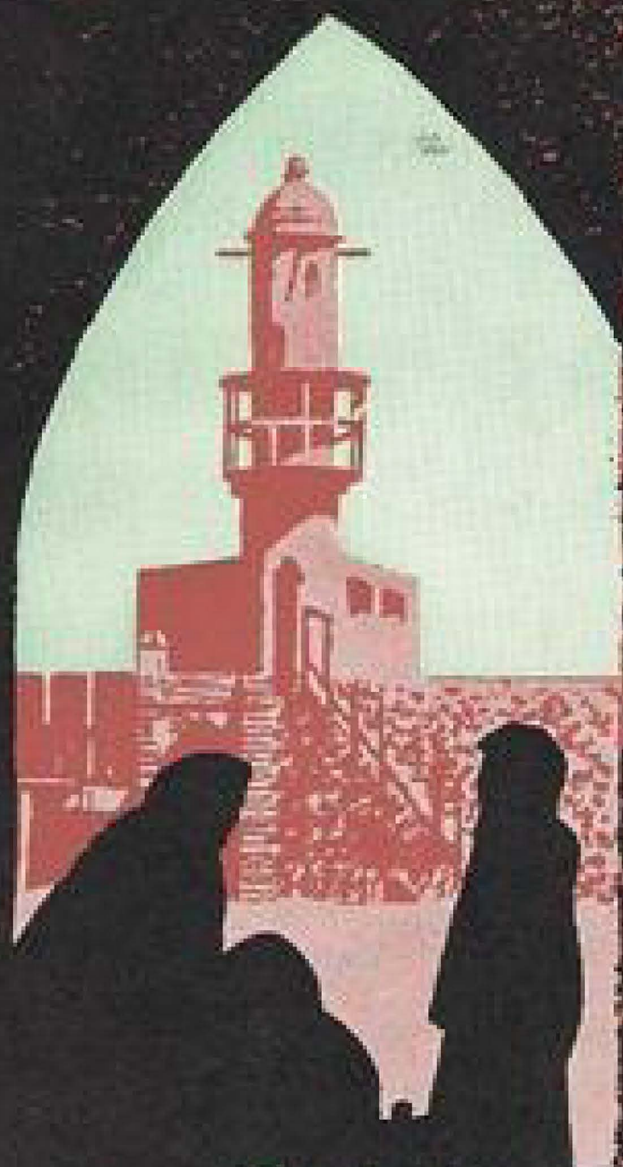


# KUWAIT AND HER NEIGHBOURS



H.R.P. DICKSON

لام على الدنيا اذا لم يكن فيها  
صديق صدوق صادق الوعد منصفا

KUWAIT AND HER NEIGHBOURS





*by H. R. P. Dickson*

THE ARAB OF THE DESERT

*by Violet Dickson*

THE WILD FLOWERS OF KUWAIT AND BAHRAIN







HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH SIR 'ABDULLAH AL SÁLIM AL SABAH,  
K.C.M.G., C.I.E.



# KUWAIT AND HER NEIGHBOURS

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by  
H. R. P. DICKSON

*edited for publication by Clifford Witting*



LONDON

**Trent University Library**  
- PETERBOROUGH, ONT.

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

RUSKIN HOUSE MUSEUM STREET

*First published in 1956*

DS 247 . K8D5

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in 12-point Fournier type  
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To  
His Highness  
THE RULER OF KUWAIT







## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND HIS WIFE

Lieutenant-Colonel Harold Richard Patrick Dickson, C.I.E., F.R.G.S., son of the late John Dickson, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul-General in Jerusalem, was born in Beyrout on 4th February 1881. Educated at St. Edward's School, Oxford, and Wadham College, Oxford University, he joined the 1st Connaught Rangers in 1903 and, after service in Ireland and India, transferred in 1908 to the 29th Lancers (Deccan Horse), Indian Army.

On the outbreak of the First World War his regiment went to France, but, because of his knowledge of Arabic, he was attached to the 33rd Q.V.O. Light Cavalry and sent to Mesopotamia in November 1914. He took part in all the actions leading up to the capture of Basra, Kurna and Nasiriyah, including the battle of Shu'aiba, and was mentioned in dispatches.

In August 1915 he was transferred to the Political Department and, under Sir Percy Cox, assisted in the organization of a civil administration in southern Iraq, which was slowly being wrested from the Turks. As Assistant Political Officer he was placed in charge of the little town and district of Suq ash Shuyúkh on the Euphrates, the only Englishman among a far from friendly Arab population. Subsequently he was appointed Political Officer at Nasiriyah, with control over the whole of that area, including the great Muntafiq tribal confederation.

Soon after the end of the First World War he was transferred to Bahrain as Political Agent, a post he held until 1920, when he returned to Iraq as Political Officer Middle Euphrates and then as adviser to the first Arab governor of the province of Hilla. In 1923 he moved to India, becoming private secretary to the Maharajah of Bikaner, and four years later was appointed secretary to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, whose headquarters were then at Bushire. In 1929, when the 'Ikhwán rebellion against King Ibn Sa'ud was at its height, he went to Kuwait as Political Agent and, sometimes at the risk of his life, played a prominent part in the negotiations that led to the capitulation of the rebels and the maintenance of the independence of Shaikh Sir Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., then ruler of Kuwait.

Retirement from the Army on reaching the age limit in 1936 led also to his relinquishment of the post of Political Agent, and since that time he has continued in Kuwait as the chief local representative (Arab relations) of the Kuwait Oil Company.

## About the Author and his Wife

His personal friendship with King Ibn Sa'ud, which began in 1920 and continued uninterrupted until that ruler's death in 1953, and his friendship also with the highest and lowliest in Kuwait, Sa'udi Arabia and Iraq, have given him opportunities to gain a great deal of valuable, first-hand information, some of which has already been recorded in *The Arab of the Desert*. Here, in this second book, are many more personal reminiscences, a history of the Al Sa'ud and the Wahábis, a detailed account of the 'Ikhwán rebellion of 1929-30 and its repercussions on Kuwait, and a complete history of that little country, so important to us now, from earliest times to the present day.

It is abundantly clear that the author could not have achieved what he has, or committed so much to paper and in such detail, without the loyal support of his wife, whose book, *The Wild Flowers of Kuwait and Bahrain*, marks her out as a naturalist of no small ability. Violet Penelope Dickson, M.B.E., F.Z.S., whom he married in 1920, is the second daughter of Neville Lucas-Calcraft of Gautby, Lincoln, and has been a helpmate and companion wherever the duties of her husband have taken him. Thus we find her camped with him in their little tent in the desert, happy in the company of a small party of humble Badu; then, within a week, she is residing with him as honoured guests in the royal palace at Riyádh.

No matter where they go, no matter how great or small the occasion may be, we find them both fitting quite naturally and without effort into their surroundings, the whole time taking notes or making little sketches, drawing maps or taking photographs, collecting flora or observing fauna—all to the end that, if Arabia is to fall victim to the march of western progress, there shall remain some record of the Badu and their way of life in the deep desert.

C. W.



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رباعيات الحكماء

- ١ اربعة هي صفاتها  
٢ اربعة يجب الدفاع عنها  
٣ اربعة سائر  
٤ اربعة طاهرة  
٥ اربعة هي الصفات  
٦ اربعة شرفه  
٧ اربعة مكرهه  
٨ اربعة كسبه  
٩ اربعة مريضة  
١٠ اربعة لا بد منها  
١١ اربعة هي اوصافها  
١٢ اربعة المذلة
- اللسان والاعصاب والنفوس والشعور  
الدين والشرف والوطن والمبدأ  
الجمال والطهارة والمواضع والنسبة  
الاعتدال بالحمل وحكمة الولدين والهدى النوى والوفاء بعد  
التعريف والتواضعية والتبذير والتكسب  
الافاقة والهدى والظلمة والاضطراب  
الكذب والحماقة ذكران الجبل والتكبر  
المتنوى والكرية والشجاعة والراحة  
انظار الذات والاضيق الحسنة وبشارة القلب والاضيق  
بالعمل  
الموت والكم والالا والهدى  
الحسد والشور والنفى وكثرة المرام  
الفتن والوميم والدين والودهم والغربة والوصول  
والسوء عن طريق السبل
١. الا عداوة من عداك عن حسد  
وليس يفتحها راق الى الابد  
وراحة اللسان في قلعة الكلام  
نقلها ابراهيم فارسي بوجه اخر  
لبناني من ترجمه
- كل العداوة قد ترمى اما تنزل  
فان في القلب شدة عقدة تحققت  
راحة الجسم في قلعة الطعام

## TRANSLATION

*Four things should be controlled :*

*Tongue, Muscles, Breathing, and Feelings.*

*Four conceptions should be defended :*

*Religion, Dignity, Motherland, and Principle.*

*Four things are pleasant :*

*Beauty, Innocence, Humbleness, and Chastity.*

*Four things are essential :*

*Gratitude, Love of Parents, Faithful Friends, and  
the Sanctity of the Pledged Word.*

*Four defects are to be avoided :*

*Flattery, Slander, Extravagance, and Laziness.*

*Four qualities are to be respected :*

*Faithfulness, Honesty, Obedience, and Diligence.*

*Four things are to be abhorred :*

*Falsehood, Stupidity, Ingratitude, and Pride.*

*Four qualities are to be loved :*

*Piety, Freedom, Bravery, and Frankness.*

*Four traits bring satisfaction :*

*Self-denial, Good Character, Pure Heart, and  
Sincerity in dealing with others.*

*Four things are unavoidable :*

*Death, Speech, Water, and Air.*

*Four things should be avoided :*

*Envy, Evil Acts, Hatred, and Levity.*

*Four things bring shame :*

*A Daughter, even if she is a Mary ; a Debt, even if it  
is a Piastre ; Remoteness, even if it is a Mile ;  
and Deviation from the Right Path.*

This was presented to the author in 1950 by his friend Ibrahim abu Khatir of Chtaura, Lebanon.



PART ONE  
WHICH IS MAINLY DESCRIPTIVE

*Al faras al asíla la 'iyíbha jallál i ha*

(The thoroughbred mare is not shamed by  
her trappings)



## CHAPTER I

# An Arab Princedom

*"Najd by the Sea"—Early History—The Present Ruler—State Boundaries—Physical Geography—Kuwait Bay—Kuwait Town—Sea Front and Shipping—Climate and Population—Military Resources—Communications—Flora and Fauna*

### "NAJD BY THE SEA"

In the far-away region of the Persian Gulf and situate in the form of a deep wedge between southern Iraq and Al Hasa, which is the north-eastern province of the modern Sa'udi Arabia, lies the intensely proud and small Arab princedom of Kuwait, which, though an independent state, is virtually under British protection.

"Najd by the sea" she is called by those who love her, nor is this a bad description of a town and principality founded by a ruler and people who migrated from central Arabia early in the eighteenth century, and to-day ranking high among the Arab states of Arabia under her pro-British and enlightened ruler, His Highness Shaikh Sir 'Abdullah al Sálím Al Sabah, K.C.M.G., C.I.E., who succeeded to the amírate in January 1950 and maintains close treaties of friendship and alliance with Great Britain—a necessary precaution indeed, for does not this midget state own the finest and most strategically favoured harbour on the whole Arabian seaboard of the Persian Gulf? And has she not two powerful neighbours lying to the north and south of her, not to mention an arrogant and covetous people across the water, who perpetually dream of a great empire with the Persian Gulf as their particular private and "middle sea"?

Kuwait's remarkable landlocked harbour, twenty miles in depth and ten miles in width, together with her untold wealth in oil, lying underground not a dozen miles from the sea, is, of course, the big attraction to-day, and at the same time the danger spot. Everyone wishes to woo this modern Helen of Troy, and advances have been made in the past—and are still being made—sometimes in cave-man style, sometimes by the more subtle though equally dangerous method



of "the bringing of gifts". Naturally every suitor is jealous of his rivals, and this in no small degree has helped the fair lady to maintain her virginity inviolable over a long period of years and, as is the hope of all fair-minded men, will yet save her from more importunate lovers.

### EARLY HISTORY

The noble and aristocratic family of Al Sabah\* is descended from the Bani 'Atúb (or 'Utúb)—at that time pure Badawin—a sept of the Dahámshah section of the 'Amarát tribe of the 'Anizah, who are of *sharíf* (aristocratic) descent and to-day inhabit Sa'udi Arabia, Iraq and Syria.

During the October of the year of his succession H.H. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím informed me in the course of conversation that in about A.D. 1710 a terrible and continuous drought drove the Al Sabah, then enjoying predominance over the whole great tribe of the 'Anizah, to migrate from inner Najd in search of a less difficult place in which to live. With them went the Al Khalífah, another family of the 'Amarát section.

They first moved south to Wádi Duwásir, but finding conditions there even worse than in Najd, they returned and proceeded to Zubara in the Qatar peninsula, on the shores of the Persian Gulf, accompanied by several senior and good families of the 'Amarát, among them the Al Záyid (known to-day as the Al Ghánim), the Al Sáleh and the Al Shamlan. Conditions at Zubara were discovered to be no better, so they all moved by slow marches with their flocks and herds and eventually arrived at a far-away promontory where, a few feet below the surface, there was plenty of sweet water. This was the site of the present town of Kuwait.

To use the expression of the time, these migrating families had '*atabu illal shimál*—moved to the north—and from this old but good Arabic word, said His Highness, the name Bani 'Atúb—the people who moved or trekked—was coined. It was never the name of an actual sept of the 'Amarát section of the 'Anizah.

Having reached Kuwait Bay the tent-dwellers forming the Al

\* See genealogical tree at end of book.

Sabah and Al Khalífah camp became anxious lest the Turks, who were very strong in Basra and claimed the land, might object to their presence there and drive them back or tax them. So at a *mijlis* (council) of greybeards it was decided to send to Basra a deputy who would explain to the Turkish Pasha, or governor, that they were poor settlers who had come from far Najd to Kuwait to try to eke out a living there and that they meant no harm to anyone. The man selected for this mission was called Sabah. Having age, experience and what the Arabs call *hadh*\* he was successful.

His Highness went on to say that subsequently the Al Nassár, ruling clan of the Bani Ka'ab, an aristocratic Arab tribe of Arabistan in south Persia, made war on 'Abdullah, son of Sabah, and that the threat of invasion caused the more cautious Al Khalífah to return south to Zubara, whence they ultimately moved to Bahrain, conquered it and have ruled it ever since.

According to local history, though partly discounted by His Highness, the reason for the Al Nassár's attack on Kuwait was that the then shaikh of the Bani Ka'ab had wooed Mariam, the beautiful daughter of Shaikh 'Abdullah Al Sabah,† and, when his advances had been rejected, had sent an armada against Kuwait.

Before withdrawing to Zubara the Al Khalífah had strongly urged 'Abdullah, their relative and ally, to buy off the Bani Ka'ab by sacrificing Mariam, but the stern 'Abdullah had replied:

"What, give my daughter to those dogs of Bani Ka'ab and save myself? Never! So long as he is alive a Sabah does not wed his daughter to any foreigner of doubtful birth."

Another story, which is also not particularly favoured by H.H. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím, has it that when the danger of the Bani Ka'ab invasion became imminent and the Al Khalífah had retired south, 'Abdullah collected all his chieftains together and made them take oath on the *'atiba* (threshold) of his house that they would stand firm,

\* Luck. The Badawin has no use for a man having courage and the powers of leadership if he has not also *hadh*. The welfare of the state is bound up in it. A general must be lucky in war; a shaikh must be lucky in peace. The great 'Abdul Azíz Ibn Sa'ud was blessed with plenty of *hadh*.

† According to Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábír Al Sabah, director of education and chief judge of Kuwait, Mariam was the daughter of Jábír, the eldest son of Shaikh 'Abdullah, but local historians have it that she was 'Abdullah's daughter.

defending his daughter and the honour of the Al Sabah. They did so to a man and so came to be known as the Bani 'Atiba or Bani 'Atúb—children of the threshold.

It is said, too, that on the reported approach of the enemy fleet the beautiful Mariam was regularly to be seen—armed with pistol, spear and sword, and riding a mare—going the rounds of the early city defences and encouraging the Badu in their tents. How her young cousin Sálím ibn Muhammad Al Sabah and his gallant band met the armada widely scattered and becalmed by night south of the island of Bubiyan and, in the guise of simple fisher-folk, boarded five great dhows one after the other, silently put the sentries to the sword, battened the remainder of the crew between decks, brought the prizes back to Kuwait, and presented them to Mariam must be recorded in another place. Suffice it to say that after this initial success and inspired by the burning enthusiasm of Mariam, young Sálím so worked up the people of Kuwait that, against the advice even of Shaikh 'Abdullah himself, their mosquito fleet, using long sweeps, sped out to sea, engaged the remainder of the Bani Ka'ab ships and put them to ignominious flight. This final discomfiture, as befell the Spanish galleons in the days of our good Queen Bess, was hastened by a great storm that scattered the fleet and destroyed half of it.

From that day to this no Sabah princess has ever been allowed to marry outside the family, not even to a member of the great house of Al Sa'ud or the Sharifs of Mecca or the noble Al Sa'dún, hereditary shaikhs of the great Muntafiq confederation of Iraq.

The state *nakhwa* (war-cries) of Kuwait are "Ana akhu Mariam" ("I am the brother of Mariam") and "'Awlád Sálím" ("The children of Sálím"). The principality has a distinctive flag of its own: scarlet in colour, with "Kuwait" written in white Arabic characters across the centre and, vertically up and down the narrow edge closest to the staff, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his Prophet".

#### THE PRESENT RULER

Born in 1895 His Highness Shaikh Sir 'Abdullah al Sálím Al Sabah is by far the strongest and most outstanding character of all the members of the Al Sabah family. He is well read and can converse with

## A Benevolent Ruler

### Chap. I

ease and more than average intelligence on world affairs generally, being particularly good at appreciating the various political situations that constantly arise in Europe and the Middle East. Although a great admirer of the late King Ibn Sa'ud he was never deceived by any of that monarch's astute political moves.

No tribal shaikh holds his position simply because his father was shaikh before him. In other words the shaikhship does not necessarily pass from father to son. The same applies to rulers. When Shaikh Sálím ibn Mubárah Al Sabah died on 27th February 1921 he was succeeded by his nephew Shaikh Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím Al Sabah, son of Shaikh Sálím, began loyally to assist and co-operate with his cousin and soon, as was natural perhaps, got a good deal of power into his own hands, which Shaikh Ahmad, with his generous, easy nature, allowed him to do.

Shaikh Ahmad the Great, as he is called to-day, died of heart disease after a short illness on 29th January 1950 and was mourned by all. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím succeeded to the throne and shows every sign of following in the steps of his pro-British predecessor. He has already inaugurated a series of wise and long-sighted measures for up-to-date public services: roads, schools, public buildings, hospitals, law courts—and above all a distillation plant that will, when completed in 1955, provide the town with 4,000,000 gallons of drinking-water per day. He has also set up a town-development committee and has given his approval to its plan for still further improvements. The article by Miss Margaret C. Clarke, which is reprinted on page 579, gives further information on the progress made possible by Kuwait's sudden acquisition of wealth through the development of her oilfields.

On 5th June 1952, on the occasion of the birthday of Her Majesty the Queen, Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím had the high order of K.C.M.G. conferred upon him in recognition of his distinguished service as ruler.

### STATE BOUNDARIES

In the past these have been the source of much dispute and no little bloodshed, the full story of which is told in later chapters. Suffice

it to mention here that the present recognized boundaries between Kuwait and her neighbours, Iraq and Sa'udi Arabia, are as shown on the map at the end of this book. In the official phraseology they are as below:—

“From the point where the three countries conjoin, which is at the junction of the Wádi al 'Aujah with the wide, long valley known as the Bátin in the west, the Kuwait-Iraq frontier runs northward along the Bátin\* to a point just south of the latitude of Safwan, whence it turns and continues eastward, passing just south of Safwan wells, Jabal Sanam and Umm Qasr, and reaching the coast at the junction of two estuaries, the Khor Zubair to the north, and the Khor 'Abdullah to the south-east.

“The Kuwait-Najd frontier starts from the same westerly point—the junction of the Wádi al 'Aujah with the Bátin. From there, leaving Riq'ai wells under the control of Najd [i.e. Sa'udi Arabia], it runs in a straight line to the junction of the 29th parallel of latitude with the arc of a circle which has the hill of Grain (or Qurain) as its southern limit and reaches the coast just south of the promontory known as Rás al Qalai'ah (or Jilai'ah).”

The centre of the circle is understood to be the town of Kuwait (old Political Agency), the radius the junction of the Khor Zubair and Khor 'Abdullah (centre line).

“Southward of this curving line is the tract of country known as the Kuwait Neutral Zone. Bounded on the west by the mountainous ridge† called Ash Shaqq, on the east by the sea, and south by a line (east-west) drawn from Ash Shaqq, through 'Ain al 'Abd, to a point on the coast just north of Rás al Mishá'ab, it is shared by Kuwait and Najd [i.e. Sa'udi Arabia], each enjoying equal rights therein.

“The principality of Kuwait includes also the islands of Warba, Bubiyan, Maskán, Failaka, 'Auha, Kubbar (or Kubr), Qaru, Maqta' and Umm al Maradim, together with other adjacent islets.”

The area of the state is 6,000 square miles, some 1,400 less than that of Wales.

\* The frontier line following the centre line of the bed of the Bátin valley.

† This is incorrect. The Ash Shaqq is a wide, shallow depression.



# A Sulphur Spring

## Chap. I

### PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Kuwait state may be said to consist in the main of a hard, gravelly surface north of a line running from Kuwait to Riq'ai via Jahra (or Jaharah), and undulating to sandy country south of that line; while west of Ash Shaqq the country everywhere as far as the Batin is flat, hard and gravelly.

The best *'arfaj* (shrub on which camels graze) is in the region lying along the sea for a depth of forty miles, with *nussi* (desert grass) lying to the west of it. The only well-marked valley of any size is Ash Shaqq, a portion of which is within the Kuwait frontier. On the western boundary is the valley of the Batin. The only eminences deserving mention are the Jal az Zor (or Zaur) and Liyah ridge, on the north side of Kuwait Bay, and a few isolated hills in the south, which are of some importance as landmarks, such as Mishrif and Sirra in the Qara'ah district, Burqan, Wára and Grain (Qurain) in the 'Adán region, and Shadhaf and Jabal Fuáris in the Kuwait Neutral Zone. Beyond the recognized frontiers to the south of the Neutral Zone are the Dhilai'at al Muaijil and the plateaux of Ba'al and Wuraiáh are also worthy of notice.

Nowhere in Kuwait is there any flowing water or spring rising to the surface of the ground; nor are there any in the adjoining tracts, except 'Ain al 'Abd ("Spring of the Negro Slave"), in the Maqta' region of the Kuwait Neutral Zone, which consists of sulphurated hydrogen and flows out at the rate of a thousand gallons a minute.

### KUWAIT BAY

This is a large inlet of remarkable form, leading out of the north-west corner of the Persian Gulf, with an extreme length from east to west of about twenty miles. In shape it approaches a crescent, with the convex side to the north and one of the horns pointing to the south-west. The bay proper is an indentation in the true Arabian coastline, which is represented northwards by the western shore of Khor Sabiyah, in which lies the island of Failaka. The entrance of the bay, between this mud flat and Rás al 'Ardh, is about four miles wide and open to the south-west.



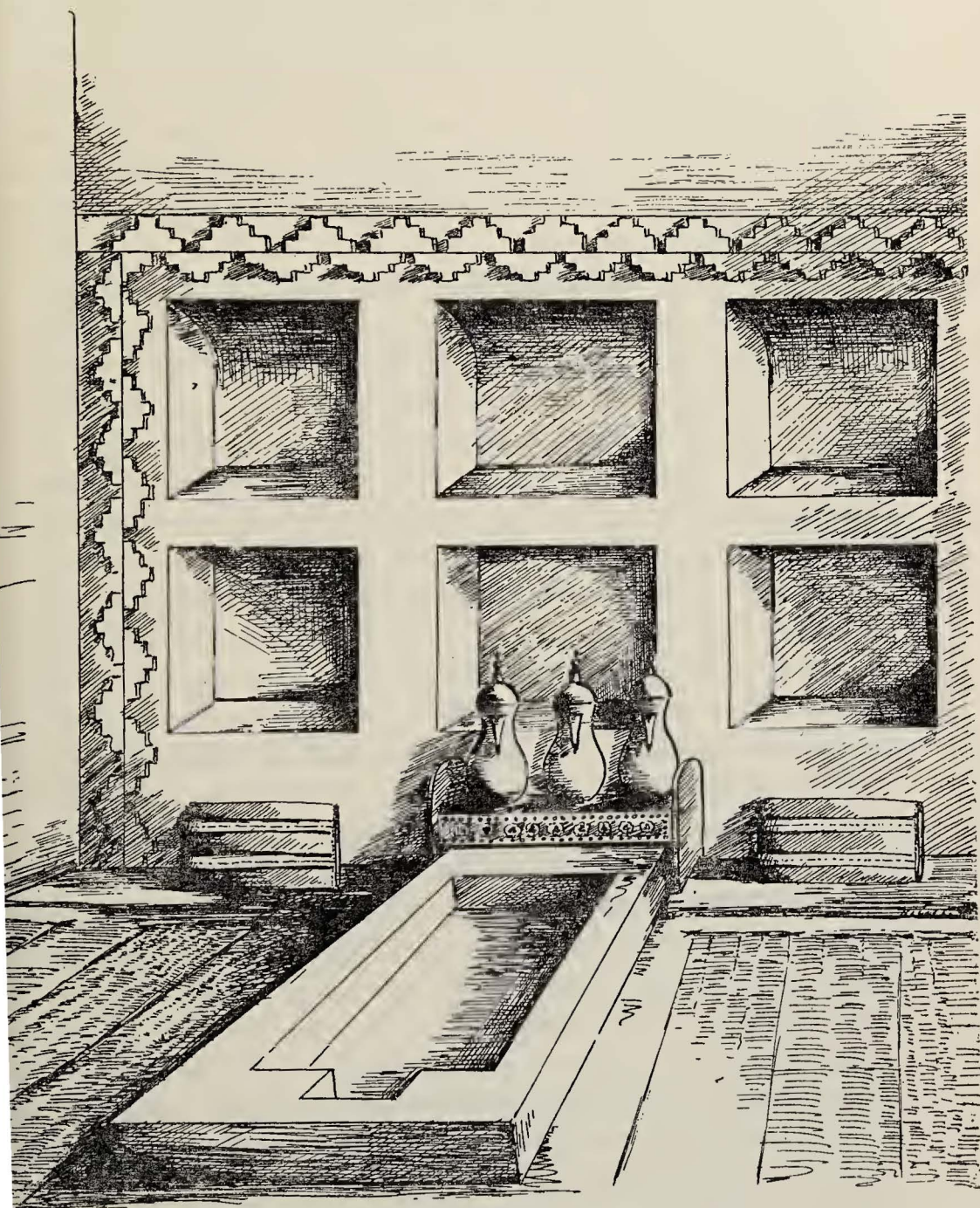
In the southern shore of Kuwait Bay are three coves. The easternmost, between Rás al 'Ardh and Rás al 'Ajúzah, is so shallow that the entry of vessels is not recommended. The eastern portion of it is known as Bandar ash Sha'ab, and the western as Bunaid al Qar, possibly a corruption of Bunaidir al Gaz ("Small Port of Bitumen"). The middle cove, between Rás al 'Ajúzah and Rás 'Usha'irij, contains Kuwait town on its eastern side, a dead coral reef covered with mud and sand and known as 'Akáz, or simply Jazírah ("the island"), in the centre, the island of Qurain on the southern margin of 'Akáz, and the island of Umm al Namal near Rás 'Usha'irij. The westernmost cove, Dauhat Kádharma, between Rás 'Usha'irij and Rás al Kádharma, forms the innermost recess of the whole bay, and near the foot of it stands the village of Jahra (or Jaharah).

The land surrounding the bay is low, except on the north side, where the Zor (or Zaur) hills, parallel to the shore, attain a height of from one hundred and fifty to four hundred feet. A flat of soft mud extends for some distance off-shore on the northern side of the bay, making communication between sea and land difficult at low water. In most parts of the bay the water is of suitable depth for anchorage and there is good holding ground. The soundings are fourteen fathoms off Rás al 'Ardh and from six to ten off Rás al 'Ajúzah, shoaling to six fathoms at the entrance to Dauhat Kádharma. There is a rocky, two-fathom shoal, called Fasht al Hadíba, two and a half miles north of the town. The anchorage for large vessels, which is marked by buoys, is called Bandar Tuwainah, lying a mile and a half to the north of the town, inside the Fasht al Hadíba. In a *shimál* (north-west wind), a considerable sea rises in the southern part of the bay, not enough, however, to distress a large vessel.

There is a beacon on Rás al 'Ardh, on which a flashing light is maintained at night. Two white lights are also kept going on Rás al 'Ajúzah, and a red light on the roof of the front portion of the new British Political Agency, which latter was completed in 1935 by the writer.

#### KUWAIT TOWN

The name, a diminutive of *kút* and meaning a small fort, was given by the early Sabah and Khalífah settlers to the stronghold built in the



CORNER OF A TYPICAL QAHWA OR DIWÁNIYAH IN OLD KUWAIT  
SHOWING COFFEE-HEARTH, ETC.  
(MIRSHID IBN TUWÁLA AL SHAMMARI'S HOUSE)

centre of the original tented settlement. In old English records and books, Kuwait is generally referred to as Graine or Grane, doubtless from the island of Qurain (or Qrain), a short distance to the west of it. The town, which as the crow flies is about eighty miles south and slightly east of Basra and nearly two hundred and eighty miles from Bahrain, faces the north-west and is situated on the southern shore of Kuwait Bay, about one-third of the way from its entrance at Rás al 'Ardh to its foot at Jahra.

Kuwait town now measures about three and a half miles along the shore, having extended considerably in recent years towards Rás al 'Ajúzah, where stands one of the palaces of H.H. the Shaikh. Erected by the late Jábir ibn Mubárah Al Sabah and named Dasmán ("Place of Bounty"), it is used by the present ruler as his *mijlis* and European guest-house. The town's greatest depth, about a mile and a quarter, is near its centre, where the long suburb called Murqáb has grown out from it towards the south-west. Slightly to the west of Dasmán Palace are the new Political Agency and two large houses belonging respectively to Haji\* Ahmad, head of the Al Ghánim family, and Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir Al Sabah, Kuwait's director of education and a grandson of Shaikh 'Abdullah, ruler of Kuwait from 1866 to 1892. A quarter of a mile west of the Agency stand the imposing quarters of the nursing sisters, and beyond these the magnificent free hospital, with its modern and up-to-date surgery, dental and eye clinics, X-ray rooms, children's wing, etc. Nearly a mile farther to the south-west is the old Political Agency, now occupied by the writer and his wife, and about half a mile beyond this is His Highness's town palace, and the modern and extensive customs house and customs police station. Here are the entrances to the main bazaar and the new Street of Pillars respectively, at the southern extremity of which, and to the west of the Murqáb quarter, is the large open market-place known as the Safát.

Continuing along the sea front a short distance from the customs house, one comes to the office of Gray, Mackenzie & Co., Ltd., and a little way beyond that is the newly opened school called Madrasat al Ahmadiyah. At the western extremity of the town are the hospitals (men and women) and dwelling houses of the American Arabian Mission.

\* Haji, the title of one who has done the Haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca.



## Kuwait Town

### Chap. I

The site of the town is generally flat and sandy, but the south-western quarter stands on somewhat higher ground, with steep lanes running down from it to the beach. The streets, which originally were irregular and winding, are now (1954) being converted into broad and modern thoroughfares. The only street of importance hitherto, besides the main bazaar and Street of Pillars, which runs at right-angles to the sea from the Shaikh's town palace and customs house, is the one leading from the Safát to the north-east end of the town and called Shára' al Dasmán.

Most of the houses in Kuwait have only a ground floor, but appear higher owing to a high parapet wall enclosing the roof. They are generally built around a central courtyard. The better sort are of stone plastered with *juss* (lime) and have high, arched gateways, a few arches appearing also in upper storeys. The system of conservancy is rudimentary, but under the guidance of the new town-development committee is being greatly improved.

There are over forty mosques, of which nine are *jámi'*, or Friday congregational mosques. These all have minarets and include the Masjid as Suq, the chief mosque, which stands on the west side of the main bazaar; the Masjid al Adsani, a little to the west of it; the Masjid Hilál and the Masjid Sáleh Fudhalah in the Murqáb quarter; the Masjid an Nusf, a little to the east of the old Political Agency; the Shaikh's mosque, Masjid al Khalífah, with its fine new minaret, on the sea front near his town palace; the Masjid as Seyed Yásín, the Masjid al Badar and the Masjid as Saiyir in the western portion of the town. A tenth, the Masjid Mulla Sáleh on the road from the Safát to the Darwázat al Jahra, is likely to be converted shortly into a *jámi'*.

Kuwait was originally a walled town and is said to have had seven gates on the landward side in 1874, but since that time it has more than quadrupled in size, and the sites of the old gates are now known to very few. For many years it remained an open, undefended town, but in 1920, immediately after the battle of Hamdh (or Hamadh), a Kuwait defeat, a new wall was built by the late Shaikh Sálím Al Sabah, then ruler of Kuwait, to keep out that great fanatical sect of central Arabia, the 'Ikhwán. This wall is a little over four miles in length. From Rás al 'Ajúzah it runs approximately south-west for two and a half miles, then west by south for a little over a mile, then west by north to the

sea, which it joins a quarter of a mile beyond the headquarters of the American Mission.

To-day there are four gates: the Darwázat Dasmán; the Darwázat al Burai'si (now named Darwázat al Sha'ab), leading to Hawali, Dimnah,\* etc.; the Darwázat Naif, on the main road to Riyádh; and the Darwázat al Jahra, leading to Jahra. In addition to the four gates, which are protected by towers, there is a round-shaped bastion—or *qala'ah*, as it is called—about every two hundred yards throughout the length of the wall. Outside, between the Darwázat Naif and the Darwázat al Jahra, are pitched many Badawin camps, and there are constant comings and goings of camels and small caravans through the Darwázat Naif. This is known as the Shamíyah area.

Immediately to the south of the town, and just outside the wall, is a good airport, which in time is to be still further modernized.

About a quarter of a mile to the south-west of the Darwázat al Jahra stood the old Christian cemetery, the ground for which was presented to the British Government in 1913 by the late Shaikh Mubárak Al Sabah, grandfather of the present ruler. In 1936 a new cemetery, surrounded by a wall, was laid out inside the town at the British Government's expense, the ground being a free gift from Shaikh Sir Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, cousin of the present ruler, who succeeded him.

These notes would not be complete without reference to the magnificent new building, situated near the Darwázat Naif, that houses the public security department and offices; to the million-pound college for boys, the new technical college, and the tuberculosis hospital that are going up three miles west of the town; to the modern quarantine station, the Cable & Wireless station, and the score of new boys' and girls' schools recently completed inside the town, under the direction of the energetic Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir Al Sabah and his assistants, Mr 'Abdul 'Azíz ibn Husain, and Mr Mikdádi of Baghdad. Nor must we forget the 750-bed general hospital soon to be erected between the boys' college and the tuberculosis hospital, the water-distillation plant to which reference has already been made, and the giant new power-house next door to it.

\* Name changed to Sálimiyah in 1953.



HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH SIR 'ABDULLAH AL SÁLIM AL SABAH,  
K.C.M.G., C.I.E., etc.  
Ruler of Kuwait State  
(A favourite portrait)





HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH SIR SALMÁN IBN HAMAD AL KHALÍFAH,  
K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E.  
Ruler of Bahrain



HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH 'ABDULLAH AL AHMAD AL  
SABAH  
Eldest son of the late Ruler of Kuwait

# Sailing-Craft

## Chap. I

### SEA FRONT AND SHIPPING

The three and a half miles of sea front is seen at its busiest in mid-August. I made these notes at that period in 1944:—

“Kuwait to-day is still a most interesting and old-world spot for anyone who wishes to study the various types of sailing-craft in the Persian Gulf. The largest of these is the *búm*, of which the merchants of the town own upwards of one hundred and thirty. Each year these ships make two or more trips to India and often to Zanzibar and the Rufiji river. Back only a few months from their last year’s trips, they are now once again being got ready for their long journeys.

“All along the *síf* (sea front) in the cool of the morning, on the *datchas*\* of nearly every house, sea captains are engaging and advancing money to their prospective crews. Sails are being taken out of godowns and look strangely like some deep-sea monster as they straggle across the road, carried on the shoulders of perhaps fifteen or sixteen of the crew. Before they are put on board, they are spread out and any repairs done. Each day and every day until these boats sail off to Basra early in December to load up with dates for India, the *síf* is a busy place.

“Smaller craft of the *sambúq* and *shu’ai* type, which have come back from the pearling banks early this year owing to Ramadhán, lie up on the beach, or inside the low coral harbour walls, in readiness to return for a short dive after the ’Id.

“Fewer boats are being built this year, owing to the difficulties of obtaining from India wood that was needed for the war effort, but in normal times some half a dozen may be seen on the stocks along the foreshore each summer. To the west of the town, outside the city wall, British and Arabs work together in building strange craft from wood brought specially from America. Kuwait’s best-known boatbuilder, Haji Ahmad al Atram,† is helping and supervising the work.

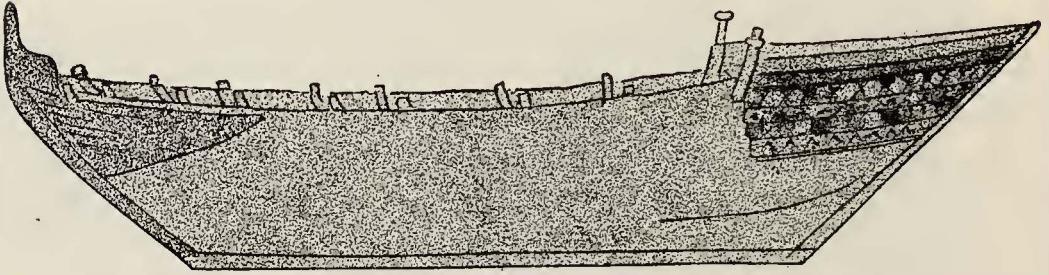
“Haji Ahmad and his sons are very clever at building small models of all types of sailing-boats. Many a sailor of the Royal Navy or other

\* *Datcha*—a long seat for guests, outside the wall of a house. It is made of mud, or stone and mortar.

† The importance of a man can be gauged by the use of *Al* or *al*. Thus Haji Ahmad *al* Atram, but H.H. Shaikh ’Abdullah al Sálím *Al* Sabah. In the contracted ’Abdullah al Sálím, *al* does not mean “the”, but corresponds to *ibn*, “son of”.

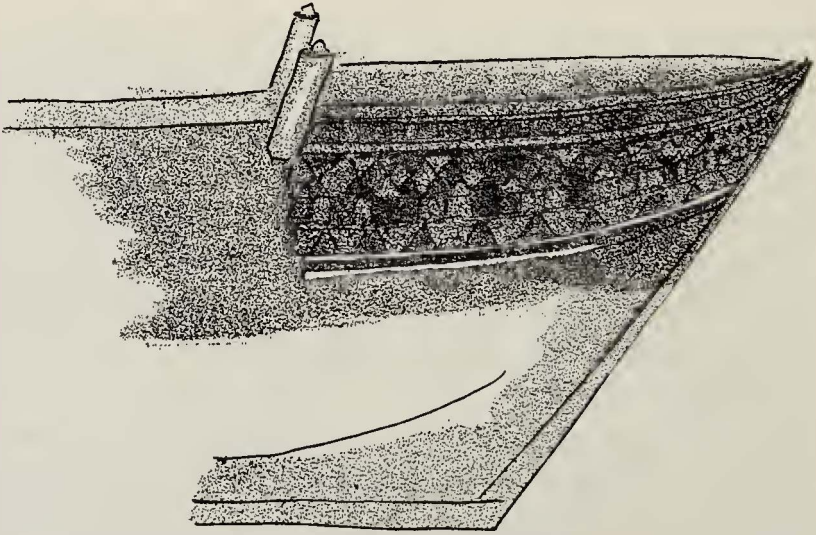


visitor has taken away with him as a souvenir a perfect model of *baghala*, *batil*, *búm*, or of one of the types of pearling boat. About nine years ago, an admiral took home one of these perfect models and presented it to the Science Museum, South Kensington.



A ZARÚQ FROM JIZAN, YEMEN

“The season for toy sailing-boats comes later on, when most of the boats have gone and the harbours are empty and deserted except for a few odd fishing-boats. Now there are other things to interest the younger generation. The sheltered harbours known as *niga’as*\* are



STERN ORNAMENTATION OF THE ZARÚQ

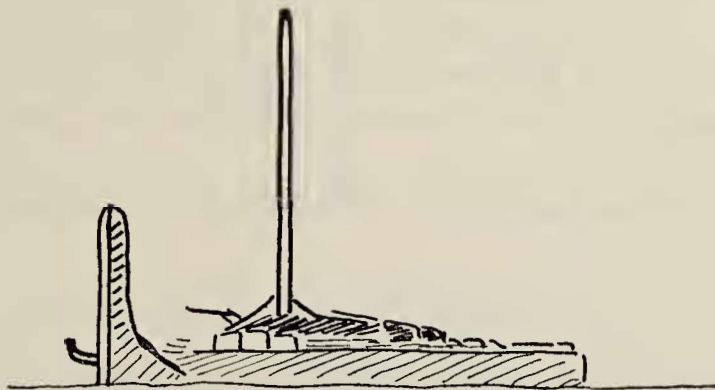
ideal places for them to teach themselves the art of sailing. As soon as a boy can swim he is given a small boat made from a four-gallon petrol tin, and in this he paddles about the harbour, or puts up a little sail, should a gentle breeze be blowing. Later on he is given a real *húri*.”

\* *Niga’a*—harbour wall enclosing a tidal basin.

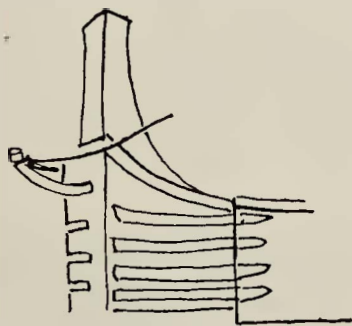
## Strange Craft

### Chap. I

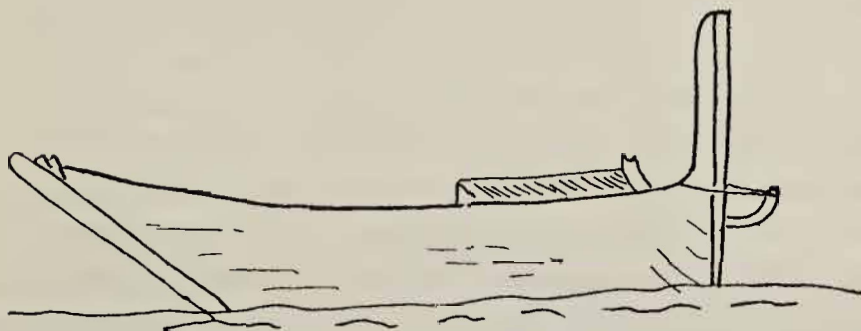
The *húri* is a small dugout boat carried by larger vessels. Light and easy to handle, it is used by the men who look after the *hadhur*\* to go out to the farther traps at low water. Those who fish with a line off-



A BADAN FROM MUSCAT



STERNPIECE OF THE BADAN



A BAQÁRAH FROM THE TRUCIAL COAST

shore use a primitive craft known as a *wairjyah*, which is built of *jarid* (date-palm fronds with the leaves stripped off) bound together with

\* Plural of *hadharah*, a fish-trap made of reeds.

'*assu*, rope made from the fibre of the male fronds. The *wairjyah* is pointed at both ends and can be sailed in either direction. There is no rudder. Two oars are used for rowing and sometimes there is a very light sail on a small pole, the lower end of which fits in a hole in the centre of a board. When fish have been caught, they are thrown into the bottom of the boat, where they live in the water that has come through, until the fisherman goes ashore and fills his basket with them.

Other craft illustrated here are described on pages 468 and 469.

#### CLIMATE AND POPULATION

The climate of Kuwait compares most favourably with that of other ports on the Persian Gulf and of most parts of Iraq. In winter, especially when a *shimál* is blowing, it is sometimes bitterly cold; in January 1911 the thermometer fell to 24° Fahrenheit. In summer the heat of the sun is usually tempered by a sea-breeze, and the desert cools down rapidly at night. The average maximum and minimum temperatures are 114° and 35° respectively, while the average rainfall is slightly under five inches.

The population of Kuwait town, in 1952 a little over 160,000, rose by the end of 1953 to 250,000, an artificial increase due entirely to the enormous influx of foreign unskilled labour for the carrying out of the town-development scheme. The great majority of the permanent population are Arabs of the 'Atúb, 'Awázim, Rashaida, Bani Khálid, Duwásir, 'Ajmán, 'Anizah, and Dhafír tribes, besides Hasawíyah, or Arabs from Hasa, and Bahárinah from Bahrain. The Persian community, which has increased enormously in recent years, now amounts to some 30,000 souls. There are many scores of Persian merchants and shopkeepers, but the great majority are employed as labourers. With the exception of the Persians, Bahárinah and such of the Hasawíyah as are of the Shi'ah sect of Islám, the Muhammadans of Kuwait are nearly all of the Sunni sect. The pilgrimage from Kuwait to Mecca is normally made by land (camel or car), the average annual number of pilgrims being about six hundred only.

The leading families in Kuwait, in order of number of living males, are as follows:—

## Important Families

### Chap. I

								<i>Approx. number of men</i>
Jana'at	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,500
Al Khálid	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	200
Al Záyid (Al Ghánim)	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	150
Al Saif (including the Ibn Rúmi and Al Shamlan)	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	150
Al Badr	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	50
Al Jalíl	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	50
Al Sáleh	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	50
Al Saqar	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	30

The above details were given to me by 'Abdul Latíf, present head of the Al Jalíl family, and by Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir.

Záyid derives from *ziada*, meaning "more", and referring to the fact that the family's ancestors had a greater number of sheep and camels than the other Arabs. All the families comprising the Al Záyid group in Kuwait are of 'Anizah extraction and, as has been mentioned, came up to Kuwait from Qatar with the Al Sabah and Khalífah princely families nearly two and a half centuries ago. They are now known as Al Ghánim and include the following:—

Shahín ibn Muhammad al Ghánim (decd.)  
 Ahmad ibn Muhammad al Ghánim (to-day head of family)  
 Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al Ghánim (decd.)  
 Khalífah ibn Shahín al Ghánim  
 Muhammad al Thana'iyán al Ghánim  
 Yusuf ibn Ibrahim al Ghánim  
 Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al Jabbar al Ghánim  
 'Abdul Waháb ibn Khalífah al Shahín al Ghánim.

Other near relatives are:—

Khálid al Ghanaím al Záyid  
 'Abdul Waháb ibn 'Isa Qatámi al Záyid  
 'Abdul Waháb ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz al Záyid.

The late ruler of Kuwait, Shaikh Sir Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, married Hussa, daughter of Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al Jabbar al Ghánim, and had several children by her, notably 'Abdullah al Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, Muhammad al Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, and Maneira, to-day wife of Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir Al Sabah.



## MILITARY RESOURCES

The ruler of Kuwait maintains a personal bodyguard of fifty men and a uniformed force of about six hundred,\* trained by British and Palestinian officers. Armed with .303 rifles this force defends His Highness's person, guards the town and protects the Kuwait Oil Company's installations at Ahmadi, etc.—this apart from the one hundred and eighty guards maintained by the Oil Company, an Anglo-American concern.

In time of war the uniformed force can be supplemented by a levy of approximately two thousand men, whom the Shaikh can raise from the Badawin tribes subject to his influence, and by a possible further three thousand from the settled inhabitants. At the time of the battle of Jahra in October 1920 practically all the able-bodied men of Kuwait town were impressed into military service, and for several weeks after it every leading merchant had to supply his quota of men for the protection of the town wall at night.

Against an emergency the Shaikh possesses an armoury of good, up-to-date weapons consisting of some 4,500 Mausers and British .303 rifles, with a plentiful supply of ammunition. In 1933 Shaikh Ahmad al Jábir added to the strength of his armed forces by the purchase of ten up-to-date heavy armoured cars fitted with good modern, non-recoiling guns. The defences were augmented in December 1953 by the arrival of fourteen light tanks, and in January 1954 by four light Auster aircraft. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím has also a dozen Chevrolet vanettes, all of which are provided with Lewis guns on tripods, and one Chevrolet lorry with a Vickers machine-gun similarly mounted. Should the need arise to rush forces to any threatened point, he can count at a moment's notice on a couple of hundred light and heavy lorries from the town.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Though free as to surface from physical obstacles, Kuwait is not an easy country in which to travel. Once one is outside the town in any direction (if we exclude the five substantial villages of the state)†

\* Recently increased to well over a thousand men.

† Jahra, Fantás, Abu Hulaifa, Fahahíl and Shu'aiba. The first is at the head of Kuwait Bay; the remainder, known collectively, together with the small village of Funaitís, as



## Roads

### Chap. I

even the smallest quantity of provisions is unobtainable and thus it is necessary to carry all food and water that may be required. Forage is easier and in most localities animals of every kind can support themselves by grazing. Water is scarce everywhere, especially to the north and north-west of Jahra, and the choice of route is chiefly determined by the position and state of wells.

With the advent of the motor-car an excellent track was blazed between Kuwait and Riyádh, capital of Sa'udi Arabia. It takes the following route: Kuwait, Minaqish, Khabrat al Duwísh, western side of Ash Shaqq, Jariya (or Qariya) 'Ilya, Turaibi, Kanhara (east side of Dahana sands opposite Rumáh), Rumáh, Buwaib ("Little Gateway") Pass, Bambán, Riyádh. Near Kanhara, and in the heart of the Dahana sands, it joins the motor track from Hufuf, capital of the Sa'udi Arabian province of Al Hasa.

For the purpose of military operations, the whole countryside—except for the sandy area of Kabd, south-west of Kuwait town—may be said to be fit for fast-moving light motor-lorries and touring cars. Under the new development plans of Kuwait five main arterial, bitumened roads are to be completed in due course: Kuwait to Safwan, Jahra to Riq'ai, Kuwait to Minaqish, Kuwait to the Al Qusur villages (coastal road), and Kuwait to Arq on the southern border of the Neutral Zone.

#### FLORA AND FAUNA

Vegetation is extremely scanty and in winter becomes almost invisible. The only trees are the date, the *sidr* (or *bér*)\* and the *'athl* (tamarisk), and even they are not met with except in the environs of villages. Shrubs found, especially in the northern, eastern and southern districts, and especially useful as grazing for camels, are the *'arfaj*, the various forms of saline-tasting brushwood known under the general name of *hamdh*, and *'ausaj*, which is the boxthorn, a thorny bush with small leaves and red berries. *Hadatch* (or *handhal*), one of the *hamdh* species, flourishes in the western desert; and south of

Al Qusur, are on the sea coast. The inland settlements are mere hamlets, the two largest, Daugha and Khaitan, being respectively seven and eight miles due south of Kuwait town, on the road to Maqwa.

\* See glossary, page 588.

Kuwait Bay, the coarse grasses known locally as *thammám* and *thanda* grow profusely over a wide area due south of the town. *Nussi* grass is also obtainable in plenty to the west of Ash Shaqq.

Every ten or fifteen days, the Badu (Arabs of the desert) take their herds of camels to localities where grow the *hamdh* bushes, on which the animals are allowed to graze for about a week, the salt in the bushes having the effect, say the Badu, of keeping the animals fit and in good condition. *Hamdh* can be compared with the saltlicks of the wild animals of Africa and India.

The various kinds of *hamdh* found in Eastern Arabia are listed below. They are not grasses, and all possess the peculiar xerophytic type of leaf.

<i>Ageram</i> (or <i>agrum</i> )	<i>Harm</i>
<i>Dhimerán</i>	<i>Rimdh</i>
<i>Gaghráf</i>	<i>Sharán</i>
<i>Ghada</i>	<i>Shinán</i>
<i>Hadatch</i> (or <i>handhal</i> )	<i>Suw'ád</i>

Such of the Latin names as are known to my wife and myself are given in the glossary.

Camels will not touch *hadatch*, but sheep like it and do well on it. Curiously enough, its effect on sheep is that they do not need water, even if the days are hot. The shepherds know this and drive their flocks into the *hadatch* areas when the rains have not arrived and there is difficulty in finding water.

It is worth mentioning here that the *Ál Murra*, the great aristocratic tribe of southern Sa'udi Arabia, use the word *tuhmáj* to describe a hollow or small area containing several kinds of *hamdh* growing together.\*

Most of the agriculture of Kuwait state is concentrated in the neighbourhood of Jahra, and is dealt with under that heading in the next chapter.

Birds are scarce, except in the migration season. Among the winter visitors are the *hubára* (lesser or Macqueen's bustard) and the *qata* (sand grouse), which are to be found in large numbers. During the early autumn and the late months of spring Kuwait forms an ideal

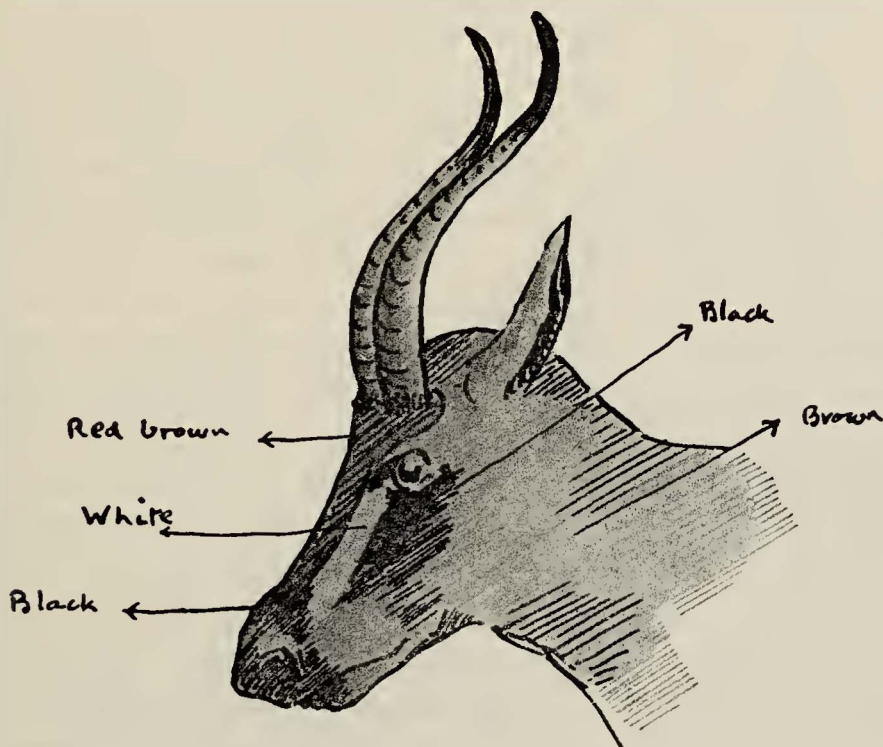
\* For further information on the flora of Kuwait, see *Wild Flowers of Kuwait and Bahrain*, by the author's wife, Violet Dickson.

## Gazelles

### Chap. I

centre for the study of migratory birds moving from the tropics to Russia and north Asia Minor; it seems to fall in the direct line of these birds' flights. Some field notes by my wife appear in Chapter XVII.

Wild animals include the hare (*'arnab*), the wolf (*dhīb*) and three varieties of gazelle: *'idmi*, *'afri* and *rhīm*. The *'idmi* (*Gazella aribica*), unlike the *'afri*, has no white markings below the eyes. Its head is reddish brown in colour and merges into a lighter-coloured brown



THE *'AFRI* GAZELLE OF NORTH-EAST ARABIA

body. It has the same black spot, known as *harga* (burnt), above the nostrils as the *'afri*. The *'afri* (*Gazella saudiya*) is the smallest and commonest gazelle of north-east Arabia. It is known by the black spot over its nostrils and the white extending on either side of the face from the eye downwards. It also has black tufts of hair just below its front knees. The *rhīm* (*Gazella marica*) can be recognized by the broad white streak on either side of the central brown streak, similar to the *'afri*, but with the white streak twice as broad and extending well behind the eye. Round the eye and below it there are a few black and dark-brown markings. Like the *'afri* and *'idmi* it has a black spot in

the centre above the nostrils. The colour of the body is light fawn, giving the appearance of being white in the distance.

Though some authorities have denied the existence of the cheetah (*fahada*) in Arabia, one of these was accidentally killed on 15th March 1950, seventy miles west of Badana, the pump station on the trans-Arabian tapline (oil pipeline) from 'Abqaiq to the Mediterranean. Mr Tony Valentine, one of the constructional engineers then working on the tapline, was going to work early in the morning in his Ford car. The cheetah rushed across the roadway, which runs parallel to the tapline, and was struck by the car, which was travelling at forty miles per hour. Mr Valentine could not say whether the cheetah's purpose was to charge the car or jump on it. I was shown the skin, which measured six feet four inches and was in perfect condition, white with black single spots all over, except on the under-side of the belly. The animal was quite obviously a cheetah, for it had the feet and nails of a large greyhound, not the retractable claws of the feline or cat tribe. It also had the well-marked side whiskers of the common cheetah. From the photograph and description I sent to the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, it was declared to be a cheetah.

Plenty of snakes are to be found in the southern coastal regions of Kuwait, most of them being non-poisonous. On 8th May 1948 my friend, Sáleh al Murri, chief tracker to Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárak Al Sabah, director of public security and commander-in-chief of the Kuwait forces, described to me the dreaded snake named *hám*, the black cobra, known among the people of Hasa as '*iyáh*. He said it is about five feet long and a slow mover; that it is deadly poisonous, and the Badu shoot it from a distance. The *hám*, he said, moves about mostly at night and utters a cry like a kid. It will attack if approached. Sálím al Murri added that he had recently seen the track of this snake near Umm Qasr. The common cobra, known as *haních*, with hood but without "spectacles" as in the Indian species, is frequently found, as are the horned viper, the saw-scaled viper and the common viper, all three of which are known under the name of *dáb*.

Locusts visit us at Kuwait almost every year in varying strength, depending on whether rains have been good or not; the better the rains in winter, the more likely are we to have locusts in the spring. As I write, in May 1954, they are with us, and the visitation is un-

## Locusts Everywhere

### Chap. I

pleasant. The finest description ever written of a plague of locusts is to be found in the first and second chapters of the Book of Joel. With it I can well end my own first chapter:—

For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion. . . . He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white. . . . The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. . . . How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. . . .

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong. . . . A fire devoureth before them. . . . behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap. . . . They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. . . . They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. . . .



## CHAPTER II

# Districts and Villages around Kuwait and in Eastern Arabia

*Al 'Adán—Bahrain—Al Bâtin—Al Dhilâi'at al Muaijil—Al Dibdibba—Failaka Island—Al Hafar al Bâtin—Al Haẓaim—Jahra—Al Kabd—Kâdhima—Al Labibah—Al Maqta'—Qara'ah—Qasr Mishrif—Qurain—Al Qusur—Al Riq'ai—Al Salu'—Ash Shaqq—Al Shiqaq—As Sûda—Al Summan—Umm al Khilan—Umm Junaib—Al Wabrah—Wuraiah—Yah—Hufuf—Al Dahana and the Jabrîn Oasis*

*(Places not listed separately are printed in small capitals in the body of the text.)*

### AL 'ADÁN

A district enclosed between those of Qara'ah on the north, Al Kabd on the west and Al Salu' on the south, it commences sixteen miles south of Kuwait town, immediately beyond Malah, which is in Qara'ah, and extends about twenty-five miles southward to the Qurain hill, which marks its boundary, as also that of the Kuwait principality, with the district of Al Salu'. The hill of Mu'aidiniyat and the wells of Subaihiyah, mentioned below, are situated in the north-western and south-western corners respectively of 'Adán, from which it appears that the breadth of the district from the sea inland varies from ten to twenty miles. Opposite the coast 'Adán reaches rather farther north than Maqwa, and includes the villages of Funaitis, Fantás, Abu Hulaifa, Fahahíl and Shu'aiba, which are known collectively as Al Qusur (q.v.). Running down the east side of 'Adán is a ridge overlooking the sea. It is known as DHAHAR AL 'ADÁN and on it stands the new oil town of Ahmadi, where there is a tank farm to which the oil is pumped from the Maqwa and Burqán wells before it runs down through gravity lines to the port of Mína al Ahmadi.

The 'Adán district contains the only relics of antiquarian interest that have as yet been discovered in the Kuwait principality. These consist of some sarcophagi found on a hillock known as UMM KHAZNA ("Mother of Treasure") six miles east of Wára hill, from which that

## Flint Implements

### Chap. II

hill lies at  $258^{\circ}$  and the westernmost part of Burqán hill at  $214^{\circ}$ . The tombs lay east and west and were, therefore, not Muhammadan. They occupied a plot of high ground about a hundred feet square. The sarcophagi were of gypsum cement, about five feet long, one foot eight inches broad and two feet deep, the thickness of the sides being about four inches. They were buried from three to four feet below the ground, and a large number of stones of irregular shape, each about two cubic feet in size, were piled over them. There were no inscriptions. A copper coin found in the vicinity seemed to be Persian of Baghdad mintage, belonging to the seventeenth or eighteenth century A.D.

The character and extent of the 'Adán district may be gathered from the following villages, wells and physical features.

ABU HULAIFA.—A coastal village lying eighteen miles south-south-east of Kuwait town, it consists of one hundred and sixty houses and is inhabited by Arabs of miscellaneous origin. There are about a thousand flourishing date palms and thirty wells containing good water at about twenty feet, only seven of them yielding water for irrigation. Barley, melons and a few vegetables are grown, and some *sidr* or *bér* trees are to be seen. This is one of the villages known as Al Qusur, to which the townsmen of Kuwait resort at certain seasons of the year. Before long it will be joined up with Kuwait by a good tarmac road. On 21st May 1937 Mr E. L. Latimer, working for the Kuwait Oil Company, discovered a perfect specimen of a flint arrowhead, one and a half inches long, three miles south-west of Abu Hulaifa village.

ARAIJÁN.—Wells five miles west of Qalai'at al 'Abíd on the coast. The water is very good.

ARFAJIYAH.—Wells, twelve feet deep, eight miles north-east of Subaihiyah. The water is brackish.

BURQÁN (commonly pronounced Burgán).—A line of hills three hundred feet high and enclosing a crater containing bitumen deposits, twenty-eight miles south of Kuwait town and thirteen from the coast. The Burqán hills are in the centre of the Kuwait Oil Company's great main oilfield. Drilling is going on all the while, so the number of wells varies. At the time of writing there are one hundred and fifty-six, including those at Maqwa, the drilling of another three being in progress. In 1935 the writer discovered in the Burqán hills many flint implements of the scraper and arrowhead variety. These were sent



to the British Museum, where they were identified by Mr R. A. Smith as of late paleolithic period.

**DASHT.**—A barren plain of sand and swamp, extending southwards along the coast for several miles from Qalai'at al 'Abíd and reaching some three miles inland. Here and there are tufts of *tarfah*, a small, bushy tamarisk, with a handsome feathery pink flower. About five miles from Qalai'at al 'Abíd, and three-quarters of a mile from the coast, is a white sandhill known as BANIYAT AD DASHT.

**DASMAH.**—Wells containing brackish water, nine miles west of Shu'aiba.

**FAHAHÍL.**—One of the villages of the Al Qusur, this is on the coast, twenty-four and a half miles south-south-east of Kuwait town. It consists of four hundred houses and has twenty wells of good water about eighteen feet deep. There are some two hundred date palms, and a certain amount of cultivation of wheat, barley and melons, irrigated from the wells. The inhabitants, who belong to various Arab tribes, own some flocks of sheep and goats. Resorted to at certain seasons by the townsmen of Kuwait, the village is becoming very prosperous, due to its proximity to the oil port of Mína al Ahmadi.

**FANTÁS.**—Another of the villages of the Al Qusur, it is on the coast, sixteen miles south-south-east of Kuwait town and contains one hundred and seventy houses, the inhabitants being of mixed Arab tribes, as in Kuwait and Fahahíl. There are about thirty wells, some brackish, others containing good water at a depth of about twenty feet. The wells have openings twenty feet square, enabling three teams of donkeys to work simultaneously. Cultivation, which consists of barley, lucerne, melons, radishes and onions, is richer than Jahra, though the area cultivated is much smaller. The village has about six hundred date palms and many *sidr* and '*ashurr* trees. Another country resort of the townsmen of Kuwait, it will be greatly improved by the tarmac road shortly to be built all along the Qusur regional road.

**FUNAITÍS.**—Another of the villages of the Al Qusur, it is on the coast, eight miles south of Rás al 'Ardh. There are six or seven wells twelve feet in depth.

**HÚNAIDHIL.**—A group of wells on the coast, two miles north of Fantás. There are many of them, but only two contain water, at a depth of eighteen feet.

## Slaves' Castle

### Chap. II

JA'AIDAN.—A mile-square depression situated one mile to the north of Burqán, it belongs to the 'Awázim tribe and contains numerous water wells, together with several very small *sidr* and palm trees. It was near a single *sidr* tree by Ja'aidan wells that oil was first struck by the Kuwait Oil Company. This was towards the end of 1937, after abortive boring at BAHRA, north of Kuwait Bay.

LAQIT (or LUQAIT).—Wells, twenty feet deep, twenty-five miles south by east of Kuwait town, on the cart-road from Burqán to Qurain. The water is good, only slightly brackish.

MANÍFAH.—Nine wells, twenty-one feet deep and containing good water, on the coast between Fantás and Hunaidhil.

MAZÁRI.—Cultivated tracts several miles in extent and three miles north-west of Laqit, containing numerous shallow wells.

MÍNA AL AHMADI.—This is the great oil port of the Kuwait Oil Company—a modern town of truly astonishing size and efficiency. It possesses probably the finest and largest loading jetty in the world, and is provided with all the latest port facilities, including a high-level beacon with a twenty-miles range. Fourteen tankers can load at the same time, and there are three submarine lines lying north of the main jetty. The port is now exporting 800,000 barrels\* daily and will shortly reach the million mark. Mína al Ahmadi is growing in size and importance every month. Magical development continues.

MISHÁSH HUBAINAN.—Five wells, containing passable water at eighteen feet, immediately to the west of Mazári.

MU'AIDINIYAT.—A group of three low hills, containing sulphur, which is indicated by a strong smell, four miles west of Maqwa, in the Qára'ah district, and centre of the new K.O.C. oilfield.

QALAI'AT (or JILAI'AT) AL 'ABÍD (“Small Fort of the Negro Slaves”).—A prominent high, rocky, flat-topped feature on the coast, enclosing a small bay that gives shelter to pearl-diving craft when the weather is stormy. It lies five miles west of Rás al Qalai'ah and ten miles south-east of Shu'aiba. There is no water. It is supposed to have been seized and defended by a band of runaway slaves many years ago. European picnickers who visit the place from Ahmadi call it “Slaves' Castle”.

RÁS AL QALAI'AH (or JILAI'AH).—A prominent headland fifteen miles south-east of Shu'aiba. There is no water.

\* A barrel is equivalent to forty-two United States gallons (approximately thirty-five British Imperial gallons).

SAFAWI.—About a hundred scattered wells adjoining Laqit on the north-west. The wells are eighteen feet deep and contain good water. There is no cultivation.

SHU'AIBA.—The last and most southerly small coastal village in the 'Adán district, and one of those included in the Al Qusur. Situated twenty-seven miles south-south-east of Kuwait town, it consists of some one hundred permanently inhabited houses, several *hautahs* that are occupied from time to time, and a fort that was once a favourite resort of Shaikh Jábir ibn Mubárah Al Sabah, but is now in ruins. There are ten wells containing good water at fifteen feet, about a hundred and fifty date palms, a few *sidr* trees, and a little cultivation of barley and vegetables. The inhabitants own one or two boats. Shu'aiba lies immediately south of the modern town of Mína al Ahmadi and is rapidly expanding.

SUBAHIYAH.—About fifty very ancient wells, thirty-two miles south of Kuwait town and twenty miles from the coast, in the vicinity of the main K.O.C. oilfield to-day. Scattered irregularly over a plain about one mile square, most of these wells are filled in when not in use. Five good ones are always available. Water, sometimes good, sometimes brackish, is struck at eighteen feet, but, owing to its strong flow, rises to twelve feet of the surface if not drawn upon. There are many vegetable gardens in the vicinity.

TAWÍL, AL.—About twelve wells, six miles west of Wára. Thirty to forty feet in depth, their water is sweet.

UMM AL HIMÁN.—About eight wells, eighteen feet deep and containing good water, three miles south of Shu'aiba. Close by is Aminoil's\* new loading terminal, MÍNA 'ABDULLAH.

UMM QUSBAH.—A small group of wells, the water brackish, near the coast about five miles south of Shu'aiba.

UMM SÁFAQ.—Wells, with good water at eighteen feet, two miles north-west of Laqit. Melons are cultivated here.

UQAILAH.—Wells near the coast, several miles south of Shu'aiba. Also called UMM AL 'AUSAJ, from the plant, which is abundant here.

WÁRA.—A prominent peak of black stone, two hundred feet high and in shape resembling a conical tower, seven miles north-west of Burqán.

\* American Independent Oil Company.

# Bahrain Island

## Chap. II

### BAHRAIN

Bahrain is the general name for the group of islands lying in the gulf between the Hasa coast of Arabia on the west and the Qatar peninsula on the east. The largest, formerly called Aval and now known as Bahrain, is twenty-seven miles long and ten miles broad, containing the capital, Manáma, which extends for three miles along its northern shore. The large Arab and Persian population are mostly of the Shi'ah sect of Islám. Pearl-fishing is the chief industry. Oil was discovered there in 1932.

Bahrain is an independent principality ruled by the well-known Al Khalífah princely clan of Arabia (see page 90) and is in close treaty relations with Great Britain. The British Government is represented by a Political Agent acting under the Political Resident, Persian Gulf, whose headquarters were once at Bushire, on the eastern shore of the Gulf, but are to-day in Bahrain, the chief naval station of the Royal Navy in the Persian Gulf.

It is also the main port of call for B.O.A.C., lying on the direct air route to India, Australia and the Far East. The airport is on MUHARRAQ island, situated to the immediate east of Manáma and joined to it by a causeway.

On a desert plain in the northern part of the main island are many thousands of ancient sepulchral mounds of uncertain origin—the largest cemetery in the world. The number of these tumuli has been estimated to be fifty thousand; there are probably very many more. Professor P. B. Cornwall assigns them to the second millenium B.C. and holds the belief that the ancient Dilmun of cuneiform inscriptions was the Bahrain of to-day.

### AL BÁTIN

The final and lower section of the great WÁDI AR RUMÁH, of which the middle and upper course lies in Sa'udi Arabia. According to some authorities, the name is given to the entire length of the valley from Qasím downwards, but the more general usage is to distinguish the portion lying in the Dahana sand-belt as the WÁDI AL MUSTÁWI, and to call only the lower portion Al Bátin. It may, therefore, be said to start from about seventy miles south-west of Hafar al Bátin, and from



Riq'ai it continues in the same direction for about one hundred and three miles farther, to the RATK ridge, thirty-seven miles from Basra, where it ends.

The Batin is generally a well-marked depression, varying in breadth from four miles, as at Hafar, to two miles, as at Riq'ai. Near its end at Ratk it is very broad and shallow. The actual bottom or bed of the valley measures about three miles across at Hafar, but it is normally much less; for some distance above Riq'ai its width does not exceed half a mile. It shows no sign of water action, but is covered with a level deposit of dark-coloured clay that may have been gradually washed down from the higher ground on either side. The level bed bears large patches of low scrub, which gives cover to gazelle and bustard. The motor routes from Basra and Kuwait to Qasim run along the bed of the Batin, the latter joining it at Riq'ai.

#### AL DHILAI'AT AL MUAIJIL

A low range of hills in the undetermined territory (claimed by Kuwait, now in Sa'udi Arabia) between the principality of Kuwait and the Dauhat Balbul in Hasa, running east and west between the Hamdh\* wells in the As Suda district and the As Safa wells in the Summan. The range has a length of some thirty miles and includes the DHILA'AT AL KIBRIT,† or ABRAQ AL CHIBRIT, as it is more commonly called. The districts of Dibdibba, Summan and Shaqq appear to meet at its western extremity. To the south of it are the following:—

JARIYA 'ILYA.—Wells giving sweet water at twelve feet, about twenty miles north-east of Wabrah. In 1920 a village was built by a predecessor of Turahib ibn Shuqair Al Duwish of the Dushan, ruling family of the Mutair. Turahib uses it as his headquarters. To-day it has a mosque, a school and an Amir, who resides in a large fort that houses a garrison of two hundred men and a wireless station.

JARIYA SIFLA.—There are wells here with sweet water at twenty feet, about fourteen miles south-east of Jariya 'Ilya. It is the headquarters of Sa'ud ibn Hayif al Fuqm, shaikh of the Al Suhabba section of the Mutair.

\* More often pronounced Hamadh.

† "Low Hill of Sulphur." *Kibrít* is the Badawin way of pronouncing *kabrit*, which means "sulphur".

## A Beautiful Plant

### Chap. II

QASWAN.—There is sweet water here also, from wells eighteen feet deep, some fifteen miles east by south of Jariya Sifla and the same distance north of NUAIRIYAH, at the head of WÁDI AL MIYÁH in Hasa.

#### AL DIBDIBBA

A large district situated between Ash Shaqq on the east, Al Shiqaq on the north, the Bátin on the north-west, and ending on the south near the AL MUSANNAT ridge, it extends little, if at all, farther north than the latitude of Kuwait town, and its northern end is about thirty-five miles west of Jahra. Its total length is about a hundred miles, its breadth perhaps fifty. On the west side of the Bátin, and corresponding to the Kuwait Dibdibba, is the Iraq Dibdibba region.

The prevailing scrub is the *hamdh*. There is *nussi* grass and also a little 'arfaj grazing. The *rubáhla*, a rare orchid-like bulbous plant, grows freely in the Dibdibba, especially along the edge of the Bátin. It is found nowhere else in Kuwait. Its bulb is eaten by the Badu and is rather like sweet onion. It has a beautiful flower.

#### FAILAKA ISLAND

To British mariners it was once known as Pheleechi, from the ordinary pronunciation, which is Failicha. An island seven miles in length, with a maximum breadth of three miles, it lies on the north side of the entrance to Kuwait Bay. Its western end, nearest to Kuwait town, is about ten miles east-north-east of Rás al 'Ardh, while its northern end is about seven miles south-east of the mouth of KHOR SABÍYAH.

In shape Failaka resembles a badly shaped wedge, having its point to the south-east and its base to the north-west. The island, which is low-lying, its highest point being a thirty-foot mound at its westernmost end, stands on an extensive flat of mud and sand, with rocky patches: called DHARUB, it stretches south-eastwards from the entrance of Khor Sabíyah. There are two outlying islets: 'AUHA, small and sandy, is three miles from Failaka's south-eastern extremity, at the place where Dharub flat comes to an end; MASKÁN (pronounced Maschán), low and sandy, is on the flat about two miles from Failaka, in the direction of Khor Sabíyah.



Estimates of the population of Failaka vary, but there appear to be about 1,500 persons altogether. The main town or village, ZOR (or ZAUR), lies on the north-west coast, facing Maskán. The only other inhabited place is QURAINIYAH, which is on the north coast, some three miles to the north-east of Zor. Here is a house belonging to Shaikh Muhammad al Jábir Al Sabah, where members of his family sometimes reside for a short time. His father used to be the governor of the island. To-day there is a salaried Amír, governing on behalf of the Shaikh of Kuwait. About one-third of the arable land is held *muáf* (free of revenue), holders of the remainder paying *zakát*, which are taxes with religious sanctions behind them, to the Shaikh of Kuwait at the rate of one-tenth of gross produce. Besides this His Highness takes all the *tibbin* (chopped straw used as fodder) of the island, even of *muáf* holdings, except a small quantity that the inhabitants are allowed to retain for their own needs. Rich merchants of Kuwait and foreigners are prohibited from settling in Failaka, on the ground that they would probably oppress the original inhabitants.

The people of Zor, mostly fishermen, but a few of them pearl-divers, are of mixed origin. The majority are said to have come from the island of Kharraq, off the coast of Persia; the others from Fao (near the mouth of the Shatt al Arab), the Hindiyan district of Persia, and even from Omán. They are civil and well-disposed, but superstitious and fanciful. At one time their condition was wretched; to-day, under the rule of His Highness Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím, things have changed for the better. Recently a school, a mosque and a hospital have been built at Zor, and an efficient municipality has been instituted.

Good water is found in most parts of the island at a depth of only six feet. It is better than that from the wells on the outskirts of Kuwait town, and is said to be less brackish near the sea than it is at some distance inland.

The resources of Failaka are fisheries and agriculture on a modest scale. Zor, where landing is easy, possesses some fifty or sixty fishing-boats, smaller on the average than those of Kuwait town, and twenty to thirty *hawári*,\* small dugout canoes carried by larger vessels. After deduction of *makalah*, or the food expenses of the crew, the catch of fish is divided into equal shares, of which one goes to the shaikh of

\* Plural of *húri*.

the island, one to the owner of the boat, one to the captain, and one to each of the crew.

When rains are good, wheat and barley are grown with some success. About 10,000 lb. of wheat are said to be sown annually in the whole island, the total yield of grain being about fifty tons. The produce, after deduction of taxes, is divided equally between the cultivator on the one hand, and, on the other, the suppliers of seed, plough-animals and food for them. The crop is sown in October and reaped in April. Melons are grown, also lucerne and ordinary vegetables such as onions, carrots and radishes.

On a visit to the island in March 1946, my wife found that many young date palms had been planted at Zor and Qurainiyah; all were bearing fruit. She also found fig, quinine, *bambar* (its round yellow fruit a favourite with children), *sidr* and henna trees. There is a variety of *sidr* growing there that has no stone in the fruit. To-day the date palms, which are chiefly towards the south-westerly end of the island, are not in a flourishing condition.

The flora somewhat resembles that of Bushire, in Persia. The pink gladioli and *ixiolirion montanum* grow profusely among the corn crops, with at least four other plants not known on the mainland. There are a few rose-trees. The large white truffle known as *zubaïdi* is very common and is found in considerable quantities wherever the perennial desert plant known as *rag-rûg* grows, in some places as close as ten or fifteen yards from the sea.

There are no snakes, foxes or wolves on the island; nor do the inhabitants keep any dogs.

Failaka is remarkable for its ancient ruined villages, its tombs and shrines. Of the first, SUBAIHÍYAH is situated on the south-eastern shore, about two and a half miles from the southern end. A mile and a half to the north-east of Zor is the deserted site of SA'IDI, and, about a mile farther on, is a similar place called DASHT. Scattered around Zor are some sixty or seventy graves of the '*auliyah*' (saints), who play a large part in the traditions of the island. About a mile to the south of Zor are the tombs of Sa'ad and Sa'id. That of Sa'ad is to the west of the other, and they stand out conspicuously as Failaka is approached in a boat from Kuwait. It is principally to visit these tombs, said to commemorate two brothers and a sister who were murdered here, that

pilgrims from Yemen and India, and more frequently from Afghanistan and Baluchistan, visit Failaka. There is another tomb, also visited by pilgrims, said to be that of Muhammad al Badawi, whose only claim to distinction is that after death his finger resisted the removal of his signet ring.

Lastly, three-quarters of a mile to the north-east of Zor, on a small promontory not far from the ruins of Sa'idi, stands the shrine known as MUQÁM AL KHIDR. Muslim theologians are not agreed as to whether this Khidr was a prophet or not; some of them even deny his existence. Certain commentators identify him with the Prophet Elias. He is believed to have been alive in the time of Abraham, to have been a companion of Moses, and to be still alive in consequence of having drunk the water of life.

Locally it is a tradition that Khidr stepped from a rock in front of what is now the American Mission in Kuwait and reached the site of this shrine in one stride. His footprint and the mark of his stick are said to be imprinted on the rocks on the seashore near the shrine. My wife found there on the flat rocks, three definite footprints of a camel, three very good ones of men with bare feet, one of a man wearing a sandal, and several children's footprints. Besides these there were four prints looking like those of prehistoric animals, three of them about twelve inches long, the fourth about sixteen inches; also what might possibly have been large human footprints eighteen inches long, though these were *not* clear. She thinks that at some period the rocks were part of a flat, muddy foreshore, which retained the imprints of men and animals, and with the ages turned into rock.

In a graveyard near Muqám al Khidr are many graves of great size, the distance between the head- and feet-stones of some being as much as five and a half yards.

Some of the Shi'ah population of Kuwait believe the quaint story that Khidr proceeds every Wednesday to Mecca from his headquarters near Basra, spends Thursday on Failaka island and returns via the same route on Friday. Hence a woman wanting a child should be at Muqám al Khidr on the proper days, and she will get her wish. Picnic parties of women and children may often be seen going from Kuwait to Failaka for this purpose. The rulers frown on this superstition and do their best to stop these picnic parties.

## Ancient Wells

### Chap. II

Most of the islanders firmly believe in the existence of a malignant demon, called Bu-Darya, who is said to frequent the sea around the island, especially between it and Maskán, and to entice the unwary out of their depth and drown them. Many also believe in Shahú, who is described as being like a woman with donkey's feet, hands like a cow's forefeet, and hair like a camel-load of brushwood. Shahú is also to be found, so it is declared, in Kuwait town.

There is a local tradition, supported by traces of a fort at Qurainiyah and good stone houses in the middle of the island, that the Portuguese once occupied Failaka, trading from there with the mainland. They are said to have been driven, first from Dasht, and then from the centre of the island, to which they had retired, by a plague of rats sent upon them by the *'auliyah*.

#### AL HAFAR AL BÁTIN

An important halting place and group of wells in the Batin section of the Wádi ar Rumáh, Al Hafar is in Sa'udi Arabia and lies about one hundred and sixty miles west-south-west of Kuwait town. The wells are about forty in number, but at the present time only eleven are alive—that is, yielding water. They are scattered in the bed of the Batin, which here forms a circular plain about three miles in diameter, at intervals of from a hundred yards to a quarter of a mile apart. Each well is in the centre of a mound (similar to AL RUMÁH wells, on the south-west edge of the Dahana, near Riyádh) about ten feet high, which has been formed by the soil removed from it. The wells are lined with rough stone masonry and are about six feet across at the top. Their average depth to the water is one hundred and fifty feet, but if left undisturbed for a time, the level rises by about thirty feet. The water they contain is almost tepid and, in the chilly air of the morning, vapour can be seen rising from their mouths.

The Hafar wells must date back to very olden times and were probably on the main trade route between the ancient city of Gerra (now 'UQAIR) and Palestine. The Badu have no idea who dug them, but say they go back to *'aiyám al juhl*—"the days of ignorance", that is, the pre-Islamic era.

The Mutair (Buraih section) claim the wells to-day, though other



tribes occasionally make use of them. They would be more frequented if they were of a less inconvenient depth.

Hafar is one of the recognized stages on the route to Qasím from Kuwait and Basra, and possesses an Amír, a garrison of three hundred men and a large, imposing, red-coloured fort, built in 1936. To-day it has a school, mosque and wireless station. At Hafar two hollows join the Bátin, one from the north and the other from the south. The former is called FULAIJ ASH SHAMALIYAH and leads to a line of wells running northward towards the TAWAL ADH DHAFÍR, of which the first is DULAIMIYAH; the latter, named FULAIJ AL JANUBIYAH, conducts similarly to a line of wells having a south-westerly direction and known as the TAWAL AL MUTAIR, of which the first is SÁFA, in the Summan. To-day the great trans-Arabian tapline passes a little to the south of Hafar, pumping station No. 3 being some fifteen miles to the south-east of it, in the heart of the QAISUMA district.

#### AL HAZAIM

A district in the Neutral Zone, it is enclosed by the sea on the east, by the Al Salu' district on the north, by the Ash Shaqq district on the west, with the Maqta' stream marking its southern limit and dividing it from the plain of Labíbah. The middle of the district is about sixty miles south by east of Kuwait town; its total extent is doubtful. Al Hazaim consists of a large plain without trees, but not destitute of camel-grazing. The soil is firm and dark-coloured, and free from stony patches. At the south end, near the Maqta' stream, is a large *sabkha*, a saline, wet-weather marsh, described more fully in the glossary.

Al Hazaim contains the following:—

AQRABIYAT.—Wells within sight of the sea, near the northern border of the district. The depth is from ten to twelve feet, and the quality of the water varies with the amount of rain.

ATARISH.—Wells, containing good water at twelve feet, to the west and somewhat north of 'Usaila.

DHILA'AT AL ASHÁRI.—Wells, containing good water at nine feet, a little to the south of Rafi'iyah.

MARÁGHA.—A conical hill and wells situated at about the middle of the western border of the district, twenty to twenty-five miles west

## Jahra Village

### Chap. II

by north of the mouth of the Maqta' stream, and ten to fifteen miles south-east of Wafrah. The water in the wells stands at nine feet, but is not good.

QAMAH (pronounced Gamah).—Wells, containing water of poor quality at twelve feet, close to the seashore, two miles south of Aqrabiyat.

RAFI'YAH.—Wells, containing fairly good water at twelve feet, about ten miles west-south-west of the mouth of the Maqta' stream.

RUGHWAH.—Wells, containing bitter water at six feet, some miles north-north-west of Rafi'iyah.

RUHAIYAH (or 'ARHAIYAH).—A prominent hill, five miles west of Wafrah.

SHADHAF.—There is fair water at twelve feet in these wells, which are seven miles south-south-east of Wafrah and the same distance west of Marágha. Standing close to them is a prominent cone-shaped hill.

TAIYIB ISM, AL.—Wells, a short distance inland from Qamah, with indifferent water at twelve feet.

'USAILA.—Wells, containing good water at twelve feet, about four miles to the west and somewhat north of Rafi'iyah.

WAFRAH.—This is a well-known camping ground of the 'Awázim tribe, a little over sixty miles due south of Kuwait town. The numerous wells are twelve feet deep and yield water of passable quality.

Those who make Umm Junaib a small separate district to the west of Al Hazaim assign to it the hill of Ruhaiyah and the wells of Shadhaf and Wafrah.

### JAHRA

Commonly also spelt and pronounced Jaharah, this is a considerable village and oasis in the Kuwait principality, situated near the foot of Kuwait Bay, about two miles inland, forty feet above sea level, and distant twenty miles by road from Kuwait town. It is the chief and almost only seat of agriculture in the principality, and, in the eyes of the Badu, a most strategic point. The air of the place is dry and the climate healthy; the drinking-water excellent on the west side of the settlement.



The village stands in an open plain of sand sprinkled with camel-grazing, three and a half miles to the south-east of the gap in the ZOR (or ZAUR) hills known as the MUTLA' PASS, through which cars and camel caravans travel by the direct route from Kuwait to Basra. Towards the west and south-west the desert rises gradually from the village, a mile to the north of which is the plain called MURAITIBAH, where the Badu camp in the summer. The plain is riddled with wells containing water at a depth of twelve feet.

Jahra is commanded at artillery ranges by the Zor hills, but, owing to the shoal water at the foot of Kuwait Bay, could not be effectively supported by naval fire.

The Shaikh of Kuwait has a fortified residence known as QASR AL AHMAR—or Red Fort, from the colour of its walls—a little over half a mile to the south-east of the village, outside the limits of cultivation, but separated only by a roadway from the nearest garden. It is about eighty yards square, and has towers at the four corners and over the doorway, which faces north-west. The walls are two feet thick at the top and fifteen feet high, the towers surmounting them by some eight feet. Both walls and towers are loopholed for rifle-fire, but the holes are so small and so badly constructed that only a limited field of fire is obtainable. There is no well of good water in the fort, which led nearly to disaster during the fighting in 1920. There were then high garden walls, since demolished, right up to the roadway opposite the fort, which afforded the enemy excellent cover from view and some cover from fire. The fort contains stabling for about a hundred horses, and its chief use now is as a place for His Highness's brood mares and young stock.

For some weeks after the battle in 1920 the village was entirely evacuated, and when it was reoccupied a wall was built round it, a few outlying houses being demolished to render its shape suitable. The village is to-day roughly rectangular, about six hundred yards long by five hundred broad, with its longer sides facing the south-west and north-east.

At the time of his death Shaikh Sálím ibn Mubárah Al Sabah was intending to build a small fort between Jahra and the head of the bay, to protect the landing-place and, in the event of Jahra again being besieged, to enable reinforcements to be brought from Kuwait by sea,

## Garden Produce

### Chap. II

but now that there is peace with Sa'udi Arabia the idea has been abandoned.

The permanent inhabitants of Jahra are mostly cultivators of Najdi extraction, who till the lands possessed there by His Highness, various merchants of Kuwait, and the relatives of the Naqib of Basra. The houses, about one hundred and ninety in number,\* are built of clay and accommodate a population of some thousand souls. In the summer there are large Badawin encampments a short distance outside the walls, and even in the winter there are generally some encampments in the vicinity. The supply of fowls and eggs is limited, but there are plenty of sheep and goats, and enough cattle to prevent any shortage of milk. Local transport consists of about a hundred donkeys, but camels can be hired from the Badu.

As has been mentioned the importance of Jahra is chiefly agricultural, and nearly all the cultivation in the Shaikh's dominions is centred there.

There is no fixed scale for the division of produce between landlord and tenant. The staple crops are wheat, barley and alfalfa (lucerne), the amount of barley being about double that of wheat, of which the total yield in a good year is only about a hundred and twenty *maunds* (9,600 lb.). The wheat, called *hintah* or *habb*, is sown at the beginning of September, and is reaped along with the barley (*sha'ir*) at the beginning of March. A part of the cereal crops is cut green for fodder, as in India, and is called *qasil*. Barley is sometimes twice cut for this purpose before it is allowed to mature, but the young wheat is rarely so treated, except in unusually good years. Alfalfa, called *jath* or, more rarely, *qatt*, is of excellent quality and is cultivated on the same ground for four years, after which the plot is left fallow (*hailah*) for one year.

Other crops are the muskmelon (*batikh*) and the watermelon (*raqqi*), which are sown once a year, ripen about the end of October, and continue in season for nearly a month. The quantity grown is too small to admit of export to Kuwait town. The pumpkin (*qara*) comes in at the beginning of December, lasts for three months and is exported to Kuwait. Beans (*baqilla*) ripen in February, but the crop is small and sufficient only for village requirements. The onion (*basal*) is ready at

\* To-day three hundred, with population of 2,500.

the end of December and continues till spring. The radish (*ruwaid*) begins early in the year and outlasts the onion. The leek (*baqál*), sown afresh every year, is cropped like the alfalfa and yields sixteen crops in the season. Clover (*halba'*) and cress (*rashád*) are small and short-lived crops, these herbs being used only for seasoning. The aubergine or egg-plant, known in India as the *brinjál* and in Arabia as *baitan-ján*, together with the vegetable known as lady's-finger (*bámia*) and the tomato—which has no Arabic name—come early in the year and do not last long, but are exported to Kuwait town.

The few trees about Jahra, except the dates belonging to the village, are either tamarisk or *bér*. There are some two thousand date trees, producing about six hundred *maunds* of fruit per annum, practically the whole of it being eaten as *ratab*—that is, in a yellow or semi-ripe state. The date plantation of Saiyid Khalaf, a relative of the Naqíb of Basra, is considered the best.

Only about thirty tons of grain are exported yearly to Kuwait town, but the agriculture of Jahra might be greatly extended if more capital were sunk in it.

The crops enumerated above are mostly irrigated and are grown in enclosures formed by low clay walls. Some of these walls were once eight or nine feet high, but were lowered after the battle of Jahra in 1920 as part of the scheme for the defence of the place. An economical substitute for a wall is a *khadad*, a ditch two feet deep and two feet broad, with sand walls about a foot high on either side. The gardens are mostly on the south-east side of the village, between it and Qasr al Ahmar. A little of the wheat and barley is grown by rainfall alone, but the area of such cultivation is very small compared with the rest.

For irrigation there are nineteen large wells with an average depth of twenty feet. The water, which is brackish, is raised in skins by donkeys walking down a slope away from the well; also by engines operating pumps. The water-lift is called '*arjiyah*' and the channels along which the water flows from the well-head to the crops are *saqiya*. Sometimes the water raised is collected in a reservoir (*birkah*) to give it a flow. A *sharb* is a small embanked terrace on which irrigation water is allowed to spread before being released to a lower level.

Late-grown crops are described as *musaiyaf*. The chief varieties

## A Primitive Plough

### Chap. II

of soil are *harra* or good arable land; *daím* or land situated on the edge of a *khabra*\* or watered only by rain; *hazám*, which is stony ground; and *sabkhah*, which is swampy, saline and non-productive (see glossary).

The commonest implements of agriculture are a rudimentary plough called *ifdán*; a large iron, short-handled hoe, *sakhín*, used in making, repairing, opening and closing water-channels; and the *masáh*, a wooden rake for levelling the ground. The *mikhyál* is a staff on which the shepherd in the desert hangs his *bhisht* (cloak) to keep his sheep together and prevent them from straying;† it serves also as a scarecrow in cultivated areas.

For the cultivation of his garden, the Shaikh of Kuwait has an agent, who acts also as his Amír or representative if none of the *shuyúkh*‡ (members of his family) is in residence. The shaikh regards Jahra as one of the most important spots in his territory, not only on account of its agricultural resources, but also because of the prestige enjoyed by its possessor, and of the hold it gives him over large numbers of the Badu permitted to camp in its vicinity during the summer. It commands the road to Basra.

Several places and landmarks that bear names, yet do not belong to any of the recognized divisions of the Kuwait principality, may conveniently be described here on account of their proximity to Jahra. They are in alphabetical order.

ATRÁF PASS.—Some broken mounds and a deep, dry watercourse, ten miles west-south-west of Jahra and forming the western extremity of the Zor hills.

FARÍDAH.—A long, elongated hill, detached and solitary, twelve miles west-south-west of Jahra.

KHABRAT AL BA'AL.—A natural basin, four miles south-west of Jahra, that intercepts a certain amount of the drainage descending from the desert towards Jahra. In favourable seasons, scanty crops of wheat and barley are raised here.

KHAD AS SA'ADA.—A prominent ridge running north and south and coloured white in the distance, it lies south of the Jahra-Riq'ai

\* The name given to a small lake formed in a hollow by rain.

† "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Ps. xxiii. 4.

‡ Plural of shaikh.



road, approximately twenty-five miles from Jahra. The slope of the country is upwards all the way from Jahra to Khad as Sa'ada. At a point twenty miles west of Jahra and on the direct Jahra-Riq'ai road itself, is a group of white gypsum hills known as GAHLULA (or GAHAILILA), which form a good landmark.

RUHAIYAH (or 'ARHAIYAH).—A prominent hill, four hundred feet high, ten miles south-south-west of Jahra.

THAMÍLAT AL JUWAISIRI.—A well-known water-pan, six miles north-west of Atráf Pass, it becomes a lake in the rainy season.

UMM AT TUWAINIJ.—A high plain in the form of a long curving ridge between Atráf and Faridah, running south-east and then east of Faridah. There are one or two *khábári* (lakelets) here in winter and the remains of some habitations.

UMM RUS.—A three-pointed hill, forming a good landmark, fifteen miles south-south-west of Jahra.

## AL KABD

A locality about thirty miles south-west of Kuwait town, between the districts of Qara'ah on the east and Ash Shaqq on the west. Kabd hills consist of a belt of high ground extending east and west over a distance of ten miles. Immediately to the south of Kabd is a parallel ridge called KUBAIDA (usually pronounced Chibaida), or Little Kabd, having to the east of it some wells called JAHILIYAH and 'ABDALIYAH (now the chief water supply of the Kuwait Oil Company), and to the south of them the well-known Badawin landmark, RIJM AL JAHTÁN—the Cairn of Jahtán. Twenty miles south of Rijm al Jahtán is FAWÁRIS in the Kuwait Neutral Zone, a small plain diversified by rocky hillocks and to-day the centre of Aminoil's oilfield. A group of five small hills at the western end of Kubaida is called MINAQISH. They are snow-white in colour and stand close to the motor route from Kuwait to Riyádh, on the south-western boundary of Kuwait principality.

## KÁDHIMA

The innermost cove of Kuwait Bay, to the west of RÁS 'USHA'IRIJ, is known as DAUHAT KÁDHIMA; the point projecting into it from its north side is known as Rás al Kádhima. The cove shoals gradually



## Berlin-Baghdad Railway

### Chap. II

from its entrance, where it is four miles broad and six fathoms deep in mid-channel, to its head, which is nine miles west by south of Rás 'Usha'irij and within two miles of the village of Jahra. There is an anchorage, well sheltered from the *shimál* (north-west wind), that would accommodate a large number of ships of 24-feet draught, but there is no deep water close to the shore, and cargo would have to be worked in lighters, or a large pier built. RÁS AL KÁDHIMA is a low, swampy point running out some half a mile southward into the cove at about three miles from its head. It is hardly above sea-level, but is partially protected by a natural bank of sand that follows the high-water line.

During the First World War, many large hospital ships visited Kádharma anchorage, where they took over sick and wounded from smaller hospital ships that could get over the bar of the Shatt al Arab.\* The big ones then evacuated their cases to India. Kuwait Bay was also used by other ships having convalescents on board.

It is of interest here to note that the final terminus of the famous Berlin-Baghdad-Basra railway, which caused so much stir immediately previous to the 1914 war, was to have been at Rás al Kádharma. It was fully realized at the time by the Germans that Basra as a port could never have become a paying proposition with the heavy expenditure that would have had to be incurred in dredging the bar of the Shatt al Arab. Hence the eyes of both Germans and Turks were turned on the bay of Kuwait, the natural port for Iraq, and hence the pressure brought to bear in 1912 by the Turks on the then ruler of Kuwait, Shaikh Mubárah Al Sabah. As history has a trick of repeating itself, may we not see the day when the new kingdom of Iraq will also endeavour, as the Turks did, to acquire the principality of Kuwait for the future sea terminus of the Iraq railway system? With the joining up of Baghdad and Mosul with the Taurus system, and the proposed bridge across the Bosphorus, this may happen sooner than we expect. Already signs are not wanting that certain persons—the late Sir John Ward, director of Basra port, for example—have been thinking along these lines.

Recognizing the potentialities of Kádharma, the Kuwait Oil Company

\* "River of the Arabs." Formed by the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris it flows down past Basra into the Persian Gulf.

landed their heavy machinery and materials there in 1936, when drilling their first oil well at BAHRA, on the north side of Kuwait Bay.

## AL LABÍBAH

A plain with grazing, in the coastal region immediately south of the Neutral Zone, its northern boundary is the Maqta' stream, so it may be reckoned as part of the As Súdā district. It is bounded on the south by the mountain of JABAL AMUDAH, partly in the Neutral Zone and partly in Sa'udi Arabia. In the centre is a prominent white conical hill known as JABAL TAIYÁR.

## AL MAQTA'

A stream of brackish, undrinkable water in the southern portion of the Neutral Zone, it forms the boundary between the district of Al Hazaim on the north and the plain of Labíbah on the south. It rises in the sulphur spring called 'AIN AL 'ABD ("Spring of the Negro Slave"), about fifteen miles from the coast, and reaches the sea immediately to the north of Rás al Khafji. Maqta' is described as having a flow of water from ten to twelve feet broad and a foot deep, and at full tide, native vessels can proceed a short way up it. Its entrance is known as KHOR AL MAQTA'. A plural form of the name—Maqati—is also sometimes used.

I visited 'Ain al 'Abd in 1934, in the following year and again in 1943. About a thousand gallons of water flow out per minute. The actual 'ain or spring is formed by a cuplike depression fifty feet across. The water is very unpleasant to smell, consisting of sulphurated hydrogen, and is very clear and buoyant. According to the Badu it is dangerous to enter the centre of the basin, owing to quicksands. There is a story that a negro's head appears in the centre of the spring every now and then. This is probably caused by water throwing up a black cone of mud as it bubbles up from time to time. I have seen the phenomenon. Badu consider the place haunted and carefully avoid it. They say a negro, half-man, half-spirit, lives in the spring and can sometimes be seen sunning himself on the banks. He attacks lonely travellers who venture too close to the 'Ain al 'Abd.



THE LATE KING OF SA'UDI ARABIA  
HIS MAJESTY KING 'ABDUL 'AZÍZ IBN 'ABDUL RAHMAN IBN FAISAL  
AL SA'UD

Mighty warrior, astute politician, and champion of the Islámic world





HIS MAJESTY KING SA'UD IBN 'ABDUL 'AZÍZ AL SA'UD  
King of Sa'udi Arabia and Dependencies, 1954  
A new star in the world of Islám

Maqta' is also the name of an island, appertaining to Kuwait state, off the coast of As Súda, one and a half miles south of Hadd al Mishá'ab. It is two miles long from north-east to south-west, with cliffs twenty to fifty feet high at the eastern end. No navigable channel exists between the island and the mainland. The island is to a great extent submerged at high spring tides.

### QARA'AH

Sometimes spelt GARA'A, this is a barren, sandy tract, bounded on the north by Kuwait Bay, on the east by the sea and the promontory of Rás al 'Ardh, on the south by the district of 'Adán, and on the west by the locality called Al Kabd. Besides the town of Kuwait, Qara'ah contains the following places:—

BAD'AH.—A small tract of country on the coast, two and a half miles south by west of Rás al 'Ardh.

CHADADIYAH.—Some wells nine miles south-west by south of Kuwait town on the main Riyádh road. The water is not good. According to some authorities these wells are outside the district of Qara'ah.

DIMNAH.—A large 'Awázim village at the base of Rás al 'Ardh peninsula, situated on a low bank of sand about two hundred yards from the sea and eight miles east-south-east of Kuwait town. It contains a mosque, two hundred houses, a school and some fine shaikhly residences. There are a number of wells, only a few of which hold water and are slightly brackish. Owing to its favourable climate, many of the *shuyukh* and notabilities from Kuwait town are rapidly building up a new and pleasing township between Dimnah and the Rás al 'Ardh lighthouse. Dimnah was renamed Sálimiyah in 1953.

HAWALI.—A large village, four miles south-east of Kuwait town, it has a school, two mosques, some five hundred houses and *hautahs* (see glossary) and telephone facilities. Now permanently inhabited by members of the mixed Arab tribes that are found in Kuwait town, all employed in Hawali as market-gardeners producing melons, radishes, onions, etc., for the Kuwait market. There are several wells from which the gardens are irrigated. South of the village stands BAIYAN palace, the late ruler of Kuwait's country seat, and now a ruin. It consists of a



large, low bungalow, a mosque, several detached buildings for guests, and servants' quarters, the whole being situated on a small hill overlooking the village. Shaikh Sabah al Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, son of the late ruler, has a villa at Hawali, and many leading merchants reside there in the spring. With the expansion of Kuwait, Hawali will soon be joined up with the capital and become a definite suburb of it.

MALAH.—Fifteen wells fifteen miles south of Kuwait town and eight miles west of the village of Abu Hulaifa on the coast. Close to the new Maqwa oilfield. The wells are twenty feet deep, the water brackish, but drinkable. Malah was formerly cultivated and has the remains of an old fort.

MAQWA (or MAJIWAH).—Here, two miles to the north of Malah, is the smaller of the Kuwait Oil Company's two oilfields (twenty-three wells), and the main hospital and training centre. There are a few wells, only one containing good water.

MISHRIF.—Here, two miles south of Qasr as Sirra, is a magnificent old fort converted into a modern palace, the residence of Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárah Al Sabah, commander-in-chief of the Kuwait army.\*

QASR AS SIRRA.—The country residence of Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir Al Sabah, Kuwait's director-general of education. It is eight miles south-south-east of Kuwait town.

QULAI SIYAH.—Six wells ten miles south-east of Kuwait town and two and a half miles from the coast. There is good water at twenty-seven feet, but no cultivation.

RÁS KAIFAN.—A few wells sunk in the sandstone on the south side of Rás al 'Ardh. There are one or two fishermen's huts nearby.

RUMATHIYAH.—A small, permanently inhabited village, six miles south-east of Kuwait town.

SÁLIMIYAH.—See Dimnah.

SHA'AB.—A large white palace on the coast, half-way between Rás al 'Ajúrah and Rás al 'Ardh. This prominent landmark is at present inhabited by His Highness Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálim, ruler of Kuwait.

SULAIBIKHAT.—White sandhills on high ground, six miles south-west of Kuwait town, on the road to Jahra and south of same. Close

\* Also director-general of public security.

## The Governor's Palace

### Chap. II

by is the new quarantine station, erected in 1952 and used temporarily in 1953 as a tuberculosis hospital for women. A new township for Europeans is going up here.

SULAIBIYAH.—Four deep new water wells, two miles south of Chadadiyah, bored by the Kuwait Oil Company for the use of Kuwait town and Badawin camels and sheep. The water is slightly brackish, but potable when mixed with fifty per cent of distilled water.

'UDAILIYAH (pronounced 'Adaliyah).—A wide, shallow depression, with about six wells, three miles south of Kuwait town. If autumn rains fall, wheat crops are always sown here and do well.

RÁS AL 'AJÚZAH and RÁS AL 'ARDH are among the coastal features of the Qara'ah district.

#### QASR MISHRIF

Originally a fort, eight miles to the south-south-east of Kuwait and guarding the southern approaches to the town, it was built in 1900 by Shaikh Mubárah Al Sabah, who frequently used it as a residence. In recent years it has been completely renovated and rebuilt by his son, 'Abdullah, without regard for expense, and to-day it is one of the most palatial residences to be found in the whole of Arabia, with magnificent reception and dining-rooms capable of accommodating three hundred persons at one sitting. A fine mosque has lately been added, while many bedrooms, with ultra-modern conveniences, have been built for the comfort of guests.

It is partly supplied with water from wells, sixty to seventy feet deep, situated a mile to the north-east, and the water is both good and abundant. On the Dhahar ridge, about twelve miles south of and slightly east of Mishrif (opposite Fantás) are the wells\* of THAMÍLAT AL ATUL, so called from a family of the 'Ajmán tribe; the water is always sweet.

His Excellency Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárah Al Sabah, worthy son of a great father, resides at Mishrif for the most part of the year.

#### QURAIN

This, frequently pronounced Grain, is the name of both a small, barren islet in Kuwait Bay and a large isolated hill on the mainland.

\* More properly water-pans.

The islet, also called JAZÍRAT ASH SHUWAIKH, is about one and a half miles off-shore at a point four miles to the west of Kuwait town. Towards its southern end is a small brown-coloured mound twenty-seven feet high. On the south-east of the islet, between it and the Kuwait shore, is a small basin called BANDAR ASH SHUWAIKH, where native boats may ride, perfectly sheltered from all winds, in three or four fathoms of water. This harbour is connected with the open bay by a long, narrow gut, which, over a distance of four hundred yards, carries only twelve to thirteen feet of water at low spring tides. The obstruction appears to be of rock, which could not be very easily removed. With the object of clearing the channel for big ships, dredging operations are being carried out (1953). Graine, the old English name for Kuwait town, was probably taken from this island.

Qurain hill is in the southern extremity of Kuwait territory, on the boundary between it and the Neutral Zone, a little over forty miles south of Kuwait town and about fourteen miles from the sea-coast. The name includes some wells and a depression known as KHOR AL QURAIN, which lies to the south and east of the hill, between it and the sea. Measuring about six miles in each direction, it is overgrown with grass and bushes, and, despite the fact that it is called a *khór* or inlet, it appears to have no communication with the sea, its drainage sinking into the ground and forming, in the rainy season, a salt-marsh near Qurain wells. According to the best authorities only the hill of Qurain, not the wells, is in Kuwait territory.

#### AL QUSUR

The name applied to the villages of Abu Hulaifa, Fahahíl, Fantás, Funaitís and Shu'aiba, listed in that order under Al 'Adán.

#### AL RIQ'AI

This is the name of a group of wells situated on the eastern bank of the Bátin, at a point about one hundred and five miles west-south-west in a direct line from Kuwait town. The wells are relatively high up above the general bottom of the Bátin depression, and do not always yield a supply of water, but if there be heavy rain in the spring, water is obtainable throughout the summer. The actual wells lie

## A Sa'udi Police Post

### Chap. II

among rocks and are interconnected by subterranean galleries, but the percolation is very slow, so that only a small quantity of water is ever available at one time.

Al Riq'ai is in Sa'udi Arabia, and a police post is maintained there.

#### AL SALU'

A district on the coast in the north-east corner of the Neutral Zone, between the districts of Al 'Adán and Al Hazaim. It is bounded on the north by Qurain and Rás al Qalai'ah, on the south by Shadhaf hill and Rás al Khafji.

#### ASH SHAQQ

A long, shallow valley, perhaps a hundred miles long from north to south, and on the average about ten miles broad, forms the district known as the Shaqq depression, which for the northern forty miles or so is within the boundary of the Kuwait principality. On the north it ends about twenty miles north-west of Jahra; on the south, in the neighbourhood of Wuraiáh; on the east it is bounded by the districts of Al Kabd and Al 'Adán, in Kuwait territory, and those of Al Salu', Al Hazaim and As Súda to the south of it; on the west, by the Dibdibba and Qara'ah regions; while the Summan approaches its south-western corner.

Ash Shaqq has no fixed inhabitants, but yields much of the grass and firewood sold in Kuwait town. In the north it marks the boundary between the *hamdh* grazing in the west and the '*arfaj*' on the east. Where it is crossed by the route from Kuwait town to Riq'ai, at forty miles west-south-west of Kuwait, it contains, but only in the rainy season, a water-pan called KHABRAT AL FARAQ; and similarly on the direct route to Riyádh, at fifty-four miles south-west of Kuwait town, there is situated in it the KHABRAT AL DUWÍSH (or KHABRAT JILHIM). The former of these is within the frontier of Kuwait; the latter just outside it.

#### AL SHIQAQ

This is a district lying between the Bátin and Kuwait, and to the north-west of Jahra. Immediately to the south of it is the large district

known as Al Dibdibba. It takes its name from a number of *shiqaq*\* or depressions, some of which run north-east, such as the SHIQQAT UMM RUWAISAT, the SHIQQAT AL JALÍB and the SHIQQAT ATH THUWAIJAH, which last is mostly within the boundaries of Kuwait. Others, such as the SHIQQAT AS SUQAIH, run south-west, while the SHIQQAT AL WASIYAH runs almost due north into the Bátin. Al Shiqaq is a barren tract, with but little grazing and no fixed inhabitants.

AS SÚDA

An extensive plain forming the southernmost district of the undetermined territory† already referred to, it lies on the sea. Bounded on the north by the district of Al Hazaim, in the Neutral Zone, from which the Maqta' stream divides it, it reaches on the west to the eastern extremity of the Dhilai'at al Muaijil range and to the Nuairiyah hill. At its north end it includes the plain of Al Labíbah. The length of As Súdā from north-north-west to south-south-east is thus about sixty miles. Its surface is level and consists of dark sand. There are no trees, but *rimdh*, *handhal*, *'arfaj* and *thammám* afford camel and other grazing. The following are the principal inland features of the district:—

ARAFJIYAH.—Wells, with a depth of fifteen feet, eight miles west of Jabal Amudah. The water is drinkable.

ARQ.—Wells, with a depth of twelve feet, twelve miles north-north-west of Takhadid, eighteen miles south-south-east of the conical hill and wells known as Marágha, in Al Hazaim, and perhaps twenty miles from the sea. It lies on the southern frontier of the Neutral Zone. The water in the wells is dangerous and almost undrinkable.

BA'AL.—A plateau or flat-topped hill, about six miles in diameter and lying towards the south-west corner of the district. Badu often come here from Ingair, which is six and a half miles to the north-east.

HAMDH or HAMADH.—Wells, with slightly brackish water at twelve feet, twenty to twenty-five miles north by west of Nuairiyah hill. The scene of the defeat of the Kuwait forces under Da'ij ibn Sulaimán ibn Sabah al Fádhil during Shaikh Sálím's reign.

\* Plural of *shuqqa*, it becomes *shiqqat* (with a second "q" and a final "t") when followed by a vowel.

† Claimed by Kuwait, now in Sa'udi Arabia.



## Flat-Topped Hills

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INGAIR (or NUQAIR).—Wells, containing drinkable water, four miles south of Naqira and six and a half miles north-east of Ba'al.

NAQIRA.—Wells, containing sweet water at a depth of twelve feet, seven and a half miles south-east by south of Hamdh.

SHADHI.—Wells, depth six feet, some miles west of Arafjiyah. Certain of the wells are sweet; the water of others is undrinkable.

TAKHADID.—Wells, containing sweet water at a depth of twelve feet, twelve miles south-east of Arq.

The principal features of the coast of As Súda are, from north to south, RÁS AL KHAFJI, HADD (or RÁS) AL MISHÁ'AB (promontory shaped like a camel-stick), JAZÍRAT AL MAQTA', DAUHAT AL KHURAI, RÁS AT TANAJIB, DAUHAT BALBUL and JABAL MANÍFAH.

#### AL SUMMAN

A huge district in Sa'udi Arabia, the northern portion of which falls within the former territory claimed by the Shaikhs of Kuwait, it lies between the Dahana desert on the west and, on the east, the districts of Dibdibba and Ash Shaqq, the ABU DHUHAIR hills and the TAFF hills in Al Hasa on the east. The Summan extends from the latitude of Hafar al Bátin on the north to the route between Riyádh and Hufuf on the south, and possibly beyond. Its length from north-west to south-east is thus at least two hundred and forty miles. It is divided half-way between the extreme points mentioned by the direct motor route from Kuwait to Riyádh, and its breadth, which is ninety miles at this point, diminishes southwards to about thirty miles, at the place where the motor road between Riyádh and Hufuf crosses it.

Entered from the Kuwait side by the direct route to Riyádh, the Summan is at first a confused region of rocky mounds and flat-topped sandstone hills, through which run shallow, winding valleys that in spring are brightened here and there by wild flowers, grass and shrubs. Farther on, the hills become more entangled, and farther on again, the country more open. The valleys, broad and flat-bottomed, run with winding courses almost north and south, while the hills—low, level and less irregularly disposed—are frequently ribanded near their bases with brick colour, or, when their form is conical, exhibit brick-red at their summits. A barren and glaring tract follows and is suc-

ceeded by a second labyrinth of valleys, but the aspect of the country is now milder. The last twenty miles, as the western border of the Summan is approached, consists of broken ground with patches of grass and brushwood, and gradually opens into undulating plains, with outcrops of sandstone that end abruptly at the red sandy barrier of the Dahana.

On the Riyádh–Hufuf road, the Summan presents towards the east scarped and embayed cliffs from fifty to a hundred feet high, and on this parallel the central portion consists of bare plains, reaching to the horizon and strewn with gravel and small stones, that afford no fuel and no grazing for camels.

After good rain there is admirable pasture throughout the greater part of the Summan, better than that of the Dahana. The common brushwood of the tract is a kind of wild myrtle; and *humaith* (sour sorrel), said to have been introduced by the Turks into Hasa, is abundant. In spring, wild parsley and various wild flowers are seen. The *sidr* trees also grow wild and are preserved largely by the Mutair tribe. The Arabs who encamp in the Summan are nearly all Mutair, but towards the south end there are some 'Ajmán, who occupy it in common with the Mutair. The tract is visited also by the Bani Khálid, the Qahtán and the Sebei' (or Sbei'). The best-known wells are those of Al Wabrah, Al Hába, Qara'ah, As Sáfa (Lisáfa) and the two Jariyas, Jariya 'Ilya and Jariya Sifla.

#### UMM AL KHÍLAN

A small tract lying between the districts of Yah on the east and Al Shiqaq on the west, it is in the north-west corner of the recognized territory of Kuwait. About eight miles in diameter, it is situated forty-five miles north-west of Jahra.

#### UMM JUNĀIB

A general term for the districts of Qara'ah, Al Kabd and Al 'Adán, together with Al Salu' and Al Hazaim, which are in the Neutral Zone, and the northern portion of As Súda, in the undetermined territory (claimed by Kuwait, now in Sa'udi Arabia) to the south of it. Umm

## A Hundred Wells

### Chap. II

Junaib is bounded on the east by the sea, on the north by Kuwait Bay, and on the south by the Dhilai'at al Muaijil. This is the generally recognized meaning of the name. There are those, however, who maintain that Umm Junaib is a small separate district, somewhat higher than Al Hazaim, lying to the west of Al Hazaim and Al Labibah, and containing the hill of Ruhaiyah and the wells of Shadhaf and Wafrah.

#### AL WABRAH

A well-known camping ground and watering station in the Summan, about one hundred and forty miles, as the crow flies, south by west of Kuwait town. It is a main and central halting place for tribes on the move between the coast and the interior of this part of Arabia. There are over a hundred wells within a space of about four hundred yards square, but ordinarily only a few are in good repair. They are sunk some twenty-eight to twenty-four feet through sandstone rock and are reputed ancient, their mouths being deeply grooved by the friction of the ropes with which the water is drawn. The fluid they yield is brackish and much inferior to the water of Jariya 'Ilya or of Al Hába wells, farther to the east and the west-south-west respectively, which are now usually called at in preference to Wabrah by travellers from Kuwait to Riyádh.

#### WURAIÁH (OR WURIY'AH)

A small tract of plateau between As Súda district and the Summan, it extends for twenty-eight miles in a north-west direction from Al Wabrah. The surface of Wuraiáh is irregular: the ground is broken, strewn with pebbles and diversified with mounds of earth and sandstone. At the western end is a group of three or four eminences called MURBÁT.

#### YAH (OR LIYAH)

This small district lies eighteen miles north-north-east of Jahra. It forms the eastern end of the low pebbly ridge known as JAL AL LIYAH, which runs due west from Yah and then turns south-west towards the south-west corner of the state. The total length of Jal al Liyah is about thirty-five miles.

Other places in eastern Arabia to which I shall have occasion to refer in later chapters are:—

HUFUF

I have been some seven times to Hufuf, homeland of Abraham and capital of Hasa province in eastern Arabia, and have collected many strange and unrecorded stories from the Badu round about—stories that do not appear to have been chronicled by Palgrave, Philby, Cheesman and others who have visited the place.

Most of the yarns are connected in some way or other with the strange *massif* or Acropolis-shaped, flat-topped hill known as JABAL QÁRA (or GÁRA), which stands in the centre of the extremely rich oasis, fifteen miles in length, that surrounds the city of Hufuf. Walking round the bottom of this remarkable pink-coloured sandstone hill, I have been reminded very forcibly of pictures I have seen of the wild and rugged scenery of Arizona, for all round the sides of Jabal Qára, centuries of hot desert winds have carved out many steep gorges and gullies, especially a series of magnificent and mighty pillars and columns, resembling the work of bygone giants. In the afternoon sun, the scene is positively gorgeous and most impressive.

On the southern face of the Jabal and at the bottom of a series of mighty stalactite-looking pillars and narrow fissures, there lies the CAVE OF ABRAHAM. I have twice attempted to explore it, but have come away disappointed each time, having seen only a fraction of the enormous interior, where, say the Badu, one can get irretrievably lost unless one ties a string at the entrance and marks out one's course with it, so as to ensure an easy return. Suffice it to say that the impression the Cave of Abraham leaves on the mind is of countless caverns, some mighty and cathedral-like, some small and insignificant, with innumerable side galleries leading off the main passageway and forming an astonishing—even frightening—underground maze.

So cold and naturally air-conditioned is this great labyrinth that the present governor of Hasa, Amír Sa'ud ibn. 'Abdullah al Jilúwi Al Sa'ud, has converted one of the caverns not far from the main entrance into a *mijlis* for himself and his servants. After a morning's work in the town, in the great heat of the summer season, he comes out to take his siesta and does not return till the time for sunset prayer.

## Abraham Treks to Ur

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If you show interest the people of Hasa, and in particular the inhabitants of the oasis, like to tell you a story that, they say, has come down to them through the ages and through their poets and bards, to the effect that, long centuries ago, Abraham, "the friend of God", used to reside in the oasis. This was long before he was first heard of, according to our Bible, as originating in Ur of the Chaldees, on the lower Euphrates in Mesopotamia (Iraq).

Abraham, so the story runs, lived a pastoral life with his tribe, and was a great shaikh, having thousands of sheep and camels. With the advent of summer and the torrid heat, it was his midday practice to drive his flocks and those of his immediate relatives into the great cave of Jabal Qára, there to remain till the cool of the evening, when the flocks were brought out again and moved, grazing as they went, to the camps in the vicinity.

It so happened that, after many years of this easy-going existence, Abraham's cousin, a man of hasty temper, fell out with the patriarch. Apparently the quarrel started over water, and the cousin smote two of Abraham's sheep over the head with a club as they were drinking and slew them. Other incidents followed and there was a split in the tribe, Abraham saying that either he or the cousin must leave the oasis for ever. Lots were drawn and Abraham lost, whereupon he packed up his goods and chattels, collected his people and, with his immense numbers of sheep and camels, trekked to the far north. There, at Ur of the Chaldees, began his story as told in the Old Testament.

"It was the undoubted hand of God working for his good", say the Badu to-day, "for God had mapped out a great destiny for Abraham and his descendants and it had to come to pass."

A pretty story, as told in detail by the people of Hufuf in their picturesque style. Who shall say whether there is not some truth in it?

### AL DAHANA AND THE JABRÍN OASIS

One hundred and fifty miles south-west of Hufuf, and an equal distance south-east of Riyádh, is the mysterious Jabrín oasis. Some interesting facts concerning it and the great Dahana sand-belt that guards inner Najd have been given to me by the well-known authority, Mr Tom Barger, who is stationed at DHAHRÁN, the big oil town near



Qatíf that is the headquarters of Aramco (Arabian American Oil Company) in Sa'udi Arabia. They are as follows:—

1. The Dahana sands, on the east and north of inner Najd, are gradually moving southwards towards the vast desert region of Ar Rimál, which is known equally well as Al Ramla and, more seldom, as RUB' AL KHÁLI—"Empty Abode". The movement has been definitely proved *not* to be from south to north, as has been supposed by some authorities in the past.

2. A great many tumuli, of the kind found in Bahrain, Dhahrán and elsewhere, are to be found round about Jabrín oasis, and an ancient track has been located, which clearly connected Jabrín with LAILA and the WÁDI DUWÁSIR farther west. This suggests that an important trade route once ran from Hadhramaut, spice country of the ancients, up through east Yemen. It then bifurcated, one branch leading up to Gerra (now 'Uqair) on the Persian Gulf, via Laila, Jabrín and Hufuf, and the other going north to Egypt, along the Red Sea upland track.

3. The ponds and small lakes of Jabrín are not, as Cheesman has suggested, shallow affairs fed by natural springs, but were artificially made by the ancients, who, to obtain water for irrigation or other purposes, tapped a great subterranean water area, possibly also connected with the well-known underground waters of AL KHARJ, for at the bottom of each of the lakes there are deep shafts, excavated through solid rock to a depth of one hundred and fifty feet or more, which tapped permanent water. This, said Tom Barger, had been proved by Aramco geologists and engineers, who had pumped one of the lakes of Jabrín dry and excavated the shaft supplying the water. The sides of the shaft, which was two and a half feet across, were cut in a remarkable manner, indicating an intelligent civilization.

4. Barger suggested that an ancient civilization came up from Marib in Yemen and founded colonies, first at Najrán, then at Laila and afterwards at Jabrín, Hufuf, Tháj, and Qatíf oasis. He mentioned that many ancient dead canals leading off an existing lake at Laila are visible to-day and indicate that once upon a time the place was in a high state of cultivation. He spoke also of two ruined forts to the immediate north and south of Sarrar, in mid-Hasa, and of many burial tumuli around Sarrar itself. One of the forts was perched on a hilltop and had a well, now filled in, that must have been three hundred feet deep

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to reach the water below. All these things were evidence of an old civilization.

My own suggestion is that Hufuf may well be ancient Gerra, and that Jabal Qára is a survival of the old name. I suggest also that the modern port of 'Uqair (Little Qára) might have been the ancient port of Gerra, as Piraeus is to Athens.

In company with the late Mr Steineke, Aramco's chief American geologist, Tom Barger made several remarkable journeys by car into the heart of the Rub' al Kháli, into the hinterland of the Trucial coast, and to the farthestmost ends of the Wádi Duwásir. An account of these operations and the wonderful collection of photographs and maps have not as yet been given to the world.

## CHAPTER III

# Tribes and Families of Arabia

*Settlers and Nomads—'Ajmán—'Aniḡah—'Aqail—'Awámir—  
'Awázim—Bani Hájir—Bani Ka'ab—Bani Khálid—Bani Sakhr—  
Bani Tamím—Bani Yám—Bani Yás—Billi—Duwásir—Harb—  
Hasawíyah—Hutaim—Al Khalifah—Manasír—Ál Murra—Mutair  
—Ahl Najrán—Qahtán—Qawásim—Al Rashaida—Al Rashíd—Al  
Sabah—Sahúl—Sai'ar—Al Sa'ud—Sebei—Shammar—Al Sudairi  
—Sulubba—'Utaiba—Al Za'ab (and 'Adwán)*

### SETTLERS AND NOMADS

There are two main groups into which the Arabs divide themselves: the Al Bádía, who live nomad lives in the desert, their homes black tents woven from goats' hair or sheep's wool; and the Al Hadhar, who are townspeople or villagers, living in permanent homes of stone or mud. The name Badawin derives from Bádía. An Arab of the desert is known as a Badawi (pronounced Baduwi), or, in the plural, Badu. A townsman is a Hadhari.

Between the Al Bádía and the Al Hadhar is an intermediate group, the 'Araibdár—Arabs of the *dár* or homeland—who are semi-nomadic, camping close to or living in the towns during the summer, and taking up their roving life once more when winter comes. The name 'Araibdár applies particularly to Kuwait state. The true Al Bádía breed only camels. Desert shepherds are known as Shawíyah or Shawáwi in Iraq, and in Kuwait and Sa'udi Arabia as Hukra, consisting for the most part of the sheep-rearing sections of the great Muntafiq confederation of the southern Euphrates. Other tribes, such as the Mutair and the 'Awázim, have their own shepherd groups. Again, there are the riverain cultivator '*ashai'yir*\* on the borders of the Tigris and the Euphrates; and the Al Sána, a community of iron-mongers, farriers and repairers of firearms, of whom each *sharíf* tribe has its contingent. They are found only in Kuwait and Najd proper, not in Iraq.

The true Bádía are proudly exclusive. They are the 'Aráb al 'Áríba

\* Plural of '*ashíra*, family, tribe, kin.

—Arabs of the Arabs, descendants of Yaráb, father of the Arabs. In their eyes all others are 'Aráb al Musta' 'Áríba—Arabs who became Arabs; that is, descendants through 'Adwán of Ishmael and Hagár his mother. Both the 'Aráb al 'Áríba and the 'Aráb al Musta' 'Áríba divide themselves into superior and inferior tribes. Those of aristocratic descent are *sharíf* tribes; they are *asíl*, pure in origin and blood. All the rest are non-*sharíf* and willingly accept the distinction.

In Arabia proper the best-known *sharíf* tribes are the 'Anizah, Shammar, Harb, Mutair, 'Ajmán, Dhafír, Bani Khálid, Bani Hájr, Ál Murra, Qahtán, 'Utaiba, Duwásir, Sahúl, Manasír, Bani Yás, Sebei' (or Sbei'), Qawásim, Bani Yám, Za'ab (with 'Adwán), and Bani Tamím, which last are not found as a whole tribe to-day. Chief among the non-*sharíf* tribes or communities are the 'Awázim, Rashaida, Hutaim, Sulubba, and 'Aqail.

The difference between Ál and Al should be noted. Al is the definite article, meaning simply "the"; Ál or Ahl signifies "people or kin" and is similar to Bani—"sons of".

The following list includes all the tribes, groups and sub-sections mentioned in this book.

### 'AJMÁN

This large and powerful *sharíf* tribe of north-eastern Arabia owes allegiance to King Sa'ud, son of the great Ibn Sa'ud\* and present ruler of Sa'udi Arabia. Closely related to the Ál Murra, its members consider themselves the aristocrats of the desert, an opinion not always shared by other tribes. They intermarry with the Bani Yám, who claim the same ancestor, Yám. The paramount shaikhs are the AL HITHLAIN of the Naji'ah sub-section of the Ma'idh section. Among the sections are:—

AL 'ARJAH.—Shaikh ibn Rímah.

ADH DHÁ'IN.—Shaikh al Dámir.

AL HABAISH.—Shaikh ibn 'Ilwaf.

AL HÁDI.—Shaikh 'Ubaid al Mutalaqim.†

\* 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sá'ud, the late King.

† His first name is in fact 'Abdullah. Because of his swarthy skin the name was changed by Ibn Sa'ud to 'Ubaid—"little negro".

AL HAJJÁN.—Shaikh ibn Sabáh.

AL HITLÁN.—Shaikh ibn Zimamám.

AL MAHFÚDH.—Shaikh Hamad ibn Rakán al Mikrád.

AL MA'IDH.—Shaikh Rakán ibn Dhaidán Al Hithlain.

AL MIFLA.—Shaikh ibn Diblán.

AL MISRA.—Shaikh Muhammad al 'Uthain.

AL SIFRÁN.—Shaikh ibn Munaikhir.

AL SULAIMÁN.—Amír Haif ibn Hajraf (owing allegiance to Kuwait).

The genealogical tree of the Al Hithlain, shown opposite, contains only such names as are mentioned in these pages.

When Dhaidán ibn Khálid Al Hithlain was murdered in 1928 his son Rakán became paramount shaikh in the eyes of the 'Ajmán, but Ibn Sa'ud appointed Khálid ibn Muhammad al Hazám Al Hithlain in his place. Khálid, who is known as "Zib Sahmán" ("Dog's Penis"), was high in the Ajmán councils of Ibn Sa'ud and a special favourite in consequence.

The noble 'Ajmán tribe has long been famous for the remarkable beauty of its daughters, many of whom have, from time to time, married princes of the royal house of the Al Sa'ud, the rulers of Kuwait and Bahrain, and the shaikhly families of the Mutair, besides various chieftains of their own people. Of recent times four famous beauties, each, curiously enough, bearing the same name, Al Jázi, have brought fame and renown to the tribe.

Of these Al Jázi bint Muhammad al Hazám Al Hithlain stands pre-eminent in beauty, charm and strength of character. To-day, though no longer as young as she was, she holds pride of place in the hearts of her people and manages the tent of her present husband, Shaikh Rakán ibn Dhaidán Al Hithlain, he whom the 'Ajmán consider to be their chief. Before marrying her present husband this queen of tribal beauties was married to the following:—

His late Majesty 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud (Ibn Sa'ud);

The late Amír Muhammad Al Sa'ud, King Ibn Sa'ud's brother;

Amír Sa'ud al 'Aráfa Al Sa'ud, King Ibn Sa'ud's brother-in-law;

Shaikh Bandar Al Duwísh, paramount chief of the Mutair;\*

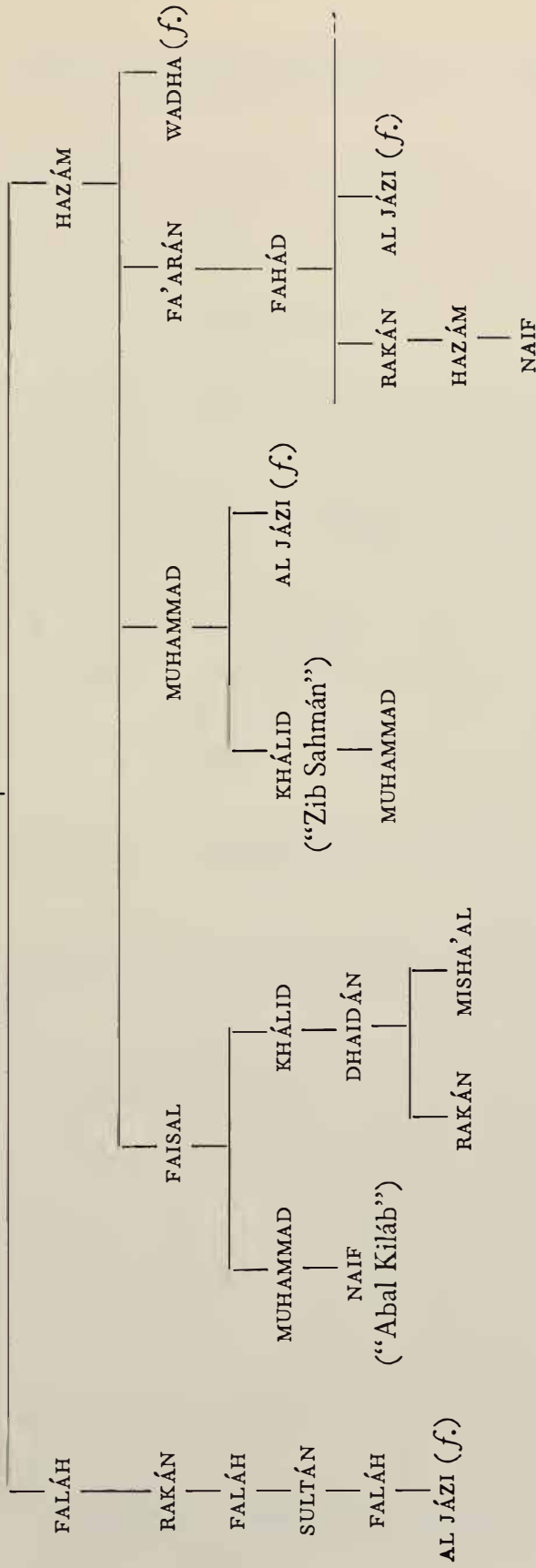
The late Shaikh Mutluq al Jaba'a, a prominent member of the

\* See tree, page 100.



MÁNA AL HITHLAIN

(of the Al Ma'idh shaikhly clan and Nají'ah sub-section)



Qahtán tribe, allied by marriage to the Dushán, ruling clan of the Mutair.

She married King Ibn Sa'ud three times. On each occasion, in return for a generous present of camels, he persuaded her then husband to divorce her on the score that "I have not got over my love for her". The lady's brother is Shaikh Khálid ibn Muhammad al Hazám Al Hithlain.

The second Al Jázi, sister of Khálid al Mikrád and cousin of Hamad ibn Rakán al Mikrád, shaikh of the Al Mahfúdh section, married in turn Shaikh Khálid (above) and Faláh ibn Sultán Al Hithlain. The third, daughter of Faláh ibn Sultán Al Hithlain, married Naif ibn Muhammad Al Hithlain, known as "Abal Kiláb" ("Father of Dogs"), who died in prison in 1934 for rebellion, and Misha'al ibn Dhaidán Al Hithlain. The fourth, daughter of Fahád al Fa'arán Al Hithlain, married Shaikh Rakán ibn Dhaidán Al Hithlain, but died within a few years.

The above information was supplied to me by Shaikh Naif ibn Hazám Al Hithlain.

Wadha bint Hazám Al Hithlain (see tree) was the mother of Sa'ud al 'Aráfa Al Sa'ud, who married Núra, the famous sister of the late King Ibn Sa'ud.

His late Highness Shaikh Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah told me in 1932 that the 'Ajmán speak by far the purest Arabic of all tribal Arabia and, as he put it, probably largely retain the speech and pronunciation of the Arabs of pre-Islámic Arabia. The 'Ajmán, he said, have many words and expressions in their vocabulary that are entirely different from those in use elsewhere or among other tribes. A selection of these is appended to the glossary. Quite unlike any other tribes in Arabia the 'Ajmán are fond of giving their children nicknames, usually of a rather lewd type, that cling to them all their lives. We have already had two examples: Khálid Zib Sahmán and Naif Abal Kiláb. Others are Mansur Khir al Dhíb (Mansur surnamed "Wolf's Droppings") and Sa'ud abu Sharrain (Sa'ud of Double Wickedness), this second applying to the present ruler of Sa'udi Arabia. An 'Ajmán woman who, at birth, had a piece of her ear cut off and eaten by her mother (this to preserve the infant's life), is nicknamed Al Jida'.

The 'Ajmán war-cry is: "Mafrás al Hadíd, wa ana ibn al 'Ajám, lo ma ta'anna mahádan khalána sikána dírah". "Striker of Iron, and I am the son of 'Ajám [ancestor], had we not trusted thee, no one would have let us live in our land."

### 'ANIZAH

In its strength (some 37,000 males) and in the number of its camels (about a million), the *sharíf* 'Anizah tribe, of Najd, Iraq and Syria, is the greatest\* of all Badawin tribes. There are numerous sections, among them those listed below.

'AMARÁT.—The late paramount shaikh was Fahad Beg Al Hadhál. On his death he was succeeded by his son Mahrút Al Hadhál. The Al Sabah, ruling family of Kuwait, are of 'Amarát (Dahámshah sept) descent, as are the Al Khalífah, rulers of Bahrain. In fact, Shaikh Mahrút claims to be titular head of those two families and made a point of saying so when H.H. Shaikh 'Abdullah Al Sabah was last in Baghdad. "He did this quite seriously", added His Highness with a smile, when he told me of the incident.

Other senior families of the 'Amarát who reside in Kuwait are the Al Sáleh (head, Mulla Sáleh), the Al Shamlan (head, Muhammad al Shamlan) and the Al Ghánim, formerly known as Al Záyid (head, Haji Ahmad al Ghánim). Other members of the Al Ghánim family are listed on page 41. The present shaikh of the Dahámshah sept of the 'Amarát is Ibn Mijlád.

FIDA'AN.—The present shaikh is Ibn Muhair.

ÁL RUWALA.—The paramount shaikh of this famous group, in the vicinity of Damascus, is Fawáz ibn Núri Al Sha'alan. A sub-tribe is the MASALÍKH, owing allegiance to Syria. King Ibn Sa'ud was descended from the Masalíkh; and the Al Hadhál and Al Sha'alan, who look upon themselves as titular heads of all the 'Anizah tribal confederation, claim to be even senior to Ibn Sa'ud and to his son, the present ruler.†

SBA'A.—According to Carl Raswan, author of *The Black Tents of Arabia*, Fahad al Masrab, present shaikh of the Sba'a, is a direct

\* Some people say the 'Utaiba tribe is larger, but this is extremely doubtful.

† King Sa'ud Ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud. He is known as King Sa'ud, but the tribes of Arabia call him Ibn Sa'ud, as they did his father.

descendant of Shaikh Mijwal al Masrab, who married the famous Lady Digby, formerly Lady Ellenborough.\* Raswan says of the MASRAB section of the Sba'a that it is considered still one of the noblest, in point of blood, of the great desert tribes of Arabia.

WULUD 'ALI (or WULD 'ALI).—An important section of the 'Anizah, in western Najd. The shaikhly family are known as the Al Sumaid.

### 'AQAIL (OR 'AGAIL)

A community of camel-dealers with headquarters in Damascus and Baghdad, they are not a Badawin tribe in any sense of the term, being more correctly described as a *hadhar* community. Their leading families are considered of *sharíf* origin.

### 'AWÁMIR

A very wild tribe of south-east Arabia. They claim to be of *sharíf* extraction.

### 'AWÁZIM

A large, important non-*sharíf* tribe of north-east Arabia.

### BANI HÁJIR

A *sharíf* tribe to be found in the Wádi Duwásir,† to the south of Riyádh, capital of Sa'udi Arabia. The paramount shaikh is Sháfi ibn Sháfi.

### BANI KA'AB

This *sharíf* tribe of Arabistan, Persia, is not properly includable among the tribes of Arabia proper, but is mentioned here for convenience. It was the Bani Ka'ab who, under the ruling family, the Al Nassár, threatened Kuwait in the days of Mariam and her father

\* Quite a number of desert Arabs still remember the great white *sitt* (lady) with affection and respect. Late in life she lived with her husband Shaikh Mijwal al Masrab in a large house in Damascus, next to which my own parents were residing at that time. According to Miss E. M. Oddie in *Portrait of Ianthe*, she died there in August 1881. More probably the date was 1883, for I was born in Beyrout in 1881 and, when we moved to Damascus, used to be taken by my mother to see her two or three times a week. She was buried in the Armenian cemetery, just outside the Báb Sharqi in Damascus, the tombstone being plainly marked "Helen Masrab". Few persons are aware of this fact.

† But their main habitat is in Qatar in the vicinity of Qatif.

## Arab Aristocracy

### Chap. III

'Abdullah Al Sabah. In the talk referred to in Chapter I His Highness Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím said that the Al Nassár were a pure-bred Arab family, originating with the Sebei' (Sbei') tribe of Hasa and central Arabia. He added that the tribes of the Persian littoral, both north and south of Bushire, were many of them of good Arab extraction and included 'Ajmán, Mutair and Sebei' details; but that to-day the mainland tribes of Arabia proper will not give their daughters to these colonists, because of their having married, at one time or another, women of Persian extraction.

#### BANI KHÁLID

The great *sharíf* tribe of Hasa. Famous in Arabian history, its ruling house is the shaikhly family of Ibn 'Ara'ir.

#### BANI SAKHR

A *sharíf* tribe of Jordan.

#### BANI TAMÍM

A *sharíf* tribe of ancient Arabia, found to-day in Qatar, etc. The ruler of Qatar is of Bani Tamím extraction.

#### BANI YÁM

A *sharíf* tribe, blood brothers of the 'Ajmán and Ál Murra (*q.v.*), their habitat is Najrán province on the north-east border of Yemen.

#### BANI YÁS

A *sharíf* tribe of the Trucial Omán, lying round Abu Dhabi and east of Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

#### BILLI

A tribe of north Hijáz, its leader Ibn Rifáda.



### DUWÁSIR

A *sharíf* tribe to be found in the Wádi Duwásir, to the south of Riyádh.

### HARB

A *sharíf* tribe of Najd. The ruling family are the Al Firm.

### HASAWÍYAH

A cultivator tribe in Hufuf.

### HUTAIM

A powerful, non-*sharíf* tribe of northern Hijáz.

### AL KHALÍFAH

The rulers of Bahrain are descended, together with the Al Sabah of Kuwait, from the 'Amarát section of the 'Anizah. Although the shaikhs of the Al Khalífah had been in direct relations with the British since 1805, and under treaty since 1820, it was not until 1867 that Shaikh 'Isa ibn 'Ali Al Khalífah entered into a binding agreement similar to that accepted by the ruler of Omán. Shaikh 'Isa owed his accession in that year to British influence and help against a senior branch of the family, who had been endeavouring to seize the reins of government and gain control of the island. He ruled until 1923, when he was deposed by the Political Agent, Major C. K. Daly, acting on the authority of the Government of India, and his son Hamad placed on the throne. Shaikh Sir Hamad ibn 'Isa Al Khalífah ruled until his death in 1942, when he was succeeded by his son, the present ruler, H.H. Shaikh Sir Salmán ibn Hamad Al Khalífah, K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., one of the wisest, most respected and loved of all the rulers of Arabia, and a doughty champion of the British connexion. To-day Bahrain is in the closest of treaty relations with the British Government.

### MANASÍR

A *sharíf* tribe inhabiting the Trucial Omán.

### ÁL MURRA

Quite a lot has been written at different times about this powerful and little-known tribe of central and south-eastern Arabia, notably by

## The Ál Murra

### Chap. III

Bertram Thomas in his *Arabia Felix*, Paul Harrison in his *The Arab at Home* and H. St. John Philby in his *The Empty Quarter*, all of whom made some mention of the tribe's mysterious habitat, its folklore, its fairy tales, and the amazing tracking powers of its members. Notwithstanding this it will not be out of place to add to existing knowledge by recording such information as I have been fortunate enough to obtain at first hand from men and women of the Ál Murra whom I have come across from time to time. A number of these tales and incidents are recounted in later chapters; here I shall confine myself to such details as concern the way of life, the *dīrah* (tribal country) and history of this great *sharīf* tribe.

They are wild and very proud folk, and have the reputation of being especially loyal to him whose salt they have eaten, or to him to whom they have made submission and sealed such by a treaty or promise of fealty. Hence their adherence to His Majesty 'Abdul 'Azīz Al Sa'ud and to his promising successor. They claim to have ten thousand tents, and though this may be an exaggeration, they are certainly much more numerous than is generally supposed. Being noble they will neither marry nor give in marriage to any tribe that is non-*sharīf*. They are *bani 'am* (of the same male ancestry) of the powerful 'Ajmán tribe living farther north. The story is that the ancestor of the Ál Murra, 'Ali ibn Murra, was own brother to Yám, ancestor of the 'Ajmán. Murra was the name of their mother, a reputed Qahtáníyah—that is, a woman of the Qahtán tribe.

The Ál Murra inhabit, and describe as their own particular *dīrah*, the north, central and eastern areas of the Rub' al Kháli, that huge "Empty Abode" of southern Arabia. They look upon the Jabrín oasis as their own property and summer camping ground, although, due to the malarious nature of the place, their leaders have preferred of recent years to move up to Hufuf, a hundred and eighty miles to the north-east of Jabrín, and pitch their tents at Ragaija, an area reserved for the Badu outside the town. It brings them close to their food-supplies and helps them to keep in touch with the officials and representatives of King Sa'ud.

Some years ago, Murra tribesmen told me of a second oasis, more beautiful than Jabrín, that they were fond of visiting and sharing with their *sharīf* friends, the 'Awámir, Manasír and Bani Yás. They said it

contained many springs of abundant water and many palm groves; that it was fifteen days' journey by riding-camel south-west of Buraimi and a like number of days' journey south by west of Abu Dhabi, on the Trucial coast; and that it was called 'Ijwa. I could find no other reference to this delectable spot until finally I identified it as Jíwa, an oasis—or rather, a series of oases—in the hinterland of Abu Dhabi. It was visited by the Aramco officials during one of their truly remarkable exploratory and scientific expeditions in the years preceding the Second World War. Their chief guide was the famous 'Ajmán, Khamís ibn Rimthán, who is a friend of ours. His wife is the sister of Muhammad ibn Táhus, head guard of the Kuwait Oil Company in the Burqán area.

In 1943 my wife and I were privileged to meet a prominent member of the Ál Murra: Muhammad ibn Sálím ibn Dráhim al Murri, of the 'Adhiba section of the Nigadán group, who had come up to Kuwait at the instance of King Ibn Sa'ud's finance minister, who had been asked to persuade a good Murri tracker to take on the role of Sherlock Holmes in Kuwait. Muhammad ibn Sálím refused to accept the post because the pay offered was small, but he stayed some days in the town and dined with us, afterwards visiting us several times. We heard some interesting stories from him, both real and fictitious. Among the things he mentioned were the following:—

(a) The Murra war-cry is "Awlád ash Shabibi"—"Sons of Al Shabibi".

(b) Being of their own stock, the Murra will always go to the help of the 'Ajmán. Should the 'Ajmán ever be threatened, they have only to cast loose among their own herds a camel with a red *safífa* \* bound round its neck, and the whole Murra tribe will at once rush to their aid. This co-operation in an emergency, added Muhammad ibn Sálím, does not prevent the Murra from having their own differences and disputes with the 'Ajmán.

(c) He described in detail the singing sands of the deep desert and gave a very sensible explanation of the reason: that wind action causes cascades of sand from the tops of the dunes down their reverse or steep sides. With a certain strength of wind this gives out a humming or booming sound similar to that of a distant aircraft in the sky. The common Murra tribesman has it that this sound is caused by *jinún* (genies) of the Rub' al Kháli, who sometimes make men mad. These *jinún*, explained Muhammad, have eyes

\* A long special hanging cord forming part of the decorations of a camel-saddle.

pointing up and down, not horizontal as in mortal man. Indeed, the ancestress of the tribe, who was a *jinníyah*, had eyes of this shape.

(*d*) The Murra train themselves to do without water. He himself, although in Kuwait and eight hundred miles from his country, did not touch it—in fact, had not touched it, except in coffee, for twelve months. Camels' milk is the normal beverage of the Murra.

(*e*) Their method of warfare is always the same: to entice their enemies into remote parts of the Rub' al Kháli, then turn and destroy them.

(*f*) The highest honour a Murri can do his guest is to kill a young camel and boil it in its mother's milk.

(*g*) Not all the Murra make good trackers. The Nigadán section are acknowledged to be the best.

(*h*) When a Murri becomes a friend, he remains a friend to the end of time.

Of the origin of the Ál Murra he told me this story:—

Many hundreds of years ago, and before the days of Abraham, when there was no religion and the inhabitants never fasted or prayed as good Muslims should, there lived in southern Arabia a famous warrior called 'Ali ibn Murra. He was the brother of Yám, the ancestor of the 'Ajmán tribe (though some say the 'Ajmán are descended from Marzúk, son of 'Ali ibn Murra).

One day in spring, 'Ali ibn Murra was very sad. The dread disease of *jarab* (camel mange) had appeared among his herd of forty camels and only four of them still survived. Not able to bear the sight of these also sickening and dying he went away, very sorrowful and in despair, into the Rub' al Kháli. There, in a lonely spot, he came across a beautiful girl who was fighting for her life with a great wolf. He ran to her aid and succeeded in killing the animal; and so grateful was the girl that she told him that any favour he asked of her would be granted. He replied that all he wished was to marry her.

"That you cannot do", she answered, "until I obtain the permission of my father and brothers, who live among my people, the *jínún* of the earth."

Then 'Ali ibn Murra realized that this strange young person was no ordinary human being, but a *jinníyah*—a spirit woman.

Seeing him still very downcast the *jinníyah* asked what ailed him. He told his tale and said he had left his last four camels behind a distant hill, because he could not bear to see them die.

“Come with me”, said the *jinn* girl, “and I will take you to my father. He will know how to cure your camels, and you can ask him at the same time for my hand in marriage.”

She then told ʿAli ibn Murra to close his eyes and, placing her hands tightly over them, she made a sign and a great cavern opened beside them. Down this she took him into the underworld to meet her people there.

When her hands had been removed from his eyes ʿAli ibn Murra was utterly astounded to see a lovely country in front of him, with flowing water and green grass everywhere. The girl who, in the upper world, had possessed eyes of ordinary shape, now suddenly took on vertical eyes, but she was still beautiful in all other ways.

She took him to her father, to whom she told the whole story of how ʿAli had saved her from the wolf, and all about the camels that had all died except four. She told him also that her preserver now wanted to marry her and that she was willing to take him, provided she had her father’s consent. This her father readily gave, as did her brothers and the whole tribe of *jinún*, so grateful were they to ʿAli for having saved the life of their princess. For this in truth she was: the daughter of the shaikh of all the *jinún* who lived in those parts.

One condition alone they laid upon ʿAli ibn Murra: that never again should he say “B’ism Illah”, but always “B’ism al Jinún”; that if he ever invoked any sort of deity, whether in surprise or when taking food or on any other occasion, he must not say “In the name of God”, but “In the name of the Jinns”. They warned him that if he ever failed to obey this injunction a terrible thing would happen to him.

ʿAli ibn Murra was deeply in love, and so he agreed to this. The wedding was celebrated shortly afterwards with great rejoicing. Moreover, so indebted did the girl’s father and people feel to ʿAli that they waived any dowry payment.

For seven days after the nuptials, ʿAli lived with the *jinún*. He found that they lived as did men in the upper world, having camels, sheep and goats, and living in black hair tents. The only differences there seemed to be were that their eyes were placed vertically up and down, and not in horizontal line, and that their food was *māsak*—that is, cooked without salt.



# The Great Disaster

## Chap. III

After the seven days 'Ali was permitted to return with his bride to the upper world. When joyful farewells had been exchanged with her people she placed her hands tightly over his eyes and conducted him up in the same way as she had brought him down. To his unbounded delight he saw all round the mouth of the cavern forty hale and hearty camels, thirty-six of which were those that had sickened of the *jarab* and died. His lovely girl-wife shyly told him that this was her father's wedding gift to him. Turning towards her to express his gratitude he found that her eyes were now as he had first seen them and that she was as other women were, yet more beautiful than any woman in all the world.

As soon as 'Ali had recovered his wits, he took his wife and camels to Najrán, where lived his mother Murra, a woman of the noble Qahtán tribe. There he stayed in great happiness with his *jinníyah* wife, and in due course she bore him a beautiful girl baby.

Time went by until his daughter was seven years old. Everything was going prosperously with 'Ali ibn Murra. One day he had to go on a long, tiring journey in search of some strayed camels. He was away several days and returned home to his tent very weary from his exertions. It so happened that his wife had not seen him coming and was sitting with her back towards him as he drew aside the curtain of her portion of the tent and stood in the entrance gazing at her. The whole of her scalp was in her lap, and she was cleaning and combing the hair.

'Ali did not know that this was a common practice among the *jinníyah*, and the sight of her bald head so affected him that in his horror and astonishment he cried out "B'ism Illah!" Immediately there was a clap of thunder and a great flash of flame; the ground opened and his beloved wife, his tent and all his possessions disappeared in a cloud of smoke and dust down into the underworld. 'Ali saved himself by hurling himself backwards. He rushed to his daughter and clutched her in his arms, holding her tightly, so that she should not disappear also.

The girl grew up and married a young man who was a close relative of 'Ali's. She became the ancestress of the great Ál Murra tribe, which to-day numbers more than twenty thousand souls.

That was the story told to me by Muhammad ibn Sálím ibn Dráhim al Murri.

When a man of the *Ál Murra* is asked his name, as often as not he will link it with his mother's instead of his father's. He will reply, for example, "I am 'Ali ibn Núra", not, as any other Arab would say, "I am 'Ali ibn Marzúk". Various persons with whom I have discussed this have suggested that the reason for this is "protective"; that to give one's father's name to a comparative stranger or to an unknown person might be dangerous in a land where the blood feud runs. In my view a more likely reason is that the *Ál Murra* do this in memory of their great *jinníyah* ancestress.

The *Ál Murra* are, as I have mentioned, famed for their remarkable skill in tracking, and many are the stories told about this mysterious and uncanny gift of theirs. They are very proud of it and like to talk about it, making boast of what they can do. So clever are they that they can identify a man's son or a camel's calf, although they have never seen either, purely by knowing the footprints of the parent. This is common knowledge and quite simple, they say, claiming that their powers are inherited from the *jinníyah* and the spirits who inhabit the dark spaces under the earth.

The following are the sections of the *Ál Murra*:—

AL BAHAIH.—The shaikh is Al Sa'ag, and there are two sub-sections: the AL SIMRA and the AL SINAIT.

AL FAHAIDA.—The shaikh is Ibn Sharaim, and there are two sub-sections: the AL BUREID and the AL DAWÍYAH.

AL JÁBIR.—The shaikh is Al Jábir al Marád haf, also known as Ra'i Jabrín, indicating that he is the owner of Jabrín oasis.

AL MUHÁNNA.—The shaikh is Tálib al Muhánna.

AL NIGADÁN.—From this tribal group come most of the famous trackers of the *Ál Murra*. The paramount shaikh is Faisal ibn Nigadán, of the AL 'ADHIBA section, to which also belongs our friend, Muhammad ibn Sálím ibn Dráhim al Murri, who has supplied me with many details concerning the *Ál Murra*, including the names of the shaikhs mentioned in these paragraphs. The three other sections of the AL Nigadán are the AL GHAFARÁN, the AL GHIYÁTHÍN and the AL JARÁBA'AH.

In 1943 my wife and I were fortunate enough to meet Shaikh Muhammad ibn Sáléh abu Laila, the paramount shaikh of the AL Ghafarán section, who had come up with his sister, Núra, to buy supplies

## A Friendly Badawiyah

### Chap. III

in Kuwait. We visited them among the 'Ajmán tents on the main Shamíyah hill outside Kuwait, which is reserved as a summer camping ground for the Badu. As they were travelling light, Shaikh Muhammad and his sister had no tents, but an open camp with their goods and chattels surrounding them *zaríba* fashion. They called at our house next day and the girl showed great friendliness. She said she had never seen an Englishwoman or man before and showed some anxiety at being inside a house, fearing, she said, that the roof might fall in and crush her. She had only once seen a town before—Hufuf—but had not entered it. We found her a delight to talk to. About twenty-four years of age, simple, smiling and curious, she said she would like to stay with us always. She was far less nervous than many a Mutairi or 'Ajmán girl.

Her brother was also most interesting. As did Núra he spoke beautiful Arabic and was much easier to understand than the 'Ajmán and other more northern tribes. In discussing ancestry and the age of the Ál Murra, he gave, without a moment's hesitation, the names of twenty-two of his ancestors in their proper order. This brought him to the twelfth century approximately. He had forgotten the names of the others, he said. He agreed that the ancestor of the tribe was 'Ali ibn Murra (surnamed 'Ali al Káfir), but expressed the belief that the 'Ajmán were descended not from Yám, brother of 'Ali, but from Marzúk, Ali's son.

#### MUTAIR

With a fine tradition behind them the Mutair are one of the most distinguished tribes of Arabia. They fall into three main groups: the AL DUSHÁN, which is the ruling clan, the AL 'ILWAH and the AL BURAIH. For the most part they range from Kuwait in the north to the Dahana sand-belt in the south, keeping to the eastern side of the Batin and avoiding the country of the 'Ajmán and 'Awázim. The neighbourhood of Kuwait has always been one of their grazing areas. They breed mainly camels and horses. In warfare they are noted for their ability to launch surprise attacks from far-distant bases.

The Dushán group is divided not into sub-sections, but into branches of the Al Duwísh family. These, with their present heads, are as follows:—

- AL 'AMASH.—Muhammad ibn 'Amash Al Duwísh.
- AL SULTÁN.—Bandar ibn Faisal ibn Sultán Al Duwísh.
- AL MUHAMMAD.—Muhammad ibn Badr Al Duwísh.
- AL MÁJID.—'Abdul 'Azíz ibn 'Abdullah al Májid Al Duwísh.
- AL SHUQAIR.—Turahíb ibn Bandar al Shuqair Al Duwísh.
- AL FAHAD.—Májid al Asqa Al Duwísh.
- AL WATBÁN.—Muhammad ibn Bandar al Watbán Al Duwísh.

The common ancestry of these seven branches is shown on page 99.

The paramount shaikh of the Al Dushán, and of the whole Mutair also, is to-day Bandar ibn Faisal ibn Sultán Al Duwísh, son of the famous Faisal Al Duwísh. They are of the Al Sultán branch (see page 100). Intermarried with the Al Dushán are the Al Jaba'a family (see Qahtán, page 103).

Concerning the other branches, the tables on pages 101-2, from which all irrelevant names have been omitted, will prove useful in following the events that are to be recorded.

The second group of the Mutair, the Al 'Ilwah, is sub-divided into three main sections:—

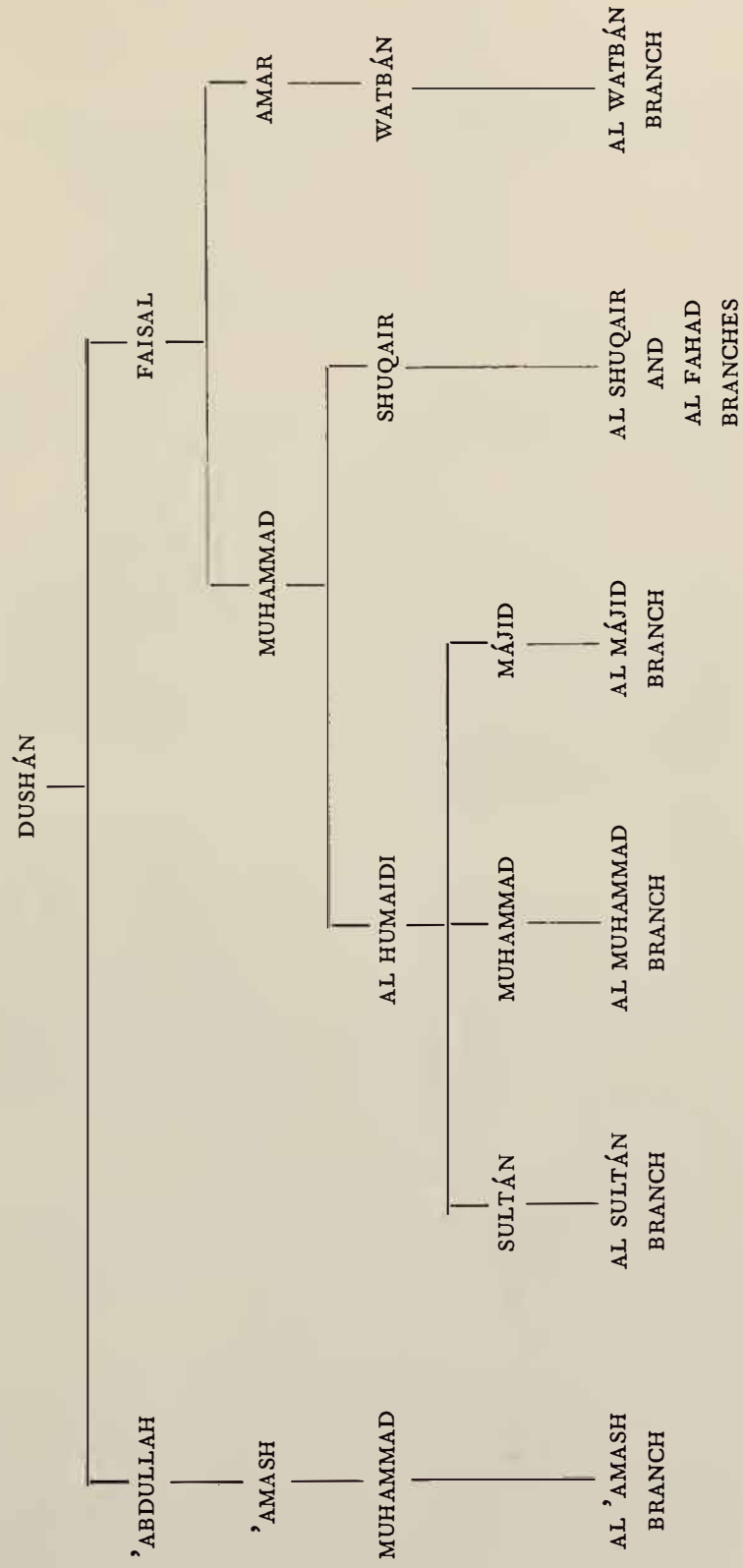
Al Muwahah.—Paramount shaikh, Bandar Al Duwísh. A sub-section are the AL RUKHMÁN (Shaikh ibn Jaribán).

Al Suhabba.—Paramount shaikh, Jufrán al Fuqm. An important sub-section are the AL DHAWÍ'AUN, who, I believe, originated with the Bani 'Abdillah. Ibn Jabrín is the shaikh of the Al Dhawí'aun, though some Badu advance the claims of others to the leadership.

Al Jiblán.—Paramount shaikh, Sáhúd ibn Lámi. A sub-section are the AL LIHÁYA (YAHYA). Faisal Al Shiblán, one of the Mutair leaders in the 'Ikhwán rebellion against Ibn Sa'ud in 1929-30, was shaikh of the Al Liháya. On his death his nephew Misyar became shaikh of this sub-section.

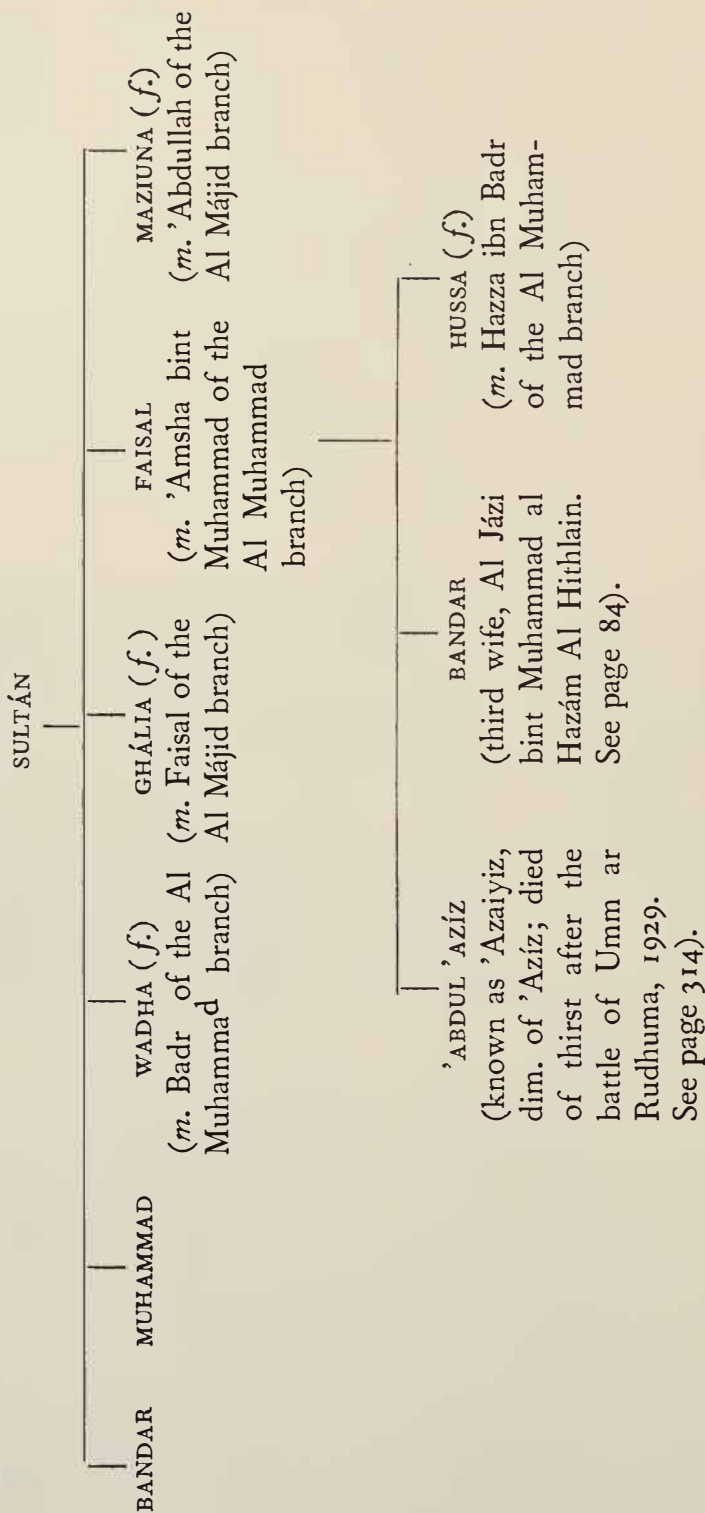
The third group, the Al Buraih, is also sub-divided into three sections: the 'AWLÁD WÁSIL (Shaikh ibn 'Ashwán), the 'AWLÁD 'ALI

AL DUWÍSH FAMILY

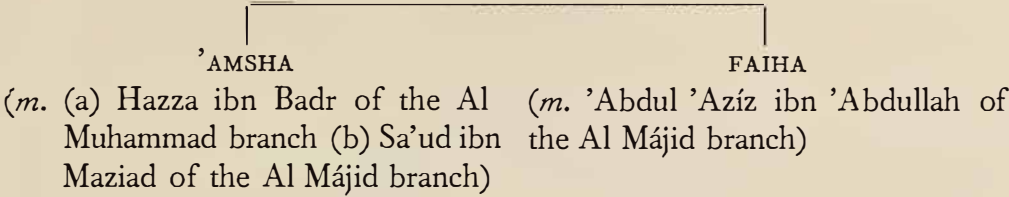




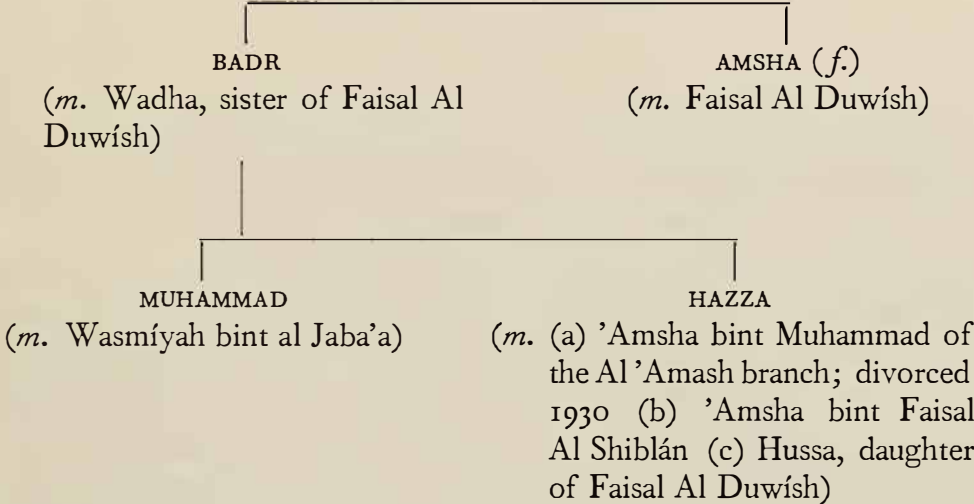
# AL SULTÁN BRANCH



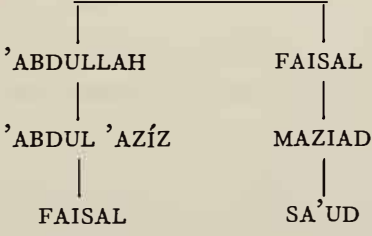
AL 'AMASH BRANCH



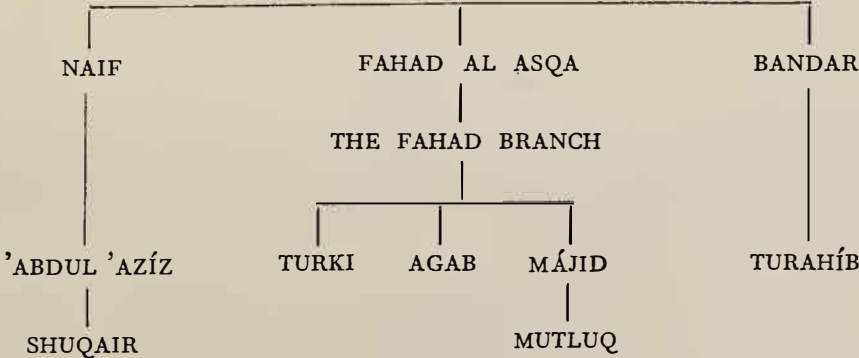
AL MUHAMMAD BRANCH



AL MÁJID BRANCH



AL SHUQAIR AND AL FAHAD BRANCHES



## AL WATBÁN BRANCH



and the BANI 'ABDILLAH. The 'Awlád Wásil share the same country as the majority of the Mutair, but the 'Awlád 'Ali keep to the south and west of the Dahana sand-belt, mostly in Qasím and towards Hijáz, while the Bani 'Abdillah confine themselves to inner Najd.

Among the sub-sections of the 'Awlád Wásil are the AL DIYAHfN, whose paramount shaikh is 'Aiyád al Muttragga, and the AL BIRZÁN, whose paramount shaikh is Ibn Shuwairibat. This notorious family have caused a great deal of trouble in their time. All the tribes of north-eastern Arabia regard as an infallible cure for rabies a coffee-cupful of the blood of a Birzání, so this sub-section of the Mutair are much sought after by those who have been bitten by mad dogs, wolves and the like, and are prepared to pay an obliging Birzání for the antidote. Other well-known sub-sections are the AL SU'RÁN (Shaikh ibn Busaiyyis) and the AL MUSÁMAH (Shaikh Sultán ibn Muhailib). The AL MAIMÚN are a sub-section of the Bani 'Abdillah. There are a number of claimants to the paramount shaikhship.

Two non-*sharíf* serf tribes of the Mutair are the AL RASHAIDA (Shaikh 'Ási ibn Musailim),\* who owe allegiance to Kuwait, and their cousins the AL HIRSHÁN.

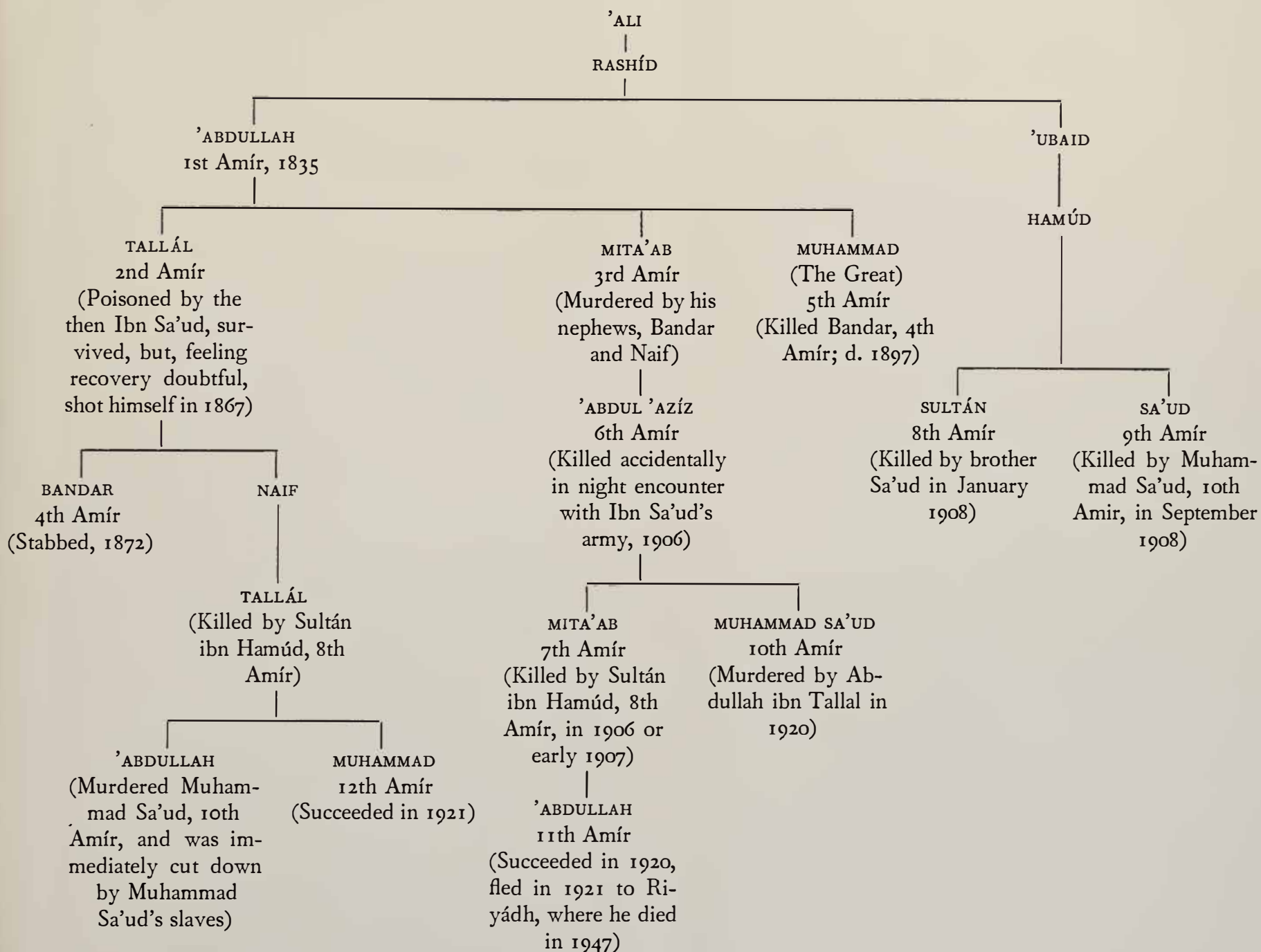
## AHL NAJRÁN

So called are the people of Najrán province, south-west Arabia. They were once tributary to the 'Imám of Yemen, but now come under King Sa'ud of Sa'udi Arabia.

\* Died in 1954.

# THE AL RASHÍD DYNASTY

FORMER RULERS OF HA'IL AND JABAL SHAMMAR







## Al Rashaida

### Chap. III

#### QAHTÁN

A *sharíf* tribe of south-west Arabia, from which is descended, through the Al Shammar (*q.v.*), the royal house of Al Rashíd, rulers of Ha'il and Jabal Shammar. The AL JABA'A family originate from the Qahtán. They settled many years ago with the Dushán (Mutair) and, being *asíl*, were given their women in marriage. Their leader to-day is Muhammad ibn Mutluq al Jaba'a.

#### QAWÁSIM

A *sharíf* tribe of the Trucial coast.

#### AL RASHAIDA

A non-*sharíf* serf tribe of the Mutair, owing allegiance to the Shaikh of Kuwait. They provide all the falconers for the royal court, while a number of others of the tribe are employed as *fidáwiyah*, paid tribal retainers of the ruler. There are fifteen sections of the Al Rashaida.

Closely allied to the Al Rashaida are their cousins the AL HIRSHÁN, of whom no separate mention is made.

#### AL RASHÍD

The Rashíd dynasty, former rulers and Amírs of Ha'il and Jabal Shammar, came from the Al Ja'afar sub-section of the Al 'Abdah section of the Shammar (*q.v.*). Before the rise of the first Amír, 'Abdullah ibn Rashíd, the Ibn 'Ali family, also of the Al Ja'afar sub-section, were in power, ruling in Ha'il as vassals of the Al Sa'ud, who were then paramount in central Arabia. Muhammad Al Rashíd, the twelfth Amír, is now prisoner in honourable captivity at King Sa'ud's court.

#### AL RASHÍD

A small tribe and people of southern Arabia, not to be confused with the above.

#### AL SABAH

Details of the descent of this ruling family of Kuwait have already been given in Chapter I. The family tree at the end of this book is

intended for the guidance of the reader, all irrelevant names being omitted.

SAHÚL

A *sharíf* tribe connected with the Sebei', its habitat Hasa and central Arabia.

SAI'AR

A tribe inhabiting the hinterland of Hadhramaut, southern Arabia. Our friend, Muhammad ibn Sálím ibn Dráhim al Murri, once told us that, where raiding is concerned, the Sai'ar are a notoriously bad tribe, but are afraid of the Ál Murra.

AL SA'UD

The rulers of Sa'udi Arabia, who, in the fifteenth century, were Amírs of Dhara'íyah, the old capital of Najd, belonged to the Masalíkh tribe of the 'Anizah, itself an offshoot of the Wulud 'Ali of western Najd, deriving through 'Adwán from Ishmael. According to their own account the Al Sa'ud originated from the Bani Bakr Wail through Mahanna ibn Rabi'ah, king of Najd, Hasa, Omán, etc., in the fifteenth century. The family tree at the end of this book is intended for the guidance of the reader, all irrelevant names being omitted. On the death of King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud on 9th November 1953 his eldest son, Sa'ud, became ruler of Sa'udi Arabia. Faisal, the second son, was proclaimed Crown Prince, prime minister and defence minister.

SEBEI' (OR SBEI')

A *sharíf* tribe of Hasa and central Arabia. See Bani Ka'ab.

SHAMMAR

A *sharíf* tribe of the northern part of central Arabia, around Ha'il and Jabal Shammar, and to-day owing allegiance to the king of Sa'udi Arabia. There are three sections: AL 'ABDAH, AL ASLAM and AL SINJÁRA. The royal house of Al Rashíd is descended, through the

## Al Za'ab

### Chap. III

Al 'Abdah section, from the Qahtán. All three sections of the Shammar claim similar descent from the Qahtán, but I was once told by Shaikh Dhaidán ibn 'Ugla, a senior shaikh of the Al Za'ab (q.v.), that it is only the Al 'Abdah section who can rightly pretend to such distinction (see Al Rashíd, page 103).

#### AL SUDAIRI

An important family of Najd. Its influence on the administration of the Sa'udi Government is shown on page 106.

#### SULUBBA

Though fine guides and hunters the Sulubba, said to be the descendants of the camp followers of the Crusaders, are much despised by the Badu of the desert. They are more properly a community than a tribe: menders of pots and pans, they maintain large permanent settlements outside the city walls of such places as Kuwait and Zubair. The women never veil and seldom wear a *milfah* over the lower part of the face.

#### 'UTAIBA

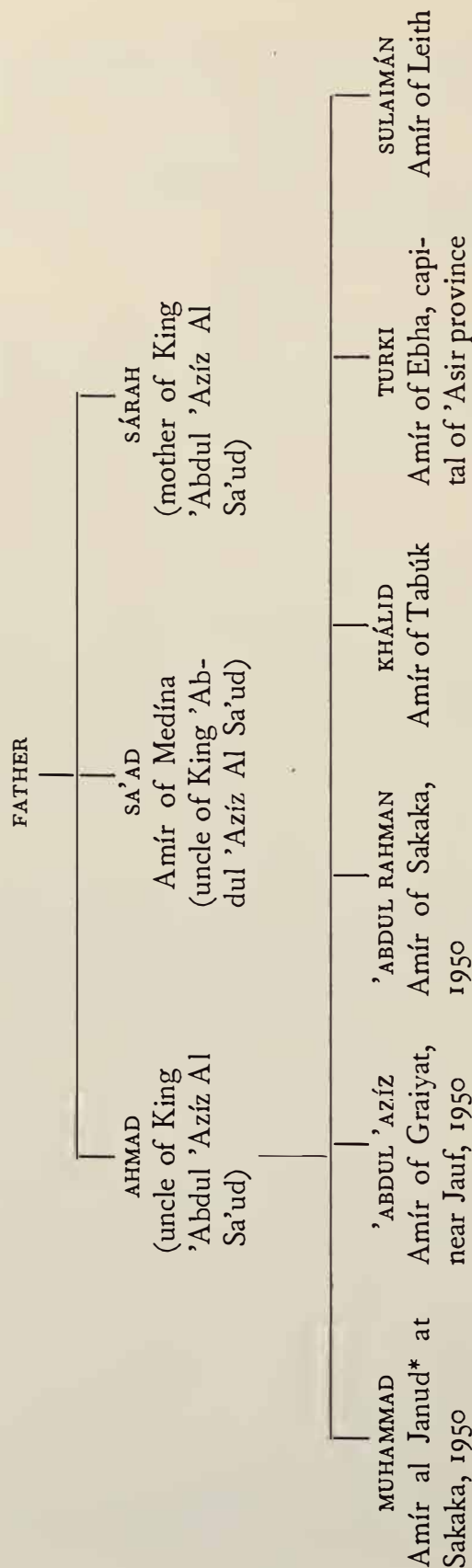
A great *sharíf* tribe of the western part of central Arabia. It has two main sections: the AL HUMAID and the AL RAUGA. The 'AMMÁR tribe was, at one time, a powerful section of the 'Utaiba.

#### AL ZA'AB (AND 'ADWÁN)

The Al Za'ab is a small *sharíf* tribe of no fixed abode, with the 'ADWÁN as a small sister tribe. They always go together and camp together. Shaikh Dhaidán ibn 'Ugla, a senior shaikh of the Al Za'ab sections in Hasa, once told me that the less important half, the 'Adwán, were once a very great tribe and, in the days of the Prophet Muhammad (Salla' 'Allah alaihi wa sallam),\* could muster a thousand horsemen, apart from camelry. They were a *sharíf* tribe of the 'Aráb al

\* "The peace and protection of God be upon him." Whenever an Arab mentions the name of the Prophet Muhammad, he uses the above expression after it. Similarly, after referring to Jesus Christ he will say "Alaihi 'as salámu". The proper Qur'anic rendering of the first expression is, "Salla' 'Illa'hu alai'hi wa salláman".

# THE AL SUDAIRI FAMILY



\* "Leader of the Camel Corps", which is based on Sakaka, near Jauf, for protecting the tapline from Hasa to Sidon.

## An Old Saying

### Chap. III

Musta' 'Áríba (descendants of Ishmael). To-day, he said, the Al Za'ab are scattered everywhere, members being found in parties of from five to thirty tents amongst almost every tribe in Arabia. They cannot unite owing to a curse put upon them by the Prophet because one of their number, on whom be perdition, stole the sandals of the Prophet and was caught out.

In alluding to the famous beauty of the Al Za'ab women, Shaikh Dhaidán quoted the old saying, "Never marry a Za'ab woman or ride an 'Umaníyah camel,\* for the first will spoil—that is, upset—your home, and the latter will spoil you for other camels".

\* A famous breed, found in Omán.





PART TWO  
WHICH IS MAINLY HISTORICAL

*La yuqadam al qaum, illa khiáriha*

(No one becomes the leader of the army,  
except he who is fitted to hold that position  
and so the best man)



## CHAPTER IV

# The Rise and Decline of Wahábiism, 1742—1893

*Birth of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb—Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud  
Becomes First Wahábi Amír of Najd—'Ali Pasha Invades Hasa—  
Opening of British Relations with Kuwait—Turkish Measures  
Against Najd—Najd a Province of Egypt—Faisal the Great—  
Third Occupation by the Turks—The Al Rashid Control Arabia*

Towards the end of the seventeenth century Najd and Arabia generally, with the exception of Omán, Yemen and the Hijáz, were divided into a number of independent districts or townships, each ruled, on the principles of self-government, by a tribal chief under Badawin protection. Religion, in all but its most primitive form, was almost forgotten among the townspeople and had practically ceased to exist among the tribesmen. In fact, according to William Gifford Palgrave,\* strange rites and superstitions, closely connected with Sabaeism, worship of the sun, moon and stars, which had held sway throughout Arabia in pre-Islámic days, still found favour, while circumcision and the sacred rites of marriage had become almost a dead letter.

In 1691 there was born at 'Ayaina, a small town in south 'Aridh, a province of Najd, a certain Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb. His father was of the Bani Tamím tribe, which, led by the house of Ibn 'Ali, held sway throughout Jabal Shammar at that time. When he grew to manhood Muhammad took up the trade of merchant, as many Najdis of to-day still do. His first commercial excursion took him to Basra† and Baghdad, which ultimately led him to Damascus, where he fell in with some of the learned and bigoted shaikhs of that town. These were all of the Sunni sect of Islám—some, like himself, of the Hanbali school, others of the Shafi' school—, opposed to the northern

\* *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, 1865.

† He is said also to have visited the Punjab in India before going to Basra, and to have come in contact with the founder of the Sikh warlike fraternity; but of this there is some doubt.

freethinkers, to the superstitious practices of the dervishes and the like, and to whatever else Persian and Turkish ideas had introduced everywhere in the East.

From Damascus, after completing a course of studies in religious laws, Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb made the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medína, then returned to his native country, where he married and settled down in the village of Hurilama, near Dhara'íyah, then capital of Najd. There and at 'Ayaina he began his teaching, the chief features of which were:—

1. The re-establishment of Muhammadan beliefs as taught by the Qur'án, and the rejection of those other beliefs accepted on tradition by the Sunnites.

2. A denial of all spiritual authority to the Ottoman or any other *khalífah*, and of any special respect paid to the Sharífs of Mecca, *seyeds* (descendants of the Prophet), saints, dervishes or other persons.

3. The restoration of discipline in the matter of prayer, fasting and the pilgrimage to Mecca.

4. A strict prohibition of wine, tobacco, games of chance, magic, silk and gold in dress, and of tombstones for the dead.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb was a man of great physical and intellectual vigour, and his experiences in Damascus had, as Palgrave puts it, "aided him to combine once for all, and to render precise, notions that he had long before, it seems, entertained in a floating and unsystematized condition". He had learned to distinguish between the essential elements of Islám and its accidental and recent admixtures, and had at last found himself in possession of what had been the primal view and starting-point of the Prophet and his first companions in the Hijáz, twelve centuries before.

It was in about the year 1742 that Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb succeeded in converting Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud, the ruler of 'Aridh. Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud belonged to the Masalíkh tribe of the 'Anizah, and when he adopted the tenets of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb he was followed by so many of the inhabitants of Dhara'íyah and the neighbouring districts that he became head of the reformed religion and, according to Wahábi pretensions, the head of all Islám.

Guided by the councils of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb, and carried forward on the wave of the new teaching, Muhammad Ibn



## Raids into Mesopotamia

### Chap. IV

Sa'ud gradually established his authority over all 'Aridh and eventually over the greater part of Najd, becoming in 1745 the first Wahábi Amír of that province. His hardest contests were with the people of Riyádh, who, under Shaikh Muhammad ibn Da'us, long held out, aided by the Ibn 'Ara'ir, the ruling family of the *sharíf* Bani Khálid. These last, who much resembled the Al Sa'dún of the Muntafiq confederation of Iraq, owned the districts of Hasa and Qatíf and, though forced to pay tribute, had always been hostile to the Al Sa'ud family and are clandestinely so to the present day. Another who was bitterly opposed to the new religion was the Amír's brother, Thana'iyán Ibn Sa'ud, whose descendants still belong to the anti-Wahábi faction in 'Aridh. It is interesting to note, however, that Ahmad ibn Thana'iyán, head of that branch of the Al Sa'ud family in 1919, visited London in that year with Faisal, son of 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud (Ibn Sa'ud), and was to the time of his death one of the principal supporters of that ruler.

Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud died in 1765 and was succeeded by his son, 'Abdul 'Azíz. Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb lived until 1787, when he died at an advanced age.

#### 'ALI PASHA INVADES HASA

The second Amír of Najd was a man of energy and ambition. Having completed the subjugation of Najd and Hasa he carried the Wahábi arms as far north as Basra and even into Iraq proper (then called Mesopotamia) which contained three *wilayets* of the Ottoman empire (Baghdad, Basra and Mosul), and formed part of Turkey in Asia. 'Abdul 'Azíz's raids into the Sinjar hills near Mosul in northern Iraq so alarmed the Ottoman Government that finally, in 1798, a Turkish expeditionary force was sent by land from Baghdad into Hasa, under the command of one 'Ali Pasha. Consisting of between four and five thousand regular infantry, with artillery and a large contingent of Badawin Arabs collected from the Muntafiq, Dhafir and other tribes hostile to the Wahábi power, it marched down the coast and took possession of the greater part of Hasa, but failed to reduce the capital, the fortified town of Hufuf.

Being compelled to retreat northwards again, 'Ali Pasha was intercepted by Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud, the Amír's son, who took

up a position near the wells of Tháj.\* A battle was imminent, but was averted at the last moment by the mediation of the local Badawin shaikhs, and 'Ali Pasha was allowed to withdraw to Basra unmolested. Sa'ud thereupon took possession of Hasa and punished those who had submitted to the Turks. The affair contributed much to the extension and renown of the Wahábi power, and offers of submission came in from all sides. Nevertheless, Amír 'Abdul 'Azíz thought it prudent to conciliate Baghdad, and dispatched valuable horses and presents to the Wáli, Sulaimán Pasha.

The Amír appears to have been a man of peace, simple in his dress and habits, and extremely devout. Sa'ud, on the other hand, was a warrior, and it was through him that the Wahábis pushed their fortunes. It is interesting to observe how exactly the characters of this father and son were reproduced in Amír 'Abdul Rahman and his son, the late King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud of modern times.

The Wahábi state had now become a regular government, with a centralized administration, a system of tax instead of tribute, and a standing army under the command of Sa'ud. There was, nevertheless, as there is to-day, a strong party of opposition in the desert, where the Badu clung to the traditions of their independence and chafed under the religious discipline imposed upon them. Qasím and Jabal Shammar, both centres of Badawin life, never accepted the Wahábi tenets with enthusiasm, while the people of Hasa, an industrious race standing in close commercial connexion with India and Persia, accepted the rule of the Al Sa'ud only on compulsion. South Najd alone seems to have been fanatically Wahábi, but this very fanaticism was its strength and carried all before it.

In 1799 Sa'ud made his first pilgrimage to Mecca at the head of four thousand armed followers, an act of piety that he repeated in 1800. About this time, passage through Najd to Mecca from the direction of either Bahrain or Baghdad was forbidden to pilgrims of the Shi'ah sect, which, being opposed to the Sunni, was regarded by the Wahábis as infidel. This aroused such a violent feeling against the Wahábis in Persia and Iraq, where most of the inhabitants were Shi'ah, that it ended in the assassination of 'Abdul 'Azíz by a Persian from Karbala.

\* The site of an ancient city in mid-Hasa and close to Sarrar, the summer headquarters of the 'Ajmán tribe. See page 473.

## Destruction of Tombs

### Chap. IV

Colonel Ross, late Resident, Bushire, gives 1803 as the date of this event, but the Al Sa'ud family put it at 1800, a date which accords better with other events. For example, in 1801 an expedition was dispatched against Omán under Sálím al Hark, one of Sa'ud's generals, and in the same year Sa'ud himself marched with twenty thousand men to the Euphrates and, on 29th April, sacked Karbala, whence, having put all the male inhabitants to the sword and razed the tomb of Husain, he returned with immense booty. The success of this attack, made in the name of a reformed Islám upon a town within the dominions of the Sultan, spread consternation throughout the Muslim world.

The islands of Bahrain were reduced to tribute in 1802, and the Wahábi power extended down the eastern coast as far as the Bátinah, on the Gulf of Omán, while several of the Omán tribes—notably the Qawásim of Rás al Khaima, Wahábis to this day—embraced the Wahábi faith and paid *zakát* to Amír Sa'ud.

In 1803 a quarrel arose with Ghálib, the Sharíf of Mecca. Sa'ud marched into Hijáz with a large army, reduced Ta'if and, on the 1st of May, entered Mecca, where he deposed Ghálib and appointed a Sharíf of his own. He did not, however, appear as an enemy, but as a pilgrim, and his troops were restrained from pillage. The only act of violence permitted was the demolition of the larger tombs in the town, so that, as they themselves said, "there did not remain an idol in that pure city". Sa'ud also abolished taxes and customs, destroyed all instruments for the use of tobacco, and the dwellings of those who sold hashish or lived in open immorality. Then he returned to Najd and received the submission of all central Arabia, including the holy city of Medína.

This may be considered the zenith of Wahábi power. Law and order prevailed under a central government, and, on his return to Dhara'íyah, Sa'ud promised strictest protection of life, property and commerce throughout his dominions. This state of affairs continued for several years.

#### OPENING OF BRITISH RELATIONS WITH KUWAIT

The recorded history of British relations with Kuwait had opened in 1775, during the reign of Shaikh 'Abdullah, father of Mariam, when,

on the investment of Basra by the Persians, the British desert mail from the Persian Gulf to Aleppo had been first dispatched from Kuwait, an arrangement that continued until 1779. In 1805 Shaikh 'Abdullah and the ruler of Zubara, the new state founded by the Al Khalífah on the western shore of the Qatar peninsula after they had left Kuwait, asked the British Government to guarantee them a safe retreat in Bahrain, in the event of their severing their connexion with the Wahábis, who, they represented, might otherwise force them to engage in depredations on British trade. Their proposals were not entertained.

Amír Sa'ud marched once more to the Euphrates in 1807 and laid siege to the walled town of Mashad 'Ali (or Najaf al Ashraf), but, failing to capture it, was forced to retreat. Two years later he collected an army of thirty thousand men, with the intention of attacking Baghdad, but, disturbances having broken out in Najd, he was obliged to abandon the plan. Instead he marched again on a pilgrimage to Mecca, whence he returned home via Medína, now annexed to his empire.

In Omán the Wahábi arms continued to gain ground. Their name appears to have first become known in India in connexion with piratical raids committed on the Indian Sea. This led to an expedition undertaken in 1809 by the British, in conjunction with the Sultan of Muscat, against Rás al Khaima, the Qawásim stronghold on the entrance to the Persian Gulf. An earnest offer by Shaikh 'Abdullah of Kuwait to assist in the operation was refused. The expedition was successful, resulting in the conclusion of a treaty binding the Qawásim to respect the flag and property of the British and to assist vessels touching on their coast.\*

Undeterred by these actions of the British, the Wahábis advanced next year to Matrah, a few miles distant from Muscat, and then to Bahrain, which was occupied and received a military governor named Ibn 'Ahfaisan. The fort built by him still stands, being used as police headquarters by His Highness Shaikh Salmán Al Khalífah, the present ruler of Bahrain. Sa'ud then invaded Iraq, and in 1811 his son 'Abdullah raided close to the suburbs of Baghdad, while Abu Nuqtah, a slave-

\* This treaty being subsequently broken, a second expedition was dispatched in 1819. Rás al Khaima was taken, and a new series of treaties made with the Qawásim and Trucial coast tribes. These have held ever since.



born general of the Amír's armies, invaded Syria and held Damascus to ransom. The city was saved by a combination of northern Badu under Ibn Sha'alan, shaikh of the Ruwala section of the 'Anizah, who defeated Abu Nuqtah on the river Orontes, a reverse that forced the Wahábi army to retire once more to Najd.

#### TURKISH MEASURES AGAINST NAJD

Notwithstanding this, it seemed probable that the new Arabian empire would extend its boundaries to the Mediterranean and the reformed religion of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Waháb to all the Arab race. The danger to orthodox Islám was now recognized.

The first appearance of the Turks in the Arabian peninsula had been in 1524, when Sultan Salím I, having conquered Egypt and usurped the khalífate held till then by the 'Abbásid dynasty, had taken military possession of the holy places, Mecca and Medína, and annexed Yemen to his dominions. Beyond the districts immediately bordering on the Red Sea, however, no part of Arabia proper had been claimed at any time by the Turks. In the following century a national insurrection had driven them even from there, so that, with the exception of the pilgrim roads from Damascus and Cairo, they had made no pretensions to being masters of the peninsula.

The Sunni subjects of Sultan Mahmúd II now reminded him that one of the claims on which his ancestors of the house of Othmán had rested their tenure to the khalífate had been that they had possessed the holy places of Mecca and Medína. Urged to recover these and assert his protectorate by force, Sultan Mahmúd resolved on serious measures against Najd. It is probable, indeed, that only the great interests at stake in Europe during the previous years of the century had delayed vigorous action. The invasion of Egypt by Napoleon and the resultant disorganization of the Turkish empire had contributed not a little to Wahábi successes. Now, however, Egypt was under the rule of the famous viceroy, Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, and to his vigorous hands the Sultan entrusted the duty of punishing the Al Sa'ud.

The absence of Amír Sa'ud's armies in the north gave a favourable opportunity to the Egyptian arms. A force of eight thousand men was dispatched to the Hijáz under Muhammad 'Ali's son, Tusún Pasha.



Mecca was occupied without resistance, but on advancing inland, Tusún was met by 'Abdullah Al Sa'ud, who defeated him in the desert, destroying half his army. Tusún could then do no more than hold his own in Mecca until relieved from Egypt.

Impatient and angry at his son's failure Muhammad 'Ali went in person to Mecca in 1813, seized the Sharíf, whom he suspected of Wahábiism, and sent him captive to Cairo. In the spring of 1814 Tusún Pasha was again entrusted with the command of an expedition destined for Najd. He was met between Ta'if and Turaba and defeated once more. While preparations were being made for the renewal of the campaign, there occurred in April of that year the death of Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud, that great Wahábi Amír. 'Abdullah, his recognized successor, was acknowledged without opposition to be chief of the Wahábi empire.

In January 1815, the year of Waterloo, Tusún Pasha inflicted the first serious defeat on the Wahábi army, an advantage that he quickly followed up by occupying Medína and advancing into Qasím, the northern province of Najd. Here he took possession of Rass, at that time the capital of the district, where he prepared for a further campaign.

'Abdullah Al Sa'ud, who had retired to the city of 'Anaiza, opened negotiations, which, to the astonishment of everyone, for he still had a powerful army, ended in his submission to Tusún Pasha. It is probable that his reason for yielding was that he felt his position in Najd to be insecure. Partly from fear and partly because of their invariable rule of following the strong men, the Bádia, people of the desert, had submitted to the Wahábi authority, yet they had never fully accepted it. Now many of them were joining the Turks, while among the town-dwelling Najdis the recent defeat of their master had completely destroyed confidence in his chance of winning.

Be that as it may, he accepted the following stringent terms:—

1. That he acknowledged the Sultan of Turkey as suzerain.
2. That he would give hostages for future conduct, even presenting himself in person in Constantinople if called upon to do so.
3. That he would deliver over Dhara'iyah, his capital, to a governor appointed by the Sultan.
4. That he would restore the jewels plundered from Medína on the occasion of his father's visit in 1809.

On these conditions, peace was concluded between 'Abdullah and Tusún Pasha. 'Abdullah gave the hostages required. He did not, however, hand over Dhara'íyah; on the contrary, he prepared for a siege. Nor did Muhammad 'Ali, when he learned that 'Abdullah refused to come to Egypt in person, nullify the peace.

Tusún\* was recalled and Ibrahím, his brother, then only twenty-six years of age, was appointed commander of the army in Arabia in his stead. A pretty story is told in connexion with this. It is said that Muhammad 'Ali, despairing of Tusún ever reaching the heart of Najd and crushing for ever the Wahábi power, was one day holding forth to this effect in his private apartments in Cairo. His generals and leaders were encouraging him not to give up, each offering to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion if only he were selected as leader. Muhammad 'Ali thereupon called for a large carpet and an apple. The carpet was spread on the floor and the apple placed in the centre.

“Now, gentlemen”, said Muhammad 'Ali, “the task of conquering Najd is of such difficulty that it resembles this apple in the middle of this carpet. The man who can seize the apple in his hand without treading on the carpet is the only man capable of conquering Najd.”

The story goes on to relate how general after general racked his brains for some way of reaching the apple, but retired discomfited, protesting against the ridiculousness of the test. Last of all arose young Ibrahím and asked to try his hand. Curious to see how his son† would solve the seemingly impossible problem he had set his generals, Muhammad 'Ali consented. Ibrahím stepped calmly forward and slowly began to roll up the carpet until the centre of it was reached and he was able to stretch out his hand and seize the apple. Muhammad 'Ali was so pleased that he at once appointed Ibrahím to the command of his armies.

At the head of a considerable force, Ibrahím Pasha left Egypt in September 1815 and proceeded to the scene of action. The first encounter with the Najdis seems to have taken place at Mawiyah, where 'Abdullah Al Sa'ud attacked the Egyptian army and suffered a signal defeat. On this occasion, Ibrahím Pasha put to death all prisoners taken. Then, with four thousand infantry and twelve hundred cavalry, besides contingents of the friendly Arab tribes of the Bani Khálid,

\* He died in 1816.

† Or adopted son.

Mutair, Harb, Sahúl and Sebei', he advanced against Rass, which had been evacuated by Tusún Pasha and was now held by a Wahábi garrison. Before this town Ibrahím suffered a serious check; after besieging it for three and a half months and losing three thousand men, he was obliged to abandon the siege, agreeing to an armistice instead.

Notwithstanding this, after masking Rass he continued his advance eastward on the town of 'Anaiza, while Amír 'Abdullah retired south to the town of Buraida. After six days' bombardment, the forts of 'Anaiza capitulated, whereupon the entire district of Qasím submitted to Ibrahím Pasha. 'Abdullah retired on Shaqra, capital of the province of Wushm. Ibrahím took Buraida, where he halted two months for reinforcements.

During this period the Pasha's policy was devoted to winning over from the Wahábi standard as many of the Najdis as he could. He did not forget the lesson of the carpet; he began, so to speak, to roll up the Najd tribes by a frank and open conduct that won the hearts of all. Strictest orders were issued against looting and ill-treatment of the inhabitants of Qasím; supplies for the troops were everywhere paid for in cash and at handsome rates. Arab fashion, Ibrahím held regular *mijlis*, when no visitor was ever allowed to go away empty-handed. Great and small were given presents according to their status. In this manner many of those who had remained faithful to the Al Sa'ud were detached. Among those soon won over was Faisal Al Duwísh, the then paramount shaikh of the Mutair, who, animated by an ancient grudge against the Al Sa'ud, was readily persuaded to join Ibrahím with the promise of being installed governor of Najd, a promise that the Pasha had no intention of fulfilling. Faisal is said to have been killed later by the Al Sa'ud for his treacherous conduct, which accounts for the age-long hostility of the Mutair tribe to the Al Sa'ud family.

Having received at Buraida reinforcements of men and guns, as well as provisions and ammunition, Ibrahím was able to continue his advance on Shaqra at the head of four thousand five hundred Turkish, Albanian and Moorish regulars, in addition to Arab contingents. About ten thousand camels accompanied the force, and the infantry rode two and two on camels. In the meantime, 'Abdullah Al Sa'ud had retired on his capital, Dhara'íyah, wasting the country behind him and sending surplus cattle and flocks to Hasa.

This was in the latter part of December 1817. In the following month, Ibrahim Pasha's forces appeared before Shaqra, which was regularly approached under the directions of a French engineer, M. Vaissiere. Shaqra capitulated on 22nd January. The lives of the garrison were spared, but they were disarmed and had to engage not to serve again against the Turko-Egyptian forces. Some months afterwards, when Dhara'iyah fell, Ibrahim caused the walls of Shaqra to be completely demolished.

'Abdullah Al Sa'ud now began to put Dhara'iyah in a state of defence. Before following him up, Ibrahim judged it advisable to turn aside from the direct route in order to take the town of Adh Dharma (pronounced locally Dhuruma). He encountered a spirited resistance, losing several men. In revenge for this, the male inhabitants were put to the sword, the town pillaged and destroyed, and the women given up to the brutality of the Turkish soldiery.

Detained by rains, it was March before Ibrahim Pasha reached Dhara'iyah, which town he invested in April with a force of five thousand five hundred horse and foot, and twelve guns, including two mortars and two howitzers. Shortly after, reinforcements and supplies reached the Turkish camp from Medina and Basra.

Siege operations were conducted for some time without any success to the Turko-Egyptian arms, and when, in the latter part of May, an explosion occurred by which the Pasha lost all his reserve ammunition, his position became extremely critical. Indeed, only the indomitable personal courage and splendid example of Ibrahim Pasha saved the army from disaster. The troops suffered much from dysentery and ophthalmia, and the forces of 'Abdullah thought to overcome the besiegers by a sortie in force. Their attack was repulsed and the opportunity lost, for soon after the sortie caravans with fresh supplies of ammunition and rations reached the Turkish camp. These were followed up by reinforcements of infantry and cavalry. On the top of this came the encouraging news of the approach of Khalil Pasha from Egypt, with a brigade of three thousand fresh troops.

Early in September, 'Abdullah Al Sa'ud sent a flag of truce to request an audience with Ibrahim Pasha. This was accorded. The Wahabi chief was kindly received, but was informed that the first and indispensable condition of peace was his personal attendance at Cairo. He



asked for twenty hours to think it over, which delay was granted, and at the expiration of the time he returned to the Pasha's camp and intimated his willingness to fulfil the conditions imposed, provided that Ibrahím guaranteed that his life would be spared. Ibrahím is reported to have replied that he had no authority to bind the Sultan and his viceroy, Muhammad 'Ali, but that he thought both were too generous to put him to death. To this day the Arabs of Najd maintain that the Pasha gave his plighted word that no harm would befall 'Abdullah. 'Abdullah then pleaded for his adherents and members of his family. His terms were conceded and a peace concluded.

The ill-starred Amír at once set out on his journey under a strong escort. On reaching Cairo he was courteously received by Muhammad 'Ali, who forwarded him to Constantinople with a strong appeal for pardon. Sultan Mahmúd was, however, implacable. 'Abdullah ibn Sa'ud Al Sa'ud, fourth Amír of Najd, was paraded through the streets for three days, then, with his companions in captivity, was publicly beheaded.

Thus ended the first epoch of the Wahábi rule in Najd.

#### NAJD A PROVINCE OF EGYPT

During the twenty-three years that followed the destruction of Dhara'íyah, Najd continued to be a province of Egypt, sometimes occupied by Egyptian troops, sometimes tributary only. 'Abdullah's brother, Mishári, became fifth Amír, under the nominal rule of Egypt.

When Ibrahím Pasha had first appeared in Najd he had earned general goodwill by his straightforward, manly and sympathetic conduct—especially so in Jabal Shammar, Qasím and Hasa, where he had been received rather as a deliverer from the Wahábi yoke than as a foreign conqueror. No Turkish army had previously been seen in central Arabia, and the Arabs of the interior, when not fanatically biased, had no special hatred of them. But after Ibrahím's departure the Turkish and Albanian troops soon excited by their cruelties the enmity of the people, and as early as 1822 a first massacre of a Turkish garrison occurred at Riyádh, the new capital of Najd (for Dhara'íyah was never rebuilt). This was followed in 1823 and 1824 by a successful rising of the Arabs under Turki ibn 'Abdullah Al Sa'ud, a cousin of



## Faisal the Great

### Chap. IV

Amír Mishári, and the re-establishment of the sovereignty of the family in 'Aridh. Turki seized Riyádh, drove out the Egyptian troops still remaining in Najd and, as leader of a popular movement against the foreigners, was recognized as Amír in place of Mishári by most of the tribes of central Arabia.

For ten years, 1824 to 1834, Turki consolidated his power in Najd, Hasa and even Omán, the whole Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf to Rás al Hadd acknowledging him and paying tribute. He, in his turn, wisely did the same to the Government of Egypt, which accorded countenance to his actions in Arabia. In 1834 he was assassinated by Mishári ibn Khálid, who was then killed by Turki's son, Faisal. Turki's murderer was the son of Khálid ibn Sa'ud Al Sa'ud, a brother of Mishári, the fifth Amír (now dead), and a claimant to the throne. Faisal, however, was acknowledged Amír in succession to his father.

#### FAISAL THE GREAT

In the year of his accession Faisal the Great—as he came to be known—neglected or refused to pay tribute to Egypt. Muhammad 'Ali Pasha sent a force under Jumail Bey to depose him and to establish Khálid on the throne. On the approach of Jumail's forces, Faisal fled to Hasa.

Supported by a portion of the people of 'Aridh and the forces of Khursid Pasha, Jumail's successor, Khálid usurped the throne. He was, however, soon set aside by the Egyptian commander, who once again established complete Egyptian rule throughout Najd. Faisal surrendered and was sent as prisoner to Cairo.

This second occupation of Najd by the Egyptians lasted only two years. Then most of the troops were recalled and Khálid Al Sa'ud was left as Wáli for the Turkish Government. In 1842 'Abdullah ibn Thana'iyán Al Sa'ud headed a revolt against Khálid, who, with his few remaining Egyptian troops, was ejected from Riyádh. 'Abdullah became ruler of Najd until the following year, when Faisal, escaping from prison in Cairo, reappeared in 'Aridh and was everywhere acknowledged as Amír in place of 'Abdullah.

From that date until Faisal's long reign of thirty-one years came to an end, neither the Egyptian Government nor the Turkish Govern-

ment exercised any authority whatsoever in Najd. Under him nearly all the former territories of the Wahábi empire were reoccupied. Jabal Shammar, which, on Ibrahím Pasha's invasion, had regained its independence under the Ibn 'Ali family of the Bani Tamím, was now once more nominally annexed to the Wahábi state. With Faisal's help, 'Abdullah ibn Rashíd of the 'Abdah section of the Shammar established himself in Ha'il and, paying tribute to Faisal, was acknowledged as Amír of all the Shammar. Only in Bahrain were Faisal's arms unsuccessful, and that owing to support given by England to the shaikhs of Bahrain.

For a description of life at Riyádh during Faisal's reign, one cannot do better than read Palgrave's *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, which recounts in vivid and truthful style his sojourn, disguised as a Syrian, in that capital, to which he came from Damascus. William Gifford Palgrave was one of the four brilliant sons of Sir Francis Palgrave; another was Francis Turner Palgrave, editor of *The Golden Treasury*. Jesuit missionary, ex-Indian Army officer, diplomat, William Gifford subsequently became minister to Uruguay.

In the last years of his life Faisal became blind and the management of affairs fell to his eldest son, 'Abdullah, who, by his fanaticism and cruelty, alienated the Badawin population from his standard and prepared matters for a third intervention on the part of the Turks. When Faisal died in 1865 the Wahábi state, which under him had regained much of its former power, was once more weakened by internal dissention. 'Abdullah, the eleventh Amír, was a strict Wahábi, while Sa'ud, the second son, held liberal opinions, national rather than religious. Each put himself at the head of a party: 'Abdullah at the head of the Hadhar (townsmen) of 'Aridh, Sa'ud at the head of the Bádia, Arabs of the desert. Muhammad, the third son, sided with 'Abdullah. For a while 'Abdullah and Sa'ud divided Faisal's inheritance between them, much as the Muntafiq in Iraq were later split into two factions after the death of Násir Pasha Al Sa'dún.

As is usual in such cases the brothers came eventually to blows. In 1871 Sa'ud forced 'Abdullah to flee from 'Aridh and established himself as sole Amír. Jabal Shammar and Qasím became completely independent, and Hasa refused to pay further tribute.

# The Turks Claim Arabia

## Chap. IV

With a few followers 'Abdullah made his way to Ha'il, where Mita'ab ibn 'Abdullah Al Rashid was ruling as third Amír of Shammar. Well received by Mita'ab, 'Abdullah got into touch from Ha'il with Midhat Pasha, governor-general of Iraq, at Baghdad.

### THIRD OCCUPATION BY THE TURKS

Before narrating the last episode of Arabian misfortune and Turkish annexation, I must explain briefly the views and pretensions of the Ottoman Sultans with regard to Arabia. Ibrahim Pasha's expedition in 1815 had been made not in assertion of a sovereign right, but as an act of chastisement and retaliation on a hostile sect. And once the Wahábi Government had been crushed, little care had been taken to retain Najd as a possession. At that time the Sultans had been far too much occupied with their position in Europe to indulge in dreams of conquest in Asia, and had been, from a military standpoint, too weak for enterprises not considered absolutely necessary. But at the close of the Crimean War in 1856 the Turkish Army, thanks to the English loan, had been thoroughly reorganized and equipped with arms of precision.

Finding himself in possession of unaccustomed power, Sultan 'Abdul 'Azíz, who ruled Turkey from 1861 to 1876, used it first for the reduction of the outlying provinces of the empire, which had shaken off his yoke, and next of those tribes on his borders that appeared easiest of conquest. The frontier lands of Syria and Kurdistan were thus brought back into subjection, the Euphrates and Tigris valleys, practically independent since the days of Tamerlane (1336-1405), were occupied in force, and Iraq was once more placed under the Turkish imperial system of tax and conscription.

With the opening of the Suez Canal, Arabia, till then accessible by land only, became for the first time within easy reach by sea of Constantinople. A sense of increased power born of full coffers, and an army ready and equipped for action, brought new dreams of conquest to the Ottoman Government. Sultan 'Abdul 'Azíz remembered what he and his predecessors had seemed to forget: that they were heirs to the Arabian khalífate. On this fact his ministers based a claim to all Arabia. The garrisons of Mecca and Hijáz were increased, an expedition

was sent against Yemen, while the great Midhat Pasha, a man of restless and ambitious temper, was appointed governor-general of Baghdad, with orders to watch his time for extending the Sultan's influence in any direction that might seem to him advisable.

Now the opportunity had come. Midhat Pasha readily responded to 'Abdullah Al Sa'ud's appeal. He issued at once a proclamation in which the sovereign power of the Sultan over Najd was assumed, and 'Abdullah was referred to as Qaimaqám of the province. Moreover, it was notified that a Turkish force would be dispatched from Baghdad "to restore order and to maintain the said Qaimaqám of that province against his rebellious brother".

After some opposition on the part of the Indian Government, which for many years had insisted on absolute peace being maintained in the Persian Gulf—a rule that had been agreed to by all the chiefs of the Arabian coast, including the people of Hasa and the Wahábi Government, and had been attended by excellent results—a military expedition was dispatched by sea from Basra to Hasa. It consisted of five thousand Turkish regulars under Hafiz Pasha, and disembarked at Qatíf in June 1871. 'Abdullah, in the meantime, had returned to Najd and, having collected a body of adherents, in union with the Qahtán, attacked Sa'ud from the west. He was defeated and took refuge in the Turkish camp. Dissention, nevertheless, broke out in Riyádh, which forced Sa'ud to take the field against 'Abdullah ibn Turki Al Sa'ud, son of the sixth Amír, at whose hands he suffered defeat and was, in his turn, forced to retire to Qatar.

The Turks had now occupied all the seaboard of Hasa and the inland fort and town of Hufuf, whence they entered into communication with 'Abdullah ibn Turki, whom they named Mudír of Riyádh, "pending the arrival there of 'Abdullah ibn Faisal"; but before the end of the year Midhat Pasha announced that, in consequence of a petition received by the Sultan from the principal inhabitants of Najd, the Al Sa'ud family had ceased to reign and that thenceforward the country would be administered by a Turkish governor. In the same announcement, Hafiz Pasha was appointed Mutasarrif of Najd. 'Abdullah, thus entirely put aside, fled from the Turkish camp to Riyádh.

Rauf Pasha, who had succeeded Midhat Pasha at Baghdad, opened



## Death of Amír Sa'ud

### Chap. IV

negotiations with Sa'ud in 1872 and induced him to send his younger brother, 'Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud, to Baghdad, where he was retained as prisoner. In the same year, Sa'ud returned to Riyádh and once more ejected his brother 'Abdullah, who retired to Kuwait, leaving Sa'ud in undisturbed possession.

All Turkish regular troops were withdrawn from Hasa in 1873. Bazi ibn 'Ara'ir al Khálid, Shaikh of the Bani Khálid and hereditary enemy of the Al Sa'ud, was left, with a garrison of *záptiehs* (mounted policemen) as Ottoman governor of the province.

In 1874 'Abdul Rahman Al Sa'ud, having been released from prison in Baghdad, raised a revolt in Hasa. He was joined by the Ál Murra, 'Ajmán and Bani Hájjir, with whom he marched on Hufuf and besieged Bazi there with his garrison, many of whom were slain. Thereupon the Turkish Wáli of Baghdad sent Násir Pasha Al Sa'dún, Wáli of Basra and paramount Shaikh of the Muntafiq,\* with a battalion of regulars by sea and a large force of Muntafiq Arabs by land, to occupy Hufuf.

At the news of Násir's approach, 'Abdul Rahman retired to Riyádh. Násir marched to Hufuf, relieved the hard-pressed garrison defending itself in the *kut* (fort) and gave the town to pillage. For several days the Turkish soldiery and their auxiliaries indulged in indiscriminate massacre and plunder of the inhabitants of the town, until even the Turkish officers remonstrated with Násir Pasha. He, however, refused to heed them, replying that stern measures were a necessity for example's sake.

Shortly after these events the Amír Sa'ud died at Riyádh, it has been said of poison, and in 1875 'Abdullah returned again to Najd, where he found 'Abdul Rahman established. After some disputing the brothers came to an amicable arrangement with respect to the chief power, 'Abdullah holding the title of Amír, 'Abdul Rahman becoming principal minister.

Midhat Pasha, who had risen to grand vizier in 1873, was instrumental in deposing Sultan 'Abdul 'Azíz of Turkey on 30th May 1876. Five days later, 'Abdul 'Azíz committed suicide by slashing his arms with a pair of scissors. On 31st August, his successor, Sultan Murád V, was certified insane. He was succeeded on the following day by Sultan 'Abdul Hamíd II, his brother.

\* For the history of the Muntafiq and the Al Sa'dún see Chapter VII.



The exact date is not on record, but in or about 1880 there was born at Riyádh the first son of 'Abdul Rahman Al Sa'ud. His full name was 'Abdul 'Azíz ibn 'Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud, and he was to become the great ruler known to the modern world as King Ibn Sa'ud.

In 1881 Midhat Pasha was accused by Sultan 'Abdul Hamíd II of murdering Sultan 'Abdul 'Azíz, was tried on the 28th June and condemned to death. Due to pressure brought to bear by Britain and other European Powers the sentence was commuted to banishment to Ta'if, near Mecca, where he was kept prisoner until he died violently on 6th April 1883.

#### THE AL RASHÍD CONTROL ARABIA

'Abdullah ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud was Amír of Najd in name only, his authority extending little beyond the walls of Riyádh and certainly not outside the province of 'Aridh. He died at Riyádh at the end of November 1889. Two years later 'Abdul Rahman seized the capital, where he was besieged by Muhammad Al Rashíd. After forty days Muhammad ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud, who seems to have accepted his younger brother's ascendancy, was sent out by 'Abdul Rahman to negotiate the terms of surrender with Ibn Rashíd.

With his four sons and the remainder of his family 'Abdul Rahman went into exile at Bahrain. In 1893 he applied to Shaikh Muhammad Al Sabah for permission to reside in Kuwait and, this being granted, moved with his family to that town. His brother Muhammad, who had played throughout a comparatively unimportant part, chiefly as mediator, in the family quarrels and the strife with the Al Rashíd, died without issue in about 1894.

Lady Anne Blunt, who accompanied her husband on his travels in Africa and Asia, wrote at the time:—

“The power of the Ibn Sa'ud family in Arabia might truly be considered to have come to an end and to have passed to the Al Rashíd of Ha'il. Everything that was truly national in thought and respectable in feeling began to group itself round Muhammad Al Rashíd, the great Amír of Ha'il and Jabal Shammar.”

The representatives of the Al Sa'ud family became mere puppets, while Rashídite governors took charge of all the important settlements in Qasím, Sudair, 'Aridh and Wushm.

## CHAPTER V

# Tales of My Grandfather

*The Siege of Plevna—Adventures in Africa—The Battle of Naḡib—  
Suicide of Sultan 'Abdul 'Azīz—Murder of Midhat Pasha*

My great-grandfather, John Dickson, a surgeon in the Royal Navy, was present with Nelson at the battles of Copenhagen and Trafalgar. After the Napoleonic wars he settled down in Tripoli, becoming principal physician to the hereditary Ottoman pashalic. He married Elizabeth, only daughter of Sir Archibald Dalzel, governor-general and commander-in-chief of Cape Coast Castle.

My grandfather, Edward Dalzel Dickson, M.D., M.R.C.P., was born in Tripoli, Barbary, on 29th November 1815. After a number of adventures, he spent some sixty years in Constantinople, partly as an officer in the Turkish Army Medical Corps, but mainly as physician to Her Britannic Majesty's Embassy there, during the latter part of which period he acted also as private physician to three Sultans: 'Abdul Majīd, 'Abdul 'Azīz and Murād V. He finished up as physician-in-chief to the British Embassy, and as president of the international board of doctors resident in the Turkish capital, which post he held until he retired and settled down to private life in Constantinople. He married three times. His first wife, Louisa Buena Parry Warrington, my grandmother, was also born in Tripoli and died there. Her father, Colonel Hanmer Warrington, formerly of the 4th Dragoon Guards, was Consul-General at Tripoli for many years. He was descended from Trevor Tudor, Lord of Hereford, ancestor of the royal house of Tudor.

I mention all this to show that my grandparents' background was North Africa, among Turks and Arabs, which accounts for much in my father's life—and in my own. Most of my father's was spent in the Levant Consular Service, especially in the Turkish province of Syria, which included Lebanon and Palestine. I, born in Beyrout on 4th February 1881, passed my young days in Damascus and Jerusalem,

where my father often used to regale us children with incidents in the remarkable career of my grandfather.

It was in 1899 that I had my first and only meeting with my grandfather. My father, John Dickson, was at that time H.B.M.'s Consul-General in Jerusalem, and the Turks occupied the land. Having left St Edward's School, Oxford, I took a trip out to Jerusalem with my cousin, Hilda Maltby, in order to see my parents and two sisters before I went up to Wadham College, Oxford. My grandfather had expressed the wish to see his only grandson, and it was agreed that we should come out via Marseilles, take a *Messagerie Maritime* steamer from there to Constantinople and subsequently continue the journey to Jerusalem. My trip was all arranged by my father, and I looked forward greatly to seeing the famous old man of whose adventures I had heard so much—alas, that he never published the story of his life.

Hilda and I reached Constantinople, where we were met by my grandfather and conducted to his house in Pera—a quaint old building, rather luxuriously furnished. My grandfather wore glasses and had white hair. His third wife, Irene, a Greek lady then about thirty years of age, was most kind to us. She knew little English, so Turkish was the language spoken in the house.

A great friend of my grandfather's was Osman Gházi Pasha, the famous defender of Plevna fortress during the second Russo-Turkish war. He dined twice with us during the week I spent there and it was wonderful to watch my grandfather talking to the aged Pasha and translating to me as they went along. I gathered from my grandfather that he also had taken part in the siege and had been present at Osman Gházi Pasha's final surrender to Czar Nicholas I, but as he had been physician to the British Embassy in 1876, when Sultan 'Abdul 'Azíz had committed suicide, it is difficult to reconcile the first story with the latter fact, unless he had been ordered by the British Ambassador to accompany Osman's army to Plevna, which is improbable. It is certainly true that his long friendship with Osman had begun at about that time.

Whether or not he had been present, my grandfather's description was vivid in the extreme. Russia had declared war on Turkey on 24th April 1877. Osman Ghazi Pasha threw himself with forty thousand

## A Week in Constantinople

### Chap. V

men into the village of Plevna, which lay right on the lines of communication of the Russian-cum-Roumanian army in its advance on Constantinople, which made it impossible for Czar Nicholas to continue until he had cleared the Turkish threat. Osman repulsed attack after attack of an enormously superior army for four whole months, which gave England and France the necessary time to come to Turkey's aid. My grandfather told also of Osman's final attempt to fight his way through the encircling enemy lines, and of his eventual capitulation on 10th December. Though sorely wounded he surrendered in person to Czar Nicholas, which magnanimous conqueror returned his sword with the words: "You have made a very gallant defence, and I return the sword of a brave man".

How my grandfather was allowed after the surrender to care for the countless Turkish wounded, and the final end of a short but desperate war, was all a delight to my young ears.

"Those were the days", said Osman Pasha, "when the Turkish soldiers, particularly the officer class, were really good. To-day they are going to Berlin in their dozens to study military matters, but do we find them benefited? I venture to say no. They learn to drink and gamble and lead fast lives, and have lost the grand old spirit of loyalty between officers and men, while there is no longer the old *esprit de corps* so evident in the Ottoman officer of olden times."

So, even in my grandfather's day, there were criticisms of the attempt to westernize the youth of oriental countries.

Every evening and much of every day of that week, my grandfather enthralled us with his reminiscences. He said that he had never written any of his life's story, as he had never had time, and it seemed to me that he knew he would never see me again and was anxious that I should know and record some of his wonderful experiences before he died.

He described how, after taking his medical degree in London and Edinburgh, he was bitten with the idea of writing up a treatise on the subject of slavery in Africa; how slaves were obtained in the interior of that continent and found their way to the markets of Turkey, Egypt, North Africa, Asia Minor and Arabia. He wanted to make a name for himself, for the Western world was awakening fast to the horrors of the slave trade, and the emancipation of slaves everywhere



was in the air. After his studies he returned to Tripoli with the intention of obtaining direct information on the subject.

To do this he joined an Arab slave-trading expedition and crossed the Sahara desert, quite unknown to Europeans of those days. After many months of hardship, intolerable heat and sandstorms, he and his companions reached Lake Chad, the great inland stretch of water lying far in the hinterland of Nigeria. In the archives of the Colonial Office I believe his name is recorded as having accomplished this great journey, and as having met certain British officials on the border of the lake, but of this I am not sure.

From Lake Chad he accompanied a second group of slave-traders and continued his journey far south into the Congo region and the land of the pygmies. Finally, after a three-year trek, he came out on the shores of the Indian Ocean, having seen the great Zambezi falls *en route*, and having joined up, in the process, with yet a third slave-trading band of Arabs, working up from the direction of Mombasa. The last part of the trip to Suez was done by dhow, crammed with slaves for the Egyptian market, he said.

"I got the material I was after", he told us, "but it took me three years of the hardest and most cruel of experiences that man could have endured. I brought out with me a pygmy man and eventually got him to Tripoli."

All this happened many years before Stanley met Livingstone in the interior of Africa and astonished the world with his story.

"Thirty years earlier", said my grandfather, "I refrained from telling the world I had been there—this for a variety of reasons, the main one being the upheaval I found existing in the Middle East and Turkey when I got back to Egypt and Tripoli."

Egypt had rebelled against Turkey. Muhammad 'Ali Pasha had declared his independence and, under his brilliant son, Ibrahim Pasha, his troops were on the march. Answering an urgent call by Sultan Mahmúd II for help and volunteers, my grandfather went to Constantinople and joined up as an officer in the Turkish Army Medical Corps. After many vicissitudes, he found himself, in the early part of 1839, under Hafiz Pasha, who had been given the task of checking Ibrahim Pasha's victorious northern advance towards Constantinople. My grandfather's tent companion and great friend





HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH SIR 'ABDULLAH AL SÁLIM AL SABAH WITH THE RULER OF  
QATAR, SHAIKH 'ALI IBN THÁNI  
During the latter's visit to Kuwait (1953)



HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH 'ABDULLAH AL MUBÁRAK  
AL SABAH, C.I.E.

Director-General of Public Security and Armed Forces, Kuwait State  
A dynamic personality

## Battle of Nazíb

### Chap. V

at the time was a young German junior captain of artillery named von Moltke.

By a series of masterly strokes, Ibrahim Pasha had occupied Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, and, having taken Aleppo and consolidated his gains, was preparing for a further move northward, when he was met by the Turkish army at Nazíb, close to the Euphrates and some seventy miles north-east of Aleppo.

As my grandfather said, Hafiz Pasha was an utterly incapable commander, who believed in astrology and other nonsense, and started manœuvring and counter-manœuvring until such time as the stars were propitious for him to give battle. This was terribly galling to the subordinate Turkish commanders, who prophesied disaster from the start.

The end came soon. After a series of brilliant manœuvres Ibrahim Pasha, outnumbered by the Turks by nearly two to one, suddenly delivered a lightning blow on the 24th June and utterly defeated them. The rout that followed was indescribable, said my grandfather. There was no thought of re-forming or holding a second line. The whole Turkish army sought safety in flight. It was *saufe qui peut* in every possible sense.

My grandfather fled the field with von Moltke and eventually found safety in an Armenian village. There von Moltke contracted typhoid fever, and my grandfather nursed him back to life through a long illness, so that he lived to command the German army that conquered France in 1870-1. In his letters to his sister, von Moltke made mention of the English doctor who had saved his life. I well remember my old grandfather laughing grimly and saying: "What would the French have given me to have let von Moltke die, far away in Turkish Armenia?"

Sultan Mahmúd died six days after the battle and was succeeded by 'Abdul Majíd. The situation had become so grave that the new Sultan appealed to England, France and even to Russia to save him from Egypt. This met with a quick response; a British and French army was landed at Beyrout, Damascus was occupied, and Ibrahim Pasha was brought to a halt. His line of communication had been cut and, good soldier that he was, he accepted the terms offered him and retired south to the Lebanon, which he was allowed to keep for a while.

Those were the days of the famous niece of Pitt, Lady Hester



Stanhope, who, from her home at Djoun, near Bait ud Dín, befriended many a Turkish and Albanian soldier, fugitive from earlier battles in Syria and Lebanon, and cared for them despite all the remonstrances of Ibrahim Pasha.

The suicide of Sultan 'Abdul 'Azíz in 1876 was described with much detail by my grandfather, as also was the great trial of Midhat Pasha in 1881, falsely accused by Sultan 'Abdul Hamíd of the murder of Sultan 'Abdul 'Azíz. My grandfather was one of the seventeen doctors called in to report on the cause of Abdul 'Azíz's death.

I quote from the *Life of Midhat Pasha*\* by his son, 'Ali Haidar Midhat:—

“... Orders being given to break into the room, they found 'Abdul 'Azíz sitting in the posture already described, and in a pool of blood flowing from two wounds in his arms, evidently caused by the scissors, which had fallen beside him on the floor. The physicians, who were hastily summoned, could only confirm the apprehension that life was extinct, and the Ministers, immediately apprised of the fact of the tragedy, ordered an immediate examination of the body to be made by all the available medical men in Constantinople, hastily summoned to draw up an official report on the subject. Seventeen men of all nationalities, comprising all the most distinguished in the city and in the Embassies of the Great Powers, signed a unanimous report to the effect that death was undoubtedly due to suicide. . . .”

When a report on Sultan Murád's mental condition was demanded, my grandfather was one of the six physicians—four from the Embassies of Britain, France, Germany and Austro-Hungary—who were called in. After an examination, they expressed the opinion “that even should the Sultan Murád after a long lapse of time, contrary to expectation, recover his intellectual faculties, these can never recover their normal condition”.

At 1.30 a.m. on 6th April 1883, on direct orders from Murád's successor, Sultan 'Abdul Hamíd, the great Midhat Pasha, together with his friend and fellow-prisoner, Damád Mahmúd Pasha, was strangled in his bedroom at Ta'if. The officer who carried out the order was one Major Bekir, of the 3rd Batt., 1st Regiment, i/c the distinguished prisoners.

\* John Murray, 1903.

## Midhat Pasha

### Chap. V

My grandfather told me that ever afterwards he refused to have anything to do with Sultan 'Abdul Hamíd, who was a *bad man* through and through. Before that my grandfather had always been private physician to the Sultans. On many occasions he had professionally attended Midhat Pasha, who had been his friend.

These were among the stories I heard from my grandfather and noted down at the time. He died on 27th March in the following year.



## CHAPTER VI

# Najd and Kuwait, 1896–1917

*Mubárák Seizes the Throne of Kuwait—Ibn Sa'ud Seizes Riyádh—British Ties with Kuwait Strengthened—Qasim Occupied—The Treasure of Israel—The American Arabian Mission—State Boundaries—The Birth of 'Ikhwánism—Ibn Sa'ud Conquers Hasa—Kuwait Joins the Allies—Ibn Sa'ud Supports Britain—Death of Shaikh Mubárák—A Leader for the 'Ikhwán—Husain Becomes King of the Hijáz*

### MUBÁRAK SEIZES THE THRONE OF KUWAIT

'Abdullah ibn Sabah Al Sabah, Shaikh of Kuwait from 1866 until his death in 1892, had accepted from the Turks in 1871 the title of Qaimaqám. His brother Muhammad, who succeeded him, was just as unwilling to oppose the Turks and, being weak and inefficient, virtually handed over control of his kingdom to a clever, unscrupulous Iraqi named Yusuf ibn 'Abdullah Al Ibrahím, who came from Daurah, a short distance below Abadan, on the right bank of the Shatt al Arab. Yusuf, a man of wealth in his native land, was pro-Turk and undoubtedly in their pay, hoping to see them one day depose the Al Sabah and place himself and his family in their place. Muhammad Al Sabah's full brother, Jarráh, was if anything a more helpless and slothful character than Muhammad himself, but their half-brother, young Mubárák, was a man of action, with a fanatical love for his country, which he saw being hastened to its ruin.

He endured this until 1896, then, in May of that year, slew his two half-brothers and seized the throne. The crafty Yusuf, against whom the *coup d'état* had been chiefly aimed, escaped by dhow and horse to Basra, where he at once started an intrigue with the Turks against Mubárák.

At first the attitude of the Turks towards the new Shaikh of Kuwait was one of benevolent neutrality. In January 1897, on the advice of Yusuf Al Ibrahím, they gratuitously appointed Mubárák their Qaimaqám of Kuwait, but he would have none of such honour, seeing

in the move a plot to get control of his country. In February the Turks went farther and sent a quarantine official to Kuwait, whereupon Mubárák asked for an interview with the British Political Resident, Persian Gulf, or an agent deputed by him. One of the Resident's assistants eventually arrived in Kuwait in September, and Mubárák intimated that he and his people would like to come under British protection to avoid annexation by the Turks. Her Majesty's Government did not accede to this request, which was repeated in the following year and met with the same result. In January 1899 Mubárák signed an agreement binding him and his successors not to alienate any part of his territory without the consent of the British Government, which, in its turn, undertook to support him and his successors and to accord them its good offices so long as they acted up to their obligations under the agreement.

In May of that year Shaikh Mubárák established a regular customs service at Kuwait, and began to realize an enhanced duty of five per cent *ad valorem* on all imports, including those from Turkish ports. When, in September, a Turkish harbour master arrived with five soldiers to take charge of the port, Shaikh Mubárák would not receive them and they had to return to Basra. In May 1900 Mubárák agreed to prohibit the importation and exportation of arms, and issued notification to that effect; all vessels suspected of carrying arms were liable to be searched, all arms found would be confiscated.

'Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud and his four sons were still living in exile at Kuwait as guests of Shaikh Mubárák, to whom is due the credit for the political training and pro-British leaning of 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud, the future ruler of Sa'udi Arabia. In the autumn of 1900 Mubárák led in the interests of the Al Sa'ud a remarkable incursion into the very heart of Arabia, where 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Rashíd, sixth Amír of Ha'il, was now paramount. Early in 1901 a severe engagement with the Al Rashíd forces took place at Saríf, near Buraida. Mubárák was defeated and two members of his family killed: his younger brother, Hamúd ibn Sabah Al Sabah, and Hamúd's eldest son, Sabah.

The seriousness of this new situation prompted Mubárák once again to approach the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf. Through the medium of the commander of H.M.S. *Sphinx* he requested the

British Government to assume a permanent protectorate over Kuwait as soon as possible. His application was again rejected.

#### IBN SA'UD SEIZES RIYÁDH

There came in 1901 an event that was to lead to the restoration of the Al Sa'ud dynasty in Najd and central Arabia. Intent on carving out a kingdom with the help of Shaikh Mubáarak, young 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud, just in his twenties, started off for Najd with only forty followers, among whom were his younger brother, Muhammad, and their kinsmen, 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi Al Sa'ud and 'Abdul 'Azíz ibn Musa'ad Al Sa'ud.\* Successfully evading a Rashídi force that attempted to cut them off in the Bátin, two hundred miles west of Kuwait, they came secretly to Riyádh, outside which they lay low among the palm groves for a couple of days.

The story of 'Abdul 'Azíz's seizure of the great fort in the centre of the town sounds almost like a fairy tale and shows better than anything else the character of that extraordinary man. He discovered that 'Ajlán, the Rashídite governor, had a wife whom he lodged in a house about fifty yards away from the fort, across an open square, and visited her for half an hour or so after morning prayers each day. With this knowledge, on the third night 'Abdul 'Azíz quietly entered the lady's house by way of the roof with twenty-three† of his forty men and, having reassured the inmates that nothing would happen to them if they remained silent, awaited the dawn.

Following his custom Governor 'Ajlán duly emerged from the fort. 'Abdul 'Azíz waited until he was half-way across the open square, then rushed out with his twenty-three men. Instead of standing, 'Ajlán fled back to the fort shouting that the wicket gate be opened. 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi flung at him a small spear he was carrying, but

\* To-day Sa'udi governor of Ha'il and Jabal Shammar. He and 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi were brothers, sons of Jilúwi Al Sa'ud, a younger brother of Faisal the Great, seventh Amír of Najd. In the Arab world, however, he is known as Ibn Musa'ad. 'Abdullah, his elder brother, was known in his lifetime as Ibn Jilúwi, a title now borne by his son Sa'ud ibn 'Abdullah al Jilúwi Al Sa'ud. Heads of families, etc., are often given the title *Ibn*, e.g. Ibn Sa'ud, Ibn Rashíd, or *Al*, e.g. Al Duwish.

† This number was given to me by Ibn Sa'ud himself in October 1937, by which time the only survivors were Ibn Sa'ud, his brother Muhammad, 'Abdul 'Azíz ibn Musa'ad and one old 'Ajmán tribesman.

## Death of 'Ajlán

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missed.\* The small wicket gate, which was only two feet high and two and a half feet from the ground, was opened, which allowed both pursued and pursuers to dive in. 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi caught 'Ajlán by the leg, brought him down just inside the gate and killed him. 'Abdul 'Azíz, following immediately behind, struck off 'Ajlán's head with his sword and threw it down over the fort wall shouting: "Who is on my side—who? Your own Amír is back again among you!"

With the gate held, 'Abdul 'Azíz called upon the garrison of the fort to surrender. This they did, and were followed by the inhabitants of Riyádh. 'Abdul 'Azíz was not slow to put the town in a state of defence, and when, a few days afterwards, Ibn Rashíd's forces appeared before it, they found it too strong for them and were compelled to withdraw, being successfully harried by 'Abdul 'Azíz right up to Qasím.

The news spread like wildfire throughout Najd, and all flocked to the Al Sa'ud standard. Old 'Abdul Rahman wisely stood aside and accepted his son as Amír.

One of the famous twenty-three said to me in March 1935:

"Ah, Abu Sa'ud,† those were great days, and it was worth a whole man's life to have seen them. I can even now see Ibn Sa'ud preparing for the sortie from 'Ajlán's lady's house, on the other side of the square. How cool and calm he was. He had discarded his 'aqál [head-cord] and tied his *kaffiyah* [headcloth] over his head and round his neck, and had followed it by carefully tying the long sleeves of his *dishdasha* round the back of his neck."

#### BRITISH TIES WITH KUWAIT STRENGTHENED

The *Zuhaf*, a Turkish sloop of war, arrived at Kuwait in December 1901 and delivered an ultimatum to Shaikh Mubárak, requiring him to receive a Turkish military detachment at Kuwait, or to leave his capital and go into retirement at Constantinople. Mubárak gave a polite but negative reply, and the *Zuhaf* was withdrawn. Towards the

\* The point of this spear, broken off and imbedded deep in the woodwork just to the right of the wicket gate, can be seen to this day.

† "Father of Sa'ud", a form of address used because our son bears that Muslim name (at the King's request at birth). Similarly my wife is known as Umm Sa'ud.

end of the same month, there was reason to believe that the intrigues of the ex-favourite, Yusuf ibn 'Abdullah Al Ibrahím, were about to bear fruit, for it became evident that a land attack on Kuwait was being planned, with a combination of a Turkish force from Basra and 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Rashíd's Shammar tribesmen from the direction of Ha'il. British naval forces in the Persian Gulf immediately made dispositions to co-operate in the defence of Kuwait—an action that successfully deterred Ibn Rashíd, who withdrew to his own part of the desert. Refusing to fight alone the Turks retired on Basra.

The most dangerous direct attack to which Mubárák was exposed was arranged for the autumn of 1902. Engineered, it is said, by Yusuf ibn 'Abdullah Al Ibrahím, its object was to seize Kuwait by a *coup de main*. Under Mubárák's nephew, Hamúd,\* son of Jarráh Al Sabah, whom Mubárák had killed on coming to the throne, a large body of the Sharaifát tribe and other Arabs embarked at Daurah, on the Shatt al Arab. The commander of H.M.S. *Lapwing* received news of the expedition at Fao on 3rd December and immediately hastened to Kuwait to give the alarm, but found the town already under arms.

Search for the enemy was made, at first without success; but on 5th December they were discovered landing men on Rás al 'Ajúzah, just east of the town. Two large sea-going *baghalas* containing a hundred and fifty riflemen were pursued by the armed boats of the *Lapwing*. After a sharp fight the *baghalas* and their contents, including stores, arms, ammunition and scaling-ladders, were captured. Other auxiliary craft to the number of fifteen fled up the Khor 'Abdullah and escaped.

The threatened invasion, as had been so in the days of the fair Mariam and the valiant Sálím of old, had come to naught.

The visit paid in November 1903 by Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, marked the consolidation of British influence in Kuwait, and placed in a clear light Shaikh Mubárák's cordial relations with the British Government. In 1904 Mubárák agreed not to allow any other government to establish a post office in his country. The appointment of a British Political Agent to Kuwait was authorized in June 1904, the first holder of the post arriving in August of the same year.

\* Still alive, and living in Kuwait with his two sons, who are married to-day to the daughters of Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir Al Sabah. Hamúd is a charming old man.



Mubárák agreed in 1907 to lease in perpetuity to the British Government for 60,000 rupees per annum a plot of land about two miles west of Kuwait, on the foreshore between Bandar ash Shuwaikh and the city. This provided an enclosed and safe anchorage, and there is little doubt that the move was made as a counter to the then proposed Berlin-Baghdad strategic railway, which was to be continued on to Basra and Kuwait as opportunity offered. The fortifying of the area leased, and the turning of Bandar ash Shuwaikh into a British naval base or coaling station, would have effectually given H.M. Government the control of the port of Kuwait, and brought the sea approaches to Rás al Kádharma, the site of the proposed railway terminus on the north side of Kuwait Bay, under effective gunfire.

In taking up this lease the British Government at the same time assured Shaikh Mubárák that it recognized that the state of Kuwait and its boundaries belonged to him and to his heirs after him, that all his arrangements, including customs, etc., would remain in his hands and in those of his heirs after him; and that the British Government would collect no customs dues in the leased area, or in any other lands that it might thereafter lease from him or his heirs after him. The British Government had the right to relinquish the lease at any time, and this was done in 1922, when the Turko-German danger died a natural death. Should history repeat itself, as it has a trick of doing, no doubt Great Britain will again remember the former danger and take precautionary measures in conjunction with her little ally, Kuwait.

#### QASÍM OCCUPIED

Acknowledged by all the southern provinces of Najd, Ibn Sa'ud had marched on Qasím in 1904 and, though forced to retire temporarily by a Turkish force under Ahmad Faizi Pasha, sent to help Ibn Rashíd, had successfully accomplished his purpose in 1906, when Ahmad Faizi had been compelled to retire on Medína. Sa'ad, Ibn Sa'ud's younger brother, had been placed in control of Qasím.

During a night encounter with Ibn Sa'ud's army in April 1906, Amír 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Rashíd had been accidentally killed. He had been succeeded by his eldest son, Mita'ab. The period of anarchy that had ensued in Ha'il can be seen from the Al Rashíd family tree facing

page 102. Ultimately, in 1908, Muhammad Sa'ud firmly established himself and remained ruler of Ha'il until 1920, when he was assassinated by 'Abdullah ibn Tallál Al Rashíd.

In 1910 Ibn Sa'ud had to face an external and internal danger. Certain pretenders, grandsons of his uncle Sa'ud and known as Al 'Aráfa ("The Recognized"), claiming the throne for the elder branch, raised a revolt in Kharj and Hariq. At the same time 'Abdullah, son of Husain, the Sharíf of Mecca, appeared in Qasím, professing to champion the rights of the 'Utaiba tribe, supposed to have been violated by Ibn Sa'ud. Sa'ad Al Sa'ud was made prisoner, but 'Abdullah, finding that Muhammad Sa'ud Al Rashíd, on whom he had counted, did not co-operate, retired again into Hijáz, but not before he had exacted a promise from Ibn Sa'ud to contribute four thousand pounds annually to the Meccan treasury, and allow Qasím to elect its own governors. Ibn Sa'ud, his tongue in his cheek, promised faithfully to abide by these conditions. Needless to say, neither promise was ever kept, on the plea that 'Abdullah had made the demand in the knowledge that the rebellion in south Najd had rendered it necessary for Ibn Sa'ud to come to terms.

On 'Abdullah's departure Ibn Sa'ud turned his attention to Kharj and Hariq and soon crushed the uprising, remorselessly pursuing the rebels from town to town of Najd, until nothing was left of them. He also revenged himself sternly on the 'Utaiba for calling in 'Abdullah—this on the excuse that they had harboured some of the rebels whom he had been pursuing.

After that time Ibn Sa'ud held Qasím to tribute, partly by direct subjection and partly by clever diplomacy. In the northern fortress of Buraida, lying on the road to Jabal Shammar, a strong force of troops is maintained to this day.

#### THE TREASURE OF ISRAEL

Having graduated at Wadham College, Oxford University, I was posted to the 1st Battalion Connaught Rangers (88th Foot) in Ireland in 1903, was transferred a year later to the 2nd Battalion (94th Foot) in India, and in 1908 joined the Indian Army (29th Lancers, Deccan Horse). In the year 1911 I got six months' leave and decided to spend

## Visit to Jerusalem

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the first part of it in England and the last two months with my mother and two sisters in Jerusalem, where they had continued to reside after my father's death in 1906. He was buried in the British cemetery on Mount Zion.

On my way home to England I reached Aden by P. & O. steamer in the middle of April 1911 and found waiting for me a cable from my mother, urging that I break my journey at Port Said and come up to Jerusalem, as there were happening there strange and important things that might have far-reaching consequences for her and my sisters.

I did as my mother wished. On arrival at Port Said I changed on to a khedivial boat, landed at Jaffa, and made my way up to Jerusalem by train. I found the family well. They were living in a house once occupied by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, situate just outside the compound gate of the Russian Consulate, which I remembered as a youngster, before I went to school in England.

The city of Jerusalem, however, was in an uproar and seething with excitement. On all side-streets barricades had been thrown up, Turkish troops were patrolling the old city and the main thoroughfares outside the town walls day and night, and a regular state of siege appeared to be the order.

It did not take me long to find out what all the bother was about, for my mother had many friends who were eager to tell me everything. Among these were an English Dominican father, a polished Greek priest who was teaching my sister his language, the resident canon of Christ's Church, and the family and staff of the bishop of St George's Cathedral. Last but not least was the local manager of Thos. Cook & Son, whose wonderful kindness to my mother and sisters in the difficult years following my father's death will never be forgotten.

All these charming folk explained that the cause of all the trouble was a certain Captain P—— (to give his name might cause distress, even after this long lapse of time) who, with a couple of other English adventurers, had lent their services and money to a Finnish savant named Dr Walter Juvelius, who had as his assistant a Swedish engineer called Melander. Dr Juvelius believed that he and Melander had discovered a secret cypher or message in the Book of Ezekiel, purporting to explain exactly where the treasure of Israel had been hidden by the priests of the temple before Jerusalem fell to the Baby-

lonian conquerors in 750 B.C., and purporting to show how this treasure could be found. The secret message was supposed also to show where lay the royal tombs of the Kings of Israel and Judah, and the tomb of David and Solomon, none of which had ever been found. The treasure, it was said, would include the Ark of the Covenant, the sword of Solomon, the throne of Solomon, the Tablets of the Law, three thousand targets of gold and so on; in all, a priceless find, valued at some fifty million pounds.

Through 1909 and 1910 the party had worked without attracting much attention, because their endeavours had taken them only outside the city walls, on the open slopes of Mount Ophel lying south-east of the old city. Those who had guessed what they were after had merely smiled and said they were mere amateurs and, as they were under the close surveillance of the Turkish authorities, could not get away with much. But when finally these adventurers—having spent large sums to no purpose—became desperate and invaded by night the holy precincts of the Mosque of Omar—ground sacred to Muslims, Jews and Christians alike—and were discovered in the act of excavating an ancient tunnel under the Dome of the Rock itself, then that was another matter altogether.

The storm broke in earnest, and there was very nearly a religious outbreak in Jerusalem that might easily have ended in the general killing of Christians and Jews, and certainly of Englishmen and women. That this did not happen must be put down to the strong garrison of Turkish troops that had been drafted into Jerusalem to maintain order during the celebration of Easter, the Passover and Nabi Musa, which all fell at the same time that year.

Captain P—— and his companions hurried to Jaffa, boarded their yacht and slipped away in the night.\*

After spending a month in Jerusalem I left to complete my leave in England.

### THE AMERICAN ARABIAN MISSION

1909 had seen the establishment in Kuwait of a branch of the American Arabian Mission of the Dutch Reformed Church. For the

\* A full account of Captain P——'s excavations and activities generally is to be found in *Our Jerusalem*, by Bertha Spafford Vester, a really splendid book published in England by Evans Brothers Ltd.



## First Impressions

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following description of it in 1912 I am indebted to Mrs Eleanor Taylor Calverley, M.D., now living in Hartland, Connecticut, and to the publishers of the *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association*, in which her article appeared in August 1950.

"How clearly I remember Kuwait", she writes, "as first I saw the town in January 1912! It was from the steamship which had brought us a two days' journey northward from the Bahrain Islands, off the East Coast of Arabia on the Persian Gulf. Three of us young missionaries—Dr Paul W. Harrison; my husband, a minister and teacher; and myself—after passing our second year's examinations in the Arabic language had been appointed to this, the newest station of the Arabian Mission. Standing there at the railings of the deck straining my eyes for the first sight of land—at last I saw it!

"Out of the desert on the horizon appeared a city of low houses the colour of sand. Above, the sky was very blue. Beneath, the blue water of the Persian Gulf was dotted with white sails. Beached along the shore a line of brown sail-boats awaited the season for pearl diving, then the chief industry of the place.\* In the whole picture was scarcely a tree or a patch of green. And yet Kuwait had a beauty of its own: a beauty of sand and sky and sea—that desert town where we hoped to live and work for many years to come.

"Soon we had gone ashore and were making our way through the unpaved streets. We had to stand aside to let camels pass, and donkeys, carrying dripping skins of the drinking water which had to be imported for this town where well water was too brackish to be drunk. The women we met were heavily veiled and draped from head to foot in black. Men, in their long cloaks and flowing head-coverings, looked like pictures of Old Testament patriarchs.

"One of the brown, bolted doors in the continuous clay wall of houses marked the entrance to the house which was to be our home and hospital. Like most other Arab houses it had no outside windows. Rooms opened upon two courtyards. The larger section we chose for Dr Harrison's medical work, with a few rooms reserved as a residence for us all. The smaller court offered the privacy essential for

\* Shaikh Mubarak had given in 1911 an undertaking to the British Government that he would not respond, without consulting the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, to overtures for pearling and sponge-fishing concessions in respect of the banks over which he possessed rights.



treating Muslim women. One of its two rooms we divided by a pink calico curtain into doctor's office and operating room. We spread straw matting in the other room and called it a ward. There were no bedsteads; but Arabs are accustomed to sleeping on the floor.

"Kuwait knew nothing of medical schools or women doctors. The town had its midwives and barbers, skilled in the use of cupping and cautery. There were both men and women who knew the use of herbs and other medicines. Sickness was divided in their understanding into the categories of 'hot' or 'cold' and 'moist' or 'dry', according to the ancient system of the Greeks. But these foreign 'Englez', after whom street urchins shouted derisively, who could trust himself to them? A few women, bolder than the rest, came to my dispensary, but some of these threw their medicine away, fearing it might be poison. My obstetrical bag was ready and waiting, but when—after several months—I was finally called to a case, it was only to be turned away at the door. Hostile midwives had persuaded the family not to let me in.

"Gradually, in spite of opposition, our clinics became larger. Trichiasis operations under local anaesthesia became popular for repairing the ravages of trachoma. A blind Bedouin woman from the desert was given her sight by an operation for cataract. But most of all it was Fulana's operation which enhanced our reputation. This patient had a disfiguring umbilical hernia as large as a grapefruit. 'Can you take it away', she asked, 'without causing any pain?'

"We had a set of surgical instruments. In the absence of an autoclave we boiled our dressings and used them wet. Before this operation we had a rehearsal with only the patient missing from the scene. My two helpers were the mother and sister of a Syrian employee of the Mission. The mother was taught to administer chloroform, using a Junker's inhaler. The sister and I scrubbed our hands for ten minutes by the clock and then soaked them in antiseptic solution. Laying out the instruments for the rehearsal I admonished my assistant not to touch anything except by my direction. The next day Fulana's husband sat outside the door to make sure that no man should enter and see his wife's face. And afterwards, when the operation was finished to everyone's satisfaction, an informer spread the news: 'What do you suppose the Doctor Lady did?' she challenged. 'Why, she cut Fulana open,

## Tribal Overlord

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took out her insides, carried them to the sea and washed them and then put them back again!’ ”

Later I shall take further opportunity to quote from Mrs Calverley's article. For the present, the following brief notes on sickness and disease can be included:—

Leprosy (*baras*) is almost non-existent in Arabia proper. In Kuwait there are only one or two known cases. In Iraq it is more common and there is a leper colony and hospital at Amárah on the Tigris, till recently run by the American Mission.

Lumbago (*barga*) is fairly common among elderly Badu. The only cure is rubbing with hot sheep's fat, but a woman whose first-born were twins and can be produced is supposed to effect a cure if she walks across the patient's back before he has eaten in the morning, each time placing one foot in the small of the back and using her weight on it. This is essential. If she can do the act for three days in succession, quicker results are obtained. In July 1940 I underwent this cure with some success.

The only remedy for paralysis (*fálej*) is the doctor, and the Badu appreciate this. Women relatives must be kept away from the patient.

#### STATE BOUNDARIES

The question of the status and territory of the Shaikh of Kuwait was the subject of negotiations between the British Government and the Sublime Porte in 1913. As a result the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 29th July 1913 was signed, but never ratified. By this agreement the autonomy of the Shaikh of Kuwait was recognized in an area, the boundary of which formed a semi-circle, with the town of Kuwait as centre, and the estuary of Khor Zubair where it joins the Khor 'Abdullah as the end of its radius to the north, and the hill of Qurain to the south, together with the islands of Warba, Bubiyan, Maskán, Failaka, 'Auha, Kubbar, Qaru, Maqta' and Umm al Maradim, and other adjacent islets.

It was further recognized that the Shaikh of Kuwait was the tribal overlord, and entitled to levy tribute over a larger area, the boundary of which started from the south side of Khor Zubair at its junction with the Khor 'Abdullah, and passed just to the south of Umm Qasr,

Safwan and Jabal Sanam, and on to the Batin valley. It then turned south-west and followed the Batin valley to the group of wells at Hafar al Batin, where it turned south-east to include the wells of Safa (Lisafa), Qara'ah, Haba and Wabrah, and the village of 'Nta, and joined the sea at Jabal Manifah.

The war with Turkey in 1914 prevented the ratification of this treaty.

#### THE BIRTH OF 'IKHWÁNISM

That remarkable religious revival, known by some as "the 'Ikhwán movement" and by others as "the new Wahábi menace", that swept across Arabia like a gigantic fire between 1914 and 1931, has already been written about or lectured upon by such well-known writers on Arabia as Philby, Rutter, Sir Fuad Hamza, Amín Riháni, Háfidh Wahbah and others.

To me the events connected with the movement, more especially the rebellion of the 'Ikhwán of 1929-30 and their final overthrow, were of poignant interest, for I lived on the borders of Wahábi land, with only one short break, for many years, keeping in close touch with every phase of the drama, imbibing much knowledge and inside information from the chief actor, His Majesty 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud, and also hearing much of deep interest and value from many prominent 'Ikhwán war-leaders after they had become rebels and gone out against their king. I thus got both sides of the story, particularly where the rebellion was concerned. Nor can I forget the testimony of the brave wives of many 'Ikhwán leaders who honoured my wife and myself with their confidence and friendship.

Though much has been written also about 'Ikhwán cruelty and frightfulness, I must record the opinion that this was carefully exaggerated to suit political ends at the time. I always had a sneaking admiration for the 'Ikhwán, this possibly because I was somewhat biased, having known a large number of them intimately, and possibly because there is a curious charm about men who are truthful, are earnest believers in one God, and, according to their lights, are out to cleanse religion of abuse. I confess that, once I got to know individual 'Ikhwán, I found very little difference between them and other good types of Badawin Arab elsewhere. They were just as fond of their

## Religious Leaders

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women, their children, their camels and their mares as others were, while their attractive ladies had the same delightful characteristics as one finds among their sisters all over Arabia if one genuinely cares to study them.

In a general sense 'Ikhwánism may be said to have been a revival of Wahábiism. It was, however, in no sense a heresy, but an aesthetic movement among Najdi Muslims to revive the Shafi' school of the Sunni, as taught by 'Imám Ahmad al Hanbali (780-855). It was started, as far as one can tell, by the religious divine Shaikh 'Abdul Karím al Maghrabi, at one time chief 'álim to the late Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún, Shaikh of the Muntafiq confederation. He later became 'álim to Miza'al Pasha Al Sa'dún, father of the present Ibrahím Beg Al Sa'dún. On leaving Miza'al Pasha's service he departed to Najd, where he ensconced himself as a religious teacher and reformer in the township of 'Irtáwíyah,\* then only a small nest of Wahábiism. There is a story that in the year 1899, when Miza'al Pasha went to Mecca, he returned via Najd and on his way visited 'Irtáwíyah. In place of a welcome, as he expected from his old friend, he was driven away by 'Abdul Karím, who cursed him for a *káfir* and a *mushrik*—an infidel and a polytheist.

Other well-known religious leaders who fanned the flame of 'Ikhwánism were 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdul Latíf ibn Abdul Waháb, Qádhi of Riyádh and a descendant of the founder of Wahábiism, and Shaikh 'Isa, Qádhi of Hasa.

The actual date of the revival is difficult to determine. Certain it is that before 1912 the word 'Ikhwán, in this particular sense as distinct from its literal meaning of "brothers", was almost unknown. Certain it is that the movement played no part in the recovery of Najd by 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud in 1901. Nor did Ibn Sa'ud have anything to do with the start of it. It was only after he recovered Hasa from the Turks that the 'Ikhwán first came under his notice. This he told me himself.

It was in 1914 that 'Ikhwánism took public shape in Najd. While the townspeople remained orthodox Wahábis the villagers and Badu joined the 'Ikhwán standard almost to a man.

Ibn Sa'ud's second great *coup*, the conquest of Hasa, came early in 1914. He had long coveted the province, firstly because it had formerly

\* British maps spell it 'Artawíyah.



belonged to Najd, and secondly because of its revenue, the need of which he was beginning to feel more and more. The Balkan war and internal and external dissensions, combined with the fact that his rebel relatives were sheltering in Hufuf, gave him the opportunity he desired. One dark night, having moved with fifteen hundred men on swift riding camels from Riyádh to Hufuf, he scaled the outer walls of the fort, which lay to the northern end of the town, and successfully forced the garrison—about a thousand Turkish infantry with guns—to surrender. Ten days later he took Qatif. The Turkish governor and garrison were permitted to march out with the honours of war. They were escorted to the port of 'Uqair. Some retired to Basra, others to Qatar.

#### KUWAIT JOINS THE ALLIES

On the outbreak of war with Turkey in 1914 Mubárák at once threw in his lot with the allies, though the act put him in immediate jeopardy with the Turks, for no British force had yet reached Mesopotamia. He was early given the task of seizing the Turkish frontier military posts of Safwan and Umm Qasr, as well as that situated on the south side of Bubiyan island. He was further instructed to threaten Basra from the land side and, if possible, take it and protect the lives and properties of all foreigners there.

Although he did not succeed in occupying Basra his presence with a large Badawin force in the hinterland created a most useful diversion and was of material assistance to General Sir Arthur Barrett and his army (I.E.F.“D”) when they landed opposite Abadan on the Shatt al Arab and advanced on Basra via the right-bank route.\*

As a reward for entering the war on the side of the British and for his useful military activities, His Majesty's Government gave him a written promise that, in the event of the Allies winning the war, which “God willing they would”:—

1. His five date gardens on the Shatt al Arab would be free of all taxes in perpetuity.
2. His title to such gardens would never be allowed to be challenged. (The Turks had tried for several years to deprive him of his title.)
3. He and his heirs and successors would be maintained as Shaikhs of Kuwait for all time by the British Government.

\* The writer was with this force, being attached to the 33rd Q.V.O. Light Cavalry, Indian Army.



With the occupation of Iraq by British forces and right up to the termination of the British mandatory period in Iraq, the British Government loyally carried out its undertakings in this respect. Unfortunately, with the granting of her independence Iraq refused to be bound by the British promises made to Shaikh Mubarak and, openly and by subtle underground methods, proceeded rigorously to tax the Shaikh's date gardens on the Shatt al Arab, to challenge his title in the law-courts, and to advocate, both in the press and by means of coffee-shop propaganda, the acquisition of Kuwait itself.

In other words, in spite of Great Britain's friendship and alliance, and in spite of the fact that she, Iraq, had received her independence as a free gift from her friend and ally, Iraq showed unworthy ingratitude and proceeded to act towards the small state of Kuwait and towards her benefactress as though she considered herself to be part of Turkey still, and was determined not only to place Great Britain in an embarrassing position with her small ally, but also to force her to lose prestige throughout the Middle East and more especially the Persian Gulf.

Fortunately the British Government, justly jealous of its good name, has not seen eye to eye with Iraq in this matter and has shown itself determined to uphold Britain's promises and keep faith.

#### IBN SA'UD SUPPORTS BRITAIN

The Political Agent in Kuwait in 1914 was Captain W. H. I. Shakespear. In November, while our troops were still at Saihan opposite Muhammerah, he visited Sir Percy Cox,\* then Chief Political Officer, I.E.F. "D", and Sir Arthur Barrett at Army headquarters and from them received orders to go into Najd and seek Ibn Sa'ud's help against the Turks. Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India, was due to visit Kuwait after seeing Basra and the troops there, so Shaikh Mubarak tried to dissuade Shakespear from leaving for Riyádh until Lord Hardinge had left Kuwait. This Shakespear declined to do and started off on his mission before the arrival of the Viceroy.

Ibn Sa'ud promised active assistance and forthwith embarked on military operations against Ibn Rashíd, who had entered the war on the side of the Turks. The rival forces met in January 1915 at Majma'a

\* Political Resident in the Persian Gulf since 1904; K.C.I.E., 1911.

(more commonly called Jaráb) in Sudair. The battle that ensued should have been won by Ibn Sa'ud. As it was, the 'Ajmán tribe holding his left wing played him false and quitted the field without fighting, so that the result was a drawn battle. Captain Shakespear was killed while helping to man one of the Najdi guns.

Shaikh Mubárah, who had been trying previously to get Ibn Sa'ud to come in and pay his respects to the Viceroy, was later able to say: "I told you so. You would not take my advice, and not only failed to see the Viceroy, but you lost a battle and made me lose my Political Agent."

Apart from concluding a treaty of friendship with Ibn Sa'ud, the British Government gave up for the time being the idea of further co-operation with him.

In the summer of 1915 Sharíf Husain of Mecca sent his son 'Abdullah, later king of Transjordan, with a considerable force, ostensibly to mediate between Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashíd and, at the same time, to enforce the pact of 1910, especially its financial clause. A peace was patched up, but not observed, and 'Abdullah retired leaving much sourness behind.

#### DEATH OF SHAIKH MUBÁRAH

There followed in November a rebellion of the 'Ajmán in Hasa. In attempting to put it down Ibn Sa'ud suffered a reverse and found himself beleaguered in the town of Hufuf. Shaikh Mubárah showed his loyal and deep interest in the affairs of his young and vigorous neighbour by sending an army to assist him. The Kuwait force, with which went two future rulers of Kuwait, Shaikh Sálím, Mubárah's second son, and Shaikh Ahmad, Mubárah's grandson, was entirely successful in its object. After raising the siege, it co-operated with Ibn Sa'ud's forces and beat the 'Ajmán concentration at the battle of Ridha, near Qatíf. Then, having agreed to give asylum to the beaten 'Ajmán—a gesture highly distasteful to the ambitious and warlike Ibn Sa'ud, and the beginning of the long feud that later existed between that ruler and Shaikh Sálím of Kuwait—it made back for Kuwait.

The triumphant army was still three marches from the capital when it received the news of the sudden death of Mubárah and of the accession of his eldest son, Jábir.

## A Warning

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Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India, who had visited Kuwait in the previous February, sent Jábir a letter congratulating him on his succession and assuring him that, so long as he acted up to existing arrangements with the British Government he could expect the same support as had been enjoyed by his father.

It was the great Mubárák who really raised Kuwait from a place of little importance to a flourishing principality. Under his strong rule it had become, to the Arab mind, a most attractive place to live in, and the population of the town had nearly doubled itself. Of his devotion to the British Government it is difficult to speak too highly.

Shaikh Jábir was a debonair and pleasant young man, whose mildness and affability were to make him a popular ruler during his short reign of little more than a year.

#### A LEADER FOR THE 'IKHWÁN

In late 1915 or early 1916 Ibn Sa'ud found that 'Ikhwánism was definitely gaining control of affairs in Najd. He saw that he had to make one of two decisions: either to be a temporal ruler and crush 'Ikhwánism, or to become the spiritual head of this new Wahábiism. Probably in the first place he had thought to make use of it to strengthen his position, but in the end he was compelled to accept its doctrines and become its leader, lest he should go under himself. Men say that, by adopting this course, he received a most serious warning from 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi Al Sa'ud, Amír of Hasa, not to have anything to do with the movement, which 'Abdullah likened to a devouring fire. There can be no doubt, however, that Ibn Sa'ud enormously increased his power, welding together the many disruptive and hostile elements that had existed in Najd from time immemorial.

Now that he had adopted 'Ikhwánism Ibn Sa'ud appreciated that it was vital to get the members of the new cult under proper control. There was the danger of their running amuck in the direction of both Hijáz and Iraq. Accordingly he issued his famous order of 1916, by which all Badawin tribes of Arabia must, whether they liked it or not, join the 'Ikhwán movement and pay him *zakát* as their recognized 'Imám. If they failed to obey they would be attacked.

The method of converting a tribe that was of itself not anxious to

become of the elect seems to have been as follows: Ibn Sa'ud would send for the shaikh and tell him in blunt terms that he and his tribe had no religion and were all *jahl* (ignorant). He next ordered the shaikh to attend the local school of '*ulema*,'\* which was attached to the great mosque at Riyádh, and there undergo a course of instruction in religion. Except that they were somewhat more forceful the tenets differed little from those of the old-fashioned and orthodox Wahábiism.

An *akh* (brother) was required to put before everything else these two things:—

- (a) Worship of one God.
- (b) Brotherhood among all true believers.

Under (a) the articles of faith were:—

1. To believe in the indivisibility of God.
2. To give *zakát*.
3. To keep the Ramadhán fast.
4. To pray five times a day.
5. To make the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca.

Under (b) the articles of faith were:—

1. To love one's country.
2. To give implicit obedience to the 'Imám (Ibn Sa'ud).
3. To give help to one's brother *akh*, whether in financial or other difficulty.

A man should always say, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet", but it was forbidden to think of or use the name of Muhammad as an interceder with God. God was all that mattered; Muhammad was only a man who gave God's injunctions to the faithful, may peace and blessing be upon him. He was dead and gone and had no further significance except, of course, that his name should be spoken with reverence always and his memory kept alive out of gratitude.

To couple with God any other name—Husain, Hassan, etc.—was an abominable sin and to do it was to be a *mushrik* (polytheist). Such an offender was a *káfir* and his possessions, his life, his women were *haldál*.† The Shi'ah came under this category. *Nidhr* (the offering of

\* Plural of '*álim*.

† Lawful, in the sense that anyone was permitted to take them.

vows), as commonly practised among the Shi'ah and some few Sunni, was also a deadly sin. Hence the duty of the 'Ikhwán was always to destroy these when found.

Smoking tobacco was a major sin, as was, too, the smoking of hashish, opium, etc. In the early days of the movement, if a good *akh* saw a man smoking, he would assault and probably kill him. Throughout Ibn Sa'ud's kingdom, smoking was officially banned—and still is to-day, except in Hasa, where the Shi'ah population may smoke in private. The drinking of alcohol was also forbidden and was treated in the same way as smoking of tobacco. The wearing of silk and gold ornaments was forbidden—and forbidden, too, was the cutting off of the moustache and beard, except as ordained by the Prophet. Gambling, telling fortunes and dabbling in magic were considered accursed.

*Zakát* required every subject to give annually to the 'Imám a fortieth of all he possessed. Under the rules laid down in the holy Qur'án (9: 60), the 'Imám distributed the money so received in eight directions: the poor; the needy; those in debt; captives; the wayfarer; officials appointed to collect and expend *zakát*; those whose hearers were inclined to truth; and the way of Allah.

If an *akh* lost his livestock by raid, diseases, etc., or was in financial difficulties, he had only to inform his companions, who would at once "pass round the hat" and collect the money necessary to set him on his feet again, or pay off his debt.

That was the 'Ikhwán creed.

Whilst the shaikh of a tribe was undergoing instruction in Riyádh, half a dozen '*ulema*, attended by some ultra-fanatical 'Ikhwán leader such as Faisal Al Duwísh, paramount shaikh of the Mutair, would be sent off to the tribe itself. These touring '*ulema* were, of course, carefully selected by Ibn Sa'ud for their loyalty to himself, and part of the teaching they gave was that the 'Ikhwán—and they only—were now the true Muslims, and that the rest of Islám were *káfirs* and heretics. They held daily classes, teaching the people all about Islám in its original simplicity and as expounded by the Prophet. Wonderful ideas were inculcated regarding the 'Imám, Ibn Sa'ud, who in future would be the people's father, spiritual leader and shaikh all in one. Much enthusiasm would be thus aroused in the tribe. The *muta'dai-*



*yanin*\* were told that they were now members of the new brotherhood, and so the name 'Ikhwán was perpetuated.

The teachers insisted that all new converts should wear as a sign a white turban, instead of the 'aqál, over their head-dress. Simplicity of living and clothing was *de rigueur*, with the result that most 'Ikhwán presented a most ragged appearance. Salaams were not to be returned, except to another *akh*. If a group of 'Ikhwán met in the streets of a town a European or an Arab from Iraq or one of the coastal states of the Persian Gulf, they were supposed to cover their faces with both hands, rather than be polluted by the sight.†

When the shaikh of the tribe was considered to have received sufficient religious instruction, he—especially if he was a powerful person—was given a house in Riyádh and invited to remain in attendance on the 'Imám. This again was part of the control system. Should Ibn Sa'ud desire at any time to mobilize his 'Ikhwán forces, he merely had to give the word to his bodyguard and entourage of shaikhs, and inside ninety-six hours the countryside was in a flame—or so it was said. Nor could the individual shaikh ever go home to his tribe, except with the permission of the 'Imám, which was not often granted.

Much importance was attached to prayer during the instruction of a tribe, and it became part of the 'Ikhwán creed that men should always pray together with their rifles laid out in a long line in front of them, ready for instant use. The effect was remarkable. At the call to prayers one heard men shouting, "Arise, lazy ones! Get up and pray". A group was then formed, a leader appointed, rifles laid on the sand muzzle to butt in a dressed line, and prayers recited in regular military style. When the number was large the sight could be quite impressive. More than once I have watched Ibn Sa'ud's bodyguard of anything up to three hundred men saying their devotions in congregation, and

\* The God-fearing; those who have been converted.

† These habits were most noticeable when I was in Hasa in 1920 and again in 1932. My Sunni companions from Kuwait and Bahrain regularly salaamed to any 'Ikhwán they met in the desert and in Hufuf, but only once did I hear the answer, "Wa 'alaikum as salá'am"—"And on you be peace". On several occasions in Hufuf in 1920 faces were covered at my approach. Once, even, when I entered Ibn Sa'ud's *mijlis* itself, a number of 'Ikhwán shaikhs got up and left in a body, all being careful to cover their faces from me. I could hear them muttering curses on me, even though I was the guest of their 'Imám.

## Recognition of Husain

### Chap. VI

have been struck by the semi-military precision of their movements. Nor did Ibn Sa'ud or any of the 'Ikhwán show the least sign of disapproval when I photographed such gatherings. I suppose they felt pride in the new order of things and, actor-like, thought my photographs would be good propaganda.

Forcible proselytizing was an article of faith with the 'Ikhwán in the early days of the movement, their methods causing much consternation among the people of the Hijáz and neighbouring countries. It is on record that when they first found their way to Hufuf they set upon and beat any woman they found in the streets, and shot in cold blood a number of citizens whose only crime was that they were seen smoking cigarettes. Ibn Sa'ud and 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi had summarily to execute several of the over-fanatical before they could bring the others to their senses.

Needless to say, the order of 1916 resulted in much fighting, particularly with the 'Ajmán of Hasa. Indeed, it can be said with truth that during 1916 and 1917 Ibn Sa'ud was engaged in one long and continuous series of wars with tribes that had no enthusiasm for 'Ikhwánism. Rarely was he able to visit Riyádh for a much-needed rest.

#### HUSAIN BECOMES KING OF THE HIJÁZ

Husain, Sharíf of Mecca, repudiated Ottoman rule in July 1916, proclaimed the independence of Arabia and threw in his lot with the Allies against the Turks. He captured Yanbo, the port of Medína, in the same month, and in October proclaimed himself King of the Arab countries. This was not acceptable to the Allies, who, however, recognized him as King of the Hijáz.

Ibn Sa'ud viewed these moves with growing apprehension, but took no immediate action against Husain, or against the hereditary enemies of his house, the Al Rashíd.

## CHAPTER VII

# Suq Ash Shuyúkh, 1915–1916

*Arab Tribes of Southern Iraq—Bani 'Ísad (or 'Asad)—Dhafir—Muntafiq—Cultivator and Marsh Tribes—Shepherd Tribes—The Al Sa'dún Family—I Take Charge of Suq ash Shuyúkh—Muhammad al'Ayail Whitens My Face—A Wise Adviser—The Mudhif—Civic Reception—Rough Justice—Qásid al Náhi Pays Blood Money—The Muffled Horseman*

For a while we must leave Arabia proper and turn our attention to Iraq, in which I served for some years under Sir Percy Cox, at that time head of the Political Department in southern Iraq.

It is as well to begin with some notes on the Arab population on the lower Euphrates, notably Suq ash Shuyúkh and Nasiríyah, where my work first took me.

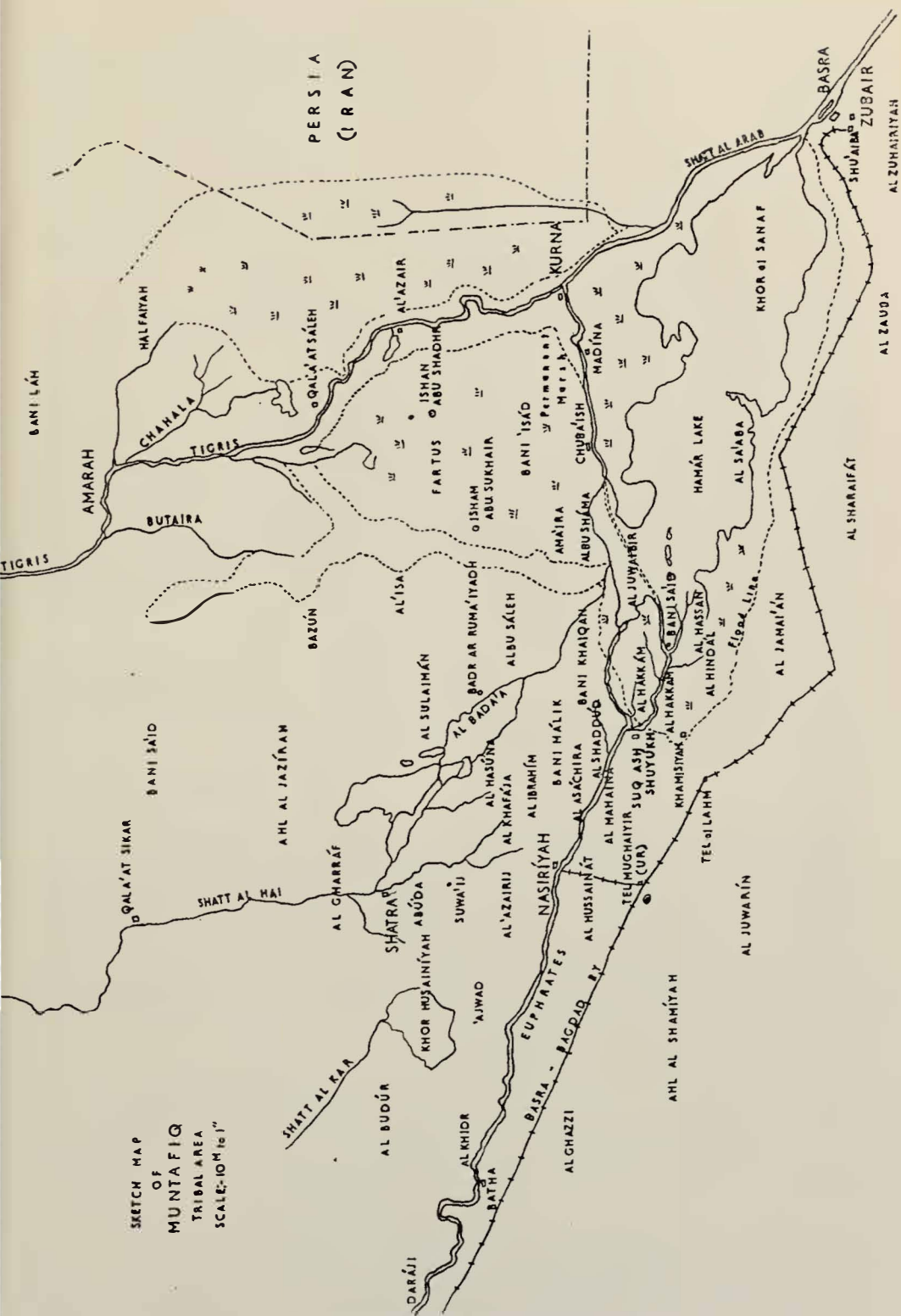
### BANI 'ÍSAD (OR 'ASAD)

A powerful non-Muntafiq marsh tribe of southern Iraq. The shaikh is Sálím al Khayún, with headquarters at Chuba'ish.

### DHAFÍR

A *sharíf* desert tribe; its habitat between Samáwah and Zubair, south of the Euphrates. It has numerous sections (e.g. BANI HUSAIN and AL 'ARAIIF), the name meaning "collection of oddments" and deriving from the same root as *dhafar*, to plait, which was exactly how the tribe originally formed, growing out of a collection of small desert units. The Dhafir have become famous among desert tribes for the way in which they protect and defend their *qusara* (tent-neighbours), of whatever tribe they may be, and even though this entails the punishment of their own kin. A Dhafir shaikh once caused his own son to be slain in his presence because the impetuous youth had killed his *qasir* in the heat of a foolish quarrel.

The shaikhly house is Al Suwait, the present paramount shaikh 'Ajaimi al Suwait.



## MUNTAFIQ

The league of Iraqi tribes that is known as the Muntafiq confederation occupied both banks of the southern Euphrates, in the areas of the Hamár Lake, Shatra, Qala'at Sikar, Nasiríyah and the little town of Suq ash Shuyúkh. There are three main divisions with no closer link than a common acceptance of the paramount authority of the Al Sa'dún family. The divisions, which are not tribes but merely groups, are the 'AJWAD, the BANI MÁLIK, and the BANI SA'ID.

The last of these, the BANI SA'ID, is the smallest and most compact, lying in the desert region between the Tigris near the town of Amárah and the Shatt al Hai at Shatra. The 'AJWAD are the least cohesive, inhabiting the Al Gharráf, which is the name given to the cultivated area or region lying on both banks of the Shatt al Hai, and inhabiting also the country on both banks of the Euphrates, above and below Nasiríyah. They are semi-settled cultivators and semi-nomadic owners of flocks. Their leading shaikhly family are the Al Mannáh, the paramount shaikh to-day being Faisal al Zámil al Mannáh.

The principal tribes included in the 'AJWAD division are:—

AL 'ABÚDA.—A powerful cultivator tribe of the Al Gharráf area, close to Shatra town. The shaikh is Khayún al 'Ubaid.

AL 'AZAIRIJ.—A cultivator tribe in the area between Shatra and Nasiríyah. The shaikh is Muhammad al Qata al Buti.

AL GHAZZI.—A powerful cultivator tribe on the right bank of the Euphrates between Batha and Nasiríyah. The shaikh is Muhammad al Habaiyib. A small section of the Al Ghazzi are the AL GHALÍDH.

AL HASÚNA.—A tribe of *seyed* cultivators lying between Shatra and Nasiríyah. The shaikhs are Seyed Hamud ibn 'Abdul Husain and Seyed Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Husain.

AL HUSSAINÁT.—A cultivator tribe on the right bank of the Euphrates opposite Nasiríyah. The shaikh is 'Ajíl al Khadhairi.

AL IBRAHÍM.—A cultivator tribe lying east of the Al Hasúna. The shaikhs are Balhul al Cha'id and Jabbar al Mutashar.

AL KHAFAJA.—A powerful cultivator tribe of the Al Gharráf area, between Shatra and Nasiríyah. The shaikh is Saqbán al 'Ali.

AL MAHAINA.—A small cultivator tribe on the right bank of the Euphrates opposite 'Asáchira. The shaikh is Gaitan al 'Ajíl al Chuwaiyid.



The third division of the Muntafiq, the BANI MÁLIK (pronounced Málich), are Ma'adán\* in origin and live in the delta formed by the Euphrates as it enters the Hamár Lake. The Albu Sáleh (see below) with their shaikhs are considered to be the head tribe of the Bani Málik.

The principal tribes included in the BANI MÁLIK division are:—

AL 'ASÁCHIRA.—A cultivator tribe of the Suq ash Shuyúkh area, left bank of the Euphrates. The shaikh is Sibrú al Dúghi.

AL HAKKÁM (HATCHÁM).—A cultivator tribe on both sides of the main channel of the Euphrates, near Suq ash Shuyúkh. It is a strong tribe, giving great trouble to the Turks in olden days, and had, at one time, four senior shaikhs, Haji Mizbán, Qásid al Náhi, Farhúd al Fandi and Haji Násir al 'Ayail, whose story has its place in later pages. The paramount shaikh on the right bank of the Euphrates is to-day Mizhir al Qásid al Náhi; on the left bank, Farhúd al Fandi. The ALBU HUMAIDI are a sub-section of the Al Hakkám.

AL HASSAN.—A marsh tribe of the Suq ash Shuyúkh delta area. The paramount shaikh to-day is Hamúda ibn Muza'al al Bishára. The Al Hassan living on the right bank of the river have as shaikh Muraihi al Faisal al Yásir, but he is under Hamúda ibn Muza'al al Bishára.

AL JUWAIBIR.—A marsh tribe west of the Hamár Lake. The shaikh is Hátim al Mauzan.

BANI KHAIQAN.—A marsh tribe of the Suq ash Shuyúkh delta area. The shaikh to-day is Haji Chuwaiyid al Mughash Ghash, brother of the late Farhúd al Mughash Ghash.

AL NOÁSHI.—A small marsh tribe near Suq ash Shuyúkh.

ALBU SÁLEH.—A strong tribe north of the Hamár Lake, partly cultivators and partly marshmen. The paramount shaikh of this head tribe of the Bani Málik was once Badr ar Ruma'iyadh, the leader to-day being Mehsin ar Ruma'iyadh. A sub-section of the Albu Sáleh are the AL SULAIMÁN under Shaikh Muhammad al Nasrulla.

AL SHADDÚD.—A small cultivator tribe of the Suq ash Shuyúkh area, left bank of the Euphrates.

ALBU SHÁMA.—A marsh tribe north of the Hamár Lake.

Forming part of the Muntafiq confederation is a powerful group of migratory or shepherd tribes that, during winter and spring, move

\* Name given to the marsh tribes of Iraq.

down to Kuwait and the southern border of Iraq, where it touches Sa'udi Arabia. Chief of these are the following, those claiming *sharíf* extraction being followed by (s):—

AL 'ABÁDA	Bani Málik
AL 'AUNÁN (s)	'Ajwad
AL BUDÚR (s)	'Ajwad
AL GHALÍDH (AL GHAZZI)	'Ajwad
AL HINDÁL (s)	Bani Málik
AL JUMAI'ÁN	Bani Málik
AL JUWARÍN (s)	Bani Málik
AL RUFAI'AT (s)	'Ajwad
AL SHARAIFÁT	'Ajwad
AL ZAIYÁD	A Samáwah tribe
AL ZAUBA (s)	Of Shammar extraction
AL ZUHAIRIYAH	A Zubair tribe

There are three general names applicable to the Arab tribes of Iraq. They are:—

AHL AL JAZÍRAH ("People of the Island").—A general name given to the tribes inhabiting the area between the Tigris and the Euphrates, from Mosul down to the Persian Gulf.

AHL AL SHAMÍYAH ("People of the Shamíyah").—A general name given to the tribes of the Suq ash Shuyúkh area, residing on the right bank of the Euphrates between Nasiríyah and Suq ash Shuyúkh.

AL MUJARRAH.—A general name given to the tribes of the Suq ash Shuyúkh area, residing on the right bank of the Euphrates between Suq ash Shuyúkh and the Hamár Lake.

The womenfolk of these Muntafiq tribes all go unveiled, their faces, arms and ankles being heavily decorated with tattoo patterns.

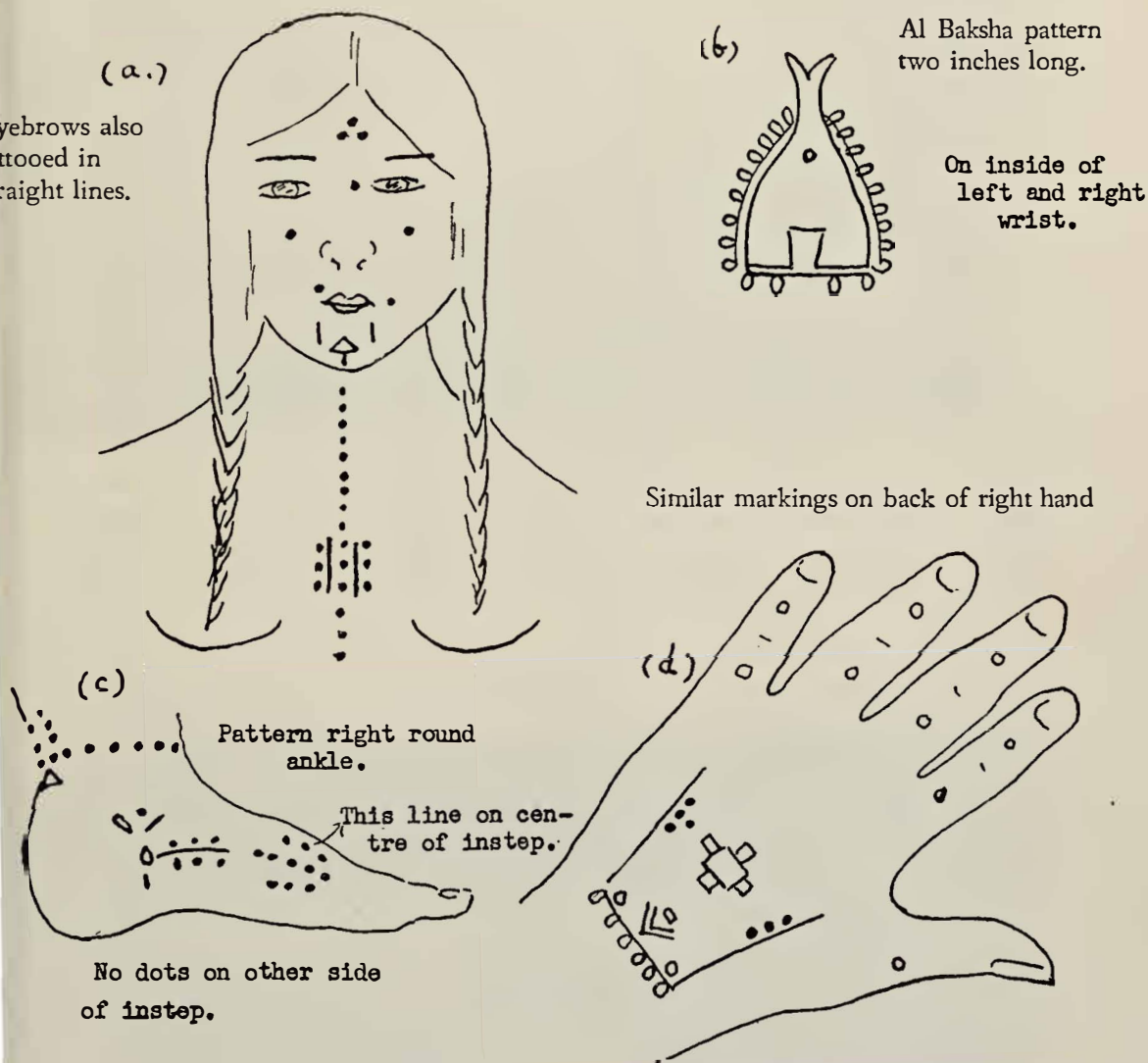
#### THE AL SA'DÚN FAMILY

The history of the Muntafiq confederation is indivisible from that of the Al Sa'dún, who, claiming descent from the Prophet and therefore related to the Shurufa (or Sharífs) of Mecca, emigrated from the Hijáz to Mesopotamia in the early part of the sixteenth century. Under them the Muntafiq confederation remained almost independent of

# Tattooing

## Chap. VII

Turkish rule until 1863, when the Wáli of Baghdad attempted to break the tribal power by taking away certain lands of the Muntafiq and turning the paramount Sa'dún chief into a regular *qaimaqám* whose powers were to be much diminished and restricted to Suq ash Shuyúkh.



TRIBAL TATTOO MARKINGS ON A MARRIED GIRL OF THE AL BUDÚR SHEPHERD TRIBE

The leading shaikh at the time, Mansur Beg Al Sa'dún, rebelled against these measures and tried to engineer a general Arab rising against the Turks. The Wáli was forced to withdraw from his new policy, but it was noted by the British Resident at Baghdad that if the Turks had had the strength and perseverance to carry it out, it

would have been approved by the Muntafiq tribes, who had suffered much oppression at the hands of their chiefs.

In 1864 and 1865 Mansur Beg and another leading shaikh, Fahad Al Sa'dún, were still in a state of veiled rebellion, owing to the attempts of the Turks to break up the tribal system. Mansur Beg finally took refuge with the Dhafir, while his brother Násir was granted in 1866 the lease of the shaikhship, having outbid Shaikh Fahad. Shaikh Násir was received into special favour by the Turks and seems to have fallen under the influence of the great Midhat Pasha, who about 1871 induced him to abandon the position taken up by his brother and Shaikh Fahad, and to welcome Ottomanizing influences among the Muntafiq. This was the first downward step, and Shaikh Násir, great as his name is (he founded Nasiríyah), seems really to have been the betrayer of the Muntafiq to the Turks.

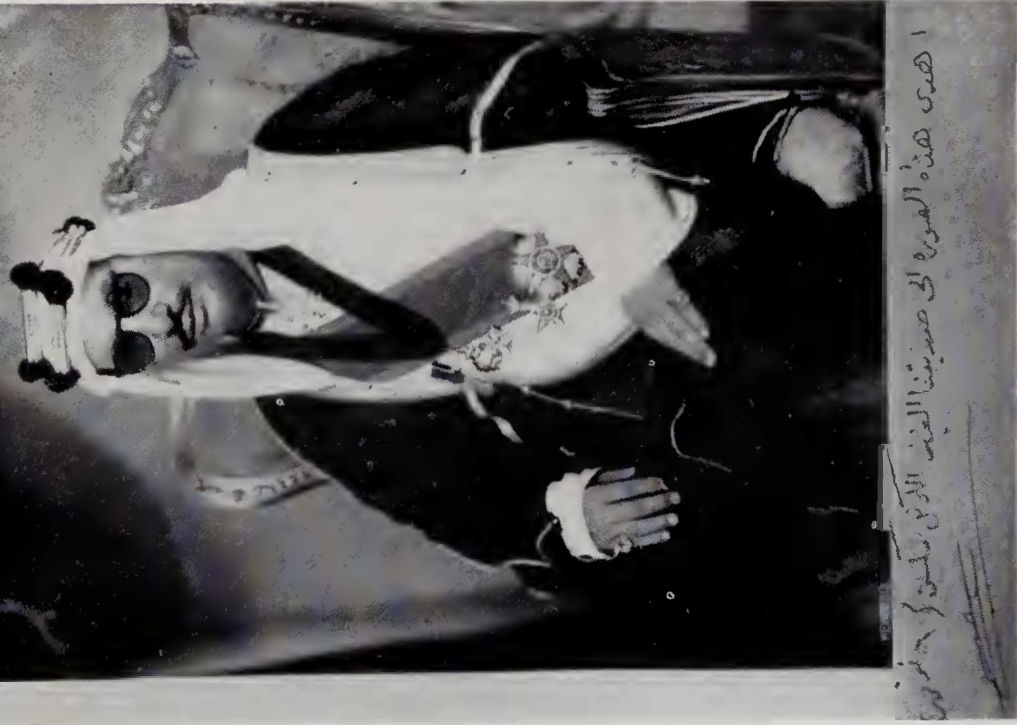
An attempt at a regular Turkish land settlement was made. The Al Sa'dún were bribed into accepting the change, by being converted from tribute-receiving chiefs into landowners. The tribes lost their status as landowners and became tenants, and the whole of the arable land of Nasiríyah and Suq ash Shuyúkh was parcelled out between the Al Sa'dún and the Turkish crown.

In 1872 Shaikh Násir was employed by the Turks in settling the newly conquered districts of Hasa and Qatíf, as a reward for which services he was appointed Wáli of the newly constituted *wilayet* of Basra in 1875, with the title of Pasha. Owing, however, to the conjunction of the governorship with the chieftainship of the Muntafiq, he proved too powerful and was exiled to Constantinople in about 1877.

In 1881, while he was a prisoner, the whole of the Muntafiq tribes rose in rebellion, partly, it seems, owing to collisions between them and the Turkish troops stationed at the recently built cantonments of Nasiríyah, and partly because of the attempts made by the Turks to enforce the new land settlement and to make the tribesmen pay dues to the Turkish crown and the Al Sa'dún. This rebellion was never properly put down. The Turks seem to have given up collecting the new land taxes and to have given considerable power to Fáleh Pasha, eldest son of the deported Násir Pasha, who thereupon resumed to some extent the Ottomanizing policy of his father.

Meanwhile the Muntafiq became divided in allegiance between Fáleh





HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH 'ABDULLAH AL JĀBIR  
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HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH SABAH AL AHMAD AL SABAH

A charming personality



HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH JABIR AL AHMAD AL SABAH

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Pasha and Sa'dún Pasha, son of Shaikh Mansur, Sad'ún being regarded as the exponent of the old tribal principles. The Fáleh faction occupied the area between the Tigris and the Euphrates, while the tribal groups under Sa'dún Pasha occupied the right bank of the Euphrates.

Fáleh Pasha died in the spring of 1908, and Sa'dún Pasha became predominant in the tribe. He began to exercise great tyranny among the Muntafiq, putting many of the minor shaikhs to death, and extending more and more his system of blackmail and extortion. By 1911 the whole country was in an uproar, and in July of that year the Turks withdrew all official support from Sad'ún Pasha, whom they sent to confinement in Baghdad, whence he was removed in the following month to Aleppo, where he died suddenly on 25th November of, as was officially reported, "apoplexy and heart failure", but, as was generally believed, poison. 'Ajaimi Beg, his son, remained at large as an outlaw in the neighbourhood of Nasiríyah.

During the interval between Sa'dún Pasha's capture and death the sympathies of the whole Muntafiq tribe (including even his enemies, the Fáleh family) seem to have veered round in his favour, presumably because he was no longer in the position of an Ottoman official and obviously out of favour with the Turks.

The tribes had never acquiesced in their degradation from land-owners to tenants, nor had the Al Sa'dún been able to enforce to the full the rights they had acquired from the Ottoman Government. With the weakening of the central authority since the beginning of the constitutional era in 1908, and the general deterioration in local administration that had followed on the Italian and Balkan wars, the official sanction for which the Al Sa'dún had bartered their old tribal prerogative had proved a broken reed. For several years before the British occupation in 1915 the tribes had refused to pay rent. Yet the prestige of the Al Sa'dún chiefs, combined with the sedulous preaching of the *jihád* (holy war) by the pro-Turkish *seyeds*, and the still stronger inducements offered by the immediate rewards of war, whether they took the form of loot or of Turkish subventions, brought the Muntafiq league out against us in November 1914.

A full genealogical tree of the Al Sa'dún family would call for the inclusion of several hundred names, so I must confine myself to one branch, showing (overleaf) the comparatively modern division into



the Sa'dún and Fáleh factions, together with some brief biographical notes concerning those who figure in the stories I have to record.

'ABDUL 'AZÍZ AL RÁSHID AL SA'DÚN (not included in tree).—Head of the Al Ráshid clan in Suq ash Shuyúkh. Now deceased.

'ABDUL MUHSIN AL SA'DÚN (not included in tree).—Four times prime minister of Iraq. Committed suicide during his fourth term, 13th November 1929.

'ABDULLAH BEG AL FÁLEH PASHA AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Paramount shaikh of all the Muntafiq tribal groups lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Now deceased.

'AJAIMI BEG AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Formerly head of the Muntafiq tribal groups lying on the right bank of the Euphrates. To-day living in Turkey.

'AJÍL BEG AL SA'DÚN (not included in tree).—Prominent leader. His family lives near Nasiríyah.

BANDAR AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Father of 'Ali ibn Bandar Al Sa'dún and Muhammad ibn Bandar Al Sa'dún. Now deceased.

DHÁRI BEG AL FAHAD AL SA'DÚN (not included in tree).—Prominent member of the Al Muhammad branch of the family, formerly resident in Nasiríyah. Now deceased.

FAHAD BEG AL SULAIMÁN AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Resided on the right bank of the Euphrates. Now deceased.

FÁLEH PASHA AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Formerly head of all the tribal groups lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Father of 'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún, who, on his death, succeeded him as paramount shaikh of those groups.

HAZÁM BEG AL MISHÁRI AL SA'DÚN (not included in tree).—Prominent member of the family, formerly resident near Nasiríyah. Now deceased.

IBRAHÍM BEG IBN MIZA'AL PASHA AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Prominent member of the family, to-day residing in Basra.

MIZA'AL PASHA AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Father of Ibrahím Beg ibn Miza'al Pasha Al Sa'dún. Now deceased.

MUHAMMAD IBN BANDAR AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Son of Bandar Al Sa'dún.

NÁSIR PASHA AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Last Sa'dún Wáli of Basra. Now deceased.



SA'UD BEG AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Younger brother of 'Ajaimi Beg and Thámir Beg.

THÁMIR BEG AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Now residing at Suq ash Shuyúkh.

YUSUF BEG AL 'ABDULLAH AL MANSUR AL SA'DÚN (see tree).—Cousin of 'Ajaimi Beg, Thámir Beg and Sa'ud Beg.

#### I TAKE CHARGE OF SUQ ASH SHUYÚKH

My regiment, the 29th Lancers (Deccan Horse), was sent to France at the outbreak of war with Germany, but because I knew Arabic, having learned it as a boy, I was sent from India to Mesopotamia in November 1914 with the 33rd Q.V.O. Light Cavalry and took part in all the actions leading to the capture of Basra, Kurna and Nasiríyah, including the battle of Shu'aiba, near Zubair.

Immediately after the capture of Nasiríyah in July 1915 by General Gorringe (affectionately known to the troops as the "Blood Orange"), I was sent as an Intelligence officer to Suq ash Shuyúkh ("Bazaar of the Shaikhs"), that very Arab little town on the Euphrates, in the heart of the Muntafiq tribal country. Even in Turkish times prior to 1914 the imperial writ had not run there. The Muntafiq were stiff-necked and rebellious, and the completely disordered state of the district compelled me to urge that the Political Department, headed by Sir Percy Cox, then rapidly organizing a civil administration in southern Iraq, should send an officer to run the area. Judge of my surprise when a telegram reached me from Sir Percy appointing me, in addition to my other duties, Assistant Political Officer, Suq ash Shuyúkh.

Though delighted I saw lots of trouble ahead, for the great Bani Khaiqan and Mugarrah tribes, residing respectively on the left and right banks of the main Euphrates, and dangerously intermingled in the delta country between Suq and the Hamár Lake, were on the verge of war and had got as far as sniping all and sundry as they tried to pass up and down the river on their legitimate business. To make matters worse there were no policemen or *shabána* (river police) or any *suwari* (mounted police for desert work)—and no British or Indian soldiers.

Thus, the only Englishman in the place, did I live alone in all my glory, while a British Army struggled to make progress up the Tigris.



## A Lonely Englishman

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Every day was full of excitement—indeed, one never knew what the night or morrow might bring. I remained alive more or less by the goodwill of Haji Hassan Hamdání, the strong man of the town, who maintained a band of some two hundred armed toughs, both to enforce his will and to maintain some semblance of law and order. Outside the town boundaries he had no influence at all.

So long as I had been an Intelligence officer pure and simple, living in the shadow of Haji Hassan's strong arm and residing for the most part in his house, I had been satisfied. Now I smiled to think that I had to try my hand at raising a small land and river force, finding police for the town, and starting an administration, which meant, first and foremost, taking some sort of revenue from tribes that had not paid a cent to the Turks for the last twenty years. I knew that there were some tussles before me, not the least of which would be the breaking of the power of Haji Hassan in the town, and the compelling of respect for law and order among the Bani Khaiqan and Mugarrah.

I moved into a small Arab house facing the river and separated from it by an open space a couple of hundred yards wide. There was a central courtyard. Three of the four rooms on the ground were used as offices, the fourth as a kitchen. The two rooms upstairs became my bedroom and sitting-room. The only way to get into the house was by a small and very stoutly built iron-studded door that would have taken some breaking open. There were no other exterior openings, all windows facing inwards on the courtyard. The flat roof joining the two upper rooms was surrounded by a parapet wall nine inches thick, built up to a height of four feet six inches. It was an ideal building to defend in case of attack, very compact and with open spaces on three sides.

Haji Hassan was soon enlisted on my side, for I offered to take over, arm and pay for most of his town toughs. I also appointed his younger brother, Cádhim Hamdání, as my Arab assistant, and Sálím, his eldest son, as my collector of taxes in the town. To the old man himself I granted the unofficial status of Adviser to the A.P.O., which honourable title was bestowed also on Haji 'Abbás al Sunait, Haji 'Ali al Dabbús and Haji Ibrahim al 'Amári, all leading citizens of Suq and each now representing a quarter of the town. I grew very fond of all four of these advisers of mine, spending many an hour chatting with them

in their shops or private houses, besides having them over every other morning or so for coffee and sherbert in my own little home. Of course, all four were at feud with one another, but they did not dare to show it. They preferred to work with me rather than against me, all being anxious to see that none got more power than his neighbour over me. We worked grandly as a team, and I put down the success of our little Suq ash Shuyúkh administration—and it was a success—entirely to the goodwill and co-operation of these four doges of my little Venice.

Having got control of the town I turned my attention to the tribes around. I started by raising two hundred *shabána*, half from the Bani Khaiqan and half from the Mujarrah. I gave them Turkish rifles, put them into a smart uniform, and established police posts at intervals of about eight miles all down the river to the Hamár Lake on the east and, on the west, up as far as the *mudhif* and war-tower of Shaikh Chuwaiyid ibn Mahaina, which, half way to Nasiríyah, was the limit of my small kingdom.

As a striking force, I kept a hundred *shabána* as far as possible at headquarters. To patrol the desert towards Khamisiyah and beyond, I gave Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún, who lived at Umm al Battush, powers of a *mudir* and the necessary funds to pay and maintain thirty *suwari*, he finding the horses. For this section, I supplied only Martini-Henry carbines—good but out-of-date weapons of .303 bore—and these desert men loved them, each calling his rifle “Abu Mauser” (“Father of the Mauser”) or “Daksan” (“Little dear”), which second name was subsequently transferred to myself, Dickson and Daksan sounding much the same.

With the appointment of other *mudirs* at Gurmat Bani Sa'id, Khamisiyah, Hakaika and north Hamár Lake, my machinery for the collection of taxes was ready to start. My advisers counselled me to proceed slowly: to go first for the tax on date palms (one rupee on each tree), but not on rice, wheat or barley, and to neglect, for the time being, the collection of *koda*, which was the sheep tax introduced by the Turks. They also told me that the Turks had left no records at all, and that if I wished for exact numbers, I should have to count the trees everywhere, which the tribes would resist. I was advised instead to demand from each tribe a nominal revenue for the first year,

to double it the next year, and to double it again the third year, offering, if there were any arguments or accusations of unfairness, to count the trees personally. I gathered that the number of trees planted since the Turks had last taken date revenue twenty years previously was so vast that no one would want his trees counted until the process of doubling had gone on for possibly five years.

I agreed to the proposal, especially as I did not wish to hamper my G.O.C.-in-chief, now toiling to make headway against the Turks on the Tigris, by raising any sort of rebellion or minor incident in the Suq area, due to "the tactlessness of some damned young A.P.O.".

It was great fun getting date revenue out of tribal folk who had little legal right to ownership, and who were well armed and in great strength everywhere. One had to do it by a mixture of bluff, cajolery, cheery invitations to luncheon parties, etc., and occasionally hitting someone hard and locking him up before his friends could come to his rescue.

The Al Shaddúd tribe, on the Bani Khaiqan side of the Euphrates, twelve miles north-west of Suq, were the first to receive my attentions. Their shaikh was Haji Faisal al Shaddúd, a man six feet four in height, with five brothers equally tall and good-looking. I told him that I was coming to settle the amount of date revenue I should require of him for that particular year. He countered by inviting me to a wonderful luncheon under his palm trees. Before the meal I said I would arbitrarily assess his trees at sixteen thousand, but that if he preferred it I would count them. Haji Faisal howled dissent, swearing I was imposing a terrible burden on him and his tribe. I stood firm and for a time things looked menacing, for all the men of the tribe were armed and had surrounded my small party.

After some two hours of argument, I conceded one thousand trees and we sat down to lunch, my demand standing at fifteen thousand trees. The luncheon was not much of a success, especially as everyone fed with rifle in hand. Obviously my presence was resented strongly and a spark would have set the place ablaze. My host's third brother, Haji Hamad al Shaddúd, held his rifle across his knee with the muzzle pointing six inches from my ribs. I asked to see it and found it fully loaded, without the safety catch up, and with four more rounds in the magazine. I quietly extracted the cartridges, and Haji Faisal looked

foolish and uncomfortable when I remarked that I, his guest, could not enjoy my meal with his brother's rifle almost prodding me in the ribs. My host's sense of hospitality won the day and we all parted friends, though I felt that I had had a narrow escape.

It is interesting to record that the following year I took revenue on thirty thousand date palms from Haji Faisal, without a murmur from anyone, and that the third year I did the same on sixty thousand trees. Only in the fourth year, when my demand reached a hundred and twenty thousand, did the worthy Haji ask for a count. This I did in person and found the correct figure to be a trifle over two hundred and forty-seven thousand trees. No doubt the wily shaikh had feared I would double the tally in the fifth year, and had thought it time to call a halt.

I never bore either Haji Faisal or Haji Hamad any malice, and the Al Shaddúd became my best payers of revenue. Twenty-five years later, when I was Political Agent at Kuwait, I had the great pleasure of receiving a visit from Haji Maghámis, Haji Faisal's second brother and now shaikh of the tribe.

#### MUHAMMAD AL 'AYAIL WHITENS MY FACE

Haji Mirri was co-shaikh with Haji Dúghi of the Al 'Asáchira tribe, a bad crowd whose territory was immediately contiguous to and upstream of the Al Shaddúd. The tribe had some eight miles of river frontage, with a fairly good palm-belt bordering the stream and an excellent wheat and barley area behind. Haji Mirri also had several hundred acres of rice-land beyond his wheat-belt. His principal village lay some two miles from the main river and could clearly be seen surrounded by five battlemented *mafátíl*\* of imposing height. Haji Dúghi disliked Haji Mirri and hoped one day to be recognized as paramount shaikh of the whole 'Asáchira. Haji Mirri was bad all through; a small man with crafty eyes and a none too pleasant smile.

At this period travel by night on the river was always unsafe, but of all the reaches the eight-mile strip that ran in front of the 'Asáchira country towards Nasiríyah was the worst. I had not yet achieved the control at which I aimed, and the 'Asáchira took toll from any boat

\* Plural of *mafátíl*, a war-tower.



## The Blinded Boy

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that passed by day, and shot up and seized with its cargo any craft that attempted to run the gauntlet by night. Nor had I dared to establish a *shabána* post in the 'Asáchira country, for fear of an incident. I bided my time.

It came sooner than I expected. I received from Sir Arnold Wilson, who was deputizing at Basra whilst Sir Percy Cox was with Force H.Q. on the Tigris, a new and powerful cabin launch. This gave me a much greater mobility than before, enabling me to show myself in the most out-of-the-way corners of the Suq ash Shuyúkh delta, which strengthened my position not a little, for with the tribes there was no truer saying than "Aqlhum fi 'aiyúnhum"—"Their senses are in their eyes". They now saw their Political Officer, whereas before he had either been afraid or unable to move among them.

One evening about sunset, a woman of the town called to see me, accompanied by her daughter, a pretty young thing whose husband had left her. The mother was the widow of a Najdi merchant, she said, and had a grown-up boy of twenty-two, her daughter being twenty. Her husband had once loaned money to Haji Mirri and, failing to get it back when the debt had fallen due, had complained to Haji Hassan Hamdání. When Haji Mirri had come up to make some purchases in the bazaar, Haji Hassan had seized him and locked him up in a none too clean gaol until the money had been produced. Her husband had died and for the past three years her son had carried on the business in a small way.

Ten days previous to her call upon me, her son had been going up to Nasiríyah by *ballam* (river boat), when he had been attacked and kidnapped by the 'Asáchira tribe. Suspecting the worst, the mother had sent men to spy out the land, and these had returned with the story that her boy lay in Haji Mirri's village a close prisoner, and that his eyes had been put out; further, that Haji Mirri had, for the last five days, forced him to plough his wheat-fields yoked side by side to a donkey. The story was a grim one and made me feel pretty sick.

After exacting a promise that they would not breathe a word to anyone at all that they had visited me, I dismissed the lady and her daughter, encouraging them to hope that I would do something. I could not say what, as I did not know myself. An hour later, I decided on a cutting-out expedition. I warned Muhammad al 'Ayail, the head



of my *shabána*, to parade with twenty of his best men at eleven p.m. He was a stout lad, was Muhammad, and he scented fun in the air.

At twelve midnight we set out in my launch for the 'Asáchira country. It was intensely dark and still. Reaching a spot opposite Haji Mirri's village at about one-thirty a.m., I brought the launch, at a quarter speed, so as to make no noise, into the bank, where a heavy screen of weeping-willow trees gave a tunnel-like shelter from any prying eyes. I then called up Muhammad and explained my plan. This was to leave five men in the launch as guard, and to creep up with fifteen others and himself to the immediate vicinity of Haji Mirri's village. With three picked men, Muhammad would then go forward, Red Indian fashion, to Haji Mirri's cowhouse (where, according to the lady's story, her son was kept manacled at night) and effect a silent rescue, the success of which would be signified by a single hoot of an owl. They would then make their way back to me with all speed, when, after three hoots of an owl in quick succession, we would all return to the launch and home, insh' Allah.

The success of the plan depended naturally on absolute silence and stealthy approach, but as my *shabána* were all picked marsh Arabs and had that uncanny faculty for ghostlike movement by night for which marshmen are famous, I felt confident of success.

The first check was a flat refusal on Muhammad's part to allow me to go with them. He reasoned that, with my clumsy English methods, I would give the show away before we had got half a mile from the launch.

"Yá Sahib", he said in an excited whisper, "you can neither move silently like us, nor swim as we can the three broad channels protecting Haji Mirri's village. Nor are you able to imitate the movements of a dog by walking on all fours with one leg up to represent the tail, which we marsh folk are adept at should an alarm be given and it becomes necessary to quit. You stay by the launch with fifteen men, while I go forward with five of my own selection. Leave things to me and I will whiten your face."

By which he meant that he would succeed on my behalf. I had perforce to agree, but much against my will. Muhammad and his party—five of my most serpent-like Hamár Lake *shabána*—took off all their

clothes and strapped round their naked waists the long, wickedly curved daggers of the marshmen. They left their rifles and bandoliers in the launch, and Muhammad's last injunction was that we should wait until half-past three and then, if they had not returned, assume that they had been killed or captured, and make our way back to Suq ash Shuyúkh. My final glimpse of Muhammad, in a quick flash of my electric torch, was a magnificent naked body, surmounted by a supremely happy face, with mouth grinning in cheery anticipation of an exciting adventure. Then, as silently as any of Fenimore Cooper's heroes, the six of them vanished into the night.

It was an anxious vigil. I made every man stand to in the launch, keeping only a couple of men some fifty yards away in the undergrowth, to watch for any sign of movement on the part of a prying enemy. At three-fifteen, we suddenly heard far away the barking of village dogs. This lasted for five minutes, then there was silence again until we heard the crack of a rifle, followed in quick succession by twenty or thirty more shots and much distant shouting. It was impossible to tell whether this was the alarm being given, or whether my men had been discovered and cornered. Our launch party were now all tense with suppressed excitement, and rifles were silently loaded for any eventuality.

Three-thirty came, and still no Muhammad; nor did we hear any more sounds from the direction of the village. At three-forty-five I began to fear the worst. It was all desperately exciting and I determined to wait a little longer. The silence was now overpowering; one could hear only the men's breathing. At three-fifty I gave a whispered order to cast off. Almost at once, and from close in, came the sound of three owl-hoots in rapid succession, and a second or two later there appeared out of the blackness the dark shadow of Muhammad. He was followed by his men, who were carrying two shapeless bundles, which they rapidly deposited on the bank close to the launch. Muhammad came close to me and whispered:

"I've got your blind boy all right, and I've got Haji Mirri too!"

Both had been tied and gagged, so as not to make a noise and to make them easier to carry. It did not take long to get the living bundles on board, and for our crew to pole the launch silently out into the stream from the shelter of branches under which we had been hiding.

We then made for home, first at quarter-speed and then, when we were well below the 'Asáchira country, at full throttle.

We got back at the first streak of dawn, before people were about. Haji Mirri was locked up in his old prison, and an hour later I was able to hand over the cruelly blinded boy to his mother and sister.

Haji Mirri denied, of course, that he had put out the eyes of the youth, saying that other enemies had done the deed. I ordered him to remain locked up until he had paid eight hundred rupees as *fasl* (blood money), this being the figure laid down by tribal law in the Muntafiq. I myself added a fine of four hundred rupees because he had taken the law into his own hands.

The prisoner remained under lock and key for fifteen days, when a small embassy of 'Asáchira ladies, headed by Haji Mirri's wife, presented themselves at my house. They wept. They swore that the rascally Haji had no money wherewith to pay the blood money or the fine; that I had not done well to interfere with tribal justice and custom; that their shaikh must be released. When they saw that I was adamant, the comely wife of Haji Mirri gave up. She produced from an old and rather smelly handkerchief her jewellery, which consisted of a large gold-and-turquoise neck medallion, a necklace of gold coins, and a pair of handsome, triangular-shaped gold rings, each studded with five turquoises. These, she said, were in lieu of the fine that I had imposed. The blood money would follow if I would but release her husband. How, she asked naïvely, could Haji Mirri collect the money from his tribesmen if this was not done? I patiently explained that it was my intention that Haji Mirri, not the tribe, should pay. The lady as patiently explained that I did not understand tribal custom; that unless I released her man, nothing would happen. I compromised, keeping my man and getting my money through Haji Dúghi, the co-shaikh of the 'Asáchira.

So ended my little brush with Haji Mirri. As for the mother of the blinded lad, she spoilt things somewhat by paying me a surreptitious visit after dark and suggesting that her daughter would like to show her gratitude in the only way she could, by spending the night with me whenever I wanted her. I was touched—at the same time, not a little disappointed. The lady did not seem to understand when I expostulated in my best Arabic with a seemingly "Istakhfar' Allah" ("God forbid"). All she could say was, "The Turks always did that sort of thing before

## The Mosque at Najaf

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you English came, so it will be quite all right. After all, nobody need know."

There is a postscript. Six years later, when I was Political Officer of the Middle Euphrates, with headquarters at Hilla in Iraq, I received a visit from Haji Mirri's wife, who was passing through the town on pilgrimage, *en route* for Karbala. She was little changed and wasted no time in reminding me that I still had her jewellery and begging for its restitution. Haji Mirri, she said, had died two years previously without ever having replaced her trinkets. Alas, I could not comply; they had been sold long ago and their money equivalent credited to the Suq treasury. Yet, conscious that I must do the right thing and show that Daksan did not lack chivalry, I paid the little lady four hundred rupees, the amount of the original fine. She went away highly delighted.

#### A WISE ADVISER

One of my chief difficulties at Suq ash Shuyúkh was the settlement of tribal disagreements. I soon found that false witness was the order, and lying the daily bread of these Muntafiq marsh folk. One day, in despair as to how to get to the bottom of a particularly difficult dispute, I asked my assistant, Cádhim Hamdání, for advice. He replied:

"Why don't you send the disputants to the holy city of Najaf al Ashraf, where, in the great mosque of 'Ali, Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi will swear both sides to testify by 'Abbás?\*" It is well known that if anyone swears falsely by 'Abbás in the great mosque of 'Ali in Najaf, his head will be immediately struck off by divine agency and will fly up inside the great dome and remain suspended from the top of it. The head of the last liar who swore falsely hangs there to-day, dried up and grisly, by a chain, so that all may see it and fear."

It was good counsel. I sent to Najaf under escort all the most important witnesses in the case, together with a diplomatic and tactful letter to the great Seyed Cádhim, begging his help. Within ten days came a charming letter of appreciation. He had settled the matter well and truly, and his letter explained in full how he had decided the case, and which party had right on its side.

From that day everything went well with me. The number of

\* A famous contemporary of the Prophet, greatly revered by Shi'ah Muslims.



decisions I referred to the holy man ran into several score. Indeed, my work became seventy-five per cent easier than before, for all my tribal friends learnt that I was ready to pass on immediately to Najaf any difficult case that came before me, so they watched their step accordingly. A further inducement to play the game was a standing order that the party declared by Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi to be in the wrong had to bear all the expenses of the journey to Najaf and back—a two hundred and fifty mile trip by river-boat or horse.

As all the Shi'ah world of Iraq and Persia knows, his Holiness Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi became chief Mujtahid of the Shi'ah sect of Islám about 1910. He was a most remarkable man, deeply learned and with a wonderful knowledge of the world. A lifelong admirer of the British and especially of Sir Percy Cox, he stood head and shoulders above all other religious leaders in Iraq and Persia, and, during the First World War, successfully countered all the efforts of the Turks, headed by Enver Pasha and his German masters, to turn the conflict into a *jihád* or holy war, as far as the Shi'ah world was concerned. The British Army in Iraq, instead of finding the population hostile, discovered that four-fifths of the inhabitants were friendly and well-wishers. This was all due to the skilful way in which Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi handled the situation.

#### THE MUDHÍF

So that I could receive my guests and tribal visitors, I obtained official permission to build a *mudhif* or guest-house. A massive and handsome affair, costing two thousand nine hundred rupees, it was seventy feet long, eighteen feet wide and eighteen feet high, and it was erected by expert marshmen, of the great Bani 'Ísad tribe, brought across from Chuba'ish, the centre of the fearful and hauntingly mysterious marsh country that extends for scores of miles round about Suq ash Shuyúkh.

Six hundred mats of reeds from the Hamár Lake were used for the roof and sides alone of the *mudhif*. They were laid over a framework of great arches, which were made of bundles of reeds bound tightly together and tapering to the top, their bases, two feet six inches in diameter, being embedded in the ground. The narrow doorway, which was five feet high, faced the river. As everyone sat on the floor,



## Celebrations

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ventilation had to be at a low level, so the spaces between the arches were left open to a height of two feet. On hot days the *mudhíf* could be open all round; at other times it was closed up by letting down mats from outside, except for an opening or two at the top end, where visitors were received and given coffee.

Bright-coloured tribal rugs covered the floor at this end. The coffee-making hearth (*wujár*) was placed at the other end, close to the entrance. Servants and guards sat round it, while more important visitors walked up the length of the *mudhíf* and seated themselves at the reception end.

Situated as it was on the edge of the river and under the shade of a few scattered palm trees, there was no cooler place than my *mudhíf* in the intense midday heat of summer. As one entered it, one was impressed not only by its size, but also by the dim light that prevailed. The *mudhíf* was cathedral-like in this respect. It was there that I transacted my business, entertained guests to Arab luncheons or dinners, and held my weekly *mijlis* of tribal shaikhs and town dignitaries. It was there, too, that I consulted my advisers, Haji Hassan Hamdání, Haji 'Abbás al Sunait, Haji 'Ali al Dabbús and Haji Ibrahím al 'Amári.

#### CIVIC RECEPTION

The King Emperor's birthday was only ten days off. I decided that I could not do better than celebrate it by a grand luncheon party, staged Arab fashion in my new *mudhíf*. Accordingly I sent out invitations to my leading Sa'dún shaikhs, who were headed by Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún, as well as all the shaikhs, some seventy in number, of the Muja'rrah and Bani Khaiqan confederations. Included also were the leading personages of Suq ash Shuyúkh and, of course, my own personal advisers. It was to be a right and proper feast, with thirty large fat sheep roasted whole, each nestling on a tray piled up high with rice. Around these were to be ranged the hundred and one smaller plates containing roast duck, chicken, fried fish, *maraq*, *kabáb*, dates, *mahalarbíyah*, sliced melon, large circular plate-like loaves of Arab bread, and—without which no Arab feast is complete—bowls of *leben*, which is buttermilk. Then there was coffee to be arranged for, and glasses of *baidhán* (almond sherbert) for those who liked it. So that my guests could wash their hands, I had to borrow basins and

water-jugs, besides purchasing a dozen cakes of soap and a like number of towels. Cádhim Hamdání did noble work buying the foodstuffs and arranging for the cooking to be done in various houses. I too did my part by borrowing sufficient carpets and rugs to cover the whole floor of my *mudhíf*, and enough cushions to give each guest something on which to lean.

My invitation was accepted by all except one man. This was Haji Mizbán, one of the four senior shaikhs of the Hakkám, the other three being Qásid al Náhi, Farhúd al Fandi and Haji Násir al 'Ayail.\* Haji Mizbán wrote to say that he feared he could not attend the function, as his only road lay through an enemy's territory. He added, however, that if the *hakúma* (Government) would give him a written *hadh wa bakht*,† then all would be well and he would gladly come.

Trusting with sublime faith in the efficacy of a letter signed by myself and sealed with my office stamp, I sent him a document to the effect that he, Shaikh Mizbán, was a guest of the *hakúma*, that he was coming to attend an official function, and that, on peril of the High British Government's displeasure, he should not be hindered, interfered with or molested *en route*. I added that the function in question was being held in honour of the King Emperor's birthday, and that it was the Government's wish and desire that all private quarrels, disputes and enmities be forgotten for three days.

The great day came at last and my guests began to arrive, some on foot, some on horses and some in the marshmen's high-prowed, bitumen-covered canoes known as *mash'ahíf*.‡ Each came escorted by bodies of retainers or armed guards, their numbers being regulated by the importance in his own eyes of their chief. The time also being unsettled, with Turk and Briton at each other's throats on the Tigris, every shaikh arrived armed with rifle or carbine and festooned like a Christmas tree with bandoliers and double cartridge-belts stiff with wicked-looking clips of Mauser ammunition.

They entered my *mudhíf*, greeted me, and sat down each according to his proper seniority. On such occasions the Al Sa'dún dignitaries, as well as the ordinary tribal shaikhs, make no mistakes and know exactly where to sit. There was no hustling, pushing or attempt to

\* Not related in any way to Muhammad al 'Ayail, head of my *shabána*.

† Safe-conduct; literally "protection and honour".

‡ Plural of *mash'huf*.

jockey themselves into a wrong seat. With every man in his best holiday attire, his rifle propped against the *mudhif* wall behind him, the gathering was indeed a goodly and impressive one to see. Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún and Yusuf Beg al Mansur Al Sa'dún sat on my right and left respectively. A short way down the line of guests on the right was Haji Mizbán, he who had asked for a safe-conduct, sitting between old Qásid al Náhi, who had but one eye, and Farhúd al Fandi, while a little farther down, Haji Násir al 'Ayail, hook-nosed and handsome, sat beside Shaikh Farhúd al Mughash Ghash, titular head of the Bani Khaiqan group.

It was a great feast. Everyone did full justice to the truly magnificent repast brought in by a host of retainers, under the aegis of the redoubtable Cádhim Hamdáni, and laid out on a long strip of black oilcloth extending down the whole length of the *mudhif*, between the lines of sitting shaikhs. When the principal guests had partaken and had resumed their seats after washing their hands, there followed the retainers and hangers-on—a motley crowd of negroes, Badawin marshmen and others—who gorged themselves in manner wonderful to behold.

Then came coffee and the many short complimentary speeches made on such occasions by the leaders of the gathering. Finally, in distinguished silence, the guests started to leave, headed by Thámir Beg and Yusuf Beg. Each man rose in his turn, shook hands with me, thanked me in the usual terms,\* received the conventional replies,† and then departed. When it came to Mizbán's turn to say good-bye, I asked him jocularly which particular enemy he had feared might do him harm. He replied: "Yá Daksan, it is he who shook hands with you three persons ago, after Qásid al Náhi".

I knew this to be Haji Násir al 'Ayail.

"Have no fear, my friend", I said.

Mizbán, who was a tall, exceptionally handsome man of some thirty-five summers, wearing a dark-blue *zibún* of the rich silk brocade known in Iraq as *putta*, laughed as he replied: "No harm can come to me with the *hadh wa bakht* of the *hakúma* in my pocket".

\* "Ana'm Allah 'alaik"—"The blessing of God be upon you".

"Kathir Allah khairak"—"May God increase your good works".

† "Halál kum"—"It is yours".

"Sharaftu al mahal"—"You honour my abode".

These were the last words I heard him utter. Thirty seconds later, as he stooped to pass out through the doorway, five shots came in rapid succession and Mizbán crashed to the floor a dead man.

Haji Násir had been waiting for him just outside the *mudhif* door, his servant standing with two horses in the shade of the stunted palm-trees ten yards away. I came out just in time to see master and slave galloping along the river bank before they disappeared round a corner. I tried frantically to arrange a pursuit, but everyone with horses had already left.

Mizbán's distracted negro slave was bending over the body and kept whimpering in hysterical manner as he fumblingly tried to open the *zibún*. Poor Misbán had two bullet wounds near the heart and another in his throat. The fourth and fifth shots had missed.

Bynow the rest of the guests had gathered round, some noisy, others in silent protest. All had loaded their rifles and were handling them rather menacingly. One-eyed Shaikh Qásid eventually voiced the company's pent-up feelings by shouting excitedly that unless I did something quickly and brought the murderer to justice no tribal leader would ever be able to visit me again. Had I not given Mizbán a safe-conduct? What was I going to do after this flagrant defiance of the laws of hospitality? What guarantee had any shaikh that he would not be killed as soon as he came up to Suq ash Shuyúkh to see the *hákím*?

An hour later, old Haji Hassan Hamdání warned me with a grave face that there was more behind the murder than met the eye; that very probably it was intended as a signal for a rising among the Suq ash Shuyúkh tribes, which the Turks had long been trying to bring about. This may or may not have been the case. Certainly many more of the Suq tribes were pro-Turk than pro-British at this time, and certainly I had been making myself unpleasant, to say the least of it, in my attempts of recent weeks to gather revenue on dates, wheat, barley and rice. Certainly it meant also the end of my authority outside the town unless I took swift action. News of the incident would be known throughout the Muntafiq within a few hours. What I feared most was that the district would go bad again; that communications would be cut; and that deterioration on a wide scale would set in. Above all I feared that my cherished plans for collecting date revenue would go



## Unrest Everywhere

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by the board. The trouble, of course, was that I had no force to back me except my small army of two hundred marsh *shabána* and my thirty horsemen run by Thámir Beg. The British army was far away, and the G.O.C. at Nasiríyah would not thank me if I asked for military assistance, apart from the fact, obvious to everyone, that he had barely enough troops with which to maintain his own position in Nasiríyah.

I thought hard for another hour, then made my decision. I issued notices in the town and sent messages far and wide offering an immediate reward of ten thousand rupees for Haji Násir dead or alive. I wired Sir Percy Cox that I had done this. His prompt approval by a return telegram marked "Immediate" was scant comfort, but encouraging nevertheless.

#### ROUGH JUSTICE

As I had expected my district went bad. I could no longer safely go far from the town. On two occasions when I took that risk I was fired at by men lurking in ambush and was lucky not to be hit. On a third occasion, when out riding two miles from Suq ash Shuyúkh, I would undoubtedly have been killed had not Haji Hassan Hamdání surreptitiously sent four of my own *shabána* after me with orders to keep me under close observation without showing themselves. As it was, when three strange men rushed out at me from behind a clump of young willow trees firing their rifles at a hundred-yards range, I was agreeably surprised to see them taken in flank by four of my own men under the stalwart Muhammad al 'Ayail, who dropped one man and put the others to flight. An examination of the dead man showed the attackers to have been of Haji Násir's tribe, the Al Hakkám.

I was unhappy and disheartened, but I knew that I could call on no one for help, least of all Sir Percy Cox or the G.O.C. at Nasiríyah, for they could not spare a man. I was acutely conscious that I would have to work out my own salvation. The problem was how, with prestige gone and a new tone of passive resistance everywhere evident among the surrounding tribes. Even my *shabána* were uneasy; some found they had business at home and needed urgent leave, others asked to resign.

Two months went by—wretched months of worry, with no revenue



coming in and my friends getting fewer and fewer everywhere. Then one forenoon a river gunboat, flying the white ensign and followed by a T. boat (troop-carrying river steamer) hove in sight round the bend above Suq ash Shuyúkh. Both quickly made fast opposite my house, and in two minutes I was welcoming the lieutenant-commander ashore and arranging a meal for him. He told me he had come with the T. boat to buy supplies, and that the T. boat carried a small detachment of a famous Kent regiment, with four machine-guns.

I dined that night on the gunboat, and after dinner told all my difficulties to my host. I explained how absolutely necessary it was to do something to punish Haji Násir, to restore the prestige of the Government and myself; how I had a few shaky *shabána* scattered at small posts up and down the river and not easily concentrated, while, with some seven hundred well-armed tribesmen only five miles downstream of Suq ash Shuyúkh, Haji Násir sat in his village breathing defiance and daring the *hakúma* to come and punish him. I finished up by asking this young Naval officer if he was game for a small cutting-out expedition, which, though it must on no account come to the G.O.C.'s ears, would restore my prestige and show the tribes that I could still sting.

My plan was to burn down Haji Násir's war-tower, *mudhif* and village, which lay half a mile from the river bank, behind the palm-belt, then set fire to his standing crops of some hundred acres. I explained that I proposed to do the burning myself, and that all I wanted of the Navy was co-operation in a stratagem that would ensure that I would not be attacked while doing the burning, and would enable me to make a safe escape from the Hakkám country.

The commander enthusiastically agreed to help, so I went on to explain the stratagem I had in mind. At 7.30 a.m. two days hence he would lay me and his two ships alongside the right bank of the river opposite Haji Násir's village and close to a large *sidr* tree under which, if my plans did not go amiss, all the forty-three sub-chiefs of Haji Násir's powerful clan would be congregated. As I jumped ashore all the guns on both ships would be trained at point-blank range on the waiting mob. I hoped, under cover of the guns, to disarm the tribal leaders, march them on board as prisoners and hold them as hostages until such time as I had carried out my programme. The plan was a

## Plan of Campaign

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dirty one, I knew, and savoured of some good old Turkish methods, but as no harm was intended to the actors, and as I would be judged by results, I felt justified in doing what I was going to do. Furthermore, I knew my treacherous tribesmen well; should I be successful, they would be the first to praise me for having adopted their own tactics to get the better of them. To make things taste a little sweeter I proposed to have ready on the T. boat a first-class Arab banquet for the unwilling guests, to take them to Suq ash Shuyúkh after the proceedings, and to release the whole bunch on the following morning, after presenting each man with a new *'aba*.

The next day, under the bond of secrecy, I divulged my plan of campaign to Cádhim Hamdání. I arranged for him to prepare a luncheon for forty-three shaikhs and headmen, to purchase forty-three new *'abas* and to bring everything on board at 7 a.m. the following morning. I then sent my one-eyed friend Shaikh Qásid al Náhi, a man famous for having successfully led several tribal rebellions against the Turks in olden times, down to Haji Násir's village with instructions to say that at 7.30 a.m. the next day the *hákim* of the district would arrive in two warships and tie up by the old *sidr* tree, his purpose being to arrange a truce between the dead Mizbán's tribe and that of Haji Násir, and to fix the amount of blood money that should be paid over by Haji Násir.

Qásid al Náhi, who was paramount shaikh of the Hakkám on the right bank of the Euphrates, was instructed to warn all the sub-shaikhs of the Hakkám to attend at the spot indicated, on pain of serious and condign punishment to follow. Haji Násir, I knew, would not put in an appearance; there were strong rumours that he had gone off to the Turks at Shatra to raise funds for starting a rebellion among the Suq ash Shuyúkh tribes. Qásid, I was confident, would give me full support, for an old feud existed between him and Haji Násir, and Qásid would like nothing better than to bring about the discomfiture of Haji Násir by persuading his following to come to terms with Government. Still there were snags—and big ones, for Haji Násir's brother was in charge of the tribe, and both he and several others could be expected to go all out to prevent Qásid's silken tongue having the desired effect.

The whole thing was a big gamble, but I was going through with it at all costs. The one possibility I feared was that H.M. ships would

be met with rifle fire as they drew in opposite the Hakkám country. The whole district was more or less up, and defiance of authority was everywhere in the air.

At seven o'clock on the following morning the gunboat and her little consort cast off according to plan. The Navy was in high fettle and my friend the commander in the best of spirits as I stood by him on the bridge. I confess that I was by no means as sanguine, for I knew more than he of the risks we ran. We might easily be the cause of a widespread rebellion of the whole powerful Mujarrah tribal confederation. Things would then come out and the usual unpleasant repercussions in high places would result. Nor did I want to see my very sporting lieutenant-commander get into trouble.

However, things looked very bright as we rounded the river bend twenty minutes later and saw a group of Arabs at the *sidr* tree rendezvous. Old Qásid al Náhi, who was among them, had been successful, all forty-three sub-chiefs of the Al Hakkám being now assembled.

Our two ships made for shore, grounded their bows in the low bank, swung round in the stream and were made fast. I jumped ashore with four fully-armed Naval ratings with bayonets fixed.

"Salá'am 'alaikum", I greeted the shaikhs, then invited them to be seated.

This they did, and immediately the muzzles of eight machine-guns, manned by grinning Naval and Army personnel, dipped downwards from the decks and covered all of us on shore at point-blank range. I shouted that no man was to stir on pain of being shot, then explained to a very astonished throng that they had absolutely nothing to fear, provided they handed over their rifles and went on board the T. boat.

For a moment I thought they would run for it, then Qásid's persuasive voice arose in praise of the *hakúma* and myself; soothing them with sweet words; promising to go bail himself for their safety. I added my bit, saying that a hot luncheon would be served on board in due course and that they were to consider themselves my guests until the morrow, when all would be returned safe and sound to their homes and families.

At a word from me Qásid then walked round the still-sitting group of men, took over their Mausers one by one and, after unloading each, handed it to the Naval ratings, who took all the weapons on board.

## The Mudhíf Burns

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I invited the owners to follow. It was rather touch and go, but the bluff came off.

When only Qásid and I were left on the bank, I called for the ships to cast off and anchor in mid-stream until I returned.

Lurking in the undergrowth and water channels a hundred yards away were, I knew, several hundred tribesmen. I had clearly seen some of them as they darted about from cover to cover, obviously in a state of great excitement and possibly preparing for a rush. For their benefit I now shouted in loud Arabic to our guests that I was going to burn Haji Násir's village and *mudhíf*, and that if a hand was laid on me or I did not return within three hours, then the fierce British captain would have them summarily put to death.

As the ships cast off, a rather anxious-faced lieutenant-commander peered over the side and wished me luck.

"Part One is over", I sang out to encourage him. "Now for the far less dangerous Part Two."

Old Qásid had shown signs of astonishment when I had made my plan public, for I had previously kept it from him. Now he chuckled quietly and asked me to shake hands.

"Insh' Allah, there is no danger for us now, Yá Daksan, but for the future, Allah karím. Arabs' memories are long. Y' Allah, let us march."

Qásid al Náhi was a brave man.

I followed him away from the river, first through undergrowth, then through a belt of palm-trees for about a quarter of a mile. On the far side we came to wide fields of ripe crops, about a mile beyond which lay a large village built of reeds and mats, with an imposing walled enclosure and *maftúl* (war-tower) standing at one end of it.

"That is Haji Násir's village", said Qásid, "and that is his fort. There on the left is his *mudhíf*."

It stood close to us, behind some willow trees, on the bank of a small canal: a brand-new and handsome *mudhíf*, rather similar to my own at Suq ash Shuyúkh, but smaller. Immediately next to it and almost touching was another and older one, which, said Qásid, Haji Násir now used as a storehouse for grain.

We went forward. Without delay I struck a match and set fire to both *mudhá'if*, which in a few moments were well alight. Qásid looked



awe-struck, but soon broke into a chuckle, remembering no doubt certain grudges he bore the upstart Haji Násir.

"Come!" he cried and moved rapidly towards the village.

By now the huge column of black smoke rose high over the palm trees, and I could see ahead of us men collecting and gesticulating with rifles in hands. They kept their distance, however, none coming within five hundred yards of us. As we neared the village, Qásid pointed out groups of women and children evacuating from the farther side of it.

"There go Haji Nasir's '*ayál*'", he said. "They know the punishment for Mizbán's death is at hand, and have long had their bundles of gold ornaments and valuables ready for instant flight."

I felt rather bad and unhappy about burning the homes of these poor people, for I loved my tribal folk. Possibly old Qásid saw me wavering, because he suddenly broke into a run and reached the village some way ahead of me, shouting out abuse and other things that I could not hear. By the time I caught him up he had lighted a bunch of faggots and was applying fire to the first hut. Soon the whole village was ablaze. The *maftúl* at the far end was more difficult than the rest, but Qásid found a ladder up which he climbed to set fire to the rafters.

There was no time to lose. Two of the three hours had gone by, and we still had to burn the crops and make a safe escape to the river, a mile and a half away. A wind aided us in the burning of the crops. I believe they were all destroyed, though I shall never be certain, for the wind was blowing towards the river, which we had to reach in front of the fire. As we neared the palm-belt the whole country behind us was wreathed in black smoke. I felt the tragedy of it all acutely, but Qásid was delirious with joy, laughing and shouting out his war-cry as we approached the river.

At last we got to the *sidr* tree. When we signalled, a boat was put off for us. Anchors were then weighed and we proceeded to Suq ash Shuyúkh under slow steam, while on the upper deck of the T. boat there was served a banquet that I think my forty-three hostages thoroughly enjoyed. Cádhim Hamdáni really surpassed himself that day.

After the luncheon and the subsequent coffee-drinking ceremony, each man was given the promised '*aba*', then all were allowed to leave the ship and go into Suq ash Shuyúkh town free men. They said



good-bye rather sheepishly and without much talk. I think they were relieved at the way things had turned out.

For many days after men talked about the vengeance of Daksan for the murder of his guest. To me it was a necessary gamble that had come off. It was with mixed feelings that I said good-bye next day to the gallant and sporting Naval commander, for none knew better than I the risks he had run and that he, and he alone, had made possible the successful outcome of our adventure.

Old Qásid got suitably rewarded, and we all agreed to keep silent about the affair. Yet I suspect that Sir Percy Cox somehow got wind of the thing, or I had a good fairy friend, for a few months later, in the summer of 1917, I unaccountably got the C.I.E.

But the end of the story was not yet.

### QÁSID AL NÁHI PAYS BLOOD MONEY

Peace and law and order now reigned in Suq ash Shuyúkh district. The word went round that the A.P.O. had a way of punishing all of his own, and all men decided that the line that paid best was to pay revenue and to put in an appearance when sent for. Haji Násir had disappeared. Some said he had fled into the desert and had died there; others that he had gone over to Shatra and joined Mizhir Pasha, Turkish Political Officer, who had established his headquarters there; yet others that he was keeping close liaison with 'Ajaimi Beg Al Sa'dún, now camped with a Turkish force holding Samáwah, on the Euphrates.

Four months went by and certain whisperings began to go round that Turkish agents had put in an appearance among the Hamár Lake tribes and, working very secretly from the marshes, were trying to raise trouble in the Suq ash Shuyúkh area, with a view to threatening the British lines of communication with Nasiríyah. Nothing positive could be made of these rumours, but it was stated that Haji Násir was with these agents, who were disguised as marsh Arabs.

Haji Hassan Hamdání and Ibrahím al 'Amári took these reports seriously, bidding me watch out. Both were annoyingly mysterious and the best they could produce by way of evidence was this curious saying, then going the rounds of the people of the marshes: "The north wind is beginning to blow and shortly it will grow stronger until it becomes a local gale". Both men interpreted this as the marshmen's

way of saying that the Turks would shortly open an offensive and that troubles would break out in the Suq ash Shuyúkh area.

About this time, I received an invitation from the aged Shaikh Muza'al al Bishára of the Al Hassan tribe to attend a banquet on the occasion of the wedding of his son Hamúda. The tribe's headquarters were to the west of the Hamár Lake, on the Umm Nakhala channel, one of the three branches of the Euphrates that flowed into the lake, which meant a twenty-mile journey down the river by launch, then a long, tedious journey upstream again. Nevertheless I accepted the invitation, in spite of a serious warning from Haji Hassan, Ibrahím al 'Amari and Haji 'Ali al Dabbús. Haji Hassan even came alone to me after dark and strenuously tried to persuade me from going.

"There is danger in the air", he said. "I cannot say of what nature it is or whence it will come, but we Arabs have a way of sensing things. Take my advice. Do not go."

I replied that I could not see my way to cancel my acceptance of Shaikh Muza'al's invitation, declaring that if it was written that something was to happen to me next day, I could not prevent it, whether I went or not to the Umm Nakhala. Haji Hassan then advised me to take with me at least three shaikhs whose tribes inhabited the banks of the rivers along which I should have to travel. By tribal custom, if one took a man as a guide or escort—called a *rafîq* or, in Iraq, a *tisyár*—through that man's tribal country, one was safe from any person in the tribe; and, such being the law, if one took three important shaikhs, one was doubly and trebly safe. This was a good suggestion of Haji Hassan's, so I asked him to arrange for the inclusion in my entourage of Haji Faisal al Yásir of the Al Hassan, Farhúd al Fandi of the Al Hakkám (left bank) and Qásid al Náhi of the Al Hakkám (right bank), all of whom understood exactly why I had selected them.

Besides these three shaikhs I had eight armed *shabána* as escort. The journey down to Umm Nakhala in my launch went off without incident and the marriage feast was a great success. Although over one hundred years old, Shaikh Muza'al was courtesy itself, and his son, Hamúda, in fine form. The celebrations over, we started on the return trip upstream. The launch was a large and powerful one, with a stout, solid awning made of wood running the whole length of it and sufficiently strong to take a reasonable weight, so, as the afternoon

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was cool, I had carpets and cushions spread on this upper roof above the cabin of the *naukhada* (captain) and invited my three friends to join me.

Thus we set off for home, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes as we told each other yarns. When we had cleared the Al Hassan country close to where the Umm Nakhala leaves the main Euphrates stream to the right, I ran the launch into the bank and invited Faisal al Yásir to land and go to his home. Outside his tribal lands his presence was of no use or protection. He readily agreed, thanked me for taking him to the banquet and, after the usual farewells, departed.

The same thing was done with Farhúd al Fandi. After safely passing through his country we dropped him ashore on the western boundary. We were now in Qásid's territory, which stretched almost right up to Suq ash Shuyúkh. Feeling secure now I sat chatting with Qásid on the top of the awning until, four miles from Suq, the launch approached a sharp bend in the river, which there narrowed to a hundred and fifty yards, with a strong current that reduced our speed to about five knots. The banks were covered with dense undergrowth. As we drew near to the bend I suddenly saw a glint of some weapon shine among the reeds close to the water's edge. Immediately afterwards, a man stood up and slowly waved his 'aba, obviously giving a signal to some person or persons unseen.

Ten seconds later we were fired on from the thick bushes on the bank at a range of some eighty yards. Like a flash Qásid hurled me backwards from my sitting position—too late to prevent a flesh-wound in my calf and a cut like a razor-slash across my under-lip. He threw himself full length over me, covering me with his 'aba so that I could not be seen, and started a torrent of abuse, calling down God's curses on those ashore who were trying to harm the companion to whom he was acting as *tisyár*.

"Don't you know me, you dogs and sons of dogs?" he screamed. "It is I—Qásid—Qásid, your shaikh! Have done! Have done!"

I was conscious he was waving his *magwár* (club) at the unseen enemy. With their paramount shaikh lying flat on top of me they dared not fire again at me, so turned their attention to the *naukhada* and engine staff, hoping to wing someone or something that would cause the launch to drift ashore. There was a tremendous din. My eight *shabána*

were replying with rapid fire at invisible targets, while the *naukhada* yelled orders to increase speed and go all out. The whole thing would have been humorous in the extreme had not bullets been flying about.

We got past the narrows with no further casualties and, as we gathered speed and rounded the bend, the firing from the banks ceased as suddenly as it had begun, enabling me to thank a wildly excited Qásid for having saved my life in such a gallant fashion. The launch had been hit in some fifty places round the gunwale and near the water-line. As far as I know, my escort's only victim was a cow, which had been standing on the bank and had suddenly toppled head over heels into the river.

The firing had been clearly heard at Suq ash Shuyúkh, less than four miles away as the crow flies, and a great crowd of men, women and children were awaiting our arrival at the landing stage. My lip was bleeding badly and the front of my shirt had a lot of blood on it, which seemed to upset the people not a little. A mournful wail rose from the several hundred women gathered on the bank. These changed to cries of pleasure when I jumped ashore and shouted that I was all right.

This obvious manifestation of affection on the part of the Suq people, and their evident relief that I was not seriously hurt, touched me very deeply, for I was a lone, very lone Englishman among them. I told them in a short speech that never as long as I lived would I forget their welcome home, and indeed I never shall. My affection for those kindly folk remains constant and green to this day.

I went to bed for three or four days with a sore leg, during which time I received a visit from the outraged and indignant Qásid.

"Yá Sahib", he said, "there is now blood between you and me. Your blood has been shed in my territories and whilst you were under my special protection. The disgrace is great. Until I can wipe it out you must place this black flag on the roof of your house, that all men may know."

He proceeded to unfurl a small black flag about two feet square, which was wrapped round a short stick. Though I tried to make little of the incident, old Qásid was terribly cut up and left me, in tears, to try to find out from his tribe who had been responsible for the ambuscade. He returned in five days and dumped on my office table a bag containing eight hundred rupees, which, he said, represented four



## The Gift of a Maiden

### Chap. VII

hundred rupees for the blood of mine that had been spilt, and four hundred rupees *hashm* (honour money) for my having been attacked whilst under his care. He would not listen to argument of any description, saying that only thus would he be able to hold up his head among his people.

He then went outside and called to a party of old women whom he had brought along with him. They came in and, with much chatter and ceremony, solemnly presented me with Qásid's niece, a rather sweet little girl about fourteen years of age. This, said Qásid, was the tribe's way of appeasing my anger, and she was to be mine for wife. He explained that, by Hakkám custom, if one of the tribe did a grave injury to a member of another tribe and the Al Hakkám considered their man to be in the wrong, besides money compensation, a maiden relative of the offender was handed over to the injured party or, if he was dead, his nearest male relative, the idea being that any children resulting from the marriage would be the means of removing all feeling of resentment that might still be harboured.

The Suq ash Shuyúkh tribe were mostly marshmen and still almost prehistoric in their ways. I was the first Englishman any of them had ever seen, so they could not know that those ways were not ours. Old Qásid was a wild, lawless character, but I loved him for his charming attempt at atonement. To please him I took the money, which I distributed among the poor. I took care to give him in return two complete *zibúns* and 'abas—the best I could find—in order to *taiyib khatirhu*—that is, to comfort his ruffled feelings. As for the little girl, after consulting Haji Hassan Hamdání I returned her to her people with two new frocks of many colours, remarking, as I had been told to do, "Qabalnaha wa raddainaha li kum"—"I have accepted her and returned her again to you". Nor did I forget the old ladies who had brought the lass along.

With everyone now happy Qásid reported on his investigations. The attack, he said, had come from the territory of the Albu Humaidi, a sub-section of Qásid's half of the Al Hakkám. The shaikh of the Albu Humaidi, one Yásir al Cholan, had denied all knowledge, suggesting that strangers had got into Qásid's territory and had committed the crime to bring discredit on Qásid, who was known to be a friend of the *hakúma*. Qásid said that Yásir was a liar, and that he knew perfectly



well that the perpetrators of the deed were Hakkám tribesmen belonging to Haji Násir, who had been promised five hundred Turkish pounds by his masters, the Turks, if he liquidated the A.P.O. Suq (which I doubted). The ambush, said Qásid, had consisted of only twelve men under a disgruntled tribesman whose father had been killed by the British at the battle of Shu'aiba, near Zubair, over two years previously, and whose feelings had been worked on by Haji Násir. Haji Násir had not been near the scene of the ambush, but was still in the northern marshes of the Hamár Lake, where he awaited the news of my death, which, when received, would be the signal of revolt for the marsh tribes and their neighbours, the Mugarrah confederation. This seemed a probable story.

Qásid now pressed for the punishment of his own sub-section, the Albu Humaidi, so I reported the matter to the G.O.C. at Nasiríyah, who played up by sending a battalion of infantry supported by gunboats. The troops cut down some three hundred of Yásir al Cholan's date palms—a really severe punishment for these people—and returned again to Nasiríyah without incident, Qásid having seen to it that no one resisted them.

Thus the incident ended. There was, however, an interesting sequel. Two months later, I was sitting in my Thursday morning *mijlis* feeling pleased with the world, having partaken upstairs and before the *mijlis* started of a bottle of good English ale, a case of which had just arrived from Basra. The assembled chiefs included a strong contingent of Sa'dún shaikhs headed by Thámir Beg, Yusuf Beg al Mansur and old Ráshid al Saqar,\* who had a long scar from a sabre cut across his cheek. I had saved and befriended his wounded son on the battlefield of Shu'aiba, in which he had fought against us.

Our proceedings were suddenly interrupted by a great deal of shouting and noise outside the *mudhif*. Then half a dozen of my *shabána* dragged in a tightly bound man and deposited him at my feet. This was a rather startling development and was received by the large gathering with obvious astonishment and curiosity.

Bursting with suppressed excitement Muhammad al 'Ayail, the head *shabána*, explained volubly that the prisoner was chief of the gang who had tried to ambush me in the launch and that they had caught

\* Al Saqar, a rather obscure branch of the Al Sa'dún.

## Prisoner Released

### Chap. VII

him in the Al Hassan country, at the instance of the faithful Qásid. There was a murmur from the assembly, all waiting to see what I would do.

The prisoner was put on his feet. He had been badly beaten and could hardly stand. He admitted freely the charges brought against him and said he was sorry for having failed to kill me. On my asking why he had acted as he had done, his defiant reply was that his father had been killed by the English in the battle of Shu'aiba, so he felt it his duty to take the life of any Englishman he came across. When I inquired what he would do if I let him go, he spat out that he would try again and, insh' Allah, would be successful next time. Lastly he frankly confessed that Haji Násir had put ideas into his head, with the promise of reward if he succeeded.

It seemed a clear enough case, but I was sorry for the man, more especially as I knew I was dealing with an extraordinarily wild and primitive person who clearly felt he had justice on his side. I made a quick decision, ordering that his bonds be loosed and he be allowed to depart a free man.

"Go", I said, "and do not err again, lest worse befall you."

What made me do it I do not know. Maybe it was the beer. There was an immediate murmur of protest from all sides. Ráshid al Saqar's great sabre mark turned red and blue in his anger.

"You cannot act thus foolishly, Yá hadhrat al Sahib!"\* he cried, and more besides.

I liked the old man, but I was adamant, insisting that my instructions were carried out. To my surprise, as soon as he was free from the ropes, the wretched prisoner burst into a torrent of weeping, then rushed forward, fell on his knees before me and started kissing my feet and knees. It was all rather harrowing, yet it confirmed my belief that the poor fellow had a lot of good in him.

Two days later he came to my house and begged that I take him on as a second syce, as he knew something about horses and wanted to serve me. I gave him his chance and, until he died six years later, I had no more faithful and devoted servant. Can one wonder why one likes these wild and childlike tribesmen of the Muntafiq?

Qásid, of course, was very angry with me. After a heated and

\* "O honoured sir."

stormy interview he left me and went to sulk among his people for the best part of a month.

## THE MUFFLED HORSEMAN

After the events just related things went very well in Suq ash Shuyúkh. I introduced a new revised system of subsidy for all my shaikhs, great and small, which helped considerably in keeping the area quiet. News reached me that Haji Násir al 'Ayail had definitely gone north and thrown in his lot with the Turks, which seemed likely enough, for he gave no further trouble and peace reigned among the Al Hakkám and throughout the Bani Khaiqan and Mugarrah areas. That old croaker, Qásid al Náhi, would always have it, however, that Haji Násir would not forget the burning of his home, or the part he (Qásid) had played in it. Qásid's favourite theme was that Haji Násir was in receipt of a handsome salary from the Turks and was forever boasting to them that he would get even with the A.P.O. Suq ash Shuyúkh, and would yet start a rebellion there against the English.

Eight months went by. One afternoon I was riding, alone and unarmed, with my two *salúqi* greyhounds in the flat, open country some three miles behind Suq ash Shuyúkh. Presently I noticed in the distance a single horseman moving in my direction. No one else was in sight. He came slowly along at a canter and at first I did not take much notice of him. As he drew nearer, however, I saw that he carried across his saddle bow a Turkish cavalry carbine, and that his face was all muffled up, which, in the tribal world, is always a suspicious sign. Trying to appear unconcerned I kept my horse at a walk. The rider came right up to me, stopping close to my near side. I stopped also, gave him the "Salá'am 'alaikum" salutation and asked what he wanted. Without replying he slowly removed the kerchief from his face and let it fall, displaying the hooked nose and evilly handsome face of Haji Násir al 'Ayail.

"Do you know me, Yá Daksan?" he grinned.

"Yes", I replied, "and welcome to you, Yá Haji Násir. God, who arranges everything, has delivered you into my hands."

I said this without in the least knowing why I did so, being conscious only of an unpleasant sensation verging on panic.

"On the contrary, Yá Daksan", replied he. "Fate has delivered you

## I Meet an Enemy

### Chap. VII

into my hands, not me into yours. Tell me, what is to prevent me now from taking my revenge and shooting you dead? Did you not burn my home, my *mudhif* and crops, and did you not, with Qásid al Náhi, cause suffering to my tribe and family?"

As he spoke he slowly drew back the bolt of his carbine and inserted a cartridge into the barrel, all the time sitting quite still on his horse. My brain just refused to work in the way I wanted it to, and downright fear had seized hold of me, but I managed to say with a show of calmness:

"Yá Haji Násir, God has in truth brought you to me and it was verily written that this thing should happen to-day. There is still that little sum of ten thousand rupees on your head, dead or alive. What is wrong with your paying over the money *yourself* to me and surrendering to the *hakúma's* mercy? It is better that way than that another should kill you and earn the money."

Haji Násir laughed mockingly and said:

"No, no. I have come to take my *haq*.<sup>\*</sup> Your time has come at last."

My babbling must, however, have struck a chord somewhere, for suddenly Haji Násir grew serious and, leaning forward, asked:

"What do you mean? I do not understand. You speak in riddles, Yá Daksan."

Encouraged no doubt by the barrel aimed at the pit of my stomach, my brain now began to work at top speed.

"Haji Násir", I said soberly, "my meaning is that if you yourself pay me the ten thousand rupees and surrender unconditionally, the *hakúma* will be pleased and satisfied, and inclined to listen to my advice. I, for my part, will undertake to try your case tribally and will see that most of the money goes to form the blood compensation due from you to the family of Shaikh Mizbán, and that the balance will be considered as a fine to be paid to the *hakúma* after the deduction of *hashm*, honour money due to me for your having slain a guest of mine while under my roof. Do as I advise, Yá Haji Násir, and trust me to obtain the *hakúma's* pardon for you, with permission to return once more to your tribe and lands."

A curious look of doubt and hope had come into Haji Násir's cruel eyes.

<sup>\*</sup> Right, due.



"How", he asked, "am I to pay the money? I do not carry so large a sum on my person."

"You know best", I replied, "how and where to find it. Go, get it, and meet me at sunset in two days' time at the south gate of the town. Your face must be carefully covered. I shall be there to see you safely past the guards. You have my word that I will not play you false."

There was a long pause. Then, to my unutterable relief, he at last gave a groan-like grunt and, turning an expressionless face towards me, said:

"Verily it must be written in this wise in God's book. I shall be at the gate, Yá Daksan, the day after to-morrow at sunset, insh' Allah, but first satisfy me by saying by your *wejh* (face) that you will keep faith."

I gave the necessary tribal assurance in the words:

"Bi *wejhi*, Yá Haji Násir, *tiji sálím insh' Allah*, ba'ad *taslúm al fasl wa al hashm*, ala *mujib qawá'id al asháiyir*." ("By my face, O Haji Násir, you will come in safety by God's grace, after paying over blood money and honour money, according to the customary tribal law.")

Apparently Haji Násir was satisfied, for without a word he swung his mare round and galloped off in a north-westerly direction.

He was as good as his word. Heavily muffled he met me at sunset outside the south gate two days later. I got him safely past the curious guards and took him direct to my house. He had brought the money, mostly in Government of India currency notes. Where he had procured it will remain a mystery. For security reasons I kept him in my house until I was able to summon a tribal council of all the Hakkám shaikhs, under the aegis of Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún and Seyed 'Auda.

I must here introduce my blue-turbaned friend, Seyed 'Auda. He lived close to Suq ash Shuyúkh in almost hermit-like seclusion among the small Noáshi tribal section. He was employed extensively by me in tribal cases necessitating the administering of oaths, for his saintliness was such, and his reputation so high among the local folk, that it was firmly believed that to swear falsely before Seyed 'Auda was tantamount to inviting sickness, scourge, crop failure, cattle disease or other misfortune, not only on the person perjuring himself, but also on members of his family. A most useful man to have.

As this case was an important one it was necessary to make an



## The Fine is Paid

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example. I insisted that double the ordinary *fasl* due for a murdered shaikh should be paid to Mizbán's relatives, and that an equal sum should be paid as *hashm* to myself. The balance of the ten thousand rupees would go to the Government as a fine.

Thámir Beg's influence with the Mugarrah confederation, of which the Al Hakkám formed part, greatly assisted in the satisfactory settlement of this local *cause célèbre*. Nor must I forget Seyed 'Auda, who helped considerably during the proceedings. The *hashm*, which came to the substantial sum of two thousand four hundred rupees, went in part to the little school I was trying to start, the remainder to the poor of the town. Everyone was pleased.

Sir Percy Cox, the C.P.O., was duly informed. He telegraphed some rather caustic remarks concerning my acceptance of ten thousand rupees for Haji Násir's life, but then, he had not been in my shoes. Nevertheless, he supported my settlement of the case, and, strange to relate, my prestige locally went up quite a lot, for the world will always love a rascal, and Haji Násir was popular.

## CHAPTER VIII

# Suq ash Shuyúkh, 1917—1918

*The Breaking of the Mujashíyah Dam—Sequel to a Christmas Party  
—Husain al Gubaih and the War-Tower—Mirza Indya's Talisman*

### THE BREAKING OF THE MUJASHÍYAH DAM

I was faced with a very awkward situation during the flood season of 1917. Suq ash Shuyúkh is in the centre of the delta formed by the Euphrates where it flows into the western end of the Hamár Lake. Just above and below the town the river divides into the Hakaika channel, the Umm Nakhala channel and the Mazlak channel respectively, while four or five large canals, which cannot be called rivers, take off on both sides of the Euphrates and, after irrigating large tracts of country, eventually find their way into the Hamár Lake by way of the marshes. The largest of these side-canals is called the Mujashíyah. At the time of which I write it was steadily growing wider, chiefly because it left the main river in the centre of a wide, moon-shaped bend. It would be sure to take charge some day and become a main channel of the Euphrates.

We had no irrigation department in those days. The tribes did more or less what they pleased in the way of erecting dams where convenient and in order to further their respective plans of irrigation. The tribal scheme of things was to get two crops off the land: a wheat or barley crop and a rice crop. The former was sown in the autumn and reaped in May, after which the Euphrates rose with the melting of the snows in far-off Turkey and the wheat-lands were purposely flooded for the rice crop, which had to be grown and ripened in water.

Rice was considered by far the more valuable of the two crops. The method of the tribes was as follows: Wheat or barley was sown and came up with the winter rain. As the crop ripened it was irrigated by flow at a time when the river was at its lowest, hence efforts were everywhere made, either in co-operation or in defiance of different interests, to build dams across the various large canals that led off the main

## Spring Floods

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waterways, in order to raise their level and force water to irrigate the wheat-fields by flow methods.

With the reaping of the first crop came the annual floods, and all but a few of the great tribal dams were then broken, to bring relief to the main river. Had this not been done, so deep would have been the flood-water that not only would no rice have been possible, but villages and inhabited areas would also have been submerged and their people drowned.

The time-margin between the reaping of the winter crop and the flood season was a narrow one and in ordinary years was calculated to a nicety by the sowing. But things sometimes went wrong. An extra-heavy fall of snow might take place in the far northern mountains and be followed by an extra-early melting of the snows. Then, before the wheat or barley could be got in, the Euphrates would rise to an abnormal degree and, being prevented by the dams from flowing through the channels into the Hamár Lake, would endanger the whole countryside and vast areas of ripening crops. Those most affected were the downstream tribes, living in the areas nearest the Hamár Lake, who felt the necessity of relief before those living above Suq town, where the banks of the Euphrates were higher.

In such an emergency the only way to save the crops was to give the river a chance to escape into the Hamár Lake. To do this, one or more of the laboriously erected tribal dams had to be broken down. Then came the trouble, for no tribe wanted its own dam destroyed, preferring to see that of its neighbour go first. Consequently, on these occasions, and when the local government was weak or non-existent, as had been the case in the Suq area for fifteen years before the advent of the English, men went about trying to demolish each other's dams. Fighting invariably broke out and the strongest usually won.

1917 was one of these years of abnormal flood. At the end of April the Euphrates reached a dangerously high level. In many areas the wheat was not ready for cutting and still had to be watered, so all the tribal dams were intact. From far and near the tribes and garden-owners hastened to the river and feverishly started raising the height of its protective bunds, all hoping that if they could prevent a spill over, the river would go down again before the main flood came.

At Suq ash Shuyúkh petitions came in hourly for official action

to be taken. If something was not done and I did not exert my authority, not only would all the crops of the district be lost, but also the town of Suq would go. My local advisers gave me nothing but contradictory advice as suited the purpose of each, for all had friends among the different tribes, and here was a chance to increase their own influence by persuading the *hakim* to order someone else's dam to be broken instead of the ones in which they were severally interested. I saw that I would get all the blame, whatever happened. It was an anxious time, with no one to help me, and the district as bad as could be.

Slowly but remorselessly the yellow-ochre waters of the river rose until the level throughout the Suq delta was quite ten feet above the surrounding country, and the water was lapping the top edge of the bund—towpath, as we should call it at home. A breach anywhere meant widespread flooding of the countryside and the destruction of all crops. To make matters worse the Arab gambling spirit was well to the fore. The demolition of any dam would result in the immediate engulfing of hundreds of acres of wheat-land directly behind and below that particular bund, so those who had dams were ready to defend them to the last. Armed guards patrolled them day and night, the general determination being that all should suffer rather than that one tribe should bear the brunt.

Something had to be done, a decision had to be made—and very secretly. In desperation, I resolved that the great Mujashíyah dam, some fifty yards across and less than five miles from the town, should go. I knew that I had only to cut a comparatively small trench across the top of it for the swollen river to do the rest. The problem was how to achieve this while sentries guarded the dam. I scouted round in my launch—taking care to visit several other dams, so as not to attract attention—and discovered that only four guards were posted, all on the eastern bank of the Mujashíyah and appearing to be keeping very careless watch.

That was enough for me. I returned to Suq and made my plans. The temper of the owners of the Mujashíyah dam being what it was I knew that they would refuse to obey any order to cut the dam, and that any attempt to breach it by force in daylight, covered by an escort however strong, would be immediately resisted. More stealthy tactics were needed.

## The Dam is Cut

### Chap. VIII

That night, provided with a pick and shovel and accompanied by Muhammad al 'Ayail and two other *shabána*, I put off in a *mash'huf*. We paddled upstream until we reached the Mujashíyah canal entrance on our right. The dam was about three hundred yards down the canal. It was very dark when we made fast to it near the western bank of the canal. The guards, on the eastern bank, were apparently asleep.

Muhammad and I crept out on top of the dam, which was twelve feet thick, and began cutting a two-foot trench across it, starting at the downstream side. The work was not difficult and could be mostly done by hand. These tribal dams are all made in the same way: quantities of rice straw rammed tight with layer upon layer of mud. The topmost layer of hard-caked earth was the worst we had to get through, and this we managed to remove by tearing away the surface with the pick, taking care to avoid any thudding blows, which might easily have attracted attention.

We worked slowly and silently for about an hour, lengthening our trench until only three feet remained to hold back the tremendous pressure of the river water upstream. When we had made a good deep slit, we hurriedly cut the last remaining yard, rushed for our canoe and paddled off hard for a hundred yards, where we paused to await results. All went according to plan. After the preliminary rush of water down the cross-trench we had dug there was a roar as the pent-up waters took charge and began to scour out a channel. We knew that all was well; nothing could stop the swollen river from tearing a larger and larger gap through the breach until all was swept away. We made off before the current formed by the opening of our crude sluice-gates became too great for us to cope with.

The alarm was given too late by the awakened sentries. The last we heard were the distant shouts of the tribe, and the shrill screaming of women from the village nearby, as they vainly tried to stem the rushing waters.

We got back to Suq about three o'clock in the morning and quietly repaired to our respective quarters, but not before I had bound Muhammad and my two other trusty *shabána* to the utmost secrecy regarding the night's work.

Suq town was saved. By morning the river had dropped fully two feet. The news was brought to me very early on by Haji Hassan



Hamdání that the Mujashíyah dam had breached during the night and that the whole of it had since been carried away.

“God has been good”, he said with a smile, “and by His mercy has Himself decided which dam should go first, thanks be to God.”

I was in bed at the time, and feigned sleepiness and irritation at being disturbed, yet I was up and about soon enough to receive the congratulations of the leading personalities of the town, who came to discuss the news and partake of a morning cup of coffee in my *mijlis*.

I kept up the act to the end and, until the day I left Suq ash Shuyúkh, no one knew of my part in the affair. My three *shabána* kept my secret loyally. Nevertheless, although I had saved the town and many thousands of acres of good wheat-land stretching for a distance of many miles off the right bank of the Euphrates, not to mention a vast area upstream of the Mujashíyah on the left bank, the whole country below the Mujashíyah on the left bank was flooded out, and the crops utterly ruined as far as the Hamár Lake. I never was able to compute how many acres of wheat-land had been destroyed, but the damage was certainly very heavy. Nor did I ever attempt to get compensation out of the Government, for such things were not heard of then.

For many a long day I hated myself for the part I had played, and could not help thinking of the many poor folk I had ruined. It was a really bad business, but I had had to hurt the few to save the many. Was I justified? The tribes would have said definitely, “No!”

#### SEQUEL TO A CHRISTMAS PARTY

Various A.P.O.s on the Euphrates, including myself, received an invitation to dine on Christmas Day, 1917, with Major (later Sir Hubert) Young,\* A.P.O. Nasiríyah.

Up to that time, all of us had held separate areas and severally and directly dealt with the C.P.O. Basra, Sir Percy Cox—“Cokus” as the Arabs called him. Major Young had ambitions and, after a very convivial evening, during which champagne mysteriously produced by our host had been freely drunk, he informed us that, for greater administrative efficiency and financial convenience, he was going to propose

\* Sir Hubert Winthrop Young, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., died 1950.

to the C.P.O. that he (Major Young) be appointed Political Officer, Euphrates, with ourselves under him. Being in a happy and festive mood, and carried away by the silken tongue of our host, we cheered to the echo, not really understanding what was involved and caring less.

In fairness to Major Young I should add that in Turkish times Nasiríyah had formed the administrative centre of the Muntafiq *liwa*. The Turks were not bad people to copy in such matters, for nearly always they had attempted to bring all the tribes comprising one confederation under one administrative rule. It was only the methods of their officials that were really at fault, not their scheme of things. Again, the G.O.C. Euphrates had his headquarters at Nasiríyah, and Major Young probably thought, not without reason, that the management of a notoriously bad area, largely cut off from Basra, could be more conveniently effected from a centre where the G.O.C. had his headquarters. After all, the G.O.C. was responsible for the whole area, as well as his lines of communication as far as Kurna.

For all that, we little guessed, when we returned next day to our respective charges, feeling good after a happily spent Christmas Day, that Major Young was serious, or that he would have the temerity to implement the suggestion he had made at the party. He did, however, as we quickly knew to our cost.

Sir Percy was furious, and a week later we all found ourselves transferred to other spheres. Six of us were involved, including Major Young, who was ordered to take over from me at Suq ash Shuyúkh, a distinct come down in the world for him. Very discomfited and sad I was to receive a telegram informing me, without giving any reasons, of my transfer back to the Army and instructing me to join the Local Purchase Department at Amárah. I loved my charge and the people I had so long dealt with, and, of course, could not but feel that I had been considered unworthy and unfit for my responsibilities. It was not until Major Young arrived at Suq that I learned what had happened, and how his tactless action, to say the least of it, had caused all the trouble, bringing down my house of cards about my ears. I blamed him for ruining my career in the Political Department.

But orders were orders. Having handed over to Major Young with a sad heart, I packed all my belongings, transferred them to a local

sailing-craft, said farewell to all my shaikhs, and set out for Basra, where I had to report before proceeding to Amárah.

It took my heavily laden little Noah's Ark five days to get to Basra. Wind and rain delayed us in the Hamár Lake, and for two days and nights we stuck on the mud outside the Mazlak channel. My friend, Hátim al Muzan, the shaikh of the Juwaibir marshmen who reside on both sides of the Mazlak, could not move us so much as an inch, with all the King's horses and all the King's men at his command. Only when a south wind banked up the water sufficiently high in the lake were we able to get off.

On arrival at Basra I repaired to the C.P.O.'s office to report and get orders. To my amazement and no little annoyance, for naturally I thought I should be accused of arranging things, I found practically all my Suq ash Shuyúkh shaikhs camped in the courtyard, surrounded by their baggage, coffee-making equipment and other goods and chattels. The rascals had said nothing of their intentions and had got down before me, some on horseback and some in light *mash'ahíf* by the Umm Nakhala and Ghabishiyah route, a distance of one hundred miles. There were some fifty of them, including Thámir Beg, 'Ajíl Beg, Yusuf Beg, 'Abdul 'Azíz al Ráshid (all of the Al Sa'dún) and almost the full complement of Bani Khaiqan and Mujarraha shaikhs, headed by one-eyed old Qásid al Náhi.

They were all in the courtyard when I entered. There was a rush to greet me, and much handshaking and kissing of me on both cheeks followed. To my anxious inquiry as to what they were doing there, Qásid, with the broadest grin I had ever seen him wear, shouted that they had come to take me back.

"Insh' Allah Cokus ma'y gassir", he cried, meaning that Sir Percy would not fail them.

As soon as I could I fled into the downstairs office of Gertrude Bell, who further alarmed me by saying that my shaikhs had arrived the previous day, had submitted a long petition praying for my return, and had refused to go home or leave the office until they got a favourable reply. Persuasive tactics had been used in vain, and a request that they at least go into the local Ashár\* hotels and coffee-shops and wait till they were sent for had proved of no avail. Miss Bell told me frankly

\* A suburb of Basra.

## The Shaikhs' Request

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that the C.P.O. was very annoyed about the whole thing, suspecting that I was at the bottom of it, and had given orders that I should see him immediately on arrival.

I found him in a very difficult mood. He asked me with icy calmness what I meant by allowing all my shaikhs to leave Suq ash Shuyúkh and come down to Basra without permission. He said that I was to send them back immediately; that he refused to see them or even argue about their petition; that I had better obey orders; and much more besides. When I was able to get a word in, I begged him to believe that, on my honour, I had not the faintest previous knowledge of the intentions of these people; that I had been delayed *en route*; that I had handed over to Major Young and it was he who should have prevented their coming; that I was a good enough soldier to know how to obey orders, but would like to know what failure of mine at Suq ash Shuyúkh had necessitated telegraphic orders transferring me out of the Political Department and back again to the Army without a word of explanation; that he must realize that his act meant the end of all my hopes and ambitions, etc. etc. Lastly I begged him not to vent his wrath on my shaikhs, a very simple, primitive and lovable crowd, who had acted as they had done from sheer ignorance of British ways and customs, and only from a sense of loyalty to their late A.P.O. I begged him to see them all collectively in his study and listen to what they had to say.

Sir Percy relented at last. He ordered me to go and fetch them all upstairs, passing the word at the same time that coffee was to be served in his room. Sheepishly my shaikhs all trooped in, the Sa'dúnis being given chairs, while the rest sat closely packed in a large circle on the floor, trying to sip the coffee that was immediately served them. It was all rather difficult, for I did the translating and had to explain the viewpoint of a still irate C.P.O. At last, when things appeared to be getting sticky, old Qásid suddenly jumped up and, with tears running down from his blind and good eyes, pulled off his *kaff'iyah* and *'aqál* and, rushing forward, wound it round the neck of Sir Percy.

"Nahnu dákhilín al' Allah wa 'alaik! 'Atína Daksan!" he cried. "We are suppliants to God and you! Give us back Daksan! He knows us and the good and bad among us, and only he knows how to manage and keep us in order."



A hubbub followed, and one witnessed the strange spectacle of the Chief Political Officer in Mesopotamia being mobbed by a bunch of wild tribesmen, all trying to wind headcloths and 'aqáls round his head, arms and even legs. The ice was broken, Sir Percy began to laugh, and as he struggled with this mob of big children, he appealed to me for protection. With not a little difficulty I got Qásid and the others to sit down again; a truly humorous sight, each with his *kaffiyah* awry and 'aqál at a curious angle, and all with a pathetic look of hope and expectancy on their villainous faces.

Sir Percy called for coffee and cigarettes and in a calmer atmosphere told his audience that he must have time to think; that he was prepared to consider their petition favourably and would do his best to meet their wishes, but there were difficulties. If they would go away into the town and come the next day, he would see them all again and give his answer. Seeing anxiety appearing on some of the faces he added that this, he hoped, would give them pleasure.

The interview thus ended. I was deputed to get rid of my shaikhs from the office courtyard, which I did and then returned as requested to Sir Percy's room. He at once faced me with a poser.

"So far so good, Dickson, but how am I to go back on my orders to Young? He is now ensconced in Suq ash Shuyúkh and in charge."

I tactfully suggested that I knew Young loathed the idea of remaining in Suq and would, I thought, willingly change places with me and go to Amárah as Local Purchase Officer.

"Very good", said Sir Percy. "If you can fix this I'll sanction an exchange, but it will have to be suggested by you to Young. I cannot go back on my orders, which have already been passed to the Army commander."

He then asked me to excuse him for a minute and wrote something down on a sheet of paper, which he then handed across to me with the words: "I think that will fix things."

It was a draft telegram to Young, purporting to emanate from myself, and to the effect that I had arrived in Basra, had interviewed the C.P.O. and, as a result, ventured to suggest that if he cared to apply direct to the C.P.O. for an exchange with me, there was every reason to believe that the C.P.O. would consider the matter favourably, but that urgency was desirable. I sent the telegram off "Priority", and



the next day, when all the shaikhs were again gathered in Sir Percy's room to hear his decision, he commenced proceedings by showing me a telegram marked "Urgent", in which Major Young applied for permission to go to the Army as Local Purchase Officer vice Dickson, who, he understood, was agreeable to return to Suq ash Shuyúkh. Sir Percy also showed me his reply approving the arrangement. With an enigmatic smile he then turned to the shaikhs and, after asking after their health and expressing the hope that they had all been comfortable in their various hotels, said quietly that he had thought over their request regarding Captain Dickson and had decided to send him back to Suq ash Shuyúkh. The enthusiasm with which this was greeted may be better imagined than described.

Sir Percy Zachariah Cox was a great man. It is easy to understand the reasons for his popularity with the people of Mesopotamia and the veneration in which he is held to this day. It will be many years indeed before his name is forgotten.

My return to Suq ash Shuyúkh was a triumph always to be remembered. I tried to make it as unostentatious and quiet as possible, but it was not to be. It was Qásid's great day.

I was to remain in Suq for nearly a year, and no one minded when I later became Political Officer for all the Muntafiq, with headquarters at Nasiríyah, only twenty miles away.

#### HUSAIN AL GUBAIH AND THE WAR-TOWER

Old Husain al Gubaih was the Shaikh of the Al Juwarín, a semi-nomadic sheep and donkey tribe of Suq ash Shuyúkh, which camped in summer in the vicinity of Umm al Battush, and, every autumn season, went into the southern desert of Iraq and Kuwait for six months. The Al Juwarín were of good Arab stock, priding themselves on being of the 'Ajwad section of the Muntafiq. They were poor. In summer Husain al Gubaih did a certain amount of tilling of the soil, usually for Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún, between Umm al Battush and Suq town. He was rather a dear old man, but wild as they make them, and not in the least averse to pinching other people's property if he saw it to his advantage to do so. His following was comparatively numerous and well armed.

One fine day in the summer of 1918 Thámir Beg came rushing in to see me with his Kurdish *kátib*, Mulla Ahmad. He excitedly complained that Husain al Gubaih had seized one of the war-towers that protected his lands. It dominated a wide area on which Husain had sown rice on behalf of Thámir Beg. Husain had refused to vacate the *maftúl* (war-tower) and had asserted his intention of becoming a landowner, as so many had done in the unsettled times then prevailing. In reply to Thámir's protests Husain had declared himself to be a servant of the Turks and had told the servants whom Thámir had sent to argue with him that he knew neither Thámir Beg nor Captain Dickson nor the *hakúmat al Inglés*, and defied anyone to evict him.

I must say that my sympathies were with Husain rather than with Thámir as I listened to the latter fuming against his erstwhile *sarkál*, for had not Thámir himself stolen lands that were not his own in the general disorganization following on the departure of the Turks and the coming of the English? I did my best to calm him and the voluble Mulla Ahmad, promising to see what I could do.

The seized *maftúl* was only three miles from Suq town, on the road to Khamisiyah, and could be plainly seen with the naked eye from the top of my house.

Husain al Gubaih was sent an official summons to attend at my office. In due course he came to see me. He was a wild-eyed, weather-beaten man of about seventy, and poorly clad. Obviously, too, he had never in his life worn sandals or other footwear on his hard and horny feet. I have a vivid recollection of them; more like the feet of a camel, they indicated better than anything else that he was a man of the desert and had spent most of his life walking barefoot over hot sands.

He was laughingly defiant and I could not help but like him. He said that his father before him had always sown crops each year on the land he had seized, and that Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún had tried to drive him out and give the land to another *sarkál*. Because, as a result of the war, many were seizing lands not their own, he thought it a good opportunity to do likewise. The *maftúl* commanded the countryside, giving him control of the lands he had sown, so he had to retain it for his own safety's sake.

After hearing all he had to say I solemnly reminded Husain that there was a *hakúma*, represented by myself, in power and that it was my

## A Problem

### Chap. VIII

duty to stop individuals taking the law into their own hands. He must evacuate the tower without delay and afterwards submit in proper manner to my court any complaint he had to make against Thámir Beg. With a cunning twinkle in his eye the old man thanked me for my advice and promised to do as I asked. He requested three days in which to persuade his tribesmen to see reason.

Husain departed and I fondly imagined the affair settled. Not so, however, for on the third day I received a very crudely worded letter from Husain to the effect that his tribesmen did not agree with my decision. Owing, he wrote, to the general lawlessness that had set in he was unable to enforce his authority over them, and if I could prove to them that the *hakúma's* authority was firmly established, the Juwarín would doubtless surrender the *maftúl* without giving trouble. In a verbal message he suggested that if I marched out with my soldiers and big guns and threatened his people with bombardment of the tower, then all would be well. The cunning old rascal knew full well that I had no soldiers and no guns, which meant that his men would remain in possession until such time as I could produce them.

In the meanwhile, Thámir Beg came in again and asked what I was going to do about it. He stressed the fact that, only the previous day, some of his men had been fired on from the *maftúl* and had suffered two casualties. Unless I handled the situation firmly, said Thámir Beg, and showed my authority, matters would get worse; all the people of the countryside, who were watching events intently, would assume that I had no real Government backing, and would everywhere start imitating Husain and his Juwarín.

With Thámir's pistol at my head I had to get busy and think hard. He had made this a test case and was obviously trying to force my hand, which did not make me love him any more. He could easily have bided his time until conditions were more propitious and then formally complained. It was equally evident that without artillery my small force of *shabána* could do nothing against a well-built, three-storeyed tribal war-tower, and to attempt to lay siege to it would have resulted only in my *shabána* being attacked by the Juwarín from the outside. I could not afford a reverse, nor could I hope to get help from the G.O.C. at Nasiríyah, who had his hands full keeping watch over the Al Gharráf tribes in the direction of Shatra.

Trying procrastination I wrote to Husain, telling him to come and see me again. He refused to comply and sent in word that his people would not allow him to visit me, lest I acted treacherously and imprisoned him. This was a very lame excuse; the whole district knew that Husain never brooked any defiance of his authority over the tribe, being, in fact, one of the strongest personalities in the area.

I wrote again and sent Haji Hassan Hamdání to try to persuade the old man to see reason—at any rate, to come under *hadh wa bakht* (safe-conduct) and discuss matters—but without avail. Haji Hassan returned with the reply that Husain was in a bad mood and would not see reason at all; also that he had delivered my letter at much risk to himself, having been set upon and nearly beaten for his pains.

The whole affair had developed into as pretty a test case as one could want. I was at my wits' end to know what to do next. But I had not reckoned with the prestige of the Royal Navy on the Tigris and Euphrates. Once again it came unwittingly to my rescue and solved an awkward problem. In the midst of my troubles and the general excitement two "fly" boats,\* proceeding from Nasiríyah to Basra on relief, anchored off my *mudhif* at Suq, their wicked-looking four-inch guns and general smartness breathing efficiency and determination.

I played my last card. In a hurried note to Husain al Gubaih I said that the *hakúma* had sent warships to enforce my authority, and that the bombardment of his people and the destruction of his war-tower by gunfire would shortly take place. In its mercy, however, the *hakúma* would give him one final chance: if he came in within four hours and notified the formal surrender of his tower and the submission of his people, than the ships would withhold their fire.

It is doubtful whether the Navy could have done anything at that range and by the indirect fire that would have been necessary, but my bluff succeeded. Within three hours old Husain appeared on my doorstep, begging for mercy. On seeing me he rushed forward and with bare head wound his *kaffiyah* round my neck, imploring *dakhála*—forgiveness and sanctuary.

"Enough, enough!" he cried. "You have shown that there is a *hakúma* in the land. I am satisfied."

He then explained volubly that his men had evacuated the *maftúl*

\* Small river gunboats bearing the names of different species of fly.



## War-Tower Occupied

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and begged that I send my *shabána* out to take possession at once. This was done. My braves occupied the place within the next hour, Husain remaining under strong guard in my office during the proceedings.

Thus all ended well. The amusing part was that His Majesty's ships knew nothing of the matter at all, the two captains being informed of the assistance they had unconsciously afforded me only as they were about to leave Suq ash Shuyúkh on the conclusion of the luncheon party given by myself in their honour.

As for old Husain al Gubaih, he played up well and was duly released after he had kissed the hand of Thámir Beg in public *mijlis* and prayed forgiveness, and had been given a solemn warning as to his future behaviour. He visited me frequently from then on and became one of my best friends when I was transferred to Nasiríyah. He died some eight years later, since when Násir, his son, has ruled the Al Juwarín in his stead. With the coming of the Arab Government under Faisal a short time afterwards, he proved himself to be a respected member of tribal society. Násir al Gubaih has done well. He often visits me in Kuwait when the Muntafiq shepherd tribes arrive each autumn.

#### MIRZA INÁYA'S TALISMAN

Between the Umm Nakhala and Mazlak channels, there lived a Shi'ah religious divine named Mirza Ináya. He wielded great influence among the Al Hassan, Al Juwaibir and Bani Sa'id marsh tribes and others who were of the Akhbaríyah sect of Shi'ahs, as opposed to the 'Usúliyah sect, which forms the bulk of the Shi'ah world. On a promontory formed by the two channels mentioned above, but well away from both, he lived with a small colony of his followers, comprising some half-dozen other '*ulema*, running a sort of tribal college to which many repaired for advice on matters affecting the religious law.

On many occasions Mirza Ináya had assisted me by settling complicated tribal cases connected with petty boundary disputes, divorce, inheritance, and the like, our only contact being by correspondence. For a religious leader to visit a British A.P.O. would have meant considerable loss of prestige in the eyes of his following, so I had not asked it of him, at the same time leaving him severely alone.



In the autumn of 1918, however, I decided to go and call on Mirza Ináya, for I badly wanted him on my side. The Government had decided to dredge a navigable channel across the Hamár Lake and also across a short stretch of country slightly south of the Mazlak. It was to come out on the Euphrates close to Bani Sa'id village and only a short distance from where Mirza Ináya resided—in other words, just where the Umm Nakhala and Mazlak bifurcated.

The Al Juwaibir, Bani Sa'id and Al Hassan were disturbed at this proposal, believing that the new deep-water channel would draw off most of the river water and, by drying up the Umm Nakhala and Mazlak channels, ruin their rice-lands. They did not want a navigable channel for sailing-craft, fearing that, by being kept always open, it would prevent their yearly practice of erecting temporary dams of reeds and rice-straw across the Umm Nakhala and Mazlak, to raise the level of the water and so benefit their rice-lands. The making by a thoughtless *hakúma* of a new dredged channel would, they thought, nullify their old-established methods.

In consequence much murmuring was in the air, and hostile meetings were daily held in Mirza Ináya's college. To make matters worse, a large Government dredger had finished its work on the Hamár Lake stretch, and had already started cutting a wide channel across the Juwaibir country, moving towards Bani Sa'id village. Petitions of protest began to pour in to me at Suq ash Shuyúkh, followed by angry deputations from the marshes. I could sense general unrest and feared hostile repercussions unless I got busy. My chief anxiety was that some irresponsible tribesmen would take the law into their own hands and start sniping the dredger staff to show their disapproval of things.

Quite obviously, Mirza Ináya sympathized with the tribes' point of view, and it was equally clear that the only way to restore confidence and avert a dangerous situation was to assure him that the new channel was only intended to assist Arab sailing-craft to get across the Hamár and up to Suq and Nasiríyah, and would be closed by a temporary dam as the rice season came round every year.

So my visit to Mirza Ináya was arranged by letter for a certain day, when I was graciously invited to come down before noon and partake of an Arab luncheon. I found him to be an elderly man of shrewd and forceful character. It was obvious that he had plenty of brains and much

## The Silver Cylinder

### Chap. VIII

local influence, and I could not but feel that with this influence permanently on the side of the Government in the unruly marsh country of the western Hamár Lake, I should be helped considerably in my work. I therefore went all out to be friendly and win his confidence.

In a long talk with him before luncheon I explained the Government's point of view and its reasons for wanting the river as a waterway. I assured the worthy divine that no objection would be raised if, preparatory to the yearly sowing of rice, the tribes built a temporary dam across the newly cut canal, provided it was removed as soon as the need for it ceased. River craft could use the old Mazlak route—though somewhat awkward, owing to its bar—during the periods when the new canal was blocked. Mirza Ináya saw my point, told me he would use his influence with the tribes, and promised that all would be well. I knew that he would be as good as his word.

Then followed the luncheon party, which was a particularly sumptuous affair, with many Persian as well as Arab dishes, for, as his title\* implies, Mirza Ináya was of Persian origin and his good ladies knew all the tricks of Persian cooking. After luncheon and the usual polite good-bye speeches, I prepared to take my leave, but Mirza Ináya would not let me go until he had personally bound round my arm a talisman, consisting of a small silver cylinder two inches long, which, he said, contained writings made by himself from the Holy Book, and possessed the virtue of making it impossible for the wearer to come to any harm when travelling by water, whether sea or river. Without doubt he knew all about the river ambush of 1916, when Qásid al Náhi had saved my life, and, in the kindness of his heart, wished to ensure the A.P.O.'s future safety from tribal treachery. I am sure he believed his talisman could definitely preserve its wearer from drowning or other harm by water.

I thanked him for his courtesy and kind thoughts, and set off for home by launch, still wearing the talisman, to the great delight of the Mirza's immediate following and the tribesmen gathered on the river bank to see me off.

The sequel came sooner than any of us expected, least of all my thoughtful host. Two months later, almost to the day, I decided to visit the now completed Bani Sa'id channel and call on the skipper of

\* Mirza, a Persian title prefixed to the surname of any man of note.

the dredger before he left for Basra. The dredger was anchored on the south side of the channel at the Hamár Lake end, and the captain was expecting me. It was cold when I set off in my launch\* in the early morning, so I was wearing my *poshteen* (sheepskin coat). Reposing in the inside pocket of my shooting-jacket was the talisman given me by Mirza Ináya. I had carried it about with me ever since the luncheon party, partly because of an inbred superstition, but more because I knew it pleased my Arab servants. That morning I did not give it a moment's thought.

The launch was covered in, with enclosed engine-room and crew's quarters, and a square-windowed cabin for myself. I had just finished my breakfast as we entered the rather impressive new Bani Sa'id channel, and noticed that the current was running very strongly, giving the launch a most flattering turn of speed. I knew that we should reach the dredger within a few minutes.

Suddenly, without any reduction of speed, the launch turned violently to port. For his own purposes the captain of the dredger had thrown a wire cable across the river and five feet above it, and the Indian *sukkani* of my launch had not seen it until he was almost on top of it. All my breakfast crockery slid off the table and crashed to the floor in alarming fashion. As I jumped up, I got a fleeting glimpse of the dredger through the window—and the next second, while still moving fast, the launch hit the taut cable broadside on, and immediately the little craft began to roll over. I only just managed to get to the window, grabbed at the cable and was torn bodily out of the cabin through the window—a tight fit with my *poshteen* on. Next moment I was aware that the launch had disappeared and that I was dangling in mid-air, grasping the cable with both hands, with the lower part of my body in the water and, due to the strength of the current, my legs inclined forward at an angle of forty-five degrees. The strain of holding on to the cable was appalling; my hands seemed frozen and my body felt as heavy as lead.

After what seemed hours, I was rescued by the crew of the dredger, but it was a near thing, for I was exhausted and ready to drop off by the time the boat came alongside.

\* Not the same vessel as that mentioned in the previous chapter, but a newer and larger one.

## The Launch Sinks

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Having been given a stiff brandy, I asked about my launch and was told that the whole outfit—*sukkani*, crew of four and my personal servant—had gone. The launch had just rolled over and sunk like a stone, giving the trapped men no chance at all. Only my cap, with political badge and white band, was recovered.

The dredger captain was very upset and worried, and arranged for my return to Suq in his own launch. His excuse for the cable across the channel was that he had been about to turn his ship round and, to assist in the process, had made a line fast to a palm tree on the opposite bank—an unforgivable thing to do, with many sailing-craft about.

Two days later, hearing of the accident, old Mirza Ináya sent his grown-up son\* to inquire after my health. In a short note he gave praise to Allah that I had been carrying his talisman at the time, although how he guessed that I had had it on me I do not know, for I had told no one.

I have never since made fun of talismans or amulets given by *seyeds* or holy men.

\* He came down to Kuwait in the spring of 1954, to see me and beg for a donation from the ruler to help rebuild his father's mosque, which had suffered during the great flood of that year. I was able to help in a small way. Mirza Ináya, his father, had died fifteen years previously, his son told me.

## CHAPTER IX

# Nasiriyah, 1918–1919

*'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún Makes His Submission—  
The Bad Old Man of the Great Marshes—Binniyyah—The Kurdish  
Maiden of Suwa'ij—The Vengeance of Haji Násir*

### 'ABDULLAH BEG AL FÁLEH PASHA AL SA'DÚN MAKES HIS SUBMISSION

In the winter of 1918, not long after the Armistice, I was transferred from Suq ash Shuyúkh to Nasiriyah, where I became Political Officer in charge of the whole Muntafiq *liwa* and the tribal confederation of that name. Captain Ditchburn succeeded me at Suq.

The story I have now to tell began while I was still at Suq. The First World War had gone on for nearly four years, yet neither 'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún nor 'Ajaimi Beg Al Sa'dún, the two leading shaikhs of the Muntafiq, had come in and submitted to the British. 'Abdullah Beg was recognized head of the Ahl al Jazírah;\* 'Ajaimi Beg, of the Ahl al Shamíyah.† Both had stood by their friends, the Turks, and one honoured them for this. But the tide of war was now going against the Turks everywhere, and the writing on the wall was clear. 'Abdullah Beg and 'Ajaimi Beg had to decide whether to surrender to the British or to retire up the Euphrates with the remnants of the broken Turkish forces, trusting that their allies would provide for them after the war was over. Both men possessed vast acres of land on the Euphrates and in the Basra area, which heavily weighed the scales in favour of their giving up the struggle and submitting to the British. However, 'Ajaimi Beg made up his mind early on to remain with his Turkish friends, and stuck to this decision to the end of the war. After the Mudros armistice of 30th October 1918 he was rewarded by them with a pension and the grant of lands at Mardín, Turkey.

More vacillating by nature, 'Abdullah Beg tried to temporize and make conditions with Sir Percy Cox by secret letter-writing and

\* "The People of the Island." See page 162.

† "The People of the Shamíyah." See page 162.



## A Visit After Dark

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requests for guarantees, etc. This did him only harm and ended in Sir Percy losing patience and refusing to hold further communication with him. He was told, finally and unequivocally, to surrender unconditionally or go off with his friends the Turks and be damned.

This did not suit 'Abdullah Beg. He disappeared for a while to ponder on his next move, realizing he had made a bad start by antagonizing Sir Percy and the Army commander without gaining anything.

This was the position in January 1919, shortly after I had taken over at Nasiríyah and occupied Shatra by a swift move of the Muntafiq Horse, my locally raised corps of four hundred men, through the tribal country of the 'Azairij, Khafája and 'Abúda. I was, of course, unaware of the secret negotiations that had gone on between 'Abdullah Beg and Sir Percy during the preceding year. As far as I was concerned 'Abdullah Beg and 'Ajaimi Beg had elected to go off with their late masters, which was regrettable, for there was always the possibility of their tampering with the loyalty of the Muntafiq tribes, over whom I now had charge, and creating trouble for us at the least expected moment. But, as I saw it, there was nothing that could be done about it.

One day I received a mysterious missive from Dhári Beg al Fahad Al Sa'dún, saying that he would like to see me on very important business, and asking if he might call on me after dark, when no one was about. Dhári Beg was a typical diplomat of the old Sa'dún school, and his underground knowledge of things was always good. He dreamed of a Sa'dún revival under the aegis of the British, and of the setting up of a Sa'dún state, under England's protection, on the lower Euphrates—something after the manner of Kuwait and Bahrain, with himself acting as chief minister or holding some similar influential post. I replied to his request in the affirmative, for I was always glad to see old Dhári Beg and hear a cynical summing up of the latest military and political developments.

Following the usual conversational preliminaries, Dhári Beg informed me that 'Abdullah Beg, the hope of all the Sa'dún now, was hiding in the vicinity of Nasiríyah and wanted to discuss at a secret interview the matter of his surrender. Dhári Beg enthused over this God-given chance of winning over this truly grand chieftain from the Turks; how it would be a great political defeat for them; and how, if I

were the person to bring in 'Abdullah Beg, I would gain much fame and honour from Sir Percy Cox.

I told Dhári Beg that I should be very pleased to receive 'Abdullah Beg, and that if he felt nervous about his safety, I would gladly offer him safe-conduct to come and go. I added that half an hour's talk was worth all the letter-writing in the world, and that if I could persuade 'Abdullah Beg to throw in his lot with the British, so much the better. After all, 'Abdullah Beg had never really fought us, and was guilty of nothing worse than sitting on the Turkish side of the fence.

Cunning old Dhári was delighted, promising to bring 'Abdullah Beg into my house at ten o'clock the following night, but urging that the meeting be kept absolutely secret from my servants and other persons in the town. This suited me very well; as all my staff, with the exception of one Indian cook, slept out, the matter could be easily arranged and I could admit the visitors personally. Every precaution would be taken to have no one about, and even the prescribed coffee would be omitted on this occasion.

Next evening Dhári Beg arrived with a very tall, distinguished stranger, heavily muffled up about the head. I let them in myself and took them up to my little drawing-room, where Dhári Beg introduced me to the great 'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún, whom I found to be a thin, handsome man of obvious breeding and looking every inch a shaikh. I was taken with him at once, and could see that the way to deal with him was to play up to his pride and make a fuss of him. The best of the Al Sa'dún are like that—and why not? They can claim direct and unbroken descent from the Prophet, since whose days they have never given their daughters in marriage to anyone other than members of their own clan.

We soon relaxed when it became clear that 'Abdullah Beg really meant business. He was ready to surrender, but was afraid that Sir Percy might, out of annoyance, send him away to India as a prisoner. He expressed himself ready to pay anything by way of a fine, if this would make matters easier for him and help grease the wheels. I was quick to note that he made no conditions, so after a little bit of fencing I agreed to use my best offices with the C.P.O., provided 'Abdullah Beg authorized me to telegraph Baghdad that he had come in and surrendered to me absolutely unconditionally; had brought in and

## Rupees Handed Over

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handed over to me ten thousand rupees as a goodwill offering to the badly equipped little hospital run in Nasiríyah by the Political Department; and had expressed the hope that the C.P.O. would allow him to retire to his estates, where he promised to reside quietly.

Dhári Beg stoutly supported me and, after a while, persuaded 'Abdullah Beg to agree to my sending the telegram. So far, so good. But what of the money? In the end 'Abdullah promised to give it to me in the morning through Dhári Beg, while I undertook to fix matters with the C.P.O. All went well: I received the ten thousand rupees; Sir Percy, who was always open to any reasonable proposal, approved the gift to the hospital, and also agreed to my suggestion that the great 'Abdullah Beg, paramount shaikh of the Muntafiq now that 'Ajaimi Beg had gone to Turkey, should retire to his property at Kutaiban, a few miles upstream of Basra, on the left bank of the Shatt al Arab.

It is surprising what a little careful *siyási* can do.

#### THE BAD OLD MAN OF THE GREAT MARSHES

There was another who had not yet come in or acknowledged the authority of the British Government. Badr ar Ruma'iyadh, shaikh of the important Albu Sáleh marsh tribe to the north of the Hamár Lake, was a sort of mythical figure, supposed to be over eighty, and married to a couple of dozen wives. He wielded great influence in the vast and mysterious marsh country extending from the Hamár Lake up to Shatra and Amárah. Many stories were told of his great prowess in battle, of his independent and super-cunning character, and of how he had defied the Turks for years prior to 1914.

"Why shouldn't he?" said the marshmen. "No one can get at him in the marshes."

"I never knew the Turks, nor do I now know the Inglese", he is reported on many occasions to have said, "and if Cokus wants to see me let him come along and visit me in my home on the Bada'a channel among the reeds. I shall not go to him."

Whilst at Suq ash Shuyúkh I had made many attempts, mainly through Haji Hassan Hamdání, to arrange a meeting with Badr ar Ruma'iyadh, but all had come to naught, although once I had nearly

been successful. Again and again I had offered him honourable safe-conduct if he would but visit me and make his submission. His reply to my overtures had been that he could not trust himself with the English, who might betray their word and imprison him. This, I believed, was a cunning and well thought out pose. He wielded great influence, and to be able to say to his wild marshmen, and to the tribes of the Muntafiq bordering on the Albu Sáleh, that he had never seen an Englishman, nor had been in to see any representative of the British since they had arrived in Mesopot, nor had any wish to see any of that brood, would sound brave and would savour of defying the foreigner and so give him the prestige he sought.

He had, it is true, sent his eldest son, Hassan, to see me on two occasions in Nasiríyah after I had been transferred there, but that was as far as he had ever got. With lying tongue, Hassan had explained how his father had many enemies, was very aged, was bent nearly double with rheumatism, etc., else he would assuredly have visited the *hakúma* long since. It had not rung true, yet I had not pushed matters, believing somehow that I should yet win over Father Fox by cultivating Hassan, the cub.

It was while Hassan was again in Nasiríyah, where he had come to convey one of his father's occasional messages of goodwill, that a report reached me from Suq ash Shuyúkh that a *safína*, en route for Shatra from Basra via the Bada'a and filled with merchandise, had been shot up close to Badr's village, half the crew killed, and the boat and merchandise seized by Badr. I promptly sent for Hassan, who pretended total ignorance of the incident and swore that the Albu Sháma, not the Albu Sáleh, marshmen must have committed the outrage.

I suspected that Hassan was fully cognizant of the affair, and that his old father's purpose in sending him in to see me was to throw dust in my eyes, so that later, when the act of piracy became known, he could say with hand on heart:

"How could I have been mixed up at all in this wicked crime, seeing that my beloved eldest son was in Nasiríyah at the time, on a goodwill visit to the British representative? How could I have endangered my son's safety like that?"

Trickery and deceit were common in those days, and one was



## Release from Prison

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becoming an adept at countering them. I committed Hassan to prison. After he had been there a week, Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún, accompanied by Haji Hassan Hamdání, came up from Suq and begged that Hassan be released and put on his honour not to leave Nasiríyah until I permitted him to do so. They pointed out that Hassan was the son of a great shaikh, and to disgrace him in the eyes of men by keeping him in a police lock-up was simply copying the bad old methods of the Turks, which God forbid that the *Hakúmat al Muddhana* (Supreme Government) should copy. Dhári Beg al Fahad Al Sa'dún also joined in the protest, and between them they persuaded me to let Hassan out on parole.

I sent for him, explained how his friends had pleaded with me on his behalf, and told him if he would give me his *kalám sharaf* (word of honour) not to leave the town without my permission, he could come out of prison and reside in Dhári Beg's house. Hassan promptly gave the required assurance, and Dhári as promptly went bail for him to the amount of five hundred rupees.

Hassan decamped two nights later.

I have often wondered how far Badr was behind the visit of my three friends, and whether Dhári had squared matters by taking the five hundred rupees from Hassan before he made himself scarce, for the money was immediately paid in to me by Dhári with a rather too patent fuming against "that dirty son of a dog, that marshman and spawn of the devil", who had lied to him. I try not to think too badly of old Dhári, who is dead now. He was a good man and a firm friend of the British.

The question of the seizure of the *safína* was never satisfactorily settled with Badr ar Ruma'iyadh, except for a surprise bombardment of his village and war-tower. As he and his tribe were becoming more and more difficult, and had taken to giving open sanctuary to every rogue wanted by the Government, I decided that it was time to call in the assistance of the Army.

Sir Arnold Wilson in Baghdad was very helpful in arranging the matter with the G.O.C.-in-chief, and in due course, on 26th February 1919, Badr's village was attacked and occupied by a column operating from Nasiríyah, and all his standing crops burnt. The wily old man slipped through our fingers, in spite of all known bolt-holes being



closed in the direction of Shatra and Amárah by parties of levies and *shabána* working under the direction of Captain Bertram Thomas, A.P.O. Shatra, and Major Robert Marrs, P.O. Amárah.

Badr had managed to get into his beloved marshes, and was said to be planning trouble in the form of raids in the direction of the Al Gharráf, where the country was open and the going good. Apart from marshmen he still had a useful little mobile force of some four hundred mounted men, which, backed by Badr's undoubted prestige, could cause a lot of trouble.

Badr's village, home and lands having been occupied, it was decided to build in the vicinity a fort that would be permanently manned by Government levies. As a precautionary measure it was decided to leave a small military force in occupation during the building work, which was quickly put in hand under the direction of Captain Ditchburn, the A.P.O. Suq. I remained camped in the immediate vicinity of Badr's village with the G.O.C., who used Badr's great seven-poled *mijlis* tent as council chamber and office.

Exactly ten days after the occupation of his village Badr sent a verbal message saying that he desired to surrender to the G.O.C., but, as a preliminary, wished to meet me, the Political Officer accompanying the force, in order to find out the Government's wishes and learn the actual terms of surrender. A verbal message was returned that I was prepared to meet him where and when he pleased, and that he had the G.O.C.'s guarantee that he could come in and discuss matters and return in safety after the interview. Haji Hassan Hamdání, who was now acting as my Arab assistant, also sent Badr a persuasive note of his own and with my approval. Two days later Badr sent in a letter in Arabic saying that he wanted me to have a small tent pitched in the middle of a wide, open plain three miles from his village, close to a lone tamarisk, which he indicated, and that I should meet him accompanied by two men only, the three of us to be entirely unarmed. For his part he also would come unarmed and accompanied by two of his sons. If I agreed, the time most suitable would be at noon on the following day.

I at once fell in with the suggestion and, with the G.O.C.'s approval, arranged for the tent to be pitched that night at the trysting place. The next morning I was preparing to go out and meet the redoubtable

## Treachery Feared

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Badr, when I was visited in my tent by Hazám Beg al Mishári Al Sa'dún, Arab commandant of the Muntafiq Horse, and Fahad Beg al Sulaimán Al Sa'dún, who urged that I should not go to the meeting without an escort. They feared treachery, knowing Badr and his record better, they said, than I did. Seeing that I was adamant, for I had already given my word, they pressed very insistently to be allowed themselves to accompany me, or, at least, have a force hidden in the vicinity, just in case Badr attempted to kidnap me.

"He is capable of the blackest treachery and knows every trick", they said. "Do not go alone, we adjure you."

Reluctantly I had to tell these two good friends of mine that I could not change my plans, and shortly afterwards I left, as arranged, with Captain Ditchburn and Hassan Hamdání. We were all three of us mounted and unarmed, and I confess that, in view of the warnings of Hazám Beg and Fahad Beg, both staunch men and not usually given to nervousness, I rode away with some trepidation.

We reached the lone tree and the solitary tent a quarter of an hour before time. Not a soul was in sight, and only the distant mirage played pranks with our vision, suggesting a wide expanse of water with tall trees in the north-east, the direction from which we expected Badr ar Ruma'iyadh to come. We knew, however, that no such water existed and that the tall trees were nothing but foot-high bushes.

The sun was now hot, so we tethered our horses to the tent ropes and took refuge inside. I had included a carpet, some six feet by four, as suitable for the occasion, so we had something on which to sit. Noon arrived without a sign of Badr, then twelve-thirty and one o'clock. I began to wonder whether we had been fooled. Haji Hassan too began to fidget and I could see that he was far from happy. He counselled patience, nevertheless, for was not Badr the wildest of wild men, and how could he know anything about time and punctuality? At long last, when it was nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, I suddenly spotted a strange commotion in the centre of the distant mirage. It appeared like a tall conical hill in reverse moving towards us. Gazing anxiously at the thing through my glasses I decided that it was a column of dust travelling fast like a gigantic whirling devil. It bore straight down on us. At last we saw what it was, for out of the sea

caused by the distant mirage emerged a body of horsemen, some two hundred and fifty in number, galloping fast towards us. With not unmixed feelings we watched them getting nearer and nearer until they arrived—a well-armed and as rascally a body of men as I want to see, headed by a magnificently proportioned man with a long, flowing red beard. The party halted some twenty yards from us and, with surprising agility, their leader dismounted and quickly advanced towards us, smiling as he came.

So this was the aged and decrepit eighty-year-old Badr ar Ruma'iyadh! I was dumbfounded, for I saw instead a well-made, thick-set man of some six feet in height, dressed in resplendent style, with gold-braided *'aqál* on his head and with handsome gold-scabbarded sword hanging by his side. In his left hand he carried a Mauser carbine, and across his chest and round his waist he wore three bandoliers stuffed full with well-oiled and glittering cartridge clips. His walk and alert manner suggested a vigorous man in the prime of life. Only the long, square-cut, heavy beard, which reached almost to his waist and was like that worn by no Arab I knew of, suggested age. It was scarlet-orange in colour, indicating henna dye. He was the only one who wore an *'aba* over his rich garments. His motley following wore simple white *dishdashas*, which, with the three bandoliers each was carrying, showed them ready for the business of war rather than peace.

With rapid and firm step Badr strode towards us, accompanied by his eldest son, Hassan, and his youngest, Hamaidi, a boy of eight. On reaching me he folded me in his arms and kissed me on both cheeks with a loud "*Salá'am 'alaikum!*" He shook hands with Captain Ditchburn and Haji Hassan, while his bodyguard watched the proceedings curiously from only a few yards away.

My feelings may be imagined. I was already sore at having been kept waiting so long, I was alarmed at having been obviously fooled and at the man's mercy, but above all I was angry at the old fox's breach of faith. Furiously I asked him why he had come armed and with so powerful a bodyguard, when the bargain was that, like myself, he should come unarmed and with only two companions. I babbled out accusations of treachery and breach of faith, and said many other things that I have forgotten. Possibly I did this because I had got the

## A Strange Meeting

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wind up properly and felt subconsciously that attack was my best chance. Badr patiently heard me out, then with a broad grin did another curious thing, quite unlike anything I had ever met in an Arab.

"Have you finished?" he asked.

Taking me by the hand, he forcibly led me into the tent, sat me down, did likewise opposite me, then, suddenly seizing me by the throat with both hands, kissed me full on the mouth, saying:

"Wallahi inta rajul! Wallahi a hab ak!" ("By God you are a man after my own heart! By God I like you!")

He then called to one of his braves and ordered him to march off his men a distance of two hundred yards.

"Daksan", he told him, "does not like the look of so many armed men, and says I ought to have come alone. Haq ma hu."

The last remark meant that I had right on my side, and, the ice being now broken, Haji Hassan Hamdání began to talk. In his cleverest manner he went all out to calm my outraged feelings. Soon he got me in a better mood, well assisted by Badr, who exuded cheerfulness and bonhomie, and adopted the role of a very contrite boy. Before long we were all five laughing and telling each other stories, but not before Badr had taken me once again by the throat with his two hands and kissed me on the mouth and cheeks, vowing that he loved me. It was a strange meeting.

When at last we came to business I felt on firmer ground. I explained to Badr that he was from first to last to blame for getting into trouble with the *hakúma*. I reminded him of my efforts of the previous four years to get him to come in and make submission, and of my many friendly letters promising safe-conduct by my *sharaf* and by my *wejh*. I told him that the *hakúma* did not really want anything from him except a formal act of submission, and that if he would come with me that very afternoon, pay his respects and make surrender to the G.O.C., I would personally guarantee to bring him back the same evening and hand him over safe and sound to his escort.

The old man had had his gruel. His crops and home had been destroyed, and I knew that, once he had come in and relations were established, H.M. Government would be only too glad to be rid of him. Hence my full and complete promises. Indeed, I was ready to do all I could to get the Government to pardon the old boy and let bygones



be bygones, for I was prepared to make allowances and thought I saw the reason for his past conduct towards the British.

For a time Badr hesitated, and, seeing this, I offered to remain with his men as hostage, while he went with Captain Ditchburn and Haji Hassan to see the G.O.C. in camp. Badr refused, but promised that, if I would meet him again at the tent next morning before noon and accompany him to the G.O.C., he would surrender positively and without condition of any sort. Keen to earn the praises of Sir Arnold Wilson, I agreed to this. After a cordial shaking of hands and a further embrace—Badr appeared to like this form of salutation—I returned to camp with my A.P.O. and Haji Hassan, much to the relief of everybody.

Having reported to the G.O.C., I awaited the morrow with confidence. Late that night, a short but very cordial missive reached me from Badr. He said how pleased he had been to make my acquaintance, assured me of his lasting love and affection, and told me that, if I gave him at once written safe-conduct, he would come with me to Nasiriyah immediately and make full submission to the *hakúma*. I sent him the necessary document early on the following morning, 12th March 1919.

I never saw Badr ar Ruma'iyadh again. I learned later that, on receipt of my letter, he mounted his horse and made off into the Bani Sa'id country. What had alarmed him must always remain a mystery. Possibly he had got wind of Thomas's moving down from Shatra and Marrs's manœuvre to cut him off from the direction of Amárah.

Of all Arabs I ever met, Badr ar Ruma'iyadh was, I think, the strangest and most remarkable. I believe Captain Ditchburn and I were the first Englishmen ever to meet him, and I do not imagine that any of my countrymen ever saw him afterwards. Twenty-four years later his youngest son, Hamaidi, visited me in Kuwait. He told me that his father had long since died, and asked if I could assist him with a donation towards a sum of money he was collecting for the purchase of a wife. For old times' sake I helped him.

#### BINNIYAH

One hot day in the early summer of 1919 I returned to the Bait al Hakúma (governor's house) from an early outdoor job of work.



After breakfasting upstairs I went down to my ground-floor office, on the cool side of my central courtyard. Because of the heat and the glare the room was kept as dark as possible, with an old Indian fly-chick,\* a prized possession, hanging over the door, and the two windows covered with thick screens of green 'agúl bush, over which water was periodically thrown to keep the room cool. My clerks had not yet arrived.

Coming in from the bright sunlight outside I could scarcely see as I entered the room. I sat down at my office table, waiting to get used to the dim light, and was there for three minutes before I felt my knees clutched by a pair of hands. I jumped up quite startled and, looking under the table, saw a female figure crouching low and trying to cover her face and head with an 'aba. I got her out and saw that she was a young girl so frightened as to be almost speechless. She remained cowering close to my chair as I tried to reassure her in as kindly a tone as I could. I told her not to be frightened, but to explain why she was there. Very upset and half-crying, she said in halting sentences that her name was Binniyah; that she was of the Al Ghazzi tribe belonging to Shaikh Manshad al Habaiyib, a man whom I knew well and who bore one of the best reputations among the Muntafiq shaikhs†; and that she had taken refuge in my office because she feared she was going to be killed.

I could now distinguish her face in the half-light. She was a pretty girl of some sixteen summers, more child than woman. I noticed, too, that she had a very white skin, and that she was slightly marked by smallpox. As she looked up at me with terrified face and large round eyes from which tears were slowly falling, I felt strangely moved, for I knew that nothing but the direst need would have driven her to come into my house alone and plead her case in this unusual manner.

Little by little I persuaded her to tell me her story. Her people lived at Batha, a village on the Euphrates, some twenty miles from Nasiríyah, and she had lived happily with her father and mother in their black tent until a short time previously, when they had told her

\* A screen of bamboo slips fastened loosely together by vertical strings.

† Later a deputy in the Iraq parliament. On his death some five years ago he was succeeded by his son Muhammad as paramount shaikh of the Al Ghazzi and Al Ghalídh (see page 160).

that she was to marry her *ibn 'am* (first cousin)\* and that the wedding was to be solemnized on the new moon. The news had come as a terrible blow to her, for she loved another boy of the tribe and he loved her, and had told her of his love for her. In great distress she had told him that her father proposed giving her to her cousin on the new moon, and begged his advice and help. She would die, she had told him, rather than be the wife of anyone but him. The youth had received this calmly, but had been deeply angered, with murder in his heart. He had told Binniyah that he must have time to think out a plan, and would return on the third day and tell her what this was. They had arranged to meet on the river bank where she was accustomed to fetch water at midday, and he would find an opportunity of talking to her.

Binniyah had passed three long days in misery and despondency. What chance had her lover, and what hope had she of getting out of the marriage arranged by her powerful father? Moreover, by Arab custom, her cousin has the right to marry her, and she could take no one else in this world unless he waived that right. She knew also that if, in spite of everyone, she married someone other than her cousin, her life would be forfeit and her cousin would be the one to kill her. Her only chance—and it was a very, very slender one—was to run away with her lover, but then she would have to flee far from her home and people and abandon all hope of ever seeing them again. If they ran away there would be an immediate pursuit, and woe betide her and her boy if the pursuers came up with them. Tribal law never forgave in such matters.

Three days later she had been at the rendezvous by the riverside. Other women had been drawing water also, but her lover had managed to get private word with her as he had walked part of the way home. He had only one plan to offer: to run away, and on that very night. He would appear behind her tent at midnight with a fast mare and, on his giving the cry of a jackal three times, she was to slip out from under the tent curtain, join him at the back, and together they would fly away to Suq ash Shuyúkh and take refuge with the Mujarrah tribes. There they would get married, and if they could not find safety they would flee farther to distant Basra.

It was the old, old story, and poor Binniyah had been faced with the

\* More commonly *walad 'am*.

## The Lovers' Flight

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alternative of flight, pursuit and probable death, to giving up her lover and accepting the fate arranged for her by her parents. With that pluck so characteristic of Arab girls she had not hesitated, agreeing to fly that night as planned. The gamble was worth it. The stake was her happiness; the penalty for failure, death. She knew it all, but what of it? Like all tribal girls she was a born gambler where happiness was at stake.

The pact made, the boy and girl had bidden farewell, she to prepare for her secret flight, he to arrange for the mare and other details. Binniyah had packed her small bundle of effects without exciting notice, and her lover had cleaned up his revolver and dagger, for he was not going to encumber himself with a rifle. Nor had the mare been forgotten; an extra feed had been given her, and a bag of grain strapped behind the saddle for use on the journey.

Midnight had arrived, and Binniyah had crept out quietly to the rear of the tent on hearing the jackal cry. Silently they had got through the sleeping camp unnoticed and then, mounting one behind the other, had sped away into the open country, their objective the palm-belt opposite Nasiriyah town. Alas, someone or some dog must have given the alarm. Binniyah could not tell me how it had happened. Suffice to say, when dawn had broken the fleeing pair had seen in the distance behind them a party of horsemen, obviously following hard on their trail.

The riders were still some three miles away, but were moving faster than they were. The lovers' only hope lay in reaching the date gardens before the pursuers. There they would abandon the mare, and gain time by trying to walk down the irrigation channels to the river bank opposite Nasiriyah, then, crossing the stream after dark, take refuge in the town.

The plan had succeeded and all had gone well until the river bank had been reached. Safety had been in sight, although both had known by the distant shouting that search for them was still being made with energy and renewed keenness, for in the watercourses their tracks had been found, and it was only a question of time before the fugitives were run to earth. Both had realized that their one chance was to evade capture till nightfall. They had, therefore, moved downstream until they had come opposite the Sabaean part of the town, where the willow trees grew very thick. There they had hidden.

The sun had now set and the darkness would be upon them very soon. They had thrown off their pursuers for a moment, and Binniyah had been almost happy. Then what disillusionment! The young man had apparently decided that, handicapped by Binniyah, he would never escape, but that he might get away alone. He had suddenly told her he was leaving her. It was useless, he had said, for them both to get killed, when he could escape to Suq and reach Basra by way of the Hamár Lake. He had not given Binniyah time to argue or even plead. He had just disappeared into the darkness. Life was sweet, so why throw it away on a *bint*?

Little Binniyah broke down when she reached this part of her story, sobbing as if her heart would break. It was a bad business. Later, calming herself, she described how she had lain all through the night in the bushes, and at dawn that very morning had managed unnoticed to get a lift in a *mash'huf* across to the Sabaean quarter, whence she had made her way to the Bait al Hakúma, because she had heard that the English were kind and that Daksan would protect her. Outside my house, she had asked to see the *hákim siyási*, and my *farásh* had let her in. Seeing her distress he had been kind to her, telling her to sit quietly in that portion of the veranda set apart for women petitioners, and wait until the Sahib came in. Still fearing that her pursuers might track her to the Bait al Hakúma and rush in and take her, she had slipped into my office when the *farásh's* back had been turned and had hidden under the table.

My astonished *farásh*, for whom I now sent, admitted having shown her the position of my room. When later he had failed to see her where he had told her to wait, he had quite thought she had gone away, intending to return later. I told him that she was a tribal lass and had taken refuge in my room out of fear; that until I could decide on her case, she was to be lodged with my syce's family.

I had barely given my orders, and Binniyah was still in the room, when a second *farásh* announced the arrival of Shaikh Manshad al Habaiyib on urgent business. I quickly put the now thoroughly terrified fugitive into an inner room where I kept my confidential papers, and shut the door. Then I gave instructions for the visitor to be shown in.

Because of his polished and gentlemanly manners, and the nice



clever way in which he approached a difficult subject, I had always liked Manshad better than my other shaikhs. After the usual greetings and cup of coffee he came to business. He recounted how a young girl of his tribe had foolishly fled her home the previous night, deceived by a worthless young man, and that a pursuing party had caught the youth among the palm trees, but that the girl had escaped across the river into Nasiriyah town and was believed to have taken refuge in my house. He prayed that, if she was still hiding there, she be handed over to him as shaikh and head of the Al Ghazzi tribe. He would keep her in his own house and among his own women until he could safely restore her to her own people. He assured me that no harm at all would come to the girl, as she had been more sinned against than sinning, etc. etc. He spoke in unaffected tones and put forward his case with pleasing and disarming directness, yet I was suspicious.

In reply I admitted that Binniyah had come to me that morning, then asked him if he would give me his word of honour that she would not be punished if I surrendered her. He hedged somewhat lamely, and I suggested that he ask the girl if she was prepared to place herself in his care. Manshad agreed, so I went into the adjoining room, shutting the door behind me. Binniyah, poor child, clutched my hand fiercely and whispered, half-crying, that if I gave her up it would mean certain death.

"You must not trust Manshad or his sweet tongue", she pleaded. "He is only concerned with getting me out of your hands and the *hakúma's* protection. Afterwards he will hand me over to my *ibn 'am* and tribal justice."

Too well did I know what that meant. I brought her back into my office, where I said to her:

"My daughter, Manshad, your shaikh, has come to take you home to the tribe. He has promised to keep you with his own womenfolk until he can arrange matters with your father and brethren. He tells me that he has your interests at heart. I have told him that he must ask you himself, for it is for you to say yes or no, and no one is going to force you to do anything against your will."

The terrified girl did not reply, but crouched down on the floor between Manshad and myself. He then addressed her in dignified and kindly manner. He asked her if she would return with him to his family



and told her that she need not fear, for her future safety was assured. With his people she would be happy and at home again, but in Nasiriyah what would become of her? With the best of intentions, the *hakúma* could not look after her indefinitely, and even Daksan could not lodge her in his house for ever.

It was some moments before Binniyah replied.

"I cannot, I dare not go back with you, Yá Manshad", she sobbed in a way that touched the heart. "You know the tribal law; it is utterly unforgiving in the case of erring girls like me, and you know full well that you must hand me over to my father and brethren, since they will demand me of you. I am afraid to die, for I am young."

"Binniyah", I said, "have no fear at all. You will not be handed over unless you wish, for you are *fi dhimmat al hakúma*—under Government protection—but there is one question I would like you to answer in the presence of your shaikh, both as a suppliant of God and as you value your honour. Did anything of a shameful nature ever pass between you and the boy, either before or after your flight? Asking God's mercy, tell me the truth, my child."

Binniyah, who had stiffened visibly as I had put the question, raised her tear-stained face and, holding her head high, answered proudly:

"Am I not a girl of the Al Ghazzi? How could such a thing happen? As God is my witness, we did no wrong."

I believed her.

"You see how things are, Manshad", I said. "I was anxious that you, her shaikh, should know from her own lips that her honour and the honour of her house are unsullied. But she does not wish to return with you."

Manshad shrugged his shoulders in an expressive manner, murmuring something about *'aql hurma* (the mind of a woman) being impossible to understand. I promised that I would send for him if I could get Binniyah to change her mind, and that meanwhile she would be safely and honourably cared for by women. He left me reluctantly and not over-happy, as I could see. As for Binniyah, she did not alter her mind one iota. In talks I had with her later she reiterated again and again her belief that she would be quietly killed if she went back with Manshad.

## A Happy Ending

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“Nor must I ever leave Nasiríyah again”, she said, “for I shall be watched from this day on.”

Leaving no stone unturned I consulted various Arabs of standing in Nasiríyah, asking them in confidence—without, of course, specific reference to Binniyah—what would normally happen to a tribal girl in a position similar to hers. All assured me that she must be killed. This, together with the fact that I could get no satisfactory replies from Manshad or any other Ghazzi tribesman as to what had happened to Binniyah’s lover, decided me against sending her back to her home.

In my predicament as to what to do with her, I sought the help and guidance of Dhári Beg al Fahad Al Sa’dún. I told him the whole story, and he advised me that the only hope for the girl was to have her married to some worthy citizen of Nasiríyah town. According to Dhári, if she were once properly married and settled down in the town, her tribe would no longer attempt to molest her, and in due course her *ibn ’am* and parents might forgive her, especially if her husband were to pay over a sum of money by way of compensation to the *ibn ’am* who fancied himself injured. Binniyah herself approved this step, so I acted on Dhári’s advice and, after some days, found a very respectable man who ran a coffee-shop a few doors away from my house, and he agreed to marry Binniyah. The wedding was a quiet one and turned out very happily. As my contribution to the happy event I gave the bridegroom six hundred rupees to be paid over to Binniyah’s cousin.

What a trouble are those tribal folk!

#### THE KURDISH MAIDEN OF SUWA’IJ

Here is a similar story, with a sadder ending.

Between Nasiríyah and Shatra, a distance of some twenty miles, lay the small village of Suwa’ij. Situated a little more than half way, it was a convenient spot at which to spend the night for a person doing the journey on horseback. Before cars were able to get to Shatra, I used to ride out to Suwa’ij in the afternoon, spend the night with Haji Saqbán, then continue on to Shatra in the cool of the following morning.

Haji Saqbán was an elderly Kurd who had settled in Suwa’ij many

years previously and made his living by catering for travellers and, more especially, supplying members of the neighbouring 'Abúda and Khafája tribes with rice, groceries, cigarettes and other town delicacies. In other words, he kept a *chai'khana* (tea-shop) and general store combined. Behind the shop lived his family, and it was as their guest rather than as a casual traveller that I was always made welcome.

The household consisted of the worthy Haji's homely and charming wife, a very pretty grown-up daughter of eighteen, and Hassún, a fine boy of twenty-two years. There was another son in far-away Kurdistan, but I never met him. It was a delightful experience staying with these humble folk. I was treated as part of the family whenever I arrived, mother and daughter sitting unveiled with me after dinner and joining in the general conversation as if I was indeed one of them. Haji Saqbán was a good host and raconteur, and always got his wife to prepare me the very choicest of dinners, usually consisting of rice and chicken, or rice and *maraq* (meat-cum-tomato stew), when I happened along on my inspection tours, which was usually twice a month. Nor did I worry to bring bedding, as I could always count on the cleanest of sheets in summer, or a new warm *laháf* (quilt) in winter. This was a definite advantage; being unencumbered, I could travel fast with only an orderly in attendance. My little evenings spent *en famille* with father, mother, son and daughter form one of my happiest memories of my sojourn in Nasiríyah as Political Officer of the Muntafiq.

Haji Saqbán was held in much respect by the villagers and neighbouring tribes and, being a Kurd, he was feared not a little. Apart from his business, he seemed to live for one thing—his *sharaf* (honour) and the keeping of it unsullied among his Arab neighbours. Indeed, he bored one at times with his perpetual talk on that theme.

The son assisted his father in the business and periodically went into Shatra or Nasiríyah to renew stocks. Mother and daughter busied themselves mostly with household duties, but in their spare time knitted socks and pullovers or did sewing, quite like one's own folk at home. Possibly it was this atmosphere that attracted me so much to this pleasant Kurdish family in a strange land. The whole family wore the normal Arab dress.

My favourite was the daughter, for she was a mixture of charm and

## Tragedy

### Chap. IX

seriousness that pleased me and reminded me of an English girl. She liked me to teach her the English names of things and tell her of England and London.

Then, like a bolt from the blue, came the tragedy—and what a tragedy it was! It did much to alter my outlook on life and brought home to me with a vengeance what an unreasoning and stupid creature the oriental can become in the space of a few moments, should he suddenly get the bug of suspicion into his head that the honour of one of his women, and especially the good name of a sister, had been besmirched.

I was hard at work in my office in Nasiríyah, when Captain Hall, my assistant in charge of the Muntafiq Horse, hurriedly entered and reported that one of his men had come in from Suwa'ij with the story that the daughter of Haji Saqbán had been shot by her brother the previous day and was lying in the hot sun, sorely wounded, if not already dead, on a rubbish heap just outside the village, no one daring to go to her aid.

After getting a few further details, I dispatched Hall with all speed to Suwa'ij, ordering him to take with him my Indian assistant surgeon, a score of men and a stretcher, and, if they found the girl alive, to bring her into hospital. The brother was to be arrested without fail.

This all took place at about nine o'clock in the morning. At five in the afternoon, a very tired Captain Hall reported to me that he had brought in the girl and lodged her in the small hospital run by the Political Department. He had arrested young Hassún, who was now lying in irons under lock and key. Hall confirmed the story that the girl had lain on the rubbish heap for some fifteen hours before he had rescued her. Her right thigh had been shattered high up by a heavy bullet, and, though still alive, she was in a bad way. He added that the grief-stricken old father and mother had asked to come in with the party, and were now with their daughter. The assistant surgeon had done very well indeed, and had made the patient as comfortable as possible.

I immediately wrote a note to the major in charge of the military hospital in Nasiríyah, asking him if he could assist me with a local case and let me have that evening a report on the girl's condition. He came round and saw me at about half-past seven, for which I was grateful.



The wound was a bad one, he said. Due to inattention for many hours, gangrene had set in. The only hope was to remove the whole leg, but the girl's condition was so bad that the operation would almost certainly kill her. He added that the patient was just conscious and was asking persistently for me. She was under the influence of morphia, but could understand if spoken to.

Without delay I accompanied the major to our poorly equipped little hospital building, and by the light of a *batti* (lantern)—we had no electric light in those days—was taken through to the back courtyard and into the small one-bed room, where the poor child lay. The assistant surgeon led the way, and I well remember him explaining cheerfully that the foul smell permeating the building came from the patient, and that that was what happened when gangrene set in.

The girl recognized me at once. Her pretty face was woefully changed and distorted. She feebly motioned me to sit down by her side and asked the doctor to give her a little more morphia. Her mother, weeping silently, was crouched on the floor in the corner. The major gave the girl the necessary injection and slipped away with the assistant surgeon, leaving us alone, which I thought nice of him.

I took the child's hand in mine and asked if she was in much pain. She said not much, but she knew she was going to die and wanted to tell me something. I was not to be distressed about her, as she had done no wrong. A jealous woman in the village, who thought a man she was after was cooling off in his affections because of the Kurdish maiden, had caused it to be whispered round that Haji Saqbán's daughter was carrying on a secret intrigue. This had been a base lie, but quite enough to cause her brother, when the rumour had reached him, to rush into the room with a loaded Martini .450 carbine and let fly at her as she sat on the floor sewing with her mother. The bullet had struck her in the groin, and she had collapsed. Later, still raving, her brother had dragged her out to the rubbish heap and threatened to shoot anyone who approached her. Nor had her father been there to save her; he had gone into Shatra on the previous day.

She told her story slowly and haltingly, with many a gasp as the pain got the better of her. A pitiful figure in a pitiful setting, for there was only the dim light of the lantern to see by, damp was oozing from the walls and floor, and the odour coming from her was over-



## Daksan takes Oath

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powering. After her effort to talk, she lay back exhausted for a while, still tightly clutching my hand. Presently she spoke again, asking me in a whisper to promise to do something for her before she died. When I asked her what it was, she gasped out: "Oh, promise, promise! Don't ask questions."

I gave the required assurance—what else could I do?—and the next moment, she asked me to feel under her pillow. I extracted a book. It was the Qur'án. Laying on it my hand still clasped in hers, she said:

"Swear by this Holy Book that you will keep your promise."

I did so. In an almost inaudible voice now, and with tears streaming down her worn face, she went on:

"I want you, Yá Daksan, to release my brother as soon as I am gone. He did what he did only because he loved me and thought only of his sister's honour. When you release him, tell him of my dying request—that his sister was a good girl and died forgiving him."

Alas, I might have known this was coming.

As she finished, the major stepped in and suggested that I should not tire the patient further. He was too late, for she suddenly relaxed her hold on my hand, now held close to her breast, and seemed to shiver all over and go off into a faint. The major quickly leaned over her and felt her heart.

"She's gone, I'm afraid", he said.

The crouching mother seemed at once to sense things, for she jumped up and rushed to her daughter's bedside uttering scream upon scream. It was all very horrible. I slipped quietly away, feeling about as bad as I ever wanted to feel. She was buried that night, for things move swiftly in the East.

Next day was Thursday and my *mijlis* day. There was a big gathering of shaikhs and members of the Al Sa'dún; Dhári Beg was well to the fore, as well as Ibrahím Beg ibn Miza'al Pasha. Haji Saqbán was there, obviously grief-stricken, but with his head held high, and saying nothing. The more important business of the day having been dealt with, I asked those present to give me their close attention. I told them of the Suwa'ij incident and recounted the dying request of the daughter of Haji Saqbán. At the end of my recital, I said:

"You people gathered here, have you ever heard of a more dastardly crime, or a more noble request from a dying person?"

There was a long silence, then Dhári Beg got up.

"Yá Daksan", he said, "what is written must take place. The boy did only what he thought was his duty. It would not be right to punish him."

I was grieved to hear this from the lips of Dhári, but not entirely surprised.

"Fear not", I said. "He shall be released, but not quite in the way you think."

A quarter of an hour later, young Hassún stood before us manacled hand and foot. He was deadly pale, but showed no other sign of feeling. Very slowly I told him of my previous night's interview with his sister, and of her last request to me. I left nothing out.

"O son of Haji Saqbán, my promise I shall keep, although you are a worthless hound and assuredly deserve little pity. You shall go free, for I gave my word, but if, in three days' time, I hear that you are anywhere in the Muntafiq *liwa*, I shall hunt you down and shoot you out of hand, like the unworthy coward you are."

The irons were then struck off him and, looking wild and bewildered, he turned round and tottered from the room without uttering a word. There was silence in my *mijlis* for a long time. Then I called for coffee and shortly afterwards declared the assembly closed. Dhári Beg was the last to go. Contrary to his usual custom he came up and shook hands.

"Yá Daksan", he said, "you were hard on Haji Saqbán's son and hard on the father, I think; but perhaps you have done right. Yet remember always, Yá Daksan, that only those things can happen that God ordains. We are only instruments. This is an old man's advice."

Poor little Kurdish maiden. Yours was a gallant and noble end. I shall always remember you.

### THE VENGEANCE OF HAJI NÁSIR

In the summer of 1919 I went home to England, and heard there from Sir Percy Cox that my old friend, Shaikh Qásid al Náhi, had been killed by his enemy, Haji Násir al 'Ayail. I could get no details at the time, but in the autumn of the same year, I was posted as Political Agent to Bahrain and there learnt all about the murder from

## The Vengeance of Haji Násir

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several Muntafiq shaikhs and notabilities who had come down to see me. It was a sad story, and I remembered Qásid's words to me, on the day that he helped me to burn Haji Násir's *mudhíf*, that Arab memories are long.

It seems that Haji Násir settled down to a quiet existence and for two years behaved himself. For all that he had not forgiven Qásid al Náhi for the part he had played, and was merely waiting for me to leave the Muntafiq before he set about obtaining his revenge. As for Qásid he reciprocated Haji Násir's hatred, but there was no outward quarrel.

In due season Haji Násir invited Qásid to a banquet to celebrate the building of his new *mudhíf*. Qásid, always fearless, accepted. It was a fatal mistake. During the luncheon, and actually as Qásid was on the point of conveying a morsel of meat to his mouth, he was shot from behind. The miscreant, a slave of Haji Násir's, had inserted the barrel of a rifle through a hole in the side of the *mudhíf*, taken careful aim and blown the top of the poor old man's head off.

A great uproar followed, but Haji Násir's plans had been well laid, and the man who had committed the deed disappeared entirely for a time. The Al Hakkám tribe as a whole was incensed at this terrible act of treachery, more especially as Qásid had been the guest of Haji Násir and so, by all Arab laws of decency, should have been inviolable. Spasmodic fighting immediately broke out between Qásid's followers and those of Haji Násir, with the late Shaikh Mizbán's people throwing in their lot with Qásid's tribe.

With the assistance of the Government, Shaikh Farhúd al Fandi, head of the Hakkám on the left bank of the river, was instrumental in bringing about a truce. But Haji Násir was from that time a doomed man. Mizhir and Raisán, the two young sons of Qásid, were determined to get him, and dogged his footsteps day and night. In a matter of weeks the chase ended: they shot and killed Haji Násir in some thick undergrowth as he was returning to his *mudhíf*.

The act was considered a well-merited piece of retribution and justice by the whole countryside, the sympathies of everyone being with the sons of Qásid. I believe the Government had the boys arrested and imprisoned for a time for taking the law into their own hands, but ultimately Mizhir became shaihk of the major portion of the

Hakkám tribe resident on the right bank of the river. I met him in 1943, and a fine upstanding man he had turned out to be. It gave me great pleasure to talk about the old days and my friendship with his father, and I was able to give him a note describing the fine loyalty of old Qásid al Náhi, both to myself and to the British Government, during the First World War. I made a point of mentioning how my life had been saved by Qásid at great risk to himself.

I trusted that my letter would be of some use to Shaikh Mizhir al Náhi and his brother, Raisán, in the days to come. To-day (1953) Mizhir is tribal deputy for the Suq ash Shuyúkh area in the Iraq parliament. Raisán runs the tribe.

## CHAPTER X

# The 'Ikhwán Make War on Kuwait, 1917—1921

*Death of Shaikh Jābir—Accession of Shaikh Sálim—The Philby Mission to Riyádh—The Royal Navy Blockades Kuwait—Ibn Sa'ud Resumes Hostilities Against Ibn Rashíd—A Hospital for the Women of Kuwait—"Myrilay"—My Visit to Hufuf—The Boundary Question Again—The Battle of Jahra—The British Government Intervenes—A New Ruler of Kuwait—Sa'ud Al Aráfa's Love for Núra—Ibn Sa'ud Captures Ha'il and Annexes Jabal Shammar*

Before continuing my personal narrative I must briefly record certain events in Arabia during my sojourn in the Muntafiq *liwa*.

After ruling for a little over a year Shaikh Jābir ibn Mubárah Al Sabah of Kuwait died on 5th February 1917. He was succeeded by his brother, Sálim, father of the present ruler. Sálim ibn Mubárah Al Sabah was a very different type of man from his easy-going brother, being a stern Muslim and very obstinate. Before coming to the throne, he had spent all his life in the desert and hated all modern inventions. He was a man of exceptional bravery, and was almost entirely to blame for the quarrel that developed between him and Ibn Sa'ud.

At the end of 1917 Mr H. St. J. B. Philby, C.I.E., of the Indian Political Department and then on special duty at Baghdad, led a secret mission to Najd with the intention of persuading Ibn Sa'ud to resume hostilities against Ibn Rashíd. Prior to this meeting, two British officers had been sent to Riyádh from Basra: Colonel R. E. A. Hamilton (Master of Belhaven) representing Sir Percy Cox, and Lieut.-Colonel F. Cunliffe-Owen representing the C.-in-C., Iraq. Both officers came away on the arrival of Mr Philby.

In February 1918 the Royal Navy found it necessary to enforce a sea blockade of Kuwait, it having been discovered that supplies were reaching the Turks in Damascus from Kuwait via the desert. In July of the same year Shaikh Sálim was warned that the assurances given to him and to his father, and the friendship, protection and assistance



of the British Government enjoyed by his father, would be continued only on the condition that he should be personally responsible for, and prevent, all acts in his territory, whether committed by his own subjects or by other persons, that might be against the interests of the British Government.

By that year Ibn Sa'ud had forced most of the Badu of Najd—I exclude the 'Ajmán—to adopt 'Ikhwánism and recognize him as their 'Imám. To ensure that the newly converted tribes behaved themselves and remained under his control, he got the Wahábi religious leaders in Riyádh to issue a *fatwa*, making it necessary that all good 'Ikhwán should build themselves towns and villages and till the soil, this being incumbent on them from the religious point of view, and an essential measure to divide the elect from the *juhl*—the ignorant ones—the name given to those Badu who had not adopted the new *dín* (religion). No houses in any of the new settlements were to have more than one storey, probably to ensure against their being fortified at some future date.

As a result of Mr Philby's mission to Riyádh, Ibn Sa'ud resumed hostilities against Ibn Rashíd in the autumn of 1918. He advanced into Jabal Shammar, but his failure to capture Ha'il, though he reached the walls of it, rendered the expedition abortive.

Meanwhile 'Abdullah, son of Sharíf Husain of Mecca, was once more endeavouring to interfere in matters of Najd. On this occasion he laid claim to the frontier towns of Turaba and Khurma. With a strong force of infantry and guns he suddenly appeared before Khurma and, after desultory fighting, occupied it. Three nights afterwards he was heavily attacked by the 'Ikhwán under Amír Khálid ibn Luwai' and completely routed, all his camp equipment, guns, rifles, ammunition and enormous quantities of booty falling into the hands of Ibn Sa'ud. 'Abdullah al Sharíf barely escaped with his life. For some years after that Great Britain was engaged in keeping the peace between King Husain and Ibn Sa'ud.

On 26th December 1919 Ibn Sa'ud entered into an agreement with H.M. Government on the matter of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1913. According to Clause VI of the new agreement the frontier between Kuwait and Ibn Sa'ud's territory was still to be determined.

## The Doctor Lady

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#### A HOSPITAL FOR THE WOMEN OF KUWAIT

“As time passed”, writes Mrs Eleanor Taylor Calverley, “confidence grew—and so did the Calverley family! Three little daughters came to share the new home which had been built for us during our first furlough. Standing near the seashore, in the clean open desert at the edge of the town, its many windows and its wide verandas were a comfort during the extreme heat of summer. Another residence in the mission compound was occupied by Dr and Mrs C. S. G. Mylrea, who had been appointed to Kuwait upon Dr Harrison’s transfer to another station. There was a new hospital, also, which for several years Dr Mylrea shared with me. During our furlough Mrs Mylrea had been helping him treat women patients. Seldom had they been permitted to examine anything but the pulse, and the tongue, extruded through a hole torn in the face veil.

“In 1919 we built a one-storey hospital for women, beside the hospital for men. Later we erected two ‘family wards’, just between the two hospitals. Here we could accommodate patients who had come from a distance, bringing their families with them. Not many of the townspeople were willing for their women to be in-patients. Usually sufferers who were too ill or too strictly secluded to attend the clinic and those who needed more than minor surgery, if they were to be helped at all, had to be treated in their own homes. The Doctor Lady, riding her white donkey, was often seen in the streets. For some operations the flat, clay roof of the patient’s house was chosen. This had been baked by the sun and early in the morning the light was good and the heat not too intense. Such assistants as the hospital afforded were taken along. I remember one operation for vesicovaginal fistula performed on a roof. On another occasion, in an upstairs room, two prospective brides, each with an unsightly blind eye, submitted to enucleation operations. And one very hot night, in the middle of a courtyard and by lantern light, the life of a mother, suffering from eclampsia, was saved by forceps delivery. Neither this patient nor any of the cases of general surgery became infected. But obstetrical patients, found on the floor on a heap of sand, had been subjected to all the measures known to local midwives and given up as hopeless before the doctor was called.

“Having the hospital near our residence made it possible for me to be within calling distance for the family’s needs during clinic hours. Often more than a hundred patients clamoured for attention in the morning. In the home we had an excellent cook, imported from Goa; a Persian houseboy; and an Arab nursemaid. In emergencies Mrs Mylrea and the other ladies of the station were glad to lend a hand with the children while their mothers had to be away. Dr Mylrea, like Dr Harrison before him, was always ready to assist me in any way he could. Most of all it was the sympathy and co-operation of the Doctor Lady’s husband which made the combination of professional and domestic life possible for her.

“It was a great day when Nurse Ravamoney, trained in the mission hospital of Madanapalli, South India, arrived in Kuwait. Soon afterwards a Ford car was sent to us to take the place of the donkey. Miss Jane A. Scardefield had been appointed to live with us and help in the women’s hospital. All the medical work attained new efficiency when Miss Mary C. Van Pelt, R.N., came to be superintendent of both hospitals. . . .”

“MYRILAY”

Charles Stanley Garland Mylrea, born in London on 18th November 1876, had studied medicine in America and, after receiving his degree of Doctor of Medicine from Philadelphia, had joined the American Arabian Mission and come to Bahrain with his wife Bessie Augusta, an American girl, in 1907. After four years at Bahrain, during which time they had learned Arabic, they had been transferred to Kuwait in 1911.

“Myrilay”, as he was affectionately known to all Arabs in the Persian Gulf, was especially loved in Kuwait. He built the first hospital there. His wife shared his life with him all through those difficult early years and came to be loved by the families of those living around them.

Mylrea often used to tell this story:—

During the year 1916, while Shaikh Sálím was away on a hunting trip, Mylrea was suddenly called upon to come and see the Shaikh’s son, who was ill.\* He rode off immediately on his horse and did all

\* I am not quite sure, but I believe this was Fahad al Sálím Al Sabah, now director of public works and health.

## First Meeting with Ibn Sa'ud

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he could for the lad, leaving careful instructions with the servants as to his care and the giving of medicine. When he arrived at the palace on the following day he found that no medicine had been given to the boy or any of his instructions carried out. He left at once in a rage, refusing to give further treatment.

He told his wife of his hastiness and they both feared the wrath of Shaikh Sálím when he returned. A few days later Mylrea saw a procession approaching his house and wondered whether it was to slay him and his family. To his relief he found that the Shaikh had come to apologize for his servants' failure to carry out the instructions of the *hakím*, and to say that they had all been well beaten. He had brought some little gifts with him. Would the *hakím* accept a Persian carpet and a small string of pearls for his wife? Mylrea could not refuse. The boy duly recovered and good relations were once more established.

#### MY VISIT TO HUFUF

My first contact with the 'Ikhwán was in January 1920, when, as Political Agent, Bahrain, I visited Hufuf on behalf of His Majesty's Government, as the guest of Ibn Sa'ud. I was at pains to find out as much as possible about the movement, which was a difficult task, for, wherever I made inquiries, I found myself up against the proverbial brick wall. It seemed clear that the people had been given the hint to reveal as little as possible. I could not help but conclude that Ibn Sa'ud had issued instructions that nothing regarding the new *dín* should be divulged to strangers.

The reason for this was not far to seek. Firstly, I think that Ibn Sa'ud, who had already associated himself with the 'Ikhwán, was alarmed at the notice taken by the outside world; secondly, he was annoyed that much unnecessary advertisement had been given to the movement by wild and exaggerated reports from biased sources as to the goings on of the 'Ikhwán; thirdly, he realized that in some quarters, notably in Cairo, Baghdad and London, the movement was looked upon with definite distrust and alarm; and fourthly, he did not want it to be known that he was at the bottom of the whole thing, fostering and guiding it for the furtherance of his own ends. When



I met him at Hufuf he insisted that the 'Ikhwán were one and the same thing as the Wahábis of old.

"To-day", he said, "old Wahábiism, with the new impetus of 'Ikhwánism, is the purest of all religions in the world."

On the same occasion he said: "O Dickson, don't worry. I am the 'Ikhwán—no one else."

Generally speaking, and from what I saw and heard from Ibn Sa'ud and from his then loyal coadjutor, Faisal Al Duwísh, paramount shaikh of the Mutair (not to mention other 'Ikhwán leaders personally known to me), I am forced to the conclusion that 'Ikhwánism was not the entirely bad movement it has sometimes been made out to be. In the first place it seems definitely to have been a genuine religious revival of the old type of Wahábiism, and an attempt on the part of the masses of central Arabia to improve themselves morally and religiously; and especially would it appear to have been a new attempt to purify Islám of the evils that contact with so-called European influence had brought in its train. Undoubtedly, also, the movement was defensive and nationalistic in character, but, in the main, it was distrust of foreigners, with a deep-down determination to retain at all costs Arabia, and Najd in particular, for the Arabs.

Whatever may have been the actual political ideas and ambitions of men like Ibn Sa'ud early on, it is certain that the masses had been generally stirred up by very intense anti-foreign feelings.

The 'Ikhwán rank and file, in the early days of the movement, had been formed, as I have already mentioned, principally from among the ignorant village classes of Najd. The movement had then spread to the Badawin tribes of inner Arabia and adjacent countries. The more educated classes, such as townsmen and merchants of Najd, were already orthodox Wahábis, and though they had not approved of some of the tenets of the 'Ikhwán, more especially their initial intolerance, they had considered the movement worthy of support, inasmuch as it would give fresh stimulus to moribund Wahábiism, and so to a purer Islám, and also because it would give Ibn Sa'ud better control over the great tribal population of Najd, which had badly needed curbing.

No one who knew him intimately could accuse Ibn Sa'ud of being a Wahábi fanatic himself, or of ever having possessed any of the



## Ibn Sa'ud Sends Cigarettes

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religious frenzy that he managed to instil into his 'Ikhwán followers. On occasions and to suit his ends, he pretended to hold the same views, especially when living in contact with the troops on the eve of a campaign, or when desirous of impressing the members of some English or foreign mission. After all, Oliver Cromwell adopted similar methods.

That Ibn Sa'ud was not a fanatic at heart cannot be better illustrated than by a rather charming incident during my visit to Hufuf. The 'Ikhwán movement was in full blaze, and on all occasions when tribal shaikhs were gathered, and even in my presence, Ibn Sa'ud did a good deal of anti-foreign preaching. For instance, the monthly subsidy of 75,000 rupees from the British Government, one instalment of which I had brought with me, he made out to be the *jazzia* tax, paid by Christians to the early leaders of Islám to exempt them from military service. He also warned me in *mijlis* that tobacco was *harám*, a deadly sin, and that anyone indulging in it in Najd was breaking the law and was liable to come to serious harm. Yet, with true Arab courtesy and care for his guests' comfort, the gracious Ibn Sa'ud sent round to me after dark and by the hand of Dr 'Abdullah Sa'id Damlúji, a couple of tins of superb Egyptian cigarettes, with the request that I should only smoke them in the privacy of my room.

The progress and guiding of the 'Ikhwán movement from step to step was being most cleverly managed, Ibn Sa'ud showing great genius in working out his schemes. By 1920 he had been able to instil such wonderful enthusiasm for the new *dín* among the Badu that most men were anxious to join. The order for the building of settlements had, in most cases, been responded to with zeal. It had become a matter of pride with a Badawin to call himself a *hadhari* (town-dweller), as opposed to a *jáhil*, an ignorant one.

Ibn Sa'ud told me that there were then fifty-two townships in Najd, all of which had come into being as a result of his famous order. The skill with which the tribes had been slowly rounded up and cajoled to settle down and plough without feeling overmuch resentment at the change showed Ibn Sa'ud to be no ordinary leader. He now boasted that he had given the nomad tribes a stake in the land, so to speak, and had made them settled tribesmen, at the same time leaving the system sufficiently elastic to allow of portions of each tribe

remaining throughout the year in the desert, tending their camels and looking after the breeding of them.

The selection of the site of each new 'Ikhwán township was made entirely by Ibn Sa'ud, who placed them near or far from Riyádh, his capital, according to whether the tribe was easy or difficult to manage.

The 'Ajmán tribe had not yet fallen into line. This was not so much because they objected to becoming 'Ikhwán, as because of their secret knowledge of Ibn Sa'ud's determination to bring them to heel, thoroughly and in a fashion all his own. This was to have taken the following form and, to one who knows the desert man, it was a really harsh punishment. The 'Ajmán were to be transferred from the coastal region of Hasa, their home, to the interior of Najd, where they were to be broken up, each of the twenty different sections of the tribe being split up among the new townships of the 'Ikhwán. In this manner their power to do harm would be broken for ever. Ibn Sa'ud told me himself that this was his intention. The 'Ajmán had twice played him false: once in the fight with Ibn Rashíd at Majma'a (Jaráb) in January 1915, and once again in November of the same year, when they had attacked and nearly overcome him in Hasa. Since then, said Ibn Sa'ud, they had successfully been playing fast and loose with him, sometimes living in Kuwait territory and sometimes in Iraq. They were then camped near Zubair and had nearly come to terms with him.

From subsequent talks I had with him I rather gathered that Ibn Sa'ud was prepared to mitigate the punishment outlined above, realizing, no doubt, that he could perhaps carry severity too far.

#### THE BOUNDARY QUESTION AGAIN

The year 1920 saw a great deterioration in the relations between Ibn Sa'ud and Shaikh Sálím of Kuwait. The latter had put the British sea blockade of Kuwait, which had been strictly enforced until the conclusion of the armistice with Turkey, entirely at the door of Ibn Sa'ud. He felt that Ibn Sa'ud had been more clever than he with the British Government, which had been willingly deceived by Ibn Sa'ud; and that the suffering inflicted on Kuwait, the loss of trade and prestige, could only be accounted for by the fact that the British believed Ibn Sa'ud to be their friend and when he had suggested to them that he,

## Defeat at Hamdh

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Shaikh Sálím, was pro-Turk, they had swallowed the story. Shaikh Sálím thought it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that Ibn Sa'ud's next move would be an attack on Kuwait, or at least an attempt to get the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1913 annulled. This had given Kuwait direct administrative control of a small area immediately around Kuwait town, and the indirect control, with the power of levying taxes on the tribes, over a much larger area to the south, extending from Jabal Manífah on the sea to Hafar al Bátin in the west, and up the Bátin valley to opposite Jabal Sanam, etc., in the north. This enlarged area was intended to include 'Nta, the two Jariyas, As Sáfa, Hába, Wabrah, etc.

Anxious for the future and greatly fearing the rising ambitions of the remarkable 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud and his henchman, Faisal Al Duwísh, virtual leader of the fanatical 'Ikhwán, Shaikh Sálím prepared for the worst. He gave out that he proposed to build a fort at Dauhat Balbul, on the coast just north of Jabal Manífah, to signify that this was his southernmost boundary. Ibn Sa'ud objected, claiming that Dauhat Balbul was within his territory, and countered by ordering the Mutair leader, Ibn Shuqair, to seize Jariya 'Ilya, which was claimed by Shaikh Sálím. Ibn Shuqair started to build an 'Ikhwán village at Jariya 'Ilya, whereupon Shaikh Sálím sent Shaikh Da'ij ibn Sulaimán ibn Sabah al Fádhil,\* commander of the Kuwait forces, with his war-flag to Hamdh (or Hamadh), fifteen miles east of Jariya 'Ilya, the intention being to overawe the Mutair.

Whilst Da'ij was camped at Hamdh with a considerable force, Faisal Al Duwísh struck, surprising Da'ij by a dawn attack with a strong contingent of the Mutair 'Ikhwán. The Kuwait army was completely defeated; the camp was captured and a large number of camels fell into the hands of the 'Ikhwán. Casualties among Da'ij's men were heavy, he himself, together with Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir Al Sabah, narrowly escaping capture and death.

When the remnants of Da'ij's army reached Kuwait, Shaikh Sálím, realizing the seriousness of the situation, ordered the famous defensive wall to be built round Kuwait without delay. It was completed in two months, the whole population taking a hand in the form of a *levée en masse*.

\* Of the well-known family of Bahrain.

Meanwhile Shaikh Sálím invoked the aid of the British Government, maintaining that Faisal Al Duwísh's action at Hamdh had been entirely unprovoked. Ibn Sa'ud stoutly denied this and, in numerous letters to the British Government, put all the blame on Shaikh Sálím. When asked to state what territory he claimed, he asserted his right to the whole country up to the walls of Kuwait town. He was informed that His Majesty's Government recognized the territory within the inner boundary defined in the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1913 as unquestionably belonging to Kuwait.

On 1st June Shaikh Sálím sent a deputation to Riyádh, reporting what had happened at Hamdh and asking Ibn Sa'ud for the restitution of his camels and property, and compensation for the families of the killed. This deputation returned to Kuwait on 2nd July accompanied by one Násir ibn Sa'ud al Farhán, who was the bearer of a long letter from Ibn Sa'ud to Shaikh Sálím. It recapitulated a long series of wrongs committed by Shaikh Sálím on Ibn Sa'ud and his people, and asserted that Shaikh Sálím had no jurisdiction at all over Jariya 'Ilya or any of the country claimed by him. Ibn Sa'ud sent also, for Shaikh Sálím's signature, a letter that was tantamount to giving away all the country he claimed east and west of Jariya.

Seeing no possible chance of an honourable understanding with Ibn Sa'ud except through British assistance, Shaikh Sálím immediately asked for His Majesty's Government's advice as to how he should reply to Ibn Sa'ud. He laid emphasis on the fact that the territory under dispute was clearly his in accordance with the terms of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of 1913. In reply he was told *not* to sign the incriminating letter sent by Ibn Sa'ud, and officially to invoke the friendly arbitration of the British Government. At the same time it was pointed out to him that the Anglo-Turkish Agreement was not a document to which he was actively a party, and that, in any case, it had been superseded by Clause VI of His Majesty's Government's agreement of 26th December 1919 with Ibn Sa'ud. Shaikh Sálím was bitterly disappointed.

After much further lengthy correspondence between Kuwait, Ibn Sa'ud and the Civil Commissioner for Iraq, the British Government agreed to appoint an arbitrator, provided that Ibn Sa'ud and Shaikh Sálím each gave a written undertaking in advance to accept, for his



# The Battle of Jahra

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lifetime and on his own behalf and that of his people, the decision of the arbitrator. It was further stipulated that meanwhile both parties must keep the peace. After more correspondence Shaikh Sálím accepted these conditions on 17th September, and restated his claims. Ibn Sa'ud did likewise in his letter of 5th September (received on 17th September), in which he declared once again that Shaikh Sálím had jurisdiction only within the new wall built round Kuwait.

In the meantime a letter from Ibn Sa'ud to Ibn Shuqair at Jariya 'Ilya, giving orders about a fort to be built there, was intercepted by Shaikh Sálím and, in view of the fact that it had been written after Ibn Sa'ud had accepted the conditions of arbitration laid down by His Majesty's Government, caused great indignation in Kuwait.

### THE BATTLE OF JAHRA

Shaikh Sálím now also received inside information that Faisal Al Duwísh was moving north to Subaihíyah, south-west of the Burqán hills, obviously by Ibn Sa'ud's orders. Fearing that this might be the prelude to a lightning attack on Jahra, a place to which was attached great strategic importance, Shaikh Sálím went out to Jahra with his war-flag and all available forces, and started putting the place in a state of defence.

Faisal Al Duwísh reached Subaihíyah on 9th September. Shaikh Sálím immediately ordered the new wall of Kuwait to be manned, almost all the able-bodied men of the town being impressed into military service for this purpose.

Sir Percy Cox had been appointed High Commissioner for Iraq. On his way up the Persian Gulf, he met Ibn Sa'ud at 'Uqair and, in talks at which I was present, discussed matters of high importance and conferred on him the order of G.C.S.I. Sir Percy arrived at Baghdad on 10th October.

At six o'clock that morning, the 'Ikhwán under Faisal Al Duwísh attacked Jahra. Shaikh Sálím's force was holding the south-west face of the village, with Ibn Tuwála's mounted Shammar on the right flank and Da'ij al Fádhil's horsemen on the left. The 'Ikhwán launched their attack on the western end of the position and, after routing the Shammar, turned the position from the north-west. By nine o'clock,



the entire village was in their hands. Shaikh Sálím, with other shaikhs and about six hundred men, was shut up in the fort to the south-west of the village, the rest of his forces being dispersed.

In the afternoon Faisal Al Duwísh sent a message to Shaikh Sálím, offering him peace if he would evacuate the fort forthwith and renounce all claims to the camels, etc., taken by the 'Ikhwán. Shaikh Sálím refused. During the night the 'Ikhwán made three determined attacks on the fort, but failed to take it.

Meanwhile very great nervousness was evident in Kuwait town, and the wildest rumours were current. An immediate attack on the town was feared, and all available men were sent to man the wall. On the morning of 11th October Shaikh Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, who was in command in Kuwait, organized and dispatched a relief force to Jahra. About six hundred men were sent by sea in the Shaikh's steam-launch *Mishrif* and several sailing-boats, while Ibn Tuwála and a party of mounted men went out by road.

Before these reinforcements arrived Faisal Al Duwísh sent an 'álim named Ibn Sulaimán to Shaikh Sálím with definite proposals of peace. He demanded that Shaikh Sálím should put down all smoking, drinking, gambling and prostitution in Kuwait. Shaikh Sálím replied that he too disapproved of all these things, and was quite willing to prohibit their being done openly by his subjects. He could not, however, answer for what people did in their own houses, nor could he be responsible for the actions of foreigners who were not under his control.

He then raised the question of the camels and other plunder, saying that if the 'Ikhwán were willing to withdraw and leave behind them everything they had taken, he would not interfere with them. Ibn Sulaimán maintained that the 'Ikhwán had a right to keep the spoils of battle and that he could not agree to leave them without reference to Faisal Al Duwísh, but that he would refer the matter to him. He then went back to Al Duwísh's tent, on the far side of the village.

Shortly after this, the 'Ikhwán withdrew without further fighting, but taking everything with them. They marched for three hours that day, and on 12th October moved on to Subaihíyah.

The Kuwait casualties had been comparatively small, amounting to about two hundred in all. The 'Ikhwán, who had attacked in the

## Al Fuqm Arrives in Kuwait

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open with the most fanatical disregard for their own safety, had lost enormously. Major J. C. More, D.S.O., then Political Agent at Kuwait, told me that they left eight hundred dead outside Jahra. They are said to have had more than that number severely wounded, of whom some four hundred died before they reached Subaihiyah, and more than a hundred after that.

So ended the battle of Jahra, which, in the eyes of the Arabs, was a very great victory for Kuwait in her long-drawn struggle with Ibn Sa'ud in the days of Shaikh Sálím.

#### THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT INTERVENES

From Subaihiyah, Faisal Al Duwísh sent a letter to Shaikh Sálím on 14th October, demanding that Hilál al Mutairi, his close friend and one of the biggest merchants in Kuwait, should be sent out to treat with him regarding a settlement of the dispute. Shaikh Sálím refused, replying that if Al Duwísh wished to discuss anything with him he should send in delegates of his own. As a result a deputation from Al Duwísh and led by Jufrán al Fuqm\* arrived in Kuwait on 18th October, but from the first it was evident that their terms were impossible of acceptance, being, in short, a demand that the whole population of Kuwait town should become 'Ikhwán. Shaikh Sálím put off seeing the envoys himself for nearly a week, meanwhile asking officially for British assistance. He received the delegation on the morning of the 24th. Major More, who was present at the beginning of the interview, delivered to them, both in writing and verbally, a *communiqué*, copies of which had already been dropped by aeroplanes.

It was to the effect that so long as hostilities had been confined to the desert and Jahra the British Government had not felt itself called upon to do more than use friendly efforts in the interests of peace. When, however, threats were uttered against the town, involving British subjects as well as our assurances to the Shaikh of Kuwait, we could no longer remain spectators. From declarations recently repeated by Ibn Sa'ud the British Government was confident that the hostile action of the 'Ikhwán was altogether contrary to his wishes and orders,

\* An old man to-day and a personal friend of the writer's. Paramount shaikh of the Suhabba section of the Mutair.

and that he would doubtless make this clear as soon as he heard of the attempt on Jahra. If the 'Ikhwán should make any attempt to attack Kuwait, they would be regarded as guilty of hostility to the British authorities as well as to the Shaikh of Kuwait, and His Majesty's Government would have no alternative but to oppose such hostile action by every convenient means.

Jufrán al Fuqm replied that, in operating against Shaikh Sálím, the 'Ikhwán had acted under the direct orders of Ibn Sa'ud. Major More said he could not believe this, as Ibn Sa'ud was a friend of the British and had recently given them an assurance that he would not molest Kuwait. He knew Ibn Sa'ud to be a man of honour and one who would keep his word.

Major More then repeated the warning that we would oppose them if they attacked Kuwait, and withdrew. After refusing a demand for supplies Shaikh Sálím dismissed the envoys. They left Kuwait the same day and returned to Subaihiyah, accompanied by a representative of Shaikh Sálím's. This man reported back to Kuwait on the 28th with a letter from Faisal Al Duwísh to the effect that he had believed the promises made by Shaikh Sálím to Ibn Sulaimán at Jahra and that, in consequence, he had abstained from hostile action and had also tried to stop Ibn Sa'ud's forces. He now saw, however, that Shaikh Sálím had deceived him and was not fulfilling his promises. Consequently the truce was at an end.

The man who brought this letter said that when he had left Subaihiyah, the 'Ikhwán had been loading up water, intending to leave on the morning of the 26th for As Sáfa, there to await ammunition and supplies. This report proved to be true—as far, at any rate, as their moving to As Sáfa was concerned. The sight of British aeroplanes and of H.M. ships in Kuwait Bay had not unlikely influenced Al Duwísh in his decision to withdraw.

On 30th October Shaikh Sálím was informed that the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, considered it a matter of urgency to prevent further bloodshed during the period that must elapse before the question now at issue between Shaikh Sálím and Ibn Sa'ud could be amicably settled. It was accordingly intimated that the wells of Subaihiyah would not be occupied by either side, and that any infringement of this direction would lead to hostile action by the

## Death of Shaikh Sálím

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Royal Air Force. The same message was sent via Bahrain to Ibn Sa'ud.

Some thirty miles east-south-east of Basra lies the Persian town of Muhammerah. In January 1921 Khaza'al Khan, Shaikh of Muhammerah, offered to send his eldest son, Chásib, to Najd, accompanied by Shaikh Sálím's nephew, Shaikh Ahmad, to try to arrange a truce between Ibn Sa'ud and Shaikh Sálím. His offer was accepted, and the mission left for Bahrain, *en route* for Najd, in February. Ibn Sa'ud's camp at Al Khafs, to the north of Riyádh, was reached on 2nd March. Two days later the news of Shaikh Sálím's death reached them. He had died on 27th February, after being suddenly taken ill at Jahra on the 23rd. Ibn Sa'ud said at once that there was no longer any quarrel to settle, or any need for a boundary between his territory and Kuwait.

#### A NEW RULER OF KUWAIT

It had always been the custom for Shaikhs of Kuwait to rule personally and autocratically, and to avoid all delegation of authority. It was also their pride that they were accessible to all their subjects, even to the most humble, it being their usage to give audience for two or three hours each morning in the market-place, and to decide great and small cases by direct judgment.

On the death of Shaikh Sálím, however, the townspeople, tired of the unnecessary war into which they had been led against their will, determined that in future they would have some say in the affairs of the state. They informed members of the Sabah family that they would accept as their ruler only one who would assent to a council of advisers.

The choice fell on Ahmad al Jábir al Sabah, the popular eldest son of the late Shaikh Jábir ibn Mubárák Al Sabah and already a favourite of 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud's. On his return from Najd on 29th March he acceded to the throne. An agreement was drawn up between him and the people of Kuwait to the effect that all criminal cases would be decided in accordance with the *shari'ah*, the religious law of Islám. In case of appeal the written statements of both parties and the Qádhi's judgment would be submitted to the '*ulema*', whose decision would be final. If both parties in a dispute agreed beforehand for a third



party to arbitrate between them, his decision would hold. The ruler would seek advice in all matters, external as well as internal, affecting the town. If anyone had any suggestion to make for the benefit of the town or people, he would lay it before the ruler, who would consult his people and adopt it if they so desired.

Under the presidency of one of the leading merchants, Hamad ibn 'Abdullah al Sagar, a council of twelve members, six from the eastern half of the town and six from the western half, was duly elected. It rarely met, however, and in practice Shaikh Ahmad followed the older system still beloved of his people, and ruled in much the same way.

Shaikh Ahmad was a strong, good-looking and pleasant man of the same type as his father. Thick-set rather than tall, his bluff, jovial manner and peculiarly charming smile made him an eminently suitable person for his position in so far as the ceremonial part of his duties was concerned. Hostile critics characterized him on occasion as a man of little real strength, a ruler who was more obstinate than strong, but I, who was to know him intimately for twenty-one years, often when dark clouds covered the political horizon, must strongly dissent from this view. I found him to be a man of quietly firm character, yet capable at times of making lightning decisions, whose ambition in life was to follow in the footsteps of his famous grandfather and later those of King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud.

He was definitely a right-minded man and could be counted on to do the right thing in the right place. On the other hand, like every Arab of pure stock, he was a man of immense pride; while he always reacted to kind and tactful treatment, he could not endure a discourtesy or forget an injury and, if taken the wrong way, was at times very awkward to handle.

He was always popular with the people of Kuwait, although, in his long fight to put the finances of the state on a proper footing and keep the Government solvent, especially during the period from 1923 to 1937, when Ibn Sa'ud prohibited all trading between Najd and Kuwait, he got the name of being miserly, notably among the wilder Badawin elements. This was unjust.

A strict Muslim he was zealous in the enforcement of the prohibition against liquor, and also in the suppression of prostitution. He himself was a non-smoker.



## A Pretty Story

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Unquestionably well disposed towards the British, who gave him on his succession the same assurances as had been given to his predecessors, he was fond of entertaining in British style. In his palace at Dasmán ("Place of Bounty"), he maintained a suite of rooms furnished like a European home, and was fond of rifles, guns, cinematographs, cameras, cars and other modern inventions. He frequently drove his own car and was a fine shot with rifle and shotgun. That he also possessed Western ideas of sport may be instanced by the fact that he set his face hard against hunting the gazelle in motor-cars.

Born in 1885 he was thirty-six years of age when he came to the throne, on which he was to remain until his death in 1950.

#### SA'UD AL 'ARÁFA'S LOVE FOR NÚRA

The Lady Núra was a remarkable woman, resembling almost exactly, in personality, character, generosity and, above all, personal magnetism, her great brother, Ibn Sa'ud. He paid close heed to her ideas and political views and, when worried about state matters, would closet himself with her for long hours, getting from her inspiration and advice.

Her husband was Sa'ud al 'Aráfa Al Sa'ud, grandson of Sa'ud ibn Faisal Al Sa'ud, the twelfth Amír of Najd. The marriage, it is said, was a love-match as far as Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa was concerned, but for Ibn Sa'ud it had deep political significance. Were not the 'Aráfa branch of the Al Sa'ud always a source of danger, and were they not also of the royal house of Al Sa'ud, and, last but not least, were they not related to the 'Ajmán tribe, for ever a thorn in the ruler's side? Because his mother, Wadha, was of the shaikhly house of the 'Ajmán, being a daughter of Shaikh Hazám Al Hithlain, Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa has always been looked upon with affection by the great 'Ajmán and Murra tribes. They call him their own particular shaikh, and would follow him to a man if ever there were trouble among the royal family. During Ibn Sa'ud's lifetime, they were cute enough not to make too much fuss of Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa, for the King knew everything and missed nothing. Nevertheless they always called him Sa'ud al Kabír—the Great Sa'ud—and do so to this day.

Sa'ud Al Aráfa was deeply attached to Núra, frequently saying to

his 'Ajmán friends: "Núra? Why, I cannot live long absent from her. She is the light of my eyes and the breath of my life."

In the summer of 1921 Ibn Sa'ud prepared to bring all central Arabia under his rule by capturing Ha'il and destroying for ever the power of the Al Rashíd. The following story concerning it was told to me years afterwards by Zunaifir ibn Huwaila of the 'Ajmán.

"When 'Abdul 'Azíz went off to raid Ibn Rashíd of Ha'il", said Zunaifir, "he ordered his *qaum* to concentrate some miles from Riyádh preparatory to marching off to the new war. With him went Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa. All farewells had been said, and Sa'ud among others had bidden farewell to his lovely Núra, for sterner business was now on hand.

"It being God's will, the force was unable to move and there was a delay of several weeks. Just before the final forward march, Sa'ud Al Aráfa, anxious to get one more glimpse of the Lady Núra, secretly rode thirty miles back to Riyádh and, unknown to any person, arrived before the town by sunset. There disguise became necessary, for the sentries of the gate must not recognize him or discover that he had come back. He therefore left his steed among the palm-trees outside the city and, after cutting some brushwood, placed some on his head and boldly walked into the town as if he was a woodcutter. By keeping his face covered he got past the guards safely, but he heard one old man say to another in the street: 'By God, the walk of that man resembles that of the 'Imám\* or Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa.'

"Sa'ud hurried on to his lady's palace, which he reached as it grew dark. Shrill cries of welcome greeted his appearance, and Núra especially was pleased. She kept her head, however, and before asking her husband's mission ordered all doors and windows to be closed and barred, so as to keep secret her husband's return. On no account, she said, was anyone to go out. Next, after ordering her slaves to keep the return of Sa'ud a strict secret on pain of death, she inquired of him why he had come back.

" 'Yá Núra', said he, 'I cannot go away without spending one last night with you.'

"That night they slept together and when dawn came, Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa prepared to depart. But before allowing him to go Núra called

\* 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud.



NAIF IBN HITHLAIN (ABAL KILÁB)

Paramount Shaikh of the 'Ajmán

Both from sketches made by the late Squadron-Leader H. Stewart, R.A.F., shortly after their surrender to the British at Jahra



FAISAL IBN SULTÁN AL DUWÍSH

Paramount Shaikh of the Mutair





Muhammad abu Shayba of the Jiblán section of the Mutair tribe, with hunting falcon. A good type of desert man



The author's wife seated in front of one of the richly ornamented doorways in the ladies' quarter of the King's Palace, Riyádh

## The Clever Princess

### Chap. X

two faithful servants and asked them to bear witness that her husband had returned and slept with her. She then made Sa'ud sign and seal a *waraqa* to the effect that on the date stated he had come back from the army and, unknown to any man, had spent the whole night with her.

“ ‘That, Yá Sa'ud, will prove to my brother 'Abdul 'Azíz and to the world, in the event of my becoming pregnant, that you are the father of my child and that I am no common adultress.’ ”

Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa rejoined the forces of Ibn Sa'ud. Ha'il was captured in August. Ibn Sa'ud annexed the amírate of Jabal Shammar and sent the surviving members of the Rashíd dynasty into captivity at Riyádh



## CHAPTER XI

# The Demarcation of the Frontiers, 1921-1923

*My Return to Iraq—The Bombing of the Mosque of 'Imám 'Alí—  
The Treaty of Muhammerah—The Black Admiral of Qatif—The  
'Uqair Conference—Reactions in Kuwait*

### MY RETURN TO IRAQ

After my tour of duty in Bahrain I was returned to Iraq as Political Officer, Hilla *liwa*, this time with my wife (*née* Violet Penelope Lucas-Calcraft), whom I married in Bombay in December 1920. We reached Basra on 1st January 1921, then, after staying with the Philbys in Baghdad for ten days, I took up my duties at Hilla. My two most important tasks were to restart the local administration, which had become completely disrupted and disorganized by a rebellion against the British in 1920, and to attempt to heal the wounds and repair the bad feeling engendered between Briton and Arab after the rough treatment the British Army had meted out to the tribes round about Hilla.

Early on I began to look round for good Arab officials to help fill various administrative posts. Among those whose services I obtained was 'Abdullah ibn Ahmad Pasha al Sána, whose father, Ahmad Pasha, a Najdi by origin, had been the first *mutasarrif* of Basra to be appointed after the British occupation late in 1915. Ahmad Pasha, who proved a loyal and faithful friend of the British until his death, wrote a letter recommending his son to me and saying that he left him entirely in my charge, to do with as I would.

'Abdullah al Sána became *qaimaqám* of Hilla and showed from the start ability of a high order. His handling of several difficult and dangerous tribal disputes, in which he showed outstanding personal courage, earned him highly deserved praise from the High Commissioner and the Central Government. I pushed him for all he was worth.

# The Mosque at Kúfa

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### THE BOMBING OF THE MOSQUE OF 'IMÁM 'ALI

It so happened that I went up one day to Baghdad to see the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, on business. He surprised me by asking if I knew Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi, he whose advice I had so often sought when I had been A.P.O. at Suq ash Shuyúkh. I replied that I had never met him, but had had many paper dealings with him over a long period. "You will do", said the great P.Z., and promptly gave me a personal letter from him to the aged *mujtahid*, ordering me to take it with all speed to Najaf al Ashraf and deliver it with my own hand to Seyed Cádhim.

He explained that there had been a very serious incident. A R.A.F. pilot, apparently engaged on some minor punitive expedition on the Mishkháb branch of the Euphrates below Abu Sukhair village, had quite accidentally dropped a bomb over Kúfa, a town on the river, twelve miles from Najaf. The bomb had hit the outer compound wall of the mosque of 'Imám 'Ali and blown a large hole in it. The mishap had been due to a faulty bomb-rack and had been in no way intentional, but it had already started a rebellion among the Shi'ahs in the Indian province of Oude, and might set the main Shi'ah world against us. Disturbances had spread far and wide, and Persia especially was in a ferment.

Sir Percy's letter to Seyed Cádhim explained that the bomb had been dropped quite inadvertently, that the R.A.F. officer had been punished, and he, Sir Percy Cox, made due apology on behalf of His Majesty's Government and himself for this most regrettable of incidents, etc. etc. I took it down to Najaf without delay, called on the *mutasarrif*, Hamíd Khan, and asked him to take me to see Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi immediately. He wasted no time and in half an hour we found ourselves in the reception chamber of the great *mujtahid*, who had not yet appeared. The room was little more than a cell: no chairs or cushions, with only a rough reed mat to cover the floor. I was impressed with this hermit-like abode of the religious leader of half the Muslim world.

Hamíd Khan and I sat talking for some ten minutes to a young secretary before the great man joined us. He was small, aged about seventy, and wore a large blue-black turban. His beard was fairly long and was dyed a henna colour. He greeted the two of us in charming

style, his eyes bubbling over with fun, which belied the many stories that he was a feeble old man. He bade us be seated, and after tea (Persian style) had been brought in and we had all partaken, I asked permission to speak. I said I had brought from his friend, the British High Commissioner in Iraq, a letter that I had been instructed to deliver with deep and respectful compliments. Seyed Cádhim took the letter and laid it unopened on the floor.

"But who are you who speak such good Arabic?" he asked.

"Seyedna", I replied, "I am your grateful disciple of Suq ash Shuyúkh, whom men call Daksan—the Englishman whom your Holiness helped so many times with difficult tribal cases some years ago."

The old man beamed on me, saying: "My son, my son, this is a pleasure."

He then went off into high-flown Persian, and for the best part of three minutes sang my praises and complimented me to the skies. I just got the gist of what he said, nothing more. At the end of the speech, I said, greatly daring:

"O descendant of the Prophet, forgive me, but I do not understand Persian. Could you repeat what you have said in Arabic?"

He laughed long and heartily, then, with a merry twinkle in his eye, reiterated the oration in the highest of high language of the Qur'án; the classical Arabic as used among scholars and known as Nahu. At the end of this second discourse, and greatly embarrassed, I said:

"Forgive me, Seyedna, but I still do not understand. Will you vouchsafe to speak ordinary Arabic to your pupil and disciple?"

Again the old man cackled out a long laugh and replied:

"I will do my best, my son, but you must really learn the two most beautiful languages in the world—Persian and Nahu."

Beaming on me with the kindest of expressions he then repeated his speech in the patois of the marsh-folk of Suq ash Shuyúkh and the Hamár Lake—more, it was the speech of a marsh-woman addressing her son. It was perfect and so was the acting. I understood every word and wondered greatly. Then I saw that he had been testing me with his rhetoric and now wanted me to feel at home. Feeling very flattered, I said so, and from that moment felt at ease.

Seyed Cádhim then took up Sir Percy's letter, opened it and read it. I watched his face carefully as he pondered long and deeply. At last he turned to me and with kindly eyes remarked:

"No bomb was ever dropped on the mosque of 'Imám 'Ali at Kúfa. Who said so? It is a lie to discredit the English, and I should know."

Very humbly I affirmed that the incident was unfortunately true and Sir Percy would certainly not have written as he had done unless he had known that it was true.

"No, no", he said. "It is a wicked lie. The thing never happened at all. I shall reply to Sir Percy Cox to that effect."

"Then", I ventured, "why not write out a *fatwa* also, declaring that the whole story is a fabrication from beginning to end and that Muslims need not fear an attack on their religion?"

He laughed and instructed his secretary how he should write and word the *fatwa*. Then, turning to me, he remarked that Sir Percy Cox was a very, very great man, who understood how to handle a difficult situation.

"Tell him that I thank him for knowing the Qur'án and God's injunction to man, which reads: 'Udkhulu fi al buyút min abwábiha; la tinzalu min al satah.'\* In this case Sir Percy has understood rightly who is the door of this house, and so I say that no bomb was ever dropped on Kúfa, by accident or otherwise."

Armed with the letter and *fatwa* I took my leave and hastened back to Baghdad. Sir Percy was particularly pleased with the *fatwa*. He had several hundred photographs taken of it and caused them to be widely distributed, copies being flown to Lucknow and other Indian cities, Teheran, and the principal towns in Iraq. The great name of Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi and his well-known seal at the bottom of the *fatwa* put an end to all disturbances.

The fact remains that the bomb *did* fall, damaging the north-west corner of the outer compound wall of the mosque of 'Imám 'Ali at Kúfa. Such was the wisdom of Sir Percy Cox and the greatness of Britain's friend, Seyed Cádhim al Yezdi.

\* "Enter into houses by the main doors; do not come down from the rooftops."

## THE TREATY OF MUHAMMERAH

During the spring of 1922 a series of raids by Najdi tribes into Iraq territory, and an equal number of counter-raids by Shammar sections that had not accepted Ibn Sa'ud's overlordship and had taken refuge in the Hilla *liwa*, brought the need of some sort of *modus vivendi* to the fore. The raids, counter-raids and subsequent anti-Ibn Sa'ud propaganda in Iraq were almost identical in form and method to those we later saw in the autumn and winter of 1927-28.

It was not generally realized, I think, especially by certain British and Arab officials in Iraq, that the trouble was almost entirely economic, aggravated, of course, by the unfortunate personal hostility existing between King Faisal I and Ibn Sa'ud. It is a well-known fact that the Badawin tribes of northern and north-eastern Najd—particularly the 'Ajmán, Harb, Mutair, Shammar, 'Awázim and, nearer Iraq, the Dhafir—cannot support themselves in their own country and for centuries have migrated each year during the autumn months towards the Euphrates and Kuwait, in order to obtain the necessities of life, which come under three main heads: dates, rice and, at the end of the hot weather, grazing for their camels along the rich zone lying to the south of the Euphrates from Karbala to the Persian Gulf. This applies also to the eastern 'Anizah tribes—the 'Amarát and Dahámshah—but as certain of their shaikhs have long owned land around Karbala, they come within the category of Iraq tribes proper, so need not be discussed here.

The routes and tribal sectors of the Euphrates tapped by the Shammar, etc., in their annual marketing migration have been from time immemorial approximately as follows:—

Shammar and Harb towards Shinafiyah (near Najaf) and Samáwah; more eastern sections, to Zubair.

Dhafir towards Samáwah, Nasiríyah and Suq ash Shuyúkh.

Mutair towards Kuwait and Zubair.

'Ajmán and 'Awázim towards Kuwait.

The methods adopted were always the same. The Badu first sent in presents to the powerful riverain tribes (to the Muntafiq Sa'dún shaikhs when they were strong) and asked permission to come up and camp near the river—usually about thirty miles' journey—



where well-water was good. From these camps, they would *sábil* in one continuous stream up to the towns and tribal villages along the Euphrates, to make their purchases. Permission was never refused, for both sides benefited: the desert man brought money and camels while his Euphrates counterpart got rid of his surplus dates, barley and rice, and, incidentally, renewed his supplies of rifles and ammunition.

The Euphrates towns and tribes—and Kuwait too—always welcomed the annual migration, while the Badu of northern Najd looked upon Iraq and Kuwait as their natural shopping centres at the end of summer and beginning of winter, when grazing was scarce in their homeland, and a distant move became imperative. For the river tribes to have denied the Badu permission to pass up to the Euphrates for their *musábilah* would have been tantamount to a declaration of war, and trouble would have resulted. But this rarely happened, and only if great heads of states—the Amírs of Ha'il, the Al Sa'ud, the Muntafiq Sa'dún shaikhs, etc.—were at enmity, as they sometimes were.

The year 1922 began under such conditions, which gave rise to the raiding and counter-raiding already referred to. On 5th May a treaty was signed at Muhammerah by representatives of Great Britain and Najd. It provided for the punishment of raiding tribes and the safety of the pilgrim routes, and also tackled the problem of a frontier between Iraq and Najd. It was, however, subject to ratification by the High Commissioner of Iraq and Ibn Sa'ud.

#### THE BLACK ADMIRAL OF QATÍF

In September of that year (1922) I was sent to Bahrain on a special mission by Sir Percy Cox, my instructions being to get in touch with Ibn Sa'ud and persuade him to come down to 'Uqair, on the coast, for a conference with Sir Percy on the frontier question. Sir Percy said definitely that he would not leave Iraq for 'Uqair until I had wired him that Ibn Sa'ud had started from Riyádh for the coast.

Major Daly, who had succeeded me as Political Agent at Bahrain, was away on leave in India, so my wife and I stayed in the guest-house of 'Abdul 'Azíz al Qusaibi, Ibn Sa'ud's trade representative in Bahrain. The house was on the sea front, just east of the customs jetty, and we were made very welcome by 'Abdul 'Azíz al Qusaibi, who had been

informed of the reason for my visit. My wife and I soon made ourselves comfortable in two of the spacious upstairs rooms of the house, and, as we had our horses with us in Bahrain, amused ourselves, when not busy writing reports, by taking long rides in the hinterland of Manáma and Budai'a.

I soon got down to business and opened a correspondence with Ibn Sa'ud and, little by little, got him to favour the idea of the conference at 'Uqair. The difficulty was to pin him down to a date. I remember that I early won his favour through the excellent work of my wife, who acted as my private secretary and typist. She got on the right side of him by translating into French the daily editions of Reuter's telegrams that came to me, and sending them by fast camel-rider to Riyádh, where the news-sheets were translated into Arabic by Dr 'Abdullah Sa'id Damlúji, then acting Foreign Secretary to Ibn Sa'ud.

It was a month after we had arrived in Bahrain that 'Abdul 'Aziz al Qusaibi came to me and said that a certain Major Frank Holmes, mining engineer, and a Dr Mann, both of the Eastern and General Syndicate Ltd., London, were shortly due out and would be obliged if my wife and I could put them up and feed them whilst they were in Bahrain. They were coming out on Ibn Sa'ud's instructions and would go into the interior as soon as he gave the word.

My suspicions were at once aroused. When I had been Political Agent in Bahrain two years previously, persistent rumours had gone round that there was an oil seepage behind the Qatíf oasis, some six miles north-east of Qatíf town. I had made several visits to the mainland in search of the seepage, but without success. With Ibn Sa'ud's permission I had also ridden by camel and donkey all over Jabal Dhahrán, thinking that Badawin rumours had located the seepage in the wrong place. I had known that I was hot on the scent, for, when in Qatíf, I had crossed over to Darín, capital of Tarút island, and had been shown by Shaikh Jásim ibn 'Abdul Waháb Pasha, who resided there, a copy of a Turkish report that stated categorically that an oil seepage was known to exist behind Qatíf. The original of the report had been sent to Istanbul by the Turkish *mutasarrif* of Hasa when the Turks had been in occupation of the province some years before.

## Our Two Guests

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It seemed obvious that, having been made aware of the Turkish report, Ibn Sa'ud had sent for Major Holmes to investigate and was delaying giving a firm date for the conference because he wanted to see Major Holmes first. It was also clear to me that Major Holmes might try to get a mining or oil concession out of Ibn Sa'ud if his preliminary researches showed any promise at all.

While negotiating with Ibn Sa'ud to get him to come down to 'Uqair, I had amused myself by writing to Sir Percy about my oil theories and describing my various visits to the mainland in search of the seepage. All these reports of mine had been typed out by my wife, so she knew all about the matter and consequently shared my suspicions when thus suddenly informed of the projected visit of the two representatives of the Eastern and General Syndicate.

I wired Sir Percy in code, telling him about Major Holmes and voicing the suspicion that he was coming out to advise Ibn Sa'ud on the possibilities of oil in the vicinity of Qatíf and Jabal Dhahrán, and might raise this question if and when Ibn Sa'ud came down to 'Uqair for the boundary conference. My previous reports made a very useful background to this new development.

Major Frank Holmes and Dr Mann arrived by next up slow mail, and were duly brought round to our house by Qusaibi and made at home there. Two things greatly amused my wife and myself. The first was the appearance of Major Holmes. He carried a large white umbrella lined green, wore a white helmet as issued to French troops in Africa, and over his face and helmet a green gauze veil—quite like pictures one has seen of the tourist about to visit the Pyramids. The second was the amazing number of presents Holmes had brought for Ibn Sa'ud. There must have been over fifty cases, leather bags, boxes and guns.

The two new arrivals very soon made themselves at home. Major Holmes was an amazingly amusing companion. His anecdotes were legion. He exuded charm, but I soon discovered he was a sick man, having bladder trouble. He wondered how he was going to do the journey by camel to Hufuf and possibly beyond. I was able to give him useful tips, for I had done the journey and many more while Political Agent in Bahrain.

A week later, the day of their departure came round, and two large

motor-driven dhows tied up in front of our house. At breakfast I asked Major Holmes why he wanted two boats.

"Ah", he replied, "one is for Dr Mann, who goes via 'Uqair, and the other is for me, for my journey takes me via Qatíf."

"But you are a sick man!" I expostulated. "Why ride a hundred miles by camel when, by the 'Uqair route, you will only have to cover a bare fifty?"

He at once became mysterious and replied:

"Dickson, I am a butterfly collector, and I have been told that a wonderful black variety, known nowhere else in the world, is to be found in the Qatíf oasis. I have already called it the Black Admiral of Qatíf and am out to get a specimen. Then my name will be famous."

He was going on with his bacon and eggs, when my wife dropped her bombshell.

"Major Holmes", she remarked in a quiet voice, "this is the first time I've heard of an oil seepage being called by the name of a butterfly."

The effect was immediate. Holmes jumped up from his chair saying: "What on earth do you mean, Mrs Dickson?"

"Exactly what I have said."

He was so taken aback that he rushed round the table and clasped my wife's hand.

"My God, you are a wonderful woman!" he exclaimed. "I shall telegraph to-day to the curator of the Zoological Gardens in London and ask that you be made a Fellow of the Zoo."

He was as good as his word. Shortly afterwards, my wife heard that she had been duly elected F.Z.S.

Holmes and Dr Mann departed in the two dhows. We were to meet Major Holmes again.

#### THE 'UQAIR CONFERENCE

About 10th November 1922 Ibn Sa'ud informed me by letter that he would arrive in 'Uqair on the 21st. I telegraphed to that effect to Sir Percy Cox, who replied that he would come down to Bahrain in one of H.M. sloops and asked me to arrange his onward trip by sea to 'Uqair. He said he would be accompanied by the Iraq Minister of Communications and Works (Sabíh Beg) and staff; Major J. C.



## The Camp at 'Uqair

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More, the Political Agent in Kuwait, who would represent Shaikh Ahmad al Jábir, ruler of Kuwait; Shaikh Fahad Beg Al Hadhál, head of the 'Amarát group of the 'Anizah; his (Sir Percy's) personal assistant, an ex-officer of the Royal Navy; and various other Arab staff and clerical officers.

This party arrived in due course, and we all proceeded to 'Uqair in one of 'Abdul 'Azíz al Qusaibi's motor-driven dhows. We found Ibn Sa'ud already there, in an impressive camp of white tents of every size and description, about half a mile to the west of the old fort and customs buildings. He was accompanied by Sa'ud al 'Aráfa Al Sa'ud, at one time rebel against his authority and now his brother-in-law; 'Abdul Latíf Pasha al Mendíl, the prominent Najdi merchant and banker of Basra; the Lebanese poet and historian, Amín Riháni; several other officials, including Dr 'Abdullah Sa'id Damlúji; and a personal bodyguard of about three hundred men. Also there was Major Holmes, who had met Ibn Sa'ud at Hufuf and had later come down to the coast with him.

We were comfortably housed in tents, a large E.P.\* tent forming a combined conference- and dining-room. Ibn Sa'ud had for himself a couple of magnificent white tents, one for reception, the other for sleeping and retiring. He gave a truly royal reception to all of us—with one exception. This was the aged Fahad Beg Al Hadhál, who appeared to be an unwelcome visitor, being rather pointedly given to understand that his counsels were not needed. He was relegated to his tent, which, feeling this treatment keenly, he refused to leave throughout the conference period of seven days.

It was a mistake of Sir Percy's to have brought him down, for he and Núri Al Sha'alan, of the Ál Ruwala branch of the 'Anizah, looked upon themselves as the titular heads of all the 'Anizah tribal confederation and claimed to be senior even to the Al Sabah of Kuwait and Ibn Sa'ud himself. The proud 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud, now lord of Arabia, would naturally not like to see in his camp or at the conference a member of the tribe, however honourable, who considered himself superior in ancestry.

The main business of the conference was to settle the Iraq-Najd

\* European pattern, an Indian Government expression to describe the large square double-fly canvas tents used for senior officers and mess-tents in standing camps.



frontier line. Iraq was represented by Sabíh Beg, Najd by Ibn Sa'ud. Sir Percy was a sort of umpire, always sphinx-like, with a vast amount of quiet humour and patience, yet clearly determined not to go away without a settlement in his pocket.

The talks were a wonderful example of the bargaining methods employed when representatives of two great oriental states get together and try to settle a problem. There was no give and take whatever—to start with, at any rate—both sides making ridiculous demands all the time. As an example of how awkward was the behaviour of the principal negotiators, I will mention an incident that happened soon after the conference started. After various polite speeches had been made by both sides and by Sir Percy, who explained how earnestly desirous His Majesty's Government, the friend of both sides, was that an agreed and amicable settlement should be arrived at, he (Sir Percy) asked Sabíh Beg to state what Iraq considered to be a fair boundary line. Sabíh Beg jumped up and said:

“Since God created the world and history began to be written, Iraq's boundary extends south to within twelve miles of Ibn Sa'ud's capital, Riyádh. It runs west to the Red Sea, so as to include Ha'il, Medína and Yanbo, and east to include Hufuf and Qatíf on the Persian Gulf. As God is my witness, this and only this is the true boundary and cannot be disputed.”

Ibn Sa'ud could scarcely contain himself and, awaiting his chance, got up and roared the reply:

“I know nothing about the creation, but I do know that from the days of Abraham, my great-grandparent, the territories of Najd and the Badawin world have extended as far north as Aleppo and the river Orontes in north Syria, and included the whole country on the right bank of the Euphrates from there down to Basra on the Persian Gulf.”

From this sort of beginning, the arguments went on for five whole days, with many similar incidents all through, sometimes *pianissimo* and sometimes *fortissimo*.

Although nominally on friendly terms with Great Britain, Ibn Sa'ud felt himself hedged in on all sides by puppet states created by his ally. His real sympathies were with his own people, who wished to drive King Husain out of the Hijáz in the west, to overrun Transjordan in

the north-west, and to raid as before into Iraq and Kuwait in the north, but he clearly recognized that to defy Great Britain was to court disaster. At the 'Uqair conference, he took the attitude that his representatives at Muhammerah had gone against his instructions in agreeing that any fixed frontiers could be laid down between Iraq and Najd. He fought very hard indeed for a tribal boundary instead of an arbitrary line drawn on a map, so many whole tribes going to Najd and so many others to Iraq and Kuwait. He started off by insisting that the Dhafir, an Iraq tribe of Badu, was his and that it was necessary for his boundary to extend right up to the Euphrates, not because he wished to control the river, but because the Dhafir, as well as his big Badawin tribes, moved up annually to the Euphrates and would never be denied right of access, which was a question of life and death for the desert man.

When it was pointed out by Sir Percy that this claim was ridiculous and could not be discussed, Ibn Sa'ud gave in over the Dhafir tribe and adopted the more reasonable line of a tribal boundary, which would safeguard the rights of his own tribes and prevent future trouble. It would be easy, he said, to have a system of wells and grazing grounds owned by each tribe, for, from the days of Abraham, every tribe had known which were its wells and grazing grounds and which were not. He advocated, for instance, that the southernmost wells claimed by the 'Anizah, Dhafir and Kuwait tribes (excluding the Mutair, 'Awázim and 'Ajmán, which, he asserted, were under his government) should form the boundary, while any wells known to be common property—such as existed between the 'Anizah and the Dhafir and between the Dhafir and the Mutair—should be declared neutral.

Asked how the claims to these wells were to be proved, he retorted that the desert world knew them as clearly as the light of day, and, moreover, ancient *wasms* (tribal marks) were to be found on the inner walls of almost all of them. In the unlikely event of a dispute arising, the *ahl al khibrah*\* (people of wisdom) could put the matter right.

These questions apart, Ibn Sa'ud maintained the right of Najd tribes to go up to the Euphrates to make their annual purchases.

Sabíh Beg, when asked at this stage for his views, declared that

\* From *khabír*, an expert.

Iraq would accept nothing less than a frontier at least two hundred miles south of the Euphrates.

On the sixth day Sir Percy entered the lists. He told both sides that, at the rate they were going, nothing would be settled for a year. At a private meeting at which only he, Ibn Sa'ud and I were present, he lost all patience over what he called the childish attitude of Ibn Sa'ud in his tribal-boundary idea. Sir Percy's Arabic was not too good, so I did the translating. It was astonishing to see the Sultan of Najd being reprimanded like a naughty schoolboy by H.M. High Commissioner, and being told sharply that he, Sir Percy Cox, would himself decide on the type and general line of the frontier. This ended the *impasse*. Ibn Sa'ud almost broke down, and pathetically remarked that Sir Percy was his father and mother, who had made him and raised him from nothing to the position he held, and that he would surrender half his kingdom, nay the whole, if Sir Percy ordered.

As far as I can remember, Ibn Sa'ud took little further part in the frontier discussions, leaving it to Sir Percy to decide for him this vexed question. At a general meeting of the conference, Sir Percy took a red pencil and very carefully drew in on the map of Arabia a boundary line from the Persian Gulf to Jabal 'Anaizan, close to the Transjordan frontier. This gave Iraq a large area of the territory claimed by Najd. Obviously to placate Ibn Sa'ud, he ruthlessly deprived Kuwait of nearly two-thirds of her territory and gave it to Najd, his argument being that the power of Ibn Sabah\* was much less in the desert than it had been when the Anglo-Turkish Agreement had been drawn up. South and west of Kuwait proper, he drew out two zones, which he declared should be neutral and known as the Kuwait Neutral Zone and the Iraq Neutral Zone. Replying to the mild expostulations of 'Abdul Latif Pasha al Mendil against the need for a Kuwait Neutral Zone, Sir Percy said that the Kuwait tribes proper must have more grazing room. Pressed by the Pasha, he snapped out: "Why, pray, are you so anxious that this area go to Najd?"

"Quite candidly", the Pasha replied, "because we think oil exists there."

\* The desert title of the Shaikh of Kuwait.

“That”, retorted Sir Percy, “is exactly why I have made it a neutral zone. Each side shall have a half-share.”

At about nine o'clock that evening there was an amazing sequel. Ibn Sa'ud asked to see Sir Percy alone. Sir Percy took me with him. Ibn Sa'ud was by himself, standing in the centre of his great reception tent. He seemed terribly upset.

“My friend”, he moaned, “you have deprived me of half my kingdom. Better take it all and let me go into retirement.”

Still standing, this great strong man, magnificent in his grief, suddenly burst out into sobs. Deeply disturbed, Sir Percy seized his hand and began to weep also. Tears were rolling down his cheeks. No one but the three of us was present, and I relate exactly what I saw.

The emotional storm did not last long. Still holding Ibn Sa'ud's hand Sir Percy said:

“My friend, I know exactly how you feel, and for this reason I gave you two-thirds of Kuwait's territory. I don't know how Ibn Sabah will take the blow.”

As has been remarked on an earlier page, Sir Percy was a very great man. 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud was a very great man too—and a very great actor besides. Both are dead now. *Allah yirhamhum*, which is to say, may God have mercy on their souls.

Sir Percy's boundary line stood. It has remained unchanged to this day.

To repeat what I have said in Chapter I, Kuwait's new frontier started in the west at the junction of the Wádi al 'Aujah with the Bátin valley. From this point, leaving Riq'ai under the control of Najd, it ran in a straight line to the junction of the 29th parallel of latitude with the red semi-circle referred to in the Anglo-Turkish Agreement, and then followed the red semi-circle to a point on the coast just south of Rás al Qalai'ah (or Jilai'ah). South of this line of demarcation was the Kuwait Neutral Zone, bounded on the west by the wide and shallow depression called Ash Shaqq, on the east by the sea, and on the south by a line drawn from Ash Shaqq, through 'Ain al 'Abd, to a point on the coast just north of Rás al Mishá'ab.

These boundaries and the Iraq-Najd frontier were fixed entirely by Sir Percy, with a few suggestions here and there by Dr 'Abdullah Damlúji, Major More and myself. The agreement between Najd and



Kuwait, "in the name of God the merciful, the compassionate", was dated 2nd December 1922 and signed by Dr 'Abdullah Damlúji on behalf of Ibn Sa'ud, and Major More on behalf of the Shaikh of Kuwait. Ibn Sa'ud signified his concurrence by appending his seal.

By this somewhat strange arrangement, which savoured of surrender pure and simple to a strong state at the expense of a small and weak one, the obvious end in view being expediency and a desire to mollify the powerful and troublesome Ibn Sa'ud, the southern boundary of the recognized territory of Kuwait was pushed back a hundred and fifty miles, reducing the kingdom to an area of six thousand square miles.

Throughout the talks, Major More, who was supposed to be watching the interests of the Shaikh of Kuwait, had said nothing. Sir Percy had dominated everything and everybody. He won the day, and I doubt if any other person in the world could have succeeded as he did, but he grievously harmed a great reputation for fair dealing among the Arabs, which he had justly acquired over a long period of years; and the young Shaikh Ahmad al Jábir, scarcely a year on the throne and very impressionable, received a blow to his faith in Great Britain from which he never really recovered.

The Iraq-Najd protocol was also signed on 2nd December. It defined the exact frontiers, established the Iraq Neutral Zone, and permitted the free movement of nomadic tribes across the frontier, and the use by both countries of wells near the frontier. In order to overcome the difficulties that Ibn Sa'ud believed would result from this effort to set up a fixed boundary between the two countries, Article 3 of the protocol forbade the construction of forts and the concentration of troops in the frontier area. The looseness of the wording was to lead to trouble five years later.

This arbitrary boundary of Western type between Iraq and Najd was, in my opinion, a serious error. It resulted ultimately in Ibn Sa'ud, almost for the first time in history, restricting the annual natural movements of Najd tribes towards the north. Feeling, no doubt, that he had been outwitted by the Iraq delegates and Sir Percy Cox, and that the problem had been settled according to European standards and not to those that would have been understood by the Arabian world, he apparently decided on a policy of slowly but surely diverting



his people from their old and time-honoured communication with Iraq and Kuwait, trying instead to force them to get the necessities of life and daily requirements from 'Uqair, Qatíf and Jubail, his ports on the Persian Gulf.

No doubt he was also guided by the fact that, for political reasons and to prevent intrigue, it was better to prevent his tribes from having direct contact with states he felt were not friendly. But natural lines of trade cannot thus be lightly interfered with or laid aside, and, as a result of this policy, we have seen nothing but trouble. Had Ibn Sa'ud left well alone, it is not improbable that we should not have had the 'Ikhwán rebellion of 1929-30, or the friction between Iraq and Najd that preceded it, or the long-drawn-out fourteen years' agony of the Kuwait blockade.

Apart from one long, continuous line forming a neutral zone between Iraq and Najd, a much better solution than that decided upon at 'Uqair would have been the adoption of Ibn Sa'ud's suggestion for a frontier based on tribal boundaries. When I was Political Officer of the Muntafiq, I had bitter experience of the futility of the old Turkish arbitrary boundaries between *liwas*, and found relief from inter-*liwa* tribal fighting only when I was able to persuade Sir Percy Cox to allow me to adopt tribal boundaries. He would have done well to follow the same plan at 'Uqair.

It was not until the last day of the conference that Major Holmes took any part. In a private talk between Ibn Sa'ud and Sir Percy, I being the only other person present, Ibn Sa'ud raised the question of granting an oil concession to the Eastern and General Syndicate. He told Sir Percy all about Major Holmes's visit to Hasa; that Holmes had made a favourable report and was anxious to take out an oil concession immediately. Ibn Sa'ud inquired whether His Majesty's Government would have any objection to this being granted.

"No", said Sir Percy. "Go ahead, but I warn you that the Eastern and General Syndicate is not an oil company, and will probably sell the concession to others."

Ibn Sa'ud thanked him and said he understood everything. Major Holmes was then called in and, having been introduced to Sir Percy, stated his case and oil hopes. He mentioned the further possibility of finding copper, then pointed out on the map the extent of the

concession he was after, which was roughly a long rectangle bounded on the north by the new Kuwait Neutral Zone, on the south by Salwa, which is on the hinterland of Qatar, and on the west by a straight line sixty miles from the sea and parallel to it, so as to include the Wádi al Miyáh and the Dhila'at al Kibrít in the Jauf area, some twenty-five miles south-west of the Kuwait Neutral Zone.

Sir Percy did not like Major Holmes and obviously thought his presence inimical to His Majesty's Government's interests. Holmes had got in, so to speak, by the back door, and there is little doubt that Sir Percy would have condemned him and his activities to Ibn Sa'ud if he could have done so safely. Being, however, personally very fond of Ibn Sa'ud, and not wanting to antagonize him after the boundary affair, he pacified him by leading him to believe that His Majesty's Government was out to help him develop his country and gain him revenue.

Some years later I knew why I had not been able to find my oil seepage. It was covered by a gigantic sand dune, one of the very many to be found, continuously on the move, west of Qatíf palm-belt. When Aramco\* (Standard Oil) eventually started work on the mainland and discovered the great oil dome on the Jabal Dhahrán, it was not long before another smaller field was come upon behind Qatíf, just where my elusive seepage existed. To-day this second field possesses six wells, I believe.

#### REACTIONS IN KUWAIT

We returned to Bahrain, whence Sir Percy and Major More proceeded to Kuwait in, I think, H.M.S. *Lupin*. My wife and I followed by slow B.I. mail, accompanied by Shaikh Fahad Beg Al Hadhál and the Iraqi delegation. I recollect that, owing to a storm that was raging, we had great difficulty in boarding the ship. In particular suffered the aged Fahad Beg, for we all had to climb on board by rope-ladder, with life-lines round our waists.

On arrival at Kuwait, which we reached only a day after Sir Percy and Major More, my wife and I landed, Fahad Beg and the Iraqi delegation going on to Basra.

\* Previously known as Casoc.

Both Major More and myself, I only in a secretarial capacity, were present when Sir Percy broke the news to the ruler of Kuwait that he had been obliged to give away to Ibn Sa'ud nearly two-thirds of the kingdom claimed by Shaikh Ahmad. Shaikh Ahmad pathetically asked why he had done this without even consulting him. Sir Percy replied that, on this unfortunate occasion, the sword had been mightier than the pen, and that had he not conceded the territory, Ibn Sa'ud would certainly have soon picked a quarrel and taken it, if not more, by force of arms. As it was, he (Sir Percy) had placated Shaikh Ahmad's powerful neighbour and brought about a friendly feeling for Kuwait. Shaikh Ahmad then asked if Great Britain had not entered the war in defence of the rights of small nations. Sir Percy admitted that this was correct.

"If some day", said Shaikh Ahmad, "Ibn Sa'ud dies and I grow strong like my grandfather, Mubarak, will the British Government object if I denounce the unjust frontier line and recover my lost territories?"

"No!" laughed Sir Percy. "And may God bless your efforts."

Thus faced with a *fait accompli* Shaikh Ahmad agreed to add his signature to the agreement. To the day of his death he believed that he had been unjustly treated and would regale his intimates with talk of the following nature:

"I was not present at the discussions at 'Uqair, three hundred miles away, nor was I kept informed of what was happening there. I trusted Sir Percy as my father, and would certainly not have minded if a few miles of my territory had been taken from me, but to be robbed of two-thirds of my kingdom without a say in the matter, and to see it given to another was hard indeed."

In later years Shaikh Ahmad often told me that, as he considered the whole of the Kuwait Neutral Zone to be part of his territory, he would never consent to go half-shares with Ibn Sa'ud in the granting of any oil concessions. It is a fact, however, that in May 1924 Ibn Sa'ud granted a concession to the Eastern and General Syndicate Ltd. for the province of Hasa. As the company did not comply with its obligations to commence and carry on operations within three years of signature, the concession was declared null and void by Ibn Sa'ud. Shortly before his death, however, in 1950, Shaikh Ahmad agreed

with Ibn Sa'ud to grant a concession to the American Independent Oil Company and the Pacific Western Oil Company.\* He did this, he said, out of his desire to maintain friendship for Ibn Sa'ud, whose support was slowly becoming worth more to him than that of the British, who, with the coming of oil to his land, and with their policy daily becoming more pro-Israel and less pro-Arab, had alienated the whole Arab and Muslim world, *not excluding himself*.

Shaikh Ahmad was informed in April 1923 that His Majesty's Government recognized the Iraq-Kuwait frontiers as claimed by him, including the islands of Warba, Bubiyan, Maskán, Failaka, 'Auha, Kubbar, Qaru, Maqta' and Umm al Maradim, and other adjacent islets.

"As you are aware", wrote Sir Percy Cox to Major More when instructing him to convey this decision to Shaikh Ahmad, "it is, in so far as it goes, identical with the frontier indicated by the Green Line of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of July 29th 1913, but there seems no necessity to make special allusion to that document in your communication to the Shaikh. . . ."

\* They go together to-day under the name of Aminoil (American Independent Oil Company). The vice-president and managing director is Mr James MacPherson—"Mac" or "Lucky Mac", as he is known everywhere from Dhahrán to Kuwait. Of Scottish-American descent, he is keen, hospitable, energetic to a degree, and honoured and liked by every Arab. He was a particular favourite of the late King Ibn Sa'ud, who loved him for his straight-from-the-shoulder method of approach.

## CHAPTER XII

# Prelude to the Rebellion, 1923-1928

*'Ikhwán Townships—Abdication of King Husain—The Treaties of Hadda and Bahra—Ibn Sa'ud Proclaimed King of the Hijáz—Signs of Discontent Among the 'Ikhwán—Heavy Raiding by the 'Ikhwán—Attack on Iraq Police Post at Busaiyah—Faisal Al Duwish Crosses Iraq Frontier—Kuwait Forces Defeat Raiders—The Jiddah Conversations—The King Decides—Conference with the 'Ikhwán—A Meeting Arranged*

The more fanatical of the 'Ikhwán were continuing to cause much alarm by forcible proselytizing. Ibn Sa'ud told me in private at 'Uqair in November 1922 that he had never countenanced these acts, but until very recently had been unable to stop them. He added that in the summer of 1922 he had passed the strictest orders on the subject, and that over and over again he had preached publicly that such acts would bring down the wrath of God and of friendly nations. He had been compelled to execute several 'Ikhwán for disobedience of his orders in this respect.

Up to 1922, he said, the Shi'ah population of Hasa and Qatíf had been forbidden to smoke, even in their own houses, nor had they been allowed to hold religious readings in their *husainiyahs*. Penalties of the severest nature had been imposed on those who disobeyed, and the 'Ikhwán had murdered several unfortunate Bahárinah, men of the Shi'ah community of Qatíf, who had tried to evade the law. Things were now sufficiently under his control to allow of the rule being relaxed. Shi'ahs were now permitted to worship and smoke in private, provided they kept the law in public. In fact, as he pointed out, the lot of the Shi'ah had become far better than it had ever been under the Turks, for while a man could not then have called even his life his own, under Ibn Sa'ud's regime things had been made entirely secure for this community; in trade and prosperity generally, their position had improved out of all knowledge.



I think Ibn Sa'ud, in telling me all this, had an eye to propaganda. He wanted me to report to Sir Percy Cox that persecution was not part of the 'Ikhwán tenets or his own policy.

The order for the building of 'Ikhwán settlements in Najd and Hasa was being complied with to such purpose that by 1922 the following *hijarahs* had come into being. The list is by no means complete, and I have ruthlessly cut down—in most cases by two-thirds—the number of fighting men said by my Badawin friends to exist in each township. It is possible that I have been too severe.

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Hijarah</i>	<i>Men</i>
Mutair	'Irtáwíyah*	1,000
	Al Faraithan†	600
	Imgaiyadh	900
	Mulaih (Little Malah)	700
	Al 'Imar (or Al 'Imaiyir)	700
	Al 'Ithlah	600
	Jariya (Qariya) 'Ilya	1,800
	Jariya (Qariya) Sifla	1,600
	Ingair (or Nuqair) and Naqira (adjoining)	1,200
	Al Sha'ab	300
	Dhuraiyah	600
	Mishaa'	400
	Tháj	1,600
	Al Hinnat	1,000
'Awázim	Al Haisi	700
	Al 'Atíqi	800
'Utaiba	Ghat Ghat‡	700
	Al Dahana	800
	As Sawh	300
	As Sájar	700
	'Arjah (or Al 'Arj)	1,000
	'Usaila	300
	Nifai (or Al Nifi')	900
	Al Hijarat Khálid ibn Luwai'	400
	'Arma (or Al 'Urma)	700
	Al Ghaba	200
	Al Raudha	700
	Al 'Urq	1,000

\* See footnote, page 149.

† In the Bani 'Abdillah country.

‡ Destroyed by Ibn Sa'ud after the battle of Sibila, 1929.

# 'Ikhwán Villages

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<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Hijarah</i>	<i>Men</i>
Harb	'Ajibba (or 'Ijibba)	1,000
	Dukhna	600
	Ash Shubaikiyah	900
	Al Dulaimah	700
	As Sádigah	600
	Al Qurain	400
	Hunaidhil*	500
	Al Buruq	800
	Abu Hulaifa*	900
'Ajmán	Sarrar	1,600
	Al Sháfi	500
	Al Hanín	800
	Awaina	1,200
	Uraira	1,000
	'Uqair (or 'Ujair)	500
Qahtán	Al Hayadhín	1,800
	Al Jufair	800
	Al Hisát	700
	Al Ghil	500
	Al Hijarat ibn Ghannám	500
	Haif Zahran	400
	As Sabha	500
	Al 'Ibra	600
	'Arhaiyan (the upper)	1,200
	'Arhaiyan (the lower)	1,000
Ál Murra	Ambáq	900
	'Ubairíq	1,000
Bani Hájr	Adh Dhahar	700
Duwásir	Mushairiyam	1,500
	Al Wusaitah	800
Bani Yám	Ahl Najrán†	4,000
'Ammár ('Utaiba)	Al Jafr	2,000
	Raudh al 'Aiyún	1,000
Hutaim	Bin Wán	1,500
Al Kharj District	Al Munaisifa	500
	Adh Dhubai'ha	600
	Al Bida'a	500

\* Of the same name as the village on the Kuwait coast.

† This was the new name for Najrán. The name of the people was given to the *hijarah*.

# We Return to the Persian Gulf

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<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Hijarah</i>	<i>Men</i>
Al Kharj	Al Akhdar	500
District	Al Taiyib Ism	400
(continued)	Ar Ruwaidha	400

From 1923 until my appointment in 1928 as secretary to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, I was in India, so out of personal touch with events in Arabia. It was during that period that our two children were born: our son, Hanmer York Warrington Sa'ud, at Territet, Switzerland, on 12th June 1923; our daughter, Irene Zahra, at Bikaner, India, on 11th January 1925. On our return to Arabia it was not long before my wife and I became known among the Badu as Umm Sa'ud and Abu Sa'ud respectively.

Ibn Sa'ud's conviction that to defy Great Britain was to court disaster was confirmed by the fate that overtook a raiding party of fifteen hundred 'Ikhwán, who, by an amazing ride of a thousand miles in the middle of August 1924, raided within fifteen miles of Amman, capital of Transjordan. It is said that all but an odd hundred or so were killed by Royal Air Force cars and aircraft from Amman, and by tribesmen of the Bani Sakhr.

Meanwhile King Husain of the Hijáz, by his arrogance and folly, was precipitating his own downfall. When he visited Transjordan and there proclaimed himself Khalífah, supreme head of the Muslim world, Ibn Sa'ud declared war on him. Sooner than Ibn Sa'ud hoped or expected, 'Ikhwán forces captured Ta'if in September 1924. On 5th October King Husain abdicated in favour of his eldest son, 'Ali, and went to live in 'Aqaba. 'Ali withdrew from Mecca and retired to Jiddah. Wahábi forces occupied Mecca in December and laid siege to Jiddah and Medína.

Another of Ibn Sa'ud's armies advanced beyond the Wádi Sirhan up to the Syrian frontier and cut Transjordan off from Iraq. His Majesty's Government sent Sir Gilbert Clayton to the Hijáz to point out to Ibn Sa'ud that this extension of his frontier, which lay across the proposed trans-desert pipeline and the newly opened motor and air routes to Baghdad and the East, could not be tolerated. Under British pressure Ibn Sa'ud gave in, showing once again the judgment and restraint to which his success can largely be attributed. The treaties of Hadda and Bahra were concluded. The Bahra treaty, signed on

1st November 1925, provided for the setting up of a special tribunal to inquire into all claims by the tribes of Najd against the tribes of Iraq and *vice versa*.

King 'Ali ibn Husain was fighting a losing war. He managed to withstand the siege of Jiddah, but the capture of Medína in December 1925 by 'Ikhwán forces under the command of Faisal Al Duwísh led to his abdication. On 8th January 1926, in the Great Mosque of Mecca, Ibn Sa'ud was proclaimed King of the Hijáz. He remained Sultan of Najd until the following year, when he assumed the title of King of the Hijáz, of Najd, and its dependencies.

The district of 'Asir, which is in western Arabia, bounded on the north, east and south by the Hijáz, Najd and Yemen respectively, came still more under the domination of Ibn Sa'ud in 1926. Up to 1920 it had been ruled by the Al Idrisi, but in that year the 'Ikhwán had occupied 'Abha and all the upland part of the district, leaving Sa'id Muhammad Al Idrisi with the remainder. Sa'id Muhammad had died in 1922, being followed by his son, who had been expelled in 1925 by his uncle, Hassan. The new ruler found himself so weak that in 1926 he placed his country under the suzerainty of Ibn Sa'ud and was appointed governor for life of 'Asir.

### SIGNS OF DISCONTENT AMONG THE 'IKHWÁN

Between 1925 and 1927 Ibn Sa'ud devoted himself to suppressing banditry, both in the Hijáz and in Najd, to ensuring the safety of the pilgrim routes, and to restraining the turbulent nature of his tribes, many of whom now felt that his policy was too often dictated by the British. His broad-minded acceptance of such modern inventions as the motor-car, the telephone and wireless was, from their point of view, evidence of his unfaithfulness to the 'Ikhwán creed. An increasing feeling of discontent was becoming manifest.

When the leaders of the 'Ikhwán returned to Najd after the fall of Jiddah, some of them were bitterly disappointed that the Hijáz campaign had not offered better facilities for plunder. They were dissatisfied, too, with his idea of organizing a civilized government in the Hijáz, and his prohibition of their raiding across the frontier.

“Raiding”, as I have written elsewhere, “is the breath of life to

the Badawin. Prevent him from raiding and he becomes the most melancholy of men. Just as in the civilized West man must have his various sports, football, cricket, tennis, hockey, shooting, etc., to keep himself fit and happy, so in Arabia the primitive Badawin must have his raids. These denote to him everything that is manly and sporting. . . . Desert raids do not as a rule entail much bloodshed. Raiders are primarily inspired by greed for camels. . . .”

Notable among the malcontents was Faisal Al Duwísh, conqueror of Medína, paramount shaikh of the powerful Mutair and a firebrand of the 'Ikhwán movement, who, up to this time, had been a close friend of Ibn Sa'ud's and the most zealous of his lieutenants. Now he induced Sultán ibn Humaid, paramount shaikh of the 'Utaiba, and Dhaidán Al Hithlain, paramount shaikh of the 'Ajmán, to take an oath binding themselves together for mutual support in the event of Ibn Sa'ud's taking punitive action against any of them.

Such was the state of affairs when, on the Persian Government's refusing permission for Imperial Airways to establish a service to India along the south coast of Persia, the suggestion was made that the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf might be followed instead. As was to be expected, the very idea of such a thing was anathema to the 'Ikhwán, and, acting on the very strong advice of 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi Al Sa'ud, Amír of Hasa, Ibn Sa'ud said that he could not agree to the proposal.

Next came the building of the Iraqi police post at Baswa (or Busaiyah, as we usually call it), in the Iraq southern desert. The 'Ikhwán apparently connected it in their minds with the air-route scheme, thinking it destined to become a huge petrol dump and a base for the Europeanization of their country. So strong was this aversion that Ibn Sa'ud was induced to lodge a protest against the establishment of the post, on the grounds that it was an infringement of Article 3 of the 'Uqair protocol—an argument that a man of his acumen could hardly have believed in his own mind, for the post was fifty-five miles from the nearest point of the Iraq Neutral Zone. Notwithstanding his having taken this action, the existence of the post certainly helped to widen the breach between him and his 'Ikhwán leaders. Faisal Al Duwísh, who had now embarked on a regular campaign of propaganda against him, pointed to it as a proof of his



## Plot Frustrated

### Chap. XII

contention that Ibn Sa'ud had sold his country's rights to the British. Egged on by Faisal the tribes began to urge that a *jihád* should be declared on Iraq, which was said to be in alliance with the same infidel British, and was itself tolerant of unlawful practices.

The feeling against Ibn Sa'ud was not confined to the 'Ikhwán tribes. Even some members of his own family were against him, and in the Hijáz he was hated as a foreign conqueror of an alien faith. In the summer of 1927, a plot to murder his son, Sa'ud, in Riyádh and his relative, 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi, in Hasa was discovered and frustrated only just in time. It was even whispered that his own brother, Muhammad, and Muhammad's son, Khálid, had been the instigators.

At about 11 p.m. on 5th November 1927 a party of some forty Mutair, under the command of Shaikh Mutluq al Súr, one of Faisal Al Duwísh's lieutenants, attacked the police post at Busaiyah, which, still under construction, was occupied by six policemen, one civilian official, twelve workmen and a woman. Taking them by surprise under the cover of darkness, the raiders put them all to death except one policeman, who was wounded. Another policeman, on duty at an outlying post, managed to make his escape and give the alarm at Abu Ghár. Air reconnaissance carried out on the morning of 6th November over Busaiyah and southwards to the Iraq Neutral Zone failed to locate the raiders, who succeeded in making good their escape over the Najd frontier. The instigator had been Faisal Al Duwísh, though, in a conversation I had with him in 1929, he tried to lay the blame on Ibn Sa'ud.

One result of this unprovoked attack was the indefinite postponement of a conference that was to have taken place in Kuwait on 20th November between delegates of Iraq and Najd, under the presidency of Major More, the Political Agent. Owing to the number of claims put forward against each other by tribes of both countries, the special tribunal provided for in the Bahra treaty had been found impracticable and, both Iraq and Najd having agreed in advance to renounce all claims made by their tribes, the Kuwait conference was to have replaced the special tribunal. The purpose had been to draw up an agreement for the mutual renunciation of all outstanding claims and to discuss the procedure to be followed in dealing with future claims of this nature.

Shaikh Háfídh Wahbah, an eminent and extremely able Egyptian (later Sau'di Arabian ambassador in London), arrived in Kuwait on 18th November to represent Najd at the conference, but Ibn Sa'ud had by then been informed by Great Britain that the conference must be postponed until those responsible had been punished, full compensation given for the killed and wounded, and assurances received that adequate measures had been taken to prevent further raids into Iraq territory.

A report reached Kuwait on 26th November that a small camp of 'Awázim near the southern boundary of Kuwait territory had been secretly told to move farther to the south out of the way, as the 'Ikhwán were going to raid into Kuwait territory. All local Badu were promptly warned, and motor-car patrols kept a sharp look-out. Notwithstanding all precautions, however, on the morning of 4th December a party of four hundred 'Ikhwán, under Turahíb ibn Shuqair Al Duwísh and a son of Sáhúd ibn Lámi, succeeded in raiding the Kuwait 'Araibdár\* at Umm Rimmam, near Zaqlah, some seven miles north-east of Jahra. As soon as the news reached Kuwait, which was not until the afternoon, a force of over a hundred men was collected and rushed out in cars, but arrived too late to intercept the raiders, who got away with a considerable number of camels.

Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait sent messengers with letters to Ibn Sa'ud, complaining of this attack on his subjects.

The unsettled state of affairs in the desert, and the alarmist rumours daily current, caused much anxiety in Kuwait town. The wall was restored where necessary and manned nightly until the close of the year. Mercenaries were also enlisted to supplement the garrison of Jahra, which was brought up to a strength of over three hundred men, not counting the Badu camped in the vicinity.

On the morning of 8th December Shaikh Háfídh Wahbah called on Major More and informed him that he had received a message from Ibn Sa'ud, telegraphed from Bahrain, instructing him to tell Major More, for the information of His Excellency the High Commissioner for Iraq, that very serious trouble had broken out in Najd and that he (Ibn Sa'ud) heard to his regret that a force of 'Ikhwán was

\* Semi-nomadic Arabs.

## Bombs Fall

### Chap. XII

marching north contrary to his orders. He conveyed a similar warning to the Shaikh of Kuwait.

On the following morning three R.A.F. aeroplanes, patrolling over the Iraq Neutral Zone, were subjected to heavy rifle-fire by a party of camel-riders, three hundred strong, in the vicinity of Umm al 'Abíd. One wireless operator was wounded. The machines immediately attacked the hostile force with machine-gun fire.

Aeroplanes sent from Busaiyah on the same day located, both at Rukhaimíyah and also near Julaidah (Iraq Neutral Zone), a force of about six hundred men and camels moving rapidly south, and attacked them with good effect. Some hours previously this party had raided encampments of the Al Ghalídh section of the Iraq shepherds of the Muntafiq and the Dhafir Badawin tribe to the north of Sha'ib al Ummah. As on previous occasions, the raiders were Mutair.

Faisal Al Duwísh crossed the Iraq frontier in some force on 22nd December and raided the Al Zaiyád shepherd tribe and some 'Abdah Shammar at Jaukha, thirty-five miles north-west of Bir Ansáb, in the western corner of the Iraq Neutral Zone. Heavy slaughter was inflicted, particularly on the Al Zaiyád. He then moved north-westward to attack the Dahámshah, who fled before him and escaped. After this Al Duwísh apparently moved south again, and his subsequent movements until the close of the year were shrouded in mystery.

That he and his Mutair had been raiding on such a wholesale scale, not only without Ibn Sa'ud's permission, but also in defiance of his orders, naturally gave rise to the most exaggerated rumours as to the real state of affairs in Najd. Some would appear to have thought that other tribes as well, particularly the 'Utaiba, were also defying the King's authority. According to the most reliable information available at the end of 1927, however, it was only the Mutair who were out of control; other tribes were quiet. The general opinion amongst Arabs best able to judge was that Ibn Sa'ud would soon re-establish his ascendancy in the desert, but that he would do it by peaceful means, as it would be unwise to punish the Mutair.

Meanwhile a force sent by Ibn Sa'ud's orders from Hasa to keep the tribes in order was known to have reached Marágha, a well-known well area one hundred and sixty-five miles south of Kuwait, where the

main body of the 'Awázim were. Another column was said to have been sent from Ha'il.

Early in January 1928 the messengers sent by Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait to Ibn Sa'ud after the raid by Turahíb ibn Shuqair, arrived back with a reply expressing regret and promising restitution. They had been told that Ibn Shuqair would be dealt with by a force ordered up from Hasa under Fahad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi Al Sa'ud. The promise, however, was never kept. Ibn Shuqair temporarily evacuated his village of Jariya 'Ilya, and Ibn Jilúwi's force was withdrawn in February.

On the evening of 27th January news reached Kuwait that 'Ali ibn Ashwán, of the 'Awlád Wásil sub-section of the Al Buraih Mutair, with a force of three hundred and fifty camel-riders and fifty horsemen, had raided the Kuwait 'Araibdár at Umm Ruwaisat, thirty-eight miles north-west of Jahra, killing three men and carrying off a considerable number of camels and sheep.

All available cars in Kuwait were at once commandeered, filled with armed men and sent off to Jahra the same night, with orders to proceed to Riq'ai, ninety miles farther to the west-south-west, as soon as it was light enough to see, in the hope of cutting off the raiders' retreat. This they succeeded in doing, and at 4.30 p.m. on 28th January fifteen out of the twenty-five cars that had left Kuwait arrived at Riq'ai—a very creditable performance, seeing that there was no road beyond Jahra and all the cars were grossly overloaded, some carrying as many as nine men. There they encountered the raiders and at once attacked them. Although numbering only seventy-five rifles, the Kuwait force was very much better armed than the raiders, to whom, moreover, the motor-car was an entirely new factor in war. The result was that the Kuwait force inflicted very heavy casualties on the enemy and forced them to abandon a substantial portion of their booty. Their own casualties were light, although they included their commander, Shaikh 'Ali al Khalífah Al Sabah, who was severely wounded.

After the engagement proper was over, Shaikh 'Ali al Sálím Al Sabah, son of the late Shaikh Sálím, a very gallant but hot-headed youth, who had been delayed by car trouble, arrived on the scene and was much galled at finding himself too late for the fight. In direct defiance of orders he insisted on pushing on, with the result that he and his



party were trapped in the Bátin, where they fought till they ran out of ammunition, surrendered, and were eventually butchered in cold blood. But for this regrettable incident, the action of the Kuwait force would have been an unqualified success.

As it was, Kuwait casualties were eleven killed and eleven wounded, of whom one subsequently died, while the Mutair certainly lost over thirty-five killed. Four Kuwait cars had to be temporarily abandoned, but were brought in afterwards. It is interesting to note that one of them, which had fallen into the 'Ikhwán's hands, was brought in under its own power. They had tried to render it unserviceable, but beyond breaking the instruments on the dashboard and wrenching off the doors, had done little harm to it.

The raiders were located by British aeroplanes on the 29th, fifteen miles north of Hafar al Bátin. The raiders opened fire on the aircraft, which replied with bombs and machine-gun fire. They again attacked the raiders eight miles south of Hafar al Bátin on the afternoon of the 30th. Casualties were inflicted on both occasions.

On 19th February some sections of the Al Juwarín, of the Muntafiq confederation, were attacked, together with some other tribes, near Jarishan in the Bátin, some fifty miles south-west of Zubair, by a force of 'Ikhwán estimated at a thousand camels carrying two men each, and a large number of horsemen—probably two thousand three hundred men in all—under Faisal Al Duwísh. The Iraqi tribesmen had twenty-six men killed and eighteen wounded, and lost one hundred and thirty camels and nearly eighteen hundred sheep.

On the same day an aeroplane reconnaissance located two parties of raiders, a large one ten miles south of Jarishan, and a smaller one near Riq'ai. A later reconnaissance observed parties spread over a large area in the neighbourhood of Jarishan, driving off plunder. All parties seen were attacked, and the aeroplanes were heavily fired on in return. One aeroplane fell in flames and the pilot was killed, but there were no other British casualties.

As they retired the raiders were twice attacked from the air—on 20th February and again on the 21st. On the latter occasion the bombing was distinctly audible in Kuwait. On the morning of the 24th aeroplanes proceeded from the Iraq Neutral Zone via Hafar al Bátin to As Sáfa. Twenty miles to the north-north-west of As Sáfa a large



camp of white tents was located, surrounded by camels, horses and flocks of sheep. Some of the aeroplanes dropped their bombs on this camp, while the remainder proceeded to As Sáfa itself and bombed it. At neither place were the results as good as had been hoped. Faisal Al Duwísh had apparently been at As Sáfa until that very morning, but had left there for 'Irtáwíyah, his home village, shortly before the bombing took place.

Reports were next received that Sultán ibn Humaid, paramount shaikh of the powerful 'Utaiba tribe, had invited the other 'Ikhwán leaders to meet him on 7th March at Shaqra, ninety miles south of 'Irtáwíyah, for a huge combined raid. This was confirmed by a prisoner who was captured from a party of Mutair who fired on some British armoured cars at Hafar al Batin on 12th March. According to him, Al Duwísh had suggested a combined raid after Ramadhán, which ended on 22nd March, but Ibn Humaid had insisted on immediate action. It was said that the raid was to have been a very big one, with Basra as its objective.

However, it did not materialize. It was afterwards learnt that, although Ibn Humaid actually left his village of Ghat Ghat according to programme, he got only as far as Shams, seventy miles west by north of Riyádh, where he was overtaken by Khálid ibn Luwái', a member of the Sharífian family of the Hijáz and one of the leading 'Ikhwán of that country, who had arrived at Riyádh a few days earlier and now came on Ibn Sa'ud's behalf to try to induce Ibn Humaid to return. He succeeded temporarily, for Ibn Humaid did go back to Ghat Ghat, though leaving his standard at Shams.

Ibn Humaid visited Al Duwísh at 'Irtáwíyah on 21st March and suggested that they should make their joint raid forthwith. The Mutair, however, had had enough for the time being of fighting and were unwilling to co-operate. Consequently, on 24th March, Ibn Humaid left Jaráb, a few miles to the north-west of 'Irtáwíyah, intending to attack the Iraq post at Salmán. Ibn Sa'ud, who by this time had accepted a British invitation to discuss outstanding questions with Sir Gilbert Clayton, again succeeded in stopping him, this time by sending Sa'ud al 'Aráfa Al Sa'ud and the well-known divine, Shaikh al 'Anqari. They overtook Ibn Humaid at 'Ajibba and, with some difficulty, persuaded him to hold his hand and confer with Ibn Sa'ud.



A flock of goats (milch) coming home to Kuwait town at end of day from grazing



'Ajmán camels at Jahra. They have come to *sábil*, i.e. carry out food supplies to the tribe in the far desert







The late King 'Abdul 'Aziz Al Sa'ud in centre foreground



The late King 'Abdul 'Aziz centre right facing camera



The Amīr Muḥammad ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz Al Sa'ud in centre



The present King Sa'ud ibn 'Abdul 'Aziz Al Sa'ud left centre

## THE WAR DANCE, RIYÁDH

## Talks in Jiddah

### Chap. XII

To this end Ibn Sa'ud left Riyádh on 10th April for Buraida, and on the 14th Faisal Al Duwísh joined Ibn Humaid at Jalah, twenty-five miles to the north of Buraida, both having large forces of their tribesmen with them. Ibn Sa'ud invited them to come into Buraida together, but this they refused to do, demanding that Ibn Sa'ud should come outside and meet them in the desert. He in turn feared to do this, so no actual meeting took place, but a temporary agreement was arrived at through the instrumentality of Sa'ud al 'Aráfa Al Sa'ud and 'Abdul 'Azíz ibn Musa'ad al Jilúwi Al Sa'ud, governor of Ha'il, by which the 'Ikhwán leaders undertook to abstain from aggressive action against Iraq for the time being, and give Ibn Sa'ud a free hand to negotiate with Sir Gilbert Clayton. Ibn Sa'ud left Buraida for Ha'il, *en route* for the Hijáz, on 20th April, and the 'Ikhwán leaders returned to their respective headquarters.

Meanwhile, on 14th April, a small raid had taken place a few miles to the south-west of Wafrah, in the Kuwait Neutral Zone, a camp of the 'Awázim having been attacked by a party of raiders from Iraq believed to have been commanded by Midbaj ibn Shuwairibat, a scion of that notorious family of the Birzán sub-section of the Buraih Mutair, which had seceded from the 'Ikhwán, taken refuge in Iraq and then caused so much trouble by raiding into Najd, until moved from the frontier by the Iraq Government in 1925. Another member of this family, 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat, had tried to cause trouble the previous month by approaching a minor shaikh of the 'Ajmán in the service of the Shaikh of Kuwait and, representing himself as speaking on King Faisal's behalf, had endeavoured to incite him to raid into Najd. He had been deported by Shaikh Ahmad some time previously for similar activities.

#### THE JIDDAH CONVERSATIONS

Ibn Sa'ud arrived at Jiddah on 7th May, and conversations between him and Sir Gilbert Clayton lasted from the 9th to the 20th. The main point at issue was the right of Iraq to build police posts in the desert at points some distance from the frontier. Whilst not attempting to excuse the action of Faisal Al Duwísh in attacking the post of Busaiyah and instigating other raids, Ibn Sa'ud emphasized that the

building of the fort was in direct contravention of Article 3 of the 'Uqair protocol. It was this, he said, that had stirred the Mutair to strike. He regarded the attacks by the R.A.F. on tribes within Najd territory as a direct breach of the provisions of the treaty of Muhammerah and the 'Uqair protocol. Moreover, he stated that the very party he had sent out to curb and punish the Mutair had itself been bombed by the R.A.F.

Sir Gilbert Clayton tactfully put forward the British case. He explained that His Majesty's Government had to maintain the principle that both Governments were free to take what measures they thought desirable for the control and defence of the desert within their frontiers, but he was unable to persuade Ibn Sa'ud to alter his opinion that a breach of Article 3 of the protocol had taken place. He, Ibn Sa'ud, demanded that the posts established at Busaiyah, Salmán and other places in the desert should be demolished. Whether or not he believed his own arguments, it would have been difficult for him to take any other line. His tribesmen all felt so strongly on the subject of these posts, which they looked on as the thin end of the wedge in the penetration of Najd itself, that he could hardly have hoped to retain any control at all, had he agreed to the contention that Iraq was justified in building them.

The conference thus ended, with no agreement reached on the principal question. Ibn Sa'ud, however, again asserted his continued good feeling towards Great Britain.

Further conversations took place at the beginning of August (2nd-9th). Ibn Sa'ud refused once more to agree to the British interpretation of Article 3. He explained that he had broadcast the provisions of this article to his tribes, who were relying on him to have the disputed forts removed. Were he to give way, he would lose all influence with his people and the 'Ikhwán. He was offered, he said, the choice of breaking with the British Government, which he could never do, or of telling his tribes that the agreement he had signed and showed them was worthless.

Throughout these negotiations, in spite of the deadlock that resulted. Ibn Sa'ud's attitude appeared to be one of genuine friendship and respect for the British Government. He seemed definitely worried lest his apparent obstinacy should cause a breach in the good relations



## Fire Difficult to Extinguish

### Chap. XII

existing between his country and Great Britain, but, as he put it, he could not see a solution that would not hopelessly weaken his authority over his own tribes.

#### THE KING DECIDES

No one knew better than King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud that the various ups and downs in fortune that the house of Al Sa'ud had seen in the past had been largely due to two causes:—

- (a) The heads of the state had been content to remain Badawin rulers.
- (b) The religious intolerance of the people of Najd had not been held in proper check.

He had decided to rectify (a) by introducing:—

1. A modern form of government, with state council, various ministries, heads of departments, ambassadors, accredited to neighbouring states, etc. etc., after the fashion of more civilized countries.
2. A system of wireless stations all over the state, to afford better control of provincial governors and the maintenance of touch between himself and them.
3. A trained army, a railroad, aeroplanes, motor-cars, and a vast system of heavy motor transport throughout the state, which, combined with the opening up of airlines and good motor routes, would enable him to manage the huge Badawin population of Najd, which, in the past, had been at once the strength and the Achilles' heel of every ruler.

To deal with (b), he determined in 1928 to reduce the power of the 'Ikhwán, a weapon that, in face of the advice of his best friends, he had himself forged with the deliberate intention of becoming master of Arabia. Whilst there had been fields to conquer, he had been able to keep his warriors occupied and in hand. Jabal Shanmar, 'Asir, the Hijáz and the Jauf oasis had been subjugated. Now nothing further remained and he was faced with the necessity of putting out a fire almost too difficult to extinguish.

The problem would probably have been early and successfully dealt with, had not the Busaiyah incident forced matters. As it was, the 'Ikhwán had become more and more out of hand, raiding heavily into Iraq and Kuwait. Even to this day, the leaders have persistently

claimed that Ibn Sa'ud himself ordered most of these hostile incursions, he being at that time still their official religious and military head.

Be this as it may, feeling amongst the 'Ikhwán' tribes of Najd was now running high. The Mutair resented Ibn Sa'ud's policy of forbidding inter-tribal raiding, or raiding across the Kuwait and Iraq borders. They objected even more to his use of wireless, motor-cars, etc., and they were infuriated at being bombed by the R.A.F. They said that their erstwhile 'Imám had become a tool of the British; that, out of fear of the 'Ikhwán, he had told them to go ahead and raid, then, on receiving a British protest, had disowned them and ordered that all loot taken should be returned.

There was grave danger of a general rising of Najd tribes under Faisal Al Duwísh and Sultán ibn Humaid, for both these leaders were openly demanding that Ibn Sa'ud should prove his fidelity to God by declaring a *jihád* against Iraq.

Ibn Sa'ud cautiously held his hand. He could not risk the defeat that might result from a hasty attack on the Mutair, the 'Utaiba and the 'Ajmán, which last, under Dhaidán Al Hithlain, had joined the movement against him. He played for time.

#### CONFERENCE WITH THE 'IKHWÁN

On arrival back in Riyádh from Jiddah on 8th September, he at once sent messengers to all the leading men of Najd and chief shaikhs of the 'Ikhwán, summoning them to attend a conference in Riyádh at the end of September. All obeyed except Faisal Al Duwísh, Sultán ibn Humaid and Dhaidán Al Hithlain. Al Duwísh sent his eldest son, 'Abdul 'Aziz, usually called 'Azaiyiz,\* as his representative, but Ibn Sa'ud refused at first to see him, demanding Al Duwísh's presence in person, as also that of Ibn Humaid and Ibn Hithlain.

The conference was delayed for a long time in the hope that they could be induced to attend, but was eventually held without them, in punishment for which the three defaulting shaikhs were deposed from the chieftainship of their respective tribes—a mere pretence that no one in Najd took seriously.

\* Diminutive of 'Aziz.

## 'Ikhwán Demands

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The 'Ikhwán put forward three demands:—

1. The abolition of the taxes that Ibn Sa'ud had recently been levying on the tribes in addition to the legal *zakát*.
2. The abolition of motor-cars, wireless telegraphy and other infidel inventions.
3. The destruction of the Iraq frontier posts of Salmán and Busaiyah.

Ibn Sa'ud agreed to the first. To the second he replied that he considered such things as real benefits to the faithful, but that even so, he was perfectly ready to destroy all motor cars, telephones, wireless sets, etc. etc., that he possessed and do without them in future, provided that the 'Ikhwán destroyed at the same time all their arms and ammunition, which were equally invented and manufactured by infidels. The matter was discussed by the religious leaders, who eventually decided that all were equally lawful.

The third demand, with which it was obviously impossible for Ibn Sa'ud to comply, caused the most trouble. The best that Ibn Sa'ud could do was to persuade the 'Ikhwán to keep the peace and take no action against the Iraq frontier posts for a further period of two months, to enable him to make one final attempt to obtain their demolition by friendly negotiation. He had to promise, moreover, that if he failed in this attempt, he would be with them heart and soul in an attack on the posts—a promise that there is little doubt he never intended to fulfil.

On his side he demanded that the 'Ikhwán would trade only with such places as he directed. To this they agreed. The intention was, of course, largely to prevent trade with Kuwait, which, for monetary reasons, he was unwilling to allow. 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi, Amír of Hasa, had recently restricted trade with Jubail and Qatíf, in order to induce the tribes to come to Hufuf, but this had resulted in their going more to Kuwait, and, by October, the Mutair and other tribes were ignoring the embargo and coming into Kuwait town quite openly. This largely ceased after the conference, and was further prevented by a detachment sent for the purpose by Ibn Jilúwi.

Having successfully overcome much of the opposition against him, Ibn Sa'ud concluded the conference with the knowledge that he had sufficient backing to suppress and punish the rebellious Mutair,

'Utaiba and 'Ajmán. He sent 'Azaiyiz Al Duwísh and the other 'Ikhwán leaders away with exceptionally lavish presents of money, arms, camels, etc.

Through his agent at Bahrain, he then informed Colonel Loch, the Political Agent there, that he would like to meet him in Hasa. The invitation was accepted, but shortly afterwards, on 5th December, Ibn Sa'ud sent word to Colonel Loch that he was detained in Riyádh and could not come to Hasa at present, so no meeting between them took place. At about the same time, Ibn Sa'ud received, through the British Agent at Jiddah, a communication concerning his negotiations with Sir Gilbert Clayton. He was informed that the British Government agreed in principle to the proposal that the points under dispute should be referred to arbitration. Possibly it was this that induced him to defer his meeting with Colonel Loch—or it may have been the disquieting symptoms of unrest that had become evident amongst his powerful tribes.

In the beginning of December rumours reached Kuwait that Sáhúd ibn Lámi of the Mutair, who had been somewhat insubordinate of late and had left the Riyádh conference without permission, had contemplated a raid, but had been forbidden by Faisal Al Duwísh to carry it out during the two months' truce that had been arranged. Then a man arrived in Kuwait who had left Riyádh on 9th December and had heard a few days later that Al Duwísh had sent word to Ibn Sa'ud that he was preparing to go raiding—presumably on the expiration of the two months. On 30th December information was received in Kuwait that a big raid was being planned. Ibn Hithlain had joined Jufrán al Fuqm at Jariya, Al Duwísh was advancing almost immediately from 'Irtáwíyah, and Ibn Lámi had already moved off.

Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait sent out patrols, although he thought there was little fear of any action against his tribes—except, possibly, by Ibn Hithlain, if he acted alone—and considered the Iraq desert posts a much more likely objective for all.

A small raid by Ibn Lámi on some Shammar in the Hajara district, westward of the Iraq Neutral Zone, did apparently take place, but this was of little or no political importance, as nothing further happened. The explanation of this may be found in the report of a reliable man who had left Riyádh on 21st December. He said there had been talk

## Ibn Humaid Becomes Awkward

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there for some time of impending raids. According to him, Ibn Sa'ud had recently sent word to Ibn Humaid that, as Ibn Humaid would not visit him in Riyádh, he proposed coming to see him at Ghat Ghat. Ibn Humaid had replied that he could not agree to this either, but that he was willing to meet him in the desert if he wished. Eventually it had been agreed that a meeting should take place at Shauqi, ninety-three miles north by west of Riyádh. Ibn Humaid had invited Al Duwísh and Ibn Hithlain to attend as well.

Nothing more was likely to happen until this meeting had taken place, but whether or not Ibn Sa'ud would be able to induce the 'Ikhwán to keep the peace afterwards remained to be seen. It was thought that he would try to persuade them to do so until the arbitration was over.



# The 'Ikhwán Rebellion, 1929-1930

*The 'Ikhwán Raid Kuwait—They are Attacked by the R.A.F.—Sibila, a Rather Mysterious Battle—The Murder of Dhaidán Al Hithlain—The 'Ajmán Raise the Standard of Revolt—Faisal Al Duwish Casts in His Lot with Them—Ibn Sa'ud is on the Defensive—Faisal Al Duwish Gives Me His Word—A Fight to the Death for Water—The King Attacks—The End of the Rebellion—Faisal Al Shiblán Takes Coffee with Me—The Terms of Surrender—Death of a Great Desert Warrior—The End of Militant 'Ikhwánism—Ibn Sa'ud Consolidates His Position*

Early in January 1929 the situation in Najd was extremely obscure. Various rumours differed so much that it became difficult to sift the true from the false. There could be little doubt, however, that the relations between Ibn Sa'ud and the 'Ikhwán leaders were becoming more and more strained, and his task of preventing them from attacking the Iraq desert posts was growing harder from day to day. He had even found it necessary to issue orders for Jubail, Qatíf and other towns to be fortified and provisioned, as a precaution. On the other hand, there were indications that considerable ill-feeling existed between Ibn Humaid and Ibn Rubai'an, the two most powerful shaikhs of the great 'Utaiba tribe. Ibn Sa'ud could be trusted to take full advantage of this.

On 21st January Dhaidán Al Hithlain, able paramount shaikh of the 'Ajmán, moved up with a mixed force via the Bátin into Kuwait territory, his intention being to raid the Muntafiq shepherd tribes camped in the northern portion of the state. He was accompanied by Sáhúd ibn Lámi and several Mutair and Rashaida sections. They attacked on the following day, capturing many hundreds of sheep, donkeys, etc., and killing six shepherds. It was most unfortunate that, on that particular morning, Mr Henry Bilkert, an American missionary of Basra, was proceeding to Kuwait by car in company with Mr Charles R. Crane, formerly United States minister in China. They encountered a portion of the raiding party, the car was fired on and Mr Bilkert was killed.

## Raiders Close to the Town

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Early in February it was learned that Faisal Al Duwísh had gone to mediate between Ibn Humaid and Ibn Rubai'an, and on 12th February a report was received that he had been successful in bringing about a reconciliation. It was further stated that he had gone to Jaráb, where he had unfurled his standard and was waiting to be joined by Ibn Hithlain, Al Fuqm and others.

The uncertainty of events, and the fear that something big was going to happen from the direction of Najd, made life in the hinterland of Kuwait distinctly unsafe for the law-abiding, and bad characters were to be found everywhere, seeing what they could pick up, raid or steal. Owing to the disturbed condition of the country, the Kuwait-Basra road was closed for a month, mails being sent and received by sea.

On the night of 15th-16th February fourteen camels and some sheep were stolen from a party of Dhafir camped a short distance from Jahra. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Jábir Al Sabah at once organized a pursuit in four cars, and on the morning of the 16th his men came up with the raiders, captured the lot and recovered the stolen animals.

Kuwait was awakened on 3rd March by sounds of heavy firing a few miles outside the town wall, on the Jahra road. It transpired that an encampment of forty tents of the Bani Málík, an Iraq shepherd tribe whose summer range is in the neighbourhood of Basra and Zubair, had been attacked at dawn by a party of some six hundred Mutair under Turahíb ibn Shuqair and Al Fuqm. Camped near Jalíb al Shuyúkh, barely seven miles from Kuwait, the shepherds put up a stout fight and endeavoured to retire on the town. Thirty-seven of them were killed and five severely wounded. With the exception of a thousand sheep and a few donkeys, they lost all their animals to the number of six thousand sheep and six hundred and fifty donkeys. Thirty of the families were deprived of all their belongings.

Loss of life among the raiders was equal to, if not more than, that among the Bani Málík and, in the R.A.F. pursuit that followed, they suffered further casualties, notwithstanding which they got away with all their loot. The people of Kuwait town treated the destitute tribesmen very kindly, supplying them with food and raising money for them. One hundred and fifty of the survivors were repatriated to

Khuwair in sailing-boats on 13th March, the remainder being sent by land, with an escort of police cars, on the following day.

Meanwhile, on the 9th, a patrol of Iraq police cars, approaching the Kuwait-Najd frontier at Riq'ai, had been suddenly attacked by forty horsemen, who had been beaten off with loss. The police cars had retired north, followed for some distance by the enemy horsemen.

On 14th March two flocks of sheep numbering five hundred head each, belonging to Kuwait tribesmen who were camped on the Mutla' Pass close to Jahra, were carried off by a party of horsemen belonging to the Al Zaiyád tribe of Iraq. Through the instrumentality of Captain John B. Glubb,\* Inspecting Officer, Southern Iraq Desert, the animals were eventually recovered and the ringleaders punished.

The above few examples illustrate the general lawless state prevailing in the Kuwait hinterland during this period. Only important incidents have been mentioned.

#### SIBILA, A RATHER MYSTERIOUS BATTLE

At about this time it became clear that Ibn Sa'ud had moved up into Qasím, determined to settle with his recalcitrant generals, Ibn Humaid and Al Duwísh. Ibn Humaid had been ordered to return a large number of camels that he had taken from the 'Aqail. This he had refused point-blank to do, though receiving only lukewarm support from Al Duwísh, who had not approved his action. On being further pressed by the King, Ibn Humaid, backed now by Al Duwísh, had demanded that the matter be settled by the holy *shari'ah*.

Their plan was to place Ibn Sa'ud in a dilemma by cunningly putting forward arguments on the following lines:—

“As the 'Imám, you, O 'Abdul 'Azíz, have preached *jihad* against all *káfirs* and infidels. As a Shi'ah state, you have repeatedly preached that Iraq must ultimately be destroyed, and that everything taken from her people is *halál*. You have quoted the Qur'án over and over again to prove that any act committed by the elect against infidels was meritorious. Now, at the bidding of the English, themselves *káfirs*, you tell us, your chosen warriors and the sword of Islám, that we have done wrong and must return loot taken or make restitution.

\* Known to-day as Glubb Pasha of Jordan.

## Battle of Sibila

### Chap. XIII

Either you are an impostor and self-seeker, or the Qur'án is no true book. Let the *'ulema* of Najd decide between us."

The King arranged to meet them on their own ground and called a conference just outside the town of Zilfi in north-central Najd, but there is little doubt that he was now so thoroughly alarmed that he had no intention at all of submitting his case to trial by any Wahábi body of divines. Rather than fall out with the British, he had decided that he must break with his 'Ikhwán quickly and once for all. Possibly he also had the idea that the British might assist him in the process.

He pitched his camp and that of his army at Zilfi. Faisal Al Duwísh, the next to appear, came with a small escort and camped on the open plain of Sibila, near Zilfi, where he was joined three days later by Ibn Humaid, who, with a strong force, pitched his camp not far from Al Duwísh. By previous arrangement the third great 'Ikhwán general, Dhaidán Al Hithlain, lay camped with Ibn Shuqair and Ibn Lámi near Jariya, at the south end of the Ash Shaqq depression, some one hundred and thirty miles south of Kuwait town, guarding the 'Ikhwán's left flank from a possible attack by Fahad ibn Jilúwi, son of the Amír of Hasa, who had a force in the north of that province. Ibn Sa'ud had used all his diplomatic skill to prevent Dhaidán Al Hithlain from throwing in his lot with the two rebellious shaikhs. Al Hithlain had, in fact, declined to take part in the conference because it seemed a defiance of the King's authority. The powerful 'Awázim of Hasa remained loyal to Ibn Sa'ud.

Faisal Al Duwísh had dined at least twice with Ibn Sa'ud before the arrival of Ibn Humaid, who refused to pay similar respect. In April reports reached Kuwait that, after a final parley with Al Duwísh and an unsuccessful attempt to induce Ibn Humaid to come into Zilfi, Ibn Sa'ud set his army in motion at dawn on 29th March, attacked without warning the two 'Ikhwán leaders at Sibila and inflicted a sharp defeat on them. Al Duwísh, who, it seems, was under the impression that preliminary negotiations were still in progress and would continue at Sibila, was taken unawares while he and his small party were cooking their breakfasts, and was shot without fighting. He was seriously wounded in the stomach. Ibn Humaid, who was better prepared, managed to escape by a masterly organized fighting retreat.

Later accounts of this rather mysterious battle, in which the rebels



lost some two hundred and fifty men, showed Ibn Sa'ud up in a somewhat bad light. It appears certain that his sudden attack on both Al Duwísh and Ibn Humaid was launched after solemn assurances had been made the previous night that he and Al Duwísh should meet once again and discuss matters according to *shari'ah*.

By Ibn Sa'ud's orders the gravely wounded Al Duwísh was taken back to his village of 'Irtáwíyah. Ibn Humaid had made his way to Ghat Ghat. He was followed by the King's brother, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdul Rahman, to whom he eventually surrendered without fighting. He was taken to Riyádh, where he was imprisoned, and Ghat Ghat was destroyed.

Satisfied that the revolt had been crushed and that Faisal Al Duwísh was dying of wounds, Ibn Sa'ud went off on the pilgrimage to Mecca. He is reported to have sent before his departure a letter to Dhaidán Al Hithlain, thanking him for not having joined Al Duwísh and Ibn Humaid at Sibila, and giving him full safe-conduct to go where he wished.

#### THE MURDER OF DH Aidán AL HITHLAIN

Ibn Sa'ud had quelled the rebel shaikhs and dispersed their followers by an act described by his friends as deserved retribution, by his enemies as treachery; and the subsequent rebellion headed by Al Duwísh, which was to put Ibn Sa'ud to so much expense and trouble, can be traced to this rather un-kinglike trick, for an Arab does not forget. The uprising might not have been so serious, however, had not the powerful 'Ajmán tribe been brought in against the King by the perfidious conduct of Fahad ibn Jilúwi, son of the governor of Al Hasa, who had a reputation for treachery and cruelty.

As a result of the intrigues of Amír Ibn Jilúwi, father of Fahad, Ibn Hithlain had temporarily lost influence among the 'Ajmán, but after Sibila he regained the leadership over the whole tribe. Ibn Jilúwi had a force camped at Awaina, seventeen miles from Sarrar, where were Ibn Hithlain and his 'Ajmán. Fahad ibn Jilúwi, who was in command of the force, invited Ibn Hithlain to come and see him and discuss a message he had to deliver from Ibn Sa'ud. He gave a full safe-conduct in writing. Dhaidán summoned the tribe and showed them the letter.



## Fahad is Slain

### Chap. XIII

“It is false and has the smell of treachery”, they all advised. “Go not up to Awaina.”

Dhaidán went, taking twelve men with him. He was well received by Fahad, but when he subsequently desired to leave, he was seized and put in irons. One of his attendants managed to escape and gallop off to give the alarm. A force of fifteen hundred 'Ajmán started off at once under Hazám Al Hithlain and rushed Fahad's camp in the early hours of the following day, 1st May.

Fahad, seeing the day lost, ordered ibn Mansur, the Amír's negro executioner, to cut the throat of Dhaidán, and then was himself slain by a young 'Ajmi, 'Abdullah ibn 'Aid al Mikhyal, who seized the bridle of his horse as he was trying to escape and shot him through the head.

The casualties in Ibn Jilúwi's force were very heavy. Practically all his men were townsmen of Hufuf and these were all put to the sword. Some Badawin irregulars, who had not joined in the fight, being shocked by the seizure of Dhaidán, were not touched. Naif ibn Muhammad Al Hithlain, cousin of Dhaidán and known as “Abal Kiláb”, was subsequently recognized as paramount shaikh of the 'Ajmán.

The news of this shameful murder spread like wildfire and caused a deep stir throughout north-eastern Arabia, and local sentiment veered strongly round against Ibn Sa'ud from this date, although the responsibility for it had not lain with him, but with 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi, whose orders Fahad had been carrying out.

On 2nd May Farhán ibn Mashúr of the Al Sha'alan, ruling family of the Ruwala section of the 'Anizah tribe, another prominent 'Ikhwán leader and a late favourite of Ibn Sa'ud, arrived at Subaihíyah wells, at the southern end of Kuwait, with a large number of camels that he had plundered from Ibn Musa'ad, the Amír of Ha'il, as well as others taken from Shammar and Dahámshah in recent raids. On 4th May he moved north to Jahra and was interviewed by Shaikh Ahmad. He gave out that he had received safe-conduct from Ibn Sa'ud and that he had sent messengers to him to learn the terms Ibn Sa'ud would offer if he came in.

Acting on instructions from His Majesty's Government, Shaikh Ahmad ordered Farhán ibn Mashúr to leave Jahra on 12th May, after

supplying himself with the provisions necessary to take him and his party to Riyádh. He crossed the frontier at Qurain on the morning of the 14th, but instead of going to Ibn Sa'ud's capital as it was thought he would, he proceeded to join the 'Ajmán in middle Hasa. There is little doubt that he had changed his mind as a result of the incident at Awaina.

### THE 'AJMÁN RAISE THE STANDARD OF REVOLT

Faisal Al Duwísh, abandoned by Ibn Sa'ud and believed to be dying in his village of 'Irtáwíyah, was slowly recovering, though he contrived by a series of clever ruses to make the world think there was no hope and that it was only a question of time for his death to be reported. Ibn Humaid was still a prisoner in Riyádh.

Immediately after the murder of their leader, the powerful 'Ajmán, supported by Farhán ibn Mashúr and other 'Ikhwán leaders, raised the standard of revolt. Soon the whole of northern Najd, from Jabal Shammar to the Persian Gulf, was in their hands.

Early in May the 'Ajmán, under Naif Al Hithlain, moved up to and camped at Wafrah, in the Kuwait Neutral Zone, with Farhán ibn Mashúr. The 'Ajmán now being in rebellion Shaikh Ahmad was instructed by His Majesty's Government not to allow supplies to go out to them or to any other rebels. Nor were any members of their forces permitted to come into Kuwait. Ibn Sa'ud was informed accordingly.

It was at this awkward juncture that, after a year of duty as secretary to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, I was appointed Political Agent at Kuwait, taking up my duties on 22nd May. On 2nd June Ibn Sa'ud, always out to anticipate, made a strong protest, accusing Kuwait of supplying the 'Ajmán and Farhán ibn Mashúr's force with food and ammunition, contrary to the undertakings given to him by His Majesty's Government. Careful inquiries on my part showed that Ibn Sa'ud's charges were entirely unfounded, although a certain amount of secret smuggling through the medium of relatives and well-wishers resident in Kuwait was disclosed. That Shaikh Ahmad was loyally carrying out the wishes of His Majesty's Government in this respect was clearly and abundantly proved.

## Invitation to Shaikh Ahmad

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Dhafir raiders made off on 4th June with a hundred camels belonging to Kuwait woodcutters close to Jahra. One of the raiders was captured and gave the names of his companions, who all turned out to be Iraqi subjects. As a result of representations made to the Iraq Government, the camels were recovered early in July and the culprits punished.

On 10th June Shaikh Ahmad officially objected to Iraq police cars moving about his territory without reference to himself. The practice had grown up during the 'Ikhwán raids of the previous year, but was considered objectionable from many points of view. It was agreed that in future no Iraq policemen should cross the frontier without having obtained, through me, the previous sanction of Shaikh Ahmad.

A large force of 'Ajmán rebels left their camp at Wafrah on 14th June for an unknown destination in the south. Five days later, Faisal Al Duwísh, taking advantage of Ibn Sa'ud's absence in Mecca, threw off the mask and cast in his lot with the 'Ajmán. Having collected some five thousand men and a hundred thousand camels from the Mutair, 'Ajmán and Ibn Humaid's section of the 'Utaiba, he reached Jariya 'Ilya, eighty miles from the Kuwait frontier, on the same day, 19th June. This move into the good grazing area south of Kuwait was to meet the need of maintaining so large a force.

This defection of the lately wounded warrior greatly added to the strength and prestige of the Hasa rebels. Immediately he heard of it, Ibn Sa'ud collected every motor-car available in Mecca and hurried back to Riyádh. Recruiting largely from the Qasím area, he raised a force of eight thousand men. He did not, however, at once attack his recalcitrant tribes, knowing that every day's delay would create difficulties of supply that Al Duwísh and his friends would not find easy to overcome. He was also anxious to get an assurance from His Majesty's Government that the British would co-operate on the Iraq and Kuwait frontiers to prevent any rebels escaping across the border if and when he did attack. This all required time.

Al Duwísh's first act on arriving in north Hasa was to invite Shaikh Ahmad to join the rebels and so recover the territories filched from Kuwait in Shaikh Sálím's reign. He followed up his letter by requesting permission to camp at Subaihiyah and come into Kuwait to explain his plans and obtain supplies. His Excellency the Shaikh was immediately instructed by His Majesty's Government to place the Mutair

in the same category as the 'Ajmán and forbid Al Duwísh or any of his people to cross the frontier. Should they do so, he was told, they would be bombed.

The combined 'Ajmán and Ibn Mashúr force that had gone south from Wafrah next attacked the 'Awázim at Ridha, close to Jubail, on 23rd June. The 'Awázim were assisted by the Amír of Hasa's troops and were prepared. The rebels received a sharp check, their losses being fifty-four killed, while the 'Awázim casualties numbered only fifteen killed, including some women. No leaders were killed on either side, but the 'Ajmán lost some war-flags. The exaggerated accounts of the battle, which was broadcast everywhere in Hasa and the Hijáz as a mighty victory, were typical of how things are stage-managed in Arabia. Faisal Al Duwísh, on receiving the news of the discomfiture of the 'Ajmán, moved to Hamdh in Hasa proper, where he upbraided Ibn Mashúr and the 'Ajmán leaders for their lack of preparation and method, telling them they deserved all they had got.

Al Duwísh made renewed attempts on 28th June to get Shaikh Ahmad to throw in his lot with the rebels. He sent letters with various prominent 'Ikhwán leaders, including his eldest son, 'Azaiyiz, to try to persuade Shaikh Ahmad to take the strong line. The letters were couched in remarkable and pathetically picturesque language and made a deep impression on the ruler of Kuwait and his people. Shaikh Ahmad was exhorted to play the man and act as Mubárak would undoubtedly have acted. Supplies and ammunition, said Al Duwísh, were all that the rebels required, and if Kuwait came in he would do the rest. Fortunately for everyone concerned, Shaikh Ahmad remained loyal to the promises he had made to me, as H.M.'s Political Agent, though the temptation to lead a powerful attack against the Sa'ud dynasty and recover his lost provinces in the south, and more especially his lost tribes, the 'Awázim, 'Ajmán and Mutair, must have been well-nigh irresistible. Had he joined the rebels and had His Majesty's Government stood aside and adopted a neutral attitude, it is highly probable that Ibn Sa'ud would have been overthrown, for the Najd fighting forces were on the side of the rebels.

The 'Ajmán, Mutair and Ibn Mashúr contingents moved their families and camels south from Wafrah on 15th July. This was largely due to the untiring efforts of Shaikh Ahmad, whose object for weeks



## Ibn Sa'ud's Troops Withdraw

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previously had been to get the rebels away from the frontier and the standing temptation of Subaihiyah and the fine grazing that existed in its vicinity.

News came on 18th July that parties of 'Ajmán rebels had penetrated as far as Abu Jifán, close to Riyádh, and had cut the Riyádh-Hufuf road.

At about this period a stream of prominent Najd refugees resident in Iraq and most of them in receipt of stipends from the Iraq Government began to arrive in Kuwait *en route* to join the rebels. It became a matter of some embarrassment to Shaikh Ahmad and myself to know how to deal with these gentry. The story told (probably falsely) by one and all was that they had been permitted by His Majesty King Faisal to join the rebels and try their luck. But as Ibn Sa'ud's agents in Kuwait kept him informed of every fresh arrival and his every movement, the matter became a most awkward one for everybody concerned in Kuwait. Finally, on the question being referred to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, permission was obtained to arrest and send back any persons arriving from Iraq and suspected of wishing to join the rebel army.

One of these persons, the notorious 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat of the Buraih Mutair, made himself particularly prominent by his secretive comings and goings between Baghdad and the rebel camp. There is little doubt that he was the bearer of much moral and material assistance, and greatly encouraged the rebels to continue their resistance. 'Ubaid ibn Humaid, of the 'Utaiba, was another such person, acting as messenger between Faisal Al Duwísh and Naif al Hindi ibn Humaid, the ex-chief of the 'Utaiba, who had fled from Najd three years previously and now resided in Baghdad.

Faisal Al Duwísh now lay camped with the main rebel forces in the Tawal al Janubi, the centrally situated rectangle formed by the wells of As Sáfa, Wabrah, Qara'ah and Hába. From this position, he could strike at will into Najd and Hasa. On 2nd August he made one of his lightning raids on Qáya (or Ga'iyah), near 'Irtáwíyah, and destroyed a force of Sebei' and Sahúl tribesmen, who were supported by a small force of Ibn Sa'ud's. Though no camels were captured this raid spread consternation far and wide, resulting in the withdrawal to Riyádh of Ibn Sa'ud's advance troops, who had been camped at Hafar al Atz. A feature of the raid was the behaviour of the rebels



towards their prisoners; it was exemplary, marking a welcome change from their old methods.

Shaikh Ahmad and I both received on 10th August lengthy letters from Ibn Sa'ud, thanking us for our efforts to keep supplies from going to the rebels.

On the same day Muhammad ibn Khálid Al Hithlain, a brilliant young 'Ajmán leader, cut up a Najdi detachment close to 'Nta in mid-Hasa. On 15th August news reached Kuwait that the baggage train of the King's eldest son, Amír Sa'ud, whilst proceeding from Riyádh to Hufuf, had been attacked on the 5th by the 'Ajmán under Muhammad al 'Uthain, and fourteen motor-lorries destroyed.

With the object of impressing other tribes with the power of the rebels and convincing doubters that they would do well to join them in the fight against Ibn Sa'ud, Al Duwísh sent his son, 'Azaiyiz, a fair-haired, upstanding young man of twenty-five, on a long raid into the country of the Harb, Shammar and southern 'Anizah. 'Azaiyiz left on 15th August with a picked force of six hundred and fifty young camel-riders of the Mutair and 'Ajmán, with Faisal Al Shiblán, who was Al Duwísh's second-in-command, and other experienced men to act as advisers to the impetuous 'Azaiyiz.

The raiding party captured vast herds of Shammar and 'Amarát camels, as well as a Sa'udi convoy conveying ten thousand *ridls* worth of *zakát* to Ha'il, and started for home again, their first objective being the wells at Umm ar Rudhuma, south-west of the Iraq Neutral Zone, where they could water their camels. Before describing the sequel I must mention other matters.

August saw the rebels everywhere successful and Ibn Sa'ud acting on the defensive, his avowed policy at this period being to hold the towns till the cold weather set in. This was obviously the proper strategy, but it meant losing more and more of his Badawin adherents. Under their paramount shaikh, Ibn Rubai'an, the Al Rauga section of the great 'Utaiba tribe were really the masters of the situation about this time, and both rebels and King strove hard to get them on their side. Together with the Al Humaid they were the most powerful confederation in Arabia proper. The Al Humaid had already thrown in their lot with the rebels, and it became clear that whichever side the Al Rauga joined would eventually win.

Al Ribái', Ibn Sa'ud's confidential secret agent, arrived in Kuwait on 20th August. Two days later Ibn Mashúr, accompanied by Muhammad al 'Uthain, moved up to Kuwait. They were not allowed in the town, so I went to interview them four miles outside. Ibn Mashúr begged permission for the rebels to camp at Subaihiyah. The request was refused and he was ordered to quit Kuwait territory at once. He then asked to be allowed to visit Baghdad, which was also vetoed.

At this interview Muhammad al 'Uthain, a short, broad-shouldered, laughing man with a straight nose and a curling jet-black beard, confirmed the report that it was he who had attacked Amír Sa'ud's baggage train. He told me that all the lorries had been burnt and that not one member of their crews had escaped with his life. The recounting of this exploit gave him great amusement.

Faisal Al Duwísh moved up on the same day, 22nd August, to Hafar al Batin and won over to his side the great Al Buraih section of the Mutair, who, with some eight hundred tents, thereupon marched into north Hasa and joined the rebel forces. A week later, some of the Al Buraih entered Kuwait territory and camped at Jahra. I caused them to be ejected.

#### FAISAL AL DUWÍSH GIVES ME HIS WORD

My first meeting with Faisal Al Duwísh—perhaps, after Ibn Sa'ud, the greatest Badawin strategist this century has produced in Arabia—has been recorded in another place,\* yet, forming as it does an important part in the struggle for power between these two adversaries who had once been the closest of friends, I feel it should be retold here.

Driven by the necessity of finding fresh grazing grounds for their vast numbers of camels and sheep, Faisal Al Duwísh and his followers suddenly invaded Kuwait territory from the south on 30th August and settled themselves in one huge mob around Subaihiyah and the adjacent wells. I estimated their strength at five thousand fighting men, two thousand tents and a hundred thousand camels—a remarkable sight.

Having reported this influx I was told to warn the redoubtable Faisal Al Duwísh that if he did not withdraw across the frontier

\* *The Arab of the Desert*, Chapter XXVI.

within forty-eight hours, he and his people would be bombed by the R.A.F. stationed in force at Shu'aiba, Basra.

The first messenger sent out to Subaihiyah was scornfully received. To avoid what might turn into a deplorable incident, especially as there were several thousands of women and children mixed up with the fighting men, I invited Faisal to meet me next day near Malah, fifteen miles south of Kuwait town, and three miles south of the Kuwait Oil Company's present-day hospital and training school at Maqwa. Against the very strong advice of Shaikh Ahmad, who feared treachery, I motored alone out to Malah in the evening of 31st August. At the last moment Shaikh Ahmad followed after me with four armed slaves, feeling that, if harm were to befall me, he ought to share my fate. I shall always feel grateful for this act.

Accompanied by the principal 'Ikhwán leaders, some forty in number, a tough and fanatical lot, but now well in hand, Faisal Al Duwish met us at the rendezvous, which was the top of the hill overlooking the wells and lying east of them. This man, who had done more than any other Arab to help Ibn Sa'ud to rise to power and fame, was short, broad-shouldered and with a remarkably big nose and head. He walked with a decided limp and had the appearance of being slightly hunchbacked. Dour and silent by nature, he was too much of a stern visionary to see things, as could Ibn Sa'ud, from a politician's point of view.

I said what I had come to say, adding that I had obtained His Majesty's Government's consent to a deferment of R.A.F. action for two days—this simply on account of the women and children, for whose sake I begged Faisal to give me his word that he would retire across the border within the stipulated time. For a full hour he hesitated, arguing that he had no quarrel with the British; that he and his tribe were old subjects of the Shaikh of Kuwait and wanted to return to their allegiance; and that they were terribly short of rations. His army was very hungry, and he hoped to be allowed to buy food in Kuwait.

Though deeply touched I was adamant, and at last persuaded him to give me his promise. As he did so the red ball of the sun went down over the distant Minaqish hills, and Faisal said he must pray. He gave the call to prayer himself and led his leaders and generals in

the *salát al maghrab* (sunset prayer), their rifles all laid in line muzzle to butt, in proper 'Ikhwán style, in front of them. The solemn prayer over, and while still on his knees, this truly great chief of the desert turned to his companions and gave the *salá'am* that follows prayers. Then, without rising, he faced me and said: "I promise on my honour to do that which you require of me. Go in peace."

He kept his word.

There was a curious incident on 4th September. I mention it as showing how law and order had deteriorated everywhere. A party of Dhafir raiders of the Bani Husain and Al 'Araif sections from Iraq, under the leadership of Shulaiwih ibn Shuraif, attacked and carried off some sheep close to Jahra. The shaikh's *fidáwiyah* camped at Jahra immediately raised the alarm and went off in pursuit. They came up with the raiders at Al Qudhi, engaged them and recovered the sheep, killing one man and taking three prisoners. The patrol lost six mares, a camel and one man wounded. On the evidence of the three prisoners the Iraq authorities were later able to effect the capture of the whole band. Both the shaikh's *fidáwiyah* and the Iraq police were to be congratulated on their smart management of this affair.

### A FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR WATER\*

We return now to 'Azaiyiz Al Duwísh and his raiding force, on their way back home. When near Lina, north of Ha'il, they heard that Ibn Musa'ad al Jilúwi, Amír of Ha'il, was trying to intercept them by seizing wells, and had moved across their line of retreat with the intention of cutting off their most likely water. The news was serious, for the August heat was intense, their riding camels had not drunk for four days, marches had been very long, and the vast herds of captured camels were falling and dying of exhaustion by the way.

Faisal Al Shiblán advised an immediate change of direction to the north-east. 'Azaiyiz was in favour of making for Umm ar Rudhuma. Then four scouts brought news that the Umm ar Rudhuma wells were held by a force fully thrice as numerous as the raiders. Faisal Al Shiblán immediately announced that he was going north-east and invited all prudent men to follow him. Hot-headed 'Azaiyiz refused

\* *The Arab of the Desert*, Chapter XXVI.



to take this advice, and Faisal Al Shiblán departed with some hundred and fifty men and several hundred captured camels.

With now only five hundred men 'Azaiyiz pushed forward swiftly, in spite of exhausted and dying camels, and reached the vicinity of the Umm ar Rudhuma wells at midday. The scouts' report had been all too correct; over fifteen hundred fresh Shammar, Harb and Hadhar Badu were holding the wells and had thrown up entrenchments all round the water area. The situation was a desperate one. Camels and men had to have water. A survivor told me afterwards that all water-skins kept in reserve for men had long since been emptied and none of 'Azaiyiz's force had drunk for the last eight hours. The sun temperature was anything up to 170° F.

'Azaiyiz called a halt within sight of the enemy, who, knowing his strength, were watching curiously to see what would happen. Then 'Azaiyiz ordered the call to prayer, and the parched force knelt. Hunger, thirst, privation and the prospect of a terrible encounter did not deter them for an instant.

"Are we not of the brotherhood, and the elect of God?" cried their leader. "We must on and win the water. The Almighty will help his children."

He gave a last command to the slave who led his mare to save *her* if possible, and the dreadful assault of the five hundred thirst-maddened men began. The defenders met the charge with cool courage. The attackers were aided by the shimmering mirage, which prevented good shooting, and got to hand-grips. A terrible and confused battle followed. For a time the wild courage of the 'Ikhwán nearly won the day, but slowly and surely numbers began to tell, Ibn Musa'ad bringing up group after group of fresh reserves. The end came as the pitiless sun was going down. 'Azaiyiz, having lost over three-quarters of his men and seeing that the day went against him, was led exhausted from the field by five of his own personal servants, faithful, determined men, who made a last effort to save their beloved leader. They were never again seen alive, but their dried-up bodies and those of their riding camels were found two months later in the heart of the Hajara desert. They had perished of thirst.

Four hundred and fifty of the 'Ikhwán died where they fought. Of the fifty who escaped, thirty-eight reached safety, and eight of these



## His Beautiful Mare

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had the ill luck to be killed at Ingair a month later, when Faïsal Al Duwîsh fell upon the 'Awázim. Ibn Musa'ad's force lost over five hundred in the battle for the Umm ar Rudhuma wells.

The thoroughbred mare of 'Azaiyiz was brought to me at Kuwait a week after the battle. She was just skin and bone, and had a running sore the size of one's open hand in the centre of her back. I had her secretly stabled in a house near my own, where my wife and I fed and tended her for three months, until she got well. I then sent her for safe-keeping to a place in Basra, where she died four years later. She was one of the most beautiful animals I ever set eyes on.

#### THE KING ATTACKS

In September and at long last the forces of Ibn Sa'ud began to show signs of life. The 'Awázim were reinforced by town troops and ordered to move north and pin the rebels on the southern frontiers of Kuwait. Another tribal concentration was formed at Hafar al Atz, and Ibn Musa'ad collected a force of three thousand Harb and other tribesmen at 'Ajibba, south-west of the Bashuk area. Several fighter aircraft acquired from His Majesty's Government were stationed with ex-R.A.F. crews on Tarut island, opposite Qatíf in south Hasa. Ibn Sa'ud devoted his attention to the important 'Utaiba, of whom a large section had at last raised the standard of revolt. He managed matters in the west with such consummate skill that he succeeded in creating open discord among his adversaries.

On 5th October Faïsal Al Duwîsh fell upon the 'Awázim at Ingair, in central Hasa, and won a complete though somewhat Pyrrhic victory. The rebel losses in killed numbered eighty-four and those of the 'Awazim two hundred and fifty, both high figures for an Arabian battle. Al Duwîsh captured eight thousand camels and much other loot. Ibn Sa'ud's commander, Muhammad al Suhaili, escaped from the field of battle with five attendants. The 'Awázim asked and were given terms on 10th October, Al Duwîsh agreeing that the 'Awázim should proceed into Kuwait territory and remain there. This was later denied strongly by Ibn Sa'ud.

Ingair gave the rebels three-quarters of the province of Hasa, but as a set-off to their victory came the news that Ibn Sa'ud had also had

an overwhelming success in west Najd and had definitely eliminated the 'Utaiba from the contest. These were bad tidings for the rebels, who had hitherto not doubted that the 'Utaiba would eventually win. On 30th October Al Duwîsh sent in and asked to see Shaikh Ahmad and me. He followed up his request by personally crossing the frontier with a small escort and camping near Jahra. Acting on the instructions of His Majesty's Government I told him to withdraw immediately. It transpired that he wished to ask the following three questions, which duly reached me by letter:—

1. If he moved south into Najd proper, and left his women and camel herds in north Hasa, would His Majesty's Government promise not to bomb them or allow Iraq tribes to attack them?
2. If Ibn Musa'ad attacked his women from the west during his absence, would His Majesty's Government permit them to take refuge in Kuwait territory and remain under the Shaikh's protection?
3. If any of his people shot down an aeroplane of Ibn Sa'ud's manned by Englishmen, would His Majesty's Government hold the rebels responsible?

On the questions being referred to His Majesty's Government, I was told to give a rather vague negative answer to the first two questions and a positive affirmative answer to the third. This deeply disappointed Al Duwîsh. He sent a message to the effect that, as His Majesty's Government was clearly on the side of Ibn Sa'ud, and as he, Al Duwîsh, could not possibly invade Najd proper and try final conclusions with the King, if his women, supplies, camels and base generally were to be at the mercy of the Iraq tribes and with the tacit consent of His Majesty's Government, he had no course left but to make as good terms as he could with the Ibn Sa'ud.

Undoubtedly the above replies of His Majesty's Government marked the collapse of the rebellion. From that day, entirely disillusioned, Faisal Al Duwîsh not only made not the slightest effort to fight Ibn Sa'ud's forces, but also openly advised and exhorted anyone who so wished to leave him and make separate peace with the King. Though the rebels had a sufficient quantity of supplies and munitions to carry on a long war, the collapse of the 'Utaiba made it vitally necessary to invade Najd and beat Ibn Sa'ud in the field. His Majesty's Government's veiled statement that it would not under-

# The King's Army Advances

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take to prevent the Iraq tribes from attacking his women and seizing his camels and supplies in his absence was accepted as tantamount to saying that such action would be encouraged, so further operations by Al Duwish against Najd became obviously impossible.

The 10th November saw what was left of the rebel force retire to the centre of the Qara'ah plateau, seventy to eighty miles from the Kuwait border, and their number gradually dwindle away.

Shaikh Háfidh Wahbah, King Ibn Sa'ud's representative in London, arrived at Kuwait on 19th November and started intensive anti-rebel propaganda. On the 23rd, as rain-pools in the desert had dried up, certain camels of the rebels began to cross the frontier and water at Jahra. Steps were at once taken to eject them and prevent the practice in future. On the 25th Naif ibn Muhammad Al Hithlain attempted to cross the border and see Shaikh Ahmad. He was turned back by the Shaikh himself. On the 29th threatening letters from Ibn Sa'ud began to pour into Kuwait. They were to the effect that he was approaching with a mighty army and that if the Shaikh allowed a single rebel to cross his frontier, he, the King, would hold him personally responsible. Similar letters were circulated by Shaikh Háfidh Wahbah among the leaders and notabilities of Kuwait. On the 26th Shaikh Ahmad formally complained that Shaikh Háfidh Wahbah was improperly assuming the functions of a consul, and requested His Majesty's Government to order him to cease his activities forthwith. A warning was duly issued to him and matters improved.

Ibn Sa'ud's advance guard was reported on 18th December to be at As Sáfa, and on the same day five of his motor-cars arrived at Kuwait with letters confirming the news. At the same time the rebel forces—much reduced in numbers, with leaders daily deserting to Ibn Sa'ud or quietly making off south—moved down to the line of the Batin, whence Faisal Al Duwish opened formal negotiations with Ibn Sa'ud. His messengers were sent to the royal camp with letters asking to be allowed to surrender and requesting terms.

The rebels lay camped on both sides of the Batin depression from Hafar al Batin up to Riq'ai, the point where the Kuwait-Iraq frontiers join at their southernmost extremities. At sunset on 28th December Muhsin al Firm, Shaikh of the Harb tribe, which constituted Ibn Sa'ud's western force or left wing, advanced from Sha'ib Fulaij with a

strong mixed contingent of Harb, Shammar and Dhafir tribesmen, and fell on the rebels at dawn.

Still waiting to receive Ibn Sa'ud's terms of peace, Faisal Al Duwīsh was taken completely by surprise. However, not much harm was done. The rebels quickly rallied and drove off the attackers, not without sustaining fifty casualties and the loss of some four thousand camels.

Muhsin al Firm had attacked without orders from the King and had been repulsed, yet the astute historians of Mecca have made it out to be a great battle and the decisive victory of the campaign. This was not so.

#### THE END OF THE REBELLION

Royal Air Force ground forces, armoured cars, etc., from Iraq were concentrated in strength near Riq'ai, their role being to prevent the rebels crossing into Iraq or Kuwait. On 30th December the Mutair, who had borne the brunt of Muhsin al Firm's attack, joined the 'Ajmán at Umm 'Amárat al Mahazul, where they were met by the Chief of the R.A.F. Air Staff, Iraq Command (the late Air Vice-Marshal Sir Charles Stuart Burnett), who ordered them to surrender and be interned, or recross the frontier. While discussions were in progress, Shaikh 'Ali ibn 'Ashwán and the Buraih group of the Mutair tried on 31st December to escape south-east round Ibn Sa'ud's right flank. They were intercepted south of the Musannat ridge and all destroyed except 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat, who got into the King's tent by night and made his *dakhála*.

After prolonged conversations at Umm 'Amárat al Mahazul the rebels rejected the A.O.C.'s terms of surrender and moved south across the border, with no knowledge of the near proximity of Ibn Sa'ud's army. At this stage, I visited the 'Ajmán camp, which was echeloned up the Bátin valley, in Kuwait territory, and urged Naif Al Hithlain most strongly to throw himself on Ibn Sa'ud's mercy.

"If you are strong enough to fight, do so", I said, "but if not, give up the struggle for the sake of your women and children."

He would not listen.

Ibn Sa'ud appeared at Riq'ai on 5th January, and the rebels changed



## My Car Fired On

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direction north-east again, making in forced marches for Jahra oasis, leaving several thousands of sheep and camels dying by the way. Accompanied by some of Shaikh Ahmad's men and disguised as a Badawi, I marched throughout the night with them and kept the R.A.F. informed of the direction of their march. Next day a combined force of aeroplanes and armoured cars overtook the rebels near Al Atráf, ten miles west of Jahra, and found them completely disorganized and fleeing in all directions. They obviously feared an immediate attack by Ibn Sa'ud's army and were not aware that it could not cross the frontier. On 7th January they moved to Jahra, where they were promptly pinned in by means of bombs dropped at regular intervals round the village.

It was here that I visited Faisal Al Duwísh, my car being heavily fired upon by R.A.F. aeroplanes as I approached. I pleaded with Al Duwísh for two hours, urging him to surrender to the R.A.F. and not attempt to break through, as he intended doing, and try conclusions with Ibn Sa'ud's forces lying in wait for him on the southern frontier of Kuwait. I left him unpersuaded.

On the same day (8th January), some Jiblán and Rashaida sections of the Mutair attempted, in company with a few 'Ajmán, to make a dash south and reach Jariya, in the rear of the King's forces. They were intercepted in Ash Shaqq, south of Minaqish, by a car force commanded by Ibn Sa'ud in person and nearly all destroyed.

One or two prominent 'Ikhwán leaders had managed to slip away from Jahra in the confusion of the aerial bombardment. Chief of these was Faisal Al Shiblán, Al Duwísh's second-in-command and head of the Jiblán clan of the Mutair. He was reported to be making his way to Kuwait town, where he hoped to go into hiding with some sympathizer. It was suggested that he might possibly endeavour to make *dakhála* to the ruler of Kuwait, which would be awkward, for, by Arab custom, Shaikh Ahmad would be obliged to decline to hand him over to Ibn Sa'ud. For the moment Faisal Al Shiblán had disappeared.

After a good deal of secret correspondence with Naif Al Hithlain, I persuaded him to surrender on 9th January to the armoured car column of the R.A.F. This caused Faisal Al Duwísh to change his mind about cutting his way through Ibn Sa'ud's forces and gaining



Najd. He and Sáhúd ibn Lámi surrendered on the 10th. With rather poignant ceremony Faisal Al Duwísh rode out with me to the camp of the A.O.C. and handed over his sword. The three leaders were sent by air to Basra, where they were transferred to a British warship, H.M.S. *Lupin*, lying in the Shatt al Arab. The remnants of the Mutair rebels, mainly Dushán and Diyahín, and the greater part of the 'Ajmán tribe were instructed to move north to the Jarishan-Raudhatain area of Kuwait state, fifteen miles south of the frontier post of Safwan, where they remained under guard of the R.A.F. armoured cars until they could be handed over to Ibn Sa'ud.

I returned to my headquarters in Kuwait and, having made full report to Shaikh Ahmad of the surrender of the 'Ikhwán leaders and of the proposed concentration of their camel herds in the north of the state, I started busying myself with providing food and clothing for the starving women and children of the rebels, who had been left behind in completely destitute condition among the date gardens of Jahra. Among these were the immediate womenfolk of Faisal Al Duwísh: his wife, 'Amsha, his three sisters, two small girls and twenty-seven other female relatives, all of the Dushán clan—a very charming and interesting company of high-born women. With female servants the party numbered thirty-seven. Before being taken away to Basra, Al Duwísh had passed all the ladies of his household into my keeping. His last words to me had been:

“A sallim harami illak, Yá Dickson, wa min dhimatí illa dhimatak.” (“I hand my ladies to your personal charge, O Dickson, and from my protective honour to your protective honour.”)

All the ladies were taken into the Qasr al Ahmar (Red Fort) at Jahra, where they were looked after, clothed and fed by my wife until they could be brought to Kuwait and lodged there as my guests. Besides making arrangements for them I had to write reports and keep His Majesty's Government and the King across the border *au fait* with events in general. I knew that Ibn Sa'ud would soon start demanding that all surrendered rebels be handed over to him with their camels, and much had to be done before His Majesty's Government could agree to such a course.

## A Brave Man

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#### FAISAL AL SHIBLÁN TAKES COFFEE WITH ME

I was working on these problems in my office a couple of days after the surrender, when my head *farásh* announced the arrival of a strange shaikh, who said he wished to pay his respects. I ordered that he be shown upstairs. I was surprised to see a splendidly proportioned and very tall man, wearing on his head the large white turban of the 'Ikhwán fraternity. I flattered myself that I knew most of the shaikhs of north-east Arabia, but I had never seen this one before. His face and nose were badly sunburnt, and unlike most Badu, who burn black, his skin was red and peeling off at nose and lips.

I offered him a seat, ordered coffee and waited for him to talk. He declined to smoke, saying with a smile that he was a Wahábi, which was pretty obvious. After taking coffee my visitor quietly said that he was Faisal Al Shiblán and that he had called to ask my advice about things. He knew all about the surrender at Jahra and admitted coming into Kuwait to escape capture by the R.A.F. He wanted to know whether, if he cast himself on the mercy of the ruler of Kuwait, Shaikh Ahmad could resist pressure from the British and refuse to hand him over. If I thought Shaikh Ahmad could not protect him, he proposed to leave the town and flee by roundabout routes to Syria.

Liking the man for trusting me like this, and admiring his courage for walking deliberately into what must have been to him a veritable lions' den, I felt an inclination to save him and decided on a bold course. I advised him not on any account to make *dakhála* to Shaikh Ahmad, as by so doing he would put Shaikh Ahmad in a very difficult position. Instead I told him to take his courage in both hands and go straight to his rightful lord, King Ibn Sa'ud. Timing himself to reach the royal camp at nightfall, he should endeavour to get into the King's tent after dark and cast himself on his mercy by making *dakhála*. I told him that all men knew that the King, a brave man himself, admired other brave men, and that the chances were a hundred to one in favour of him, Ibn Shiblán, that he would be forgiven for his part in the rebellion.

Ibn Shiblán pondered awhile, and thanked me for my advice, which he said sounded good. I called for more coffee to give him an opportunity to think, hoping against hope that he would do as I wished. It was then that my *farásh* brought in a telegram from Air Vice-

Marshal Burnett, now camped with the air and ground forces at Jahra. It read that reports had confirmed the fact that Faisal Al Shiblán had fled to Kuwait town and that it was desirable that this leader be captured and sent off to Basra. I was to ask Shaikh Ahmad to have the town searched and the man immediately arrested when found, and sent in irons to R.A.F. headquarters at Jahra. Escort would be provided from Jahra as soon as news of the arrest reached there.

This was indeed a predicament. After some thought, I said:

"Faisal, I am going to read out a telegram that I have just received from the commander of the British forces who have taken Al Duwísh."

"Read on, in the name of God", was the reply.

Not a muscle of Ibn Shiblán's face moved as I did as he asked, nor by the slightest sign did he show fear or nervousness. It was a rather fine effort at self-control.

"What do you think I should do?" I asked.

The reply came quickly.

"Wallah inta ahsan al nathar." ("By God you know best.")

Here was a man after my own heart.

"Have no fear, Yá Faisal", said I. "You are safe. You have partaken of a cup of coffee in my house and, by Arab laws of hospitality, this makes you immune. You shall leave my house in safety, for I know your customs."

He smiled faintly and said:

"Yá Abu Sa'ud, I knew that you would say that, for you could not have agreed to take over and care for the ladies of the Dushán as you have done, had you not been fully aware of our customs and our ideas of chivalry. You have done well and shown your honourable feeling. Your act has furthermore quite decided me to cast myself on the mercy of my King, as you yourself suggested. If God wills that I win through and gain his pardon, I shall tell him what you have done this day."

While he was still in my office I wirelessly my reply to the A.O.C., informing him that his signal had been received by me when Ibn Shiblán was drinking my coffee. By Arab custom a cup of coffee was tantamount to giving a man a meal and entitled the person so served to absolute protection whilst under his host's roof. I trusted, therefore, that the A.O.C. would understand my point of view and my inability

## I Meet Ibn Sa'ud

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to take action as desired. I sent a copy to the Political Resident, Bushire, and another to the Ambassador, Baghdad.

On my advice Faisal Al Shiblán spent the first part of the night in the house of Farhán ibn Khudhaiyir, a Mutairi pearl merchant of the town. I arranged that Farhán should provide a fast *dhalúl* (riding camel) for his guest at a certain spot just outside the city wall, and that at midnight Faisal should be let down, as once was St Paul, and make his escape.

“Good-bye and good luck, Yá Faisal”, I said when we parted. “Perhaps some day we shall meet in happier circumstances.”

Farhán reported later that all had gone according to plan.

As for the A.O.C., he was a decent chap and man enough to appreciate my position and the reasons for my acting as I did. He never mentioned the matter again to me.

#### THE TERMS OF SURRENDER

It having been decided that a mission should proceed to Ibn Sa'ud's camp, now at Khabári Wadha, ninety miles south-west of Kuwait as the crow flies, and one hundred and thirty by the car route, to discuss ways and means of surrendering the rebel leaders and their followers, Sir Hugh Biscoe, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf since 1929, Air Vice-Marshal Burnett and I left Kuwait by air on 20th January. Shaikh Ahmad and members of the Al Sabah family followed, also by air, on the 22nd, to pay their respects to the King. They returned on the 23rd. Ibn Sa'ud's attitude during the discussions was one of conciliation, and he expressed regret for the tone of recent notes dispatched by his Minister for Foreign Affairs. There was, however, considerable bargaining before, on the 26th, Sir Hugh was able to extract the following terms from Ibn Sa'ud in return for the surrender of Faisal Al Duwísh, Naif Al Hithlain and Sáhúd ibn Lámi, who were being brought back to Kuwait in H.M.S. *Lupin*, and their tribesmen concentrated in the north of Kuwait state:—

1. He would spare the lives of the leaders and their followers.
2. Any punishment he might award would be tempered with kindness and mercy, though he reserved the right to recover from the rebels any loot they might have taken from others.



3. He promised categorically to prevent raids in future on either Iraq or Kuwait by the 'Ajmán, Mutair and other Najd tribes. Should such occur, he would effect a settlement without delay, immediately restoring anything plundered; in the case of Iraq, under the terms of the Bahra agreement; in the case of Kuwait, in accordance with customs current between Shaikh Ahmad's country and his own. He was ready to negotiate a treaty with Kuwait on the lines of the Bahra agreement, should Shaikh Ahmad so desire.

4. He promised to settle in the same manner all *past* claims made by Iraq and Kuwait, provided that all 'Ajmán and Mutair now in the hands of the Royal Air Force were returned, with their followers and property, to Najd territory.

5. He agreed to pay £10,000, as compensation to tribes in Iraq and Kuwait, in anticipation of a final settlement of accounts.

6. He would appoint representatives at any time to a tribunal under the Bahra agreement, after receipt of a request to do so.

The surrender terms having been signed by both Ibn Sa'ud and Sir Hugh Biscoe, the mission returned to Kuwait on 27th January. On the following day, the three rebel leaders, having been each fitted out with a set of handsome new clothes by my wife, were landed from H.M.S. *Lupin* and taken by air under my charge to Ibn Sa'ud's camp. I found the King sitting inside a large closed-in marquee, surrounded by his relatives and tribal leaders. The meeting between rebels and master was pathetic. With tears streaming down his face Ibn Sa'ud allowed each of the prisoners to kiss him on the nose, Badawin fashion. He then sat me down by his side and thanked me for all my efforts on his behalf and especially for having looked after the womenfolk of the late rebel leader.

"Verily, O Dickson, we appreciate your good deeds, for although Al Duwísh did indeed rebel against his King and did fight us, yet his ladies are of pure and noble blood and are entitled to the fullest consideration and protection. It will be our special duty to continue to care for them, as soon as we are able to send cars to Kuwait and take them away from you."

As he was speaking I spotted, sitting among his chiefs and advisers, my friend Faisal Al Shiblán. The King must have followed my glance, for he smiled broadly and said:

"Yes, we have forgiven him. He came and made *dakhála* to us and told us all. It seems we are again indebted to you, Colonel Dickson."





### PRISONERS OF WAR

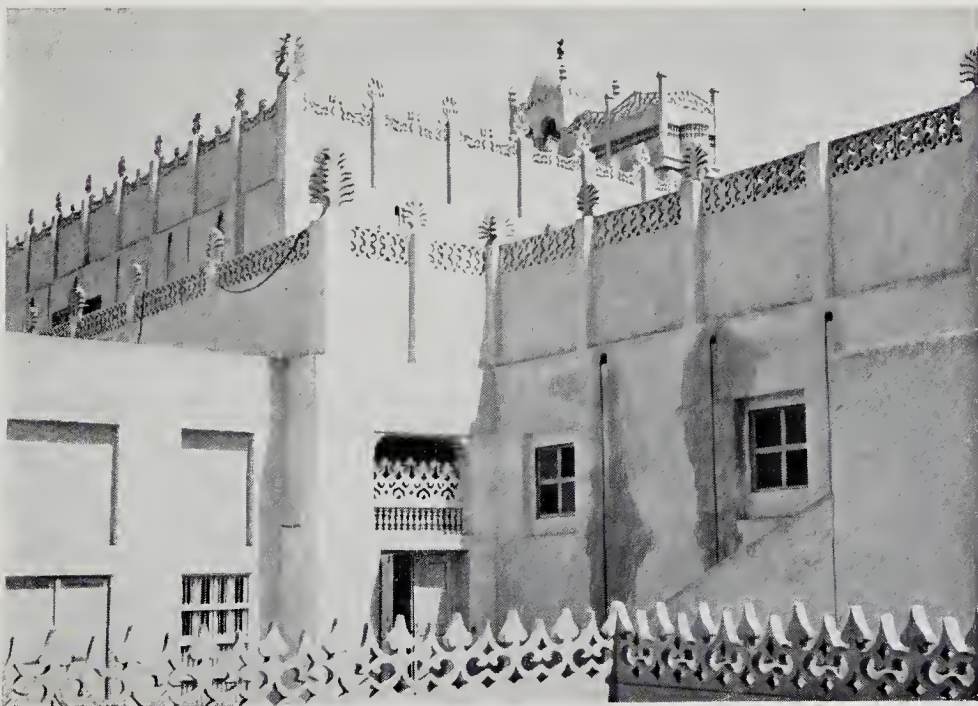
Three leaders of the great 'Ikhwán rebellion of 1929–30

(a) *Centre:* The late Faisal Al Duwísh (Mutair); (b) *Left:* The late Naif Al Hithlain ('Ajmán); (c) *Right:* The late Sáhúd ibn Lámi (Mutair)



View of Hufuf taken from Ibn Jilúwi's palace. In centre distance is the prison housing the dungeon "whence no man returns alive".

Naif Al Hithlain and Sáhúd ibn Lámi both died here



A view inside Ibn Jilúwi's palace at Hufuf



Munif al Munaifis' tent and family in the Kuwait Dibdibba



Sáleh al Murri, the great tracker, outside his tent, with his wife Gumza and infant son Daksan. An employee of Aminoil



I took the opportunity to convey a personal message from my wife, begging as a mother that the King show clemency to all his erring children. He responded nobly, for instead of executing the rebel leaders, as most of his people expected him to do in spite of his assurances to His Majesty's Government, he placed them in protective custody, a step made necessary for the sake of his prestige. His subsequent treatment of their ladies was exemplary.

The rebel forces, during their period of detention in the north of Kuwait state, had suffered cruelly from night attacks by the Dhafir and other Iraq tribes, who, thinking them fair game, and in revenge for past raids, had done their utmost to steal their camels and the remnants of their sheep from under the eyes of the R.A.F. On 29th January they were ordered to commence their return journey to Najd, in accordance with the terms of the agreement. The armoured car column of the R.A.F. controlled their southward movement along the route selected, shepherding them towards Minaqish on the border, where, on 4th February, they were handed over to Ibn Sa'ud's emissaries.

While this is not the place to go into details of the eventual punishment meted out to the Mutair, the following short summary of what was done may not be out of place:—

1. From Faisal Al Duwish were taken all his personal camels, including the famous Al Shuruf, the sacred black herd of the Mutair. All his horses and mares were also forfeit.
2. From the Dushán, the ruling clan, was taken only loot captured from other people, which worked out to about two-thirds of their livestock. Private property was left untouched.
3. From the rank and file were taken all riding camels, horses and mares, as well as property looted from others.
4. As a reward for surrendering voluntarily and not through the Royal Air Force, Faisal Al Shiblán and another well-known leader, 'Abdul 'Azíz al Májid Al Duwish, were not required to give up anything.
5. No rifles were confiscated.

The 'Ajmán received identical treatment.

I was very glad that Ibn Shiblán had got away with it. He rose to high favour and soon after was put in charge of all the King's camels (seventy *ra'iyah*),\* including the famous Al Shuruf. 'Amsha, his very

\* Four thousand nine hundred in all. A *ra'iyah* is a herd of seventy. See glossary for note on *ra'iyah*.

attractive daughter, often came up to see us at Kuwait and reminded me every now and then with a sly smile of how the cup of coffee saved her father's life. She married Hazza ibn Badr Al Duwísh, a nice lad, whom I first met when he was brought up to Kuwait with a desperately bad bullet hole through his neck. We have counted little 'Amsha as quite one of the best of our many Mutairi friends. *Allah yahfadha*—God protect her.

After having arranged for the removal of the three leaders to Riyádh, and the confiscation of the rebels' livestock as set out above, Ibn Sa'ud himself moved to Hamaidat al Qata, near Jariya, on 12th February. Four days later he left for Rás Tanurah, near Qatíf, from where he embarked on the 22nd for his meeting with King Faisal of Iraq in H.M.S. *Lupin* outside the Fao bar. The draft of an agreement of friendship between the two countries was approved.

My wife and I cared for Faisal Al Duwísh's ladies for six weeks in Kuwait town before Ibn Sa'ud sent cars to take them away. During that time we not only fed and clothed them at Government expense, but also had daily opportunities of meeting and speaking with them. After the terrible hardships and strain they had undergone during the last stages of the rebellion, my wife had a hard task nursing them back to health. We treated them as guests and friends rather than as refugees, and I well remember how Faisal's two little nieces, 'Amsha and Faiha, were the friendliest and least shy of them all. They came to us thin, starved and in rags, but they were to grow into fine women, and we were to meet them again many times.

For remaining neutral and refusing to aid the rebels, Shaikh Ahmad received the K.C.I.E. in 1930 and His Majesty's Government's high commendation. He was also promised that His Majesty's Government would use its best endeavours to bring about a removal of Ibn Sa'ud's restrictions on trade between Najd and Kuwait. The blockade had lasted for seven years, and it was to be another seven before it was finally lifted.

#### DEATH OF A GREAT DESERT WARRIOR

Faisal Al Duwísh died in Riyádh on 3rd October 1931, the immediate cause being, as far as one could judge, aneurism of the heart.

## The King's Remorse

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The first news was brought to Kuwait on 25th October by one Ibrahím al Muzaiyin, for many years standard-bearer to the Shaikhs of Kuwait, but who, three years previously, had taken service under Ibn Sa'ud at Riyádh. He came to Kuwait to buy falcons for Muhammad Al Sa'ud, the King's brother.

Ibrahím recounted to me in detail how Al Duwísh had been complaining for a month of pain due to a pronounced swelling in the lower part of his throat. On 3rd October, whilst walking about in the prison courtyard with Ibn Hithlain, he had suddenly fallen on the ground, blood gushing from his mouth, caused by the swelling in his jugular having apparently burst inwards. He had remained senseless until evening, when he had recovered consciousness for a short time, during which he had asked to see the King. Ibn Sa'ud had refused to come. Al Duwísh had sent him farewell greetings, saying he forgave him all the wrongs he had done him, but that final judgment between them would not be decided until they both stood together before their Maker. Then he had fallen back and died, and had been washed and buried the same evening.

Ibrahím further recounted how the King, apparently filled with remorse, had sent later for Al Duwísh's widow, 'Amsha, and two of his sisters, Ghália and Wadha, and, after declaring that they could consider themselves as his sisters all their lives, had granted annual life pensions of four hundred *riáls*\* to 'Amsha and Ghália, the eldest sister, and three hundred *riáls*\* to Wadha and the third sister, who was then in Kuwait. Having given them also four camels each, he had told them to go home to 'Irtáwíyah. Other sources said also that Ibn Sa'ud gave the three ladies a free house each in Riyádh.

The deathbed scenes were given in so much detail that there could be little doubt that Faisal Al Duwísh was really dead. Hilál al Mutairi, the prominent pearl merchant of Kuwait and lifelong friend of Al Duwísh, shortly afterwards gave out that he believed the story, as also did Shaikh Ahmad.

The passing of this great desert chief, a very king among Arab shaikhs, and the only tribal leader in Arabia whose prerogative it was, if he saw necessary, to slay men of his own tribe without trial, was greatly felt throughout the Badawin world. He and the Dushán shaikhs

\* Sa'udi *riáls* equivalent then to Rs. 1/- each.



of the Mutair before him can be compared to the medieval king-makers of England. Throughout their history they had dared to attempt to make and break—and often successfully—the Al Sa'ud rulers of Najd. It was entirely due to the assistance of the Mutair under Faisal's forebear, who bore the same name as he, that Ibrahím Pasha of Egypt was able successfully to attack and conquer the Wahábi kingdom in the early part of last century.

Arabia has never produced a greater warrior than Faisal Al Duwísh, nor had Ibn Sa'ud a more devoted follower until politics or ingratitude drove Faisal to rebellion. The Mutair, his people, almost worshipped him, and no man mentions his name to-day but with tears in his eyes. They say that it was the death of his son, 'Azaiyiz, that broke his spirit and convinced him that he could not win.

'Amsha, his widow, did not survive him long. She passed away quietly at 'Irtáwíyah five years later, mourned by a large number of friends.

The other leaders of the rebellion were kept imprisoned at Riyádh until 1934, when, while Ibn Sa'ud was fighting Yahya, the 'Imám of Yemen, they were accused of attempting to escape. They were transferred to Hufuf, were incarcerated in the famous old Turkish underground dungeons there, and have never been heard of since.

#### THE END OF MILITANT 'IKHWÁNISM

The rebellion had been put down, but only after a vast expenditure of money and material. Ibn Sa'ud had to thank the British Government for extricating him from his predicament. There can be little doubt that, but for its efforts in keeping Kuwait and Iraq neutral, and but for the placing on the southern frontier of Kuwait of a powerful force that had eventually compelled the surrender of the rebels, Ibn Sa'ud would not have succeeded in crushing the revolt, and most serious consequences would have resulted for himself and the house of Al Sa'ud.

With the collapse of the rebellion and the death of Faisal Al Duwísh, militant 'Ikhwánism may be said to have died for good. Ibn Sa'ud saw to that. He was going to have no more conflagrations. Based as it had been on religion and fanaticism, the 'Ikhwán military machine was far

too dangerous a plaything for him. He had made a mistake and would not repeat it. For the future he preferred armoured cars, wireless and machine-guns to do his behest, and probably he was wise.

In the operations against the rebels he had made use for the first time of motor transport to increase his mobility and assist him in keeping his forces supplied. Much of his success had been due to that fact, in that he had often brought his influence to bear on wavering tribes before they had made up their minds to join the rebels, and had frequently caught rebel detachments unprepared. He realized of what assistance proper communications could be to him in maintaining order in his vast and scattered kingdom. Thus, when Ibn Rifáda revolted in 1932 with six thousand men of the Billi tribe in north Hijáz, he quickly assembled ten thousand men at Ta'if and, by a surprise attack made possible by the use of cars, wiped them out at Dabha and marched triumphantly through the Hijáz.

The 'Ikhwán rank and file now understood that Ibn Sa'ud had raised the cry of religion in 1914 for his own ends. They felt sore and resentful at having been played with, and so no longer had the desire to be loyal or even militant. They just wanted to be left alone. The King had ceased to be the popular hero and father of his people, and one found, even among loyal Shammar, Harb, Sebei', Sahúl and 'Awázim tribesmen, let alone those who had failed in their revolt against him, a spirit resembling deep disappointment. If asked to say why this was so, they were unable to give concrete or sensible replies, but distrust and disillusionment would seem to have been the root cause. Without doubt, the phenomenon was due to one or a combination of the following:—

1. It was universally felt that Ibn Sa'ud had not played the game by his 'Ikhwan and had not stood by them as he should have done. After all, it was they who had made him what he was, and they too were good Muslims.
2. He had called in the British to his aid and, with their help, had been able to crush his own Muslim subjects.
3. He had treated Faisal Al Duwísh, Naif Al Hithlain and Sultán ibn Humaid Al 'Utaibi, three of the greatest chieftains in Arabia, with cruel and uncalled-for severity, when more chivalrous methods would have met the case.

As time went by Ibn Sa'ud's title of 'Imám was discarded by the

Badawin world north and north-east of the Dahana sand-belt—that is, north-eastern Arabia—and he was widely known as Al Wahábi, especially by those who had once rebelled against him, this more as an epithet of opprobrium than anything else. An even more significant feature was that the white turban cloth, once the sign before the world of a good *akh*, was seldom to be seen. Most of the Mutair, Rashaida, 'Awázim, 'Ajmán and Shammar went back to the old *'aqál*, and those who wore the white turban did so with their tongues in their cheeks, or to curry favour with the King's officials.

This is not to say that 'Ikhwánism was a thing of the past. It continued to exist, but, for the most part, in sensible form. By 1931 it had lost most of its unreasonable bigotry. The great tribes of Arabia still liked to call themselves good 'Ikhwán or Wahábis and, as of yore, did not smoke, gamble or drink. Their aggressive fanaticism, however, had quite gone, except, perhaps, in southern Najd and in such places as Hauta, which is south of Riyádh, and in the Wádi Duwásir. Elsewhere zealous spirits devoted themselves to prayer and self-improvement, where before they thought only of forcible conversion and interference with others. I have had this from many an 'Ikhwán leader and from representatives of every tribe. Nor—though it is unwise to prophesy in a land where history has repeated itself again and again—do I think that militant 'Ikhwánism will ever be roused again in our lifetime.

#### IBN SA'UD CONSOLIDATES HIS POSITION

Ibn Sa'ud now wanted peace. Constant fighting had been expensive. He needed money. To increase his prosperity, he granted a concession in Hasa to the Standard Oil Company of California (now Aramco) and asked it to consider the construction of a railway from Dammam to Hufuf and Riyádh via Al Kharj.\* Having persuaded the *'ulema* that Islám did not forbid such developments, but was in favour of all that signified true progress, he spared no effort to link up all important centres by roads and tracks fit for wheeled transport, and to organize efficient wireless communications. He gave an Indian company a concession for a tarmac road from Mecca to Jiddah; he promoted the regular operations of motor-transport companies; he arranged for the

\* Since completed.

## Najrán Occupied

### Chap. XIII

establishment of wireless telegraph stations throughout the country; he encouraged everywhere the cultivation of land.

In September 1932 the kingdom of Hijáz, Najd and its dependencies became known as Sa'udi Arabia.

Throughout 1933 trouble was brewing over a frontier dispute in the 'Asir. It began with an uprising against Ibn Sa'ud that resulted in the governor he had appointed to that district, Hassan Al Idrisi, being driven out by the inhabitants of the 'Asir into Yemen. 'Imám Yahya of Yemen moved troops into the 'Asir, and Ibn Sa'ud sent his son, Amír Sa'ud, with a force to conduct negotiations. These finally broke down in March 1934, by which time Ibn Sa'ud had accumulated an army of considerable size near the disputed area.

Although there was no formal declaration of war, hostilities commenced in April. A force commanded by Amír Sa'ud met with early success in occupying Najrán. Amír Faisal, Sa'ud's younger brother, whose supporting force was largely mechanized, captured Hudaida early in May. Realizing that, with summer approaching, his best line of action was to prolong the operations as long as possible, 'Imám Yahya availed himself of an opportunity for a truce. The Sa'udi forces, although full of confidence in themselves after their initial success, were in fact deteriorating. Sickness, against which little provision appears to have been made, was attacking them, besides which they were kept short of ammunition and short of pay. Consequently, discipline suffered. Ibn Sa'ud saw that to continue the war might involve him in defeat, so he extended the truce and modified his demands. His forbearance had the desired effect: the 'Imám complied with his preliminary conditions and, in the middle of June, signed a treaty between Yemen and Sa'udi Arabia.

By this campaign Ibn Sa'ud considerably increased his prestige, regained the fertile oasis of Najrán and asserted his claim over the 'Asir, which was incorporated that year in Sa'udi Arabia. He finished with a victorious but underpaid, war-weary army. The outbreak of raiding that might have been expected as the natural corollary of the return of troops empty-handed did not materialize—an indication of the extent of the authority that this great and remarkable leader had, by then, obtained over his many truculent tribes.

It was not until the end of 1937 that friendly relations were again



established between Sa'udi Arabia and Kuwait by Ibn Sa'ud's lifting the embargo on his subjects' trading with Kuwait. It must be stated that the fault had lain with Ibn Sa'ud rather than the British Government, which, since 1930, had never ceased trying, in the face of Ibn Sa'ud's clever procrastination, to liquidate its promise to Shaikh Ahmad.



PART THREE

WHICH IS MAINLY REMINISCENT

*Yá dhaifuna, lau zirtuna, lau wajatuna, nahnú al  
dhuyúfu wa anta rabbu 'l manzili*

(O guest of ours, though you have visited us,  
though you have honoured our dwelling, we  
verily are the real guests and you are lord of this  
house)

This was Ibn Sa'ud's greeting to me when I visited him at  
Hufuf in 1920 for the first time



## Kuwait, 1931-1936

*Justifiable Homicide—The Nine Graves—The Air Agreement at Shárjah—'Amsha and Faiha—A Desert Luncheon—Sulubba Witchcraft—Daghaima and the Fox's Hole—The Dream of the 'Utaiba Woman*

## JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE

In 1931 the Iraq world was suddenly startled and shocked to hear of the murder in his office in the Balát\* of the popular governor of Baghdad, 'Abdullah ibn Ahmad Pasha al Sána, by 'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún, paramount shaikh of the Muntafiq. I knew them both well, though I had lost sight of them for a number of years. 'Abdullah Beg had surrendered to me in Nasiríyah in January 1919 and had been allowed to go and reside on his estate at Kutaiban, a few miles north of Basra, where he had lived quietly, taking no part in politics and only occasionally visiting Baghdad to pay his respects to King Faisal or to attend court cases connected with his various properties. On one of these occasions I had met him and had found him the same quiet, proud personage who had come to see me at dead of night in Nasiríyah and begged my good offices with Sir Percy Cox.

'Abdullah al Sána I had known more intimately. Son of Ahmad Pasha, *mutasarriif* of Basra under the British, he had worked under me as *qaimaqám* of Hilla. When I had left Iraq for India I had learned that he had made his mark by sheer merit, rising step by step to the coveted post of governor of Baghdad, where he had enjoyed to the fullest degree the confidence of King Faisal. I was very proud, feeling that some of the credit for the boy's rise to fame could be attributed to my early training.

Then came 'Abdullah al Sána's mistake. He aspired to the hand of the daughter of the late Prime Minister of Iraq, 'Abdul Muhsin Al Sa'dún. After the tragic suicide in 1929 of her famous father, this young girl had gone with her mother to reside in Syria. 'Abdullah al

\* The King of Iraq's official residence, used for royal receptions, etc.

Sána, as his name implies, was of very humble origin and everyone knew it. Only drive, personal ability and the favour of King Faisal had got him where he was. For him even to think of marriage with a lady of the Al Sa'dún, the *crème de la crème* of Arab tribal aristocracy, was a crime, not to say an utterly mad act. The Sána community is so low in the Badu social scale that none of the *sharíf* tribes throughout the length and breadth of Arabia will dream of giving one of their daughters to a Sána, classed from earliest times as low-born shoeing-smiths, gunsmiths and workers in iron, and tolerated only as servants of the tribes. Contravention of the code means death to both man and girl. There can never be extenuating circumstances.

Whether 'Abdullah al Sána thought his position so strong and Baghdad now so modernized that he could defy tribal custom and prejudice will never be known. Suffice to say that he courted the lady and sought the King's consent to the marriage. It is said that Faisal gave his blessing out of a desire to reward his favourite, but some affirm—wrongly, I think—that the act was political, his intention being deliberately to lower the good name of the Al Sa'dún in the Arab world. He had never been on good terms with them and resented their haughty claim to be as good as he was. Moreover, their outspoken defiance on all occasions offended him.

One thing is certain: King Faisal, himself of the noblest stock of the Hijáz, brought up in tribal surroundings and prejudices since boyhood, must have known how dangerous would be the reactions everywhere, especially among the Al Sa'dún; yet he did not choose to forbid or discourage the marriage. Nor did any of the British community in Baghdad appear to appreciate the position. Thinking in terms of their own country and of only the brave deserving the fair, Englishmen wished him luck and congratulated him on his choice.

Encouraged by his sovereign, 'Abdullah al Sána wasted no time. He successfully got round the girl's mother, a Turkish-bred lady, who no doubt thought the King's approval sufficient guarantee for her daughter's safety; and living as she did in ultra-modern Syria, probably regarded tribal prejudice as far away and a thing of the past.

When the news reached Basra, stronghold of the Al Sa'dún, great was the consternation. Immediately a powerful deputation proceeded to Baghdad and demanded from the King that he should annul the

## The Sa'dún Enraged

### Chap. XIV

engagement and forbid the marriage. In spite of all reasoning and arguments, they failed in their object. A second deputation, headed by Thámir Beg Al Sa'dún, Dhári Beg al Fahad Al Sa'dún and others, again saw the King, and it is said that high words and the plainest of speaking were indulged in. The version that reached us at Kuwait was that the deputation told the King that if the marriage was proceeded with, not only would bride and bridegroom be killed, but even the King himself would as like as not suffer the same fate; that they, the Al Sa'dún, were of as good family as was the King, and they cried shame on him for using his position to force through a marriage that he well knew would bring dishonour on their whole house.

The King, of course, received both deputations in the strictest privacy, and the outside world was supposed to know nothing of what was said or of the bitter feeling that was displayed, but things have a way of getting out. The King—again it is said—was in high dudgeon at being bearded and threatened in his own palace by a collection of his own subjects. He roundly accused them of lese-majesty and refused to consider their representations in any way whatsoever.

The proud 'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún had not gone with the deputation, preferring to remain in Basra and await developments. He received the news of this second failure with distress and resentment. Family honour was now at stake, and life counts for nothing on such occasions. Undecided on the action he should take, he spent some days in Basra city.

'Ajaimi Beg Al Sa'dún now appeared on the scene. On the urgent summons of his family he came to Basra from Mardín, in Turkey. He saw 'Abdullah Beg and his ('Ajaimi's) brother, Sa'ud Beg, who had come down from Nasiríyah, and urged the need for immediate action. In secret session it was decided that 'Abdullah Beg and Sa'ud Beg, working independently, should proceed to Baghdad and kill 'Abdullah al Sána.

It is said further that news then reached Basra that the marriage had been celebrated by proxy and that the bridegroom was preparing to go to Syria and consummate it. I cannot vouch for the truth of this. What did happen to hasten the tragedy was a family incident. 'Abdullah Beg Al Sa'dún went to his home at Kutaiban one afternoon and, on entering his great black tent, called aloud for his wife. The



lady did not appear from her curtained-off quarters, but, addressing him through the *qáta*, asked him who he was. In anger he replied:—

“I am ‘Abdullah, your husband. Why don’t you come forth?”

“I am not now your wife”, she retorted, “and will never be again until you have slain the Sána who has dared to aspire to the hand of one of our daughters.”

Without a word ‘Abdullah Beg left his tent and, taking a loaded automatic with him, set off alone in a car for Baghdad, where, on arrival, he made his way straight to the Balát and asked to see the governor. He was shown into the presence of ‘Abdullah Sána, who politely offered him a chair and asked why he was honoured with his visit. ‘Abdullah Beg refused the cup of coffee that had been offered him and, according to the *farásh* who had brought it in, told ‘Abdullah Sána that, while he felt no personal animosity for him, it was his duty to prevent his proposed marriage with his clanswoman. He then drew his pistol and shot ‘Abdullah Sána across the table. ‘Abdullah Sána fell to the ground, and ‘Abdullah Beg emptied the rest of the magazine deliberately into his head. He then went to the door, called the *farásh* and ordered him to send for the police. When these arrived, they found him seated and smoking a cigarette. He quietly explained the reasons for his act.

The trial of ‘Abdullah Beg, with a British judge presiding, stirred the Arab world to its depth. When sentence of death was pronounced, so great was the reaction in the murderer’s favour, and such powerfully worded telegraphic demands for a reprieve reached King Faisal from such potentates as Ibn Sa’ud, the rulers of Kuwait, Bahrain, Omán, Yemen, and a host of Amírs and shaikhs from central Arabia, the Hijáz, Iraq and elsewhere, that the sentence was commuted to one of twenty years’ simple imprisonment. As an act of grace by King Faisal this was later reduced to one year.

I happened to be in Basra when ‘Abdullah Beg was released from prison and returned to that city. Rarely have I seen such a reception given to an oriental. Thousands were at the station, and thousands more lined the streets of Basra and Ashár. It had to be seen to be believed. They were welcoming no common murderer, but a national hero.

I plead guilty to having fought my way through the crowd at the reception that followed, and to having offered my felicitations on his

release from prison. After all, he was a brave man and had done what he believed to be right, according to the code in which he had been brought up.

### THE NINE GRAVES

Here is another tale of tribal prejudice.

At the end of a long day's hawking trip all along the Kuwait Dhahar ridge in 1931 my wife and I, both very tired, returned at nightfall to our camp. I had in the morning ordered our black tent and those of our retainers, Sálím al Muzaiyin and family, to be pitched and made ready for us in a place selected at random by me—a pretty little glade at the lower end of the western slope of the ridge, facing the Burqán hills. In the evening light I came across, some one hundred yards from our tent, a row of low mounds marking nine graves dug side by side at the foot of a small, bare hill. On making inquiries I learned what had happened there in February 1926.

During the summer and early autumn of each year, the Al Hindál, a small section of the Bani Málik group, lived on the Ghariyafiyah channel, near Suq ash Shuyúkh. In the winter and spring they migrated south to Kuwait with other shepherd tribes of the Muntafiq.

Anyone who has lived any length of time in Kuwait can very easily distinguish these Muntafiq northerners from the Badu of Kuwait and Sa'udi Arabia. They usually wear a dark blue chequered headcloth, with a thick black *'aqal* poised at a rakish angle on the top of the head. The Badu of this part of eastern Arabia all wear a scarlet chequered or white headcloth, with either a thinnish black *'aqal* or a simple piece of rope knotted round the head. As already mentioned, the womenfolk of these Muntafiq tribes all go unveiled, their faces, arms and ankles being heavily decorated with tattoo patterns.

The Al Hindál had many friends among the 'Ajmán of Kuwait and Hasa, and were on especially good terms with the Mishwat family of the Mahfúdh section of the 'Ajmán domiciled in the Abu Hulaifa and Wára areas of Kuwait, who, during the sojourn of the Al Hindál in Kuwait territory in those troublous times, kept them informed of any 'Ikhwán raiders who might be in the vicinity, which enabled them to move their flocks to safe areas when danger threatened.

The head of the Al Hindál was one Fiza', a very great friend of ours and whom I had known since my Suq ash Shuyúkh days. It was he and his kinsmen, 'Abdul 'Azíz and Sumair (known as Mismár—"the Nail"), who told me the story of the family massacre.

In 1925 (they said) early rains had fallen in the desert and the prospect for the spring seemed good. Times were not settled, and the 'Ikhwán raiders were still venturing up close to Kuwait town itself and carrying off sheep and camels, but the age-long move to the south could not be changed; the flocks and mares must graze on desert herbs and flowers during the coming spring season. Moreover, with the first rains in the Muntafiq, ploughing and the sowing of new crops had begun, and sheep and donkeys must be moved away from them.

All the Muntafiq shepherd tribes came down as usual from the Euphrates in Iraq, but none of them went as far south as was their normal custom. In February 1926 the Al Hindál were camped along the western side of the Dhahar ridge above the wells of Arfajiyah, about eight miles south-east of the Burqán hills. Like all Iraqi shepherds they had not placed their tents in a line, as do the Badu of Sa'udi Arabia, but, for the sake of their sheep, had them dotted about in ones and twos, but all within sound of rifle-shot of one another, in case of alarm.

The Muntafiq shepherd tribes do not own camels, so the tents, which had to be carried on the backs of tiny donkeys, were small and low. Fiza's tent had four poles, but of a lighter variety than those used by the Badawin. Each of his people's tents contained at least one of the brightly coloured, long-pile woollen rugs made by their women during the summer months under the palm trees of the Muntafiq, and everyone was as happy as the uncertain times allowed, for the great annual migration into the southern desert and Kuwait was something to which all looked forward year by year.

The young men of the Al Hindál, like those of the other Muntafiq tribes, were a fine lot of thick-set, healthy lads. Most of them had mares on which they had ridden during the long trek down to Kuwait, and they could often be seen in the bazaars of Kuwait, doing their business or shopping, while their mares were fed in some neighbouring stables.

One of these young men was Shara'ib ibn Mudhrib al Hindál, first

## A Terrible Day

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cousin of Fiza'. For some months past, he had been carrying on a very secret love affair with a girl named Rukhaisa, of the small 'Abáda cultivator tribe. This came to light when the father, Mudhrib al Hindál, informed his son that, on their return to the Muntafiq country in summer, he was to marry his cousin. Shara'ib was furious and wildly indignant, swearing that he would never marry anyone else in all his life except his love, Rukhaisa. But he saw difficulties, for, although the Al 'Abáda, also of the Bani Málik group, were friendly neighbours, willing to give their daughters in marriage to the Al Hindál, no man of the Al Hindál had ever been permitted to marry a girl of the Al 'Abáda.

Some days after these events, when 'Abdullah al Hindál, a senior member of the family, had gone up to Kuwait town with a party of women to do the shopping, Fiza' made coffee in his tent and gathered together most of the members of his family to discuss the situation. The times being unsettled, all the men sat round the coffee fire with loaded rifles across their knees and cartridge belts buckled round their waists. Rukhaisa was also present among the women, who severally tried to show her how impossible it was for her to marry Shara'ib.

After the coffee had been handed round the argument began and, Shara'ib refusing to see reason, became more and more heated. Suddenly, as quick as lightning and without waiting to think what the consequences would be, one of the young men fired his rifle at point-blank range at Shara'ib and killed him on the spot. Instantly the attacker was dropped himself, and next moment the whole tent was a mass of infuriated men all firing at each other. As Rukhaisa ran screaming from the tent, she was shot down with a bullet in her back. The other women fled from the scene into the desert, where, weeping and wailing, they tore their clothes and beat their breasts.

Only four men were left alive in the tent—Fiza', young 'Abdul 'Azíz and his two brothers, Shadaiyid and Miza'al, all wounded. Around them lay the dead. Grasping the situation before the others, Fiza' ordered 'Abdul 'Azíz, the least wounded, to go off to the town and fetch 'Abdullah as quickly as he could. 'Abdul 'Azíz ran out to his mare, undid her iron shackles, threw them on the ground and went off bareback at full gallop for Kuwait town, thirty-six miles away.



He found 'Abdullah and the women gathered in the Safát (market place). Many are those who remember the scene on that dreadful day, as the exhausted and wounded horseman arrived with the terrible news. 'Abdullah, always calm and collected, leapt on his mare and immediately went off at speed. The womenfolk, a score in number, were overwhelmed with grief and, screaming and wailing, tearing their hair and rending their garments, rushed about like demented persons. The news spread like wildfire through the town, and crowds quickly collected around them. Women friends went to them and tried to comfort them, while many willing hands assisted them to load up their donkeys. Late that afternoon they went out from the town, walking in a grief-stricken bunch behind their little herd of donkeys, on their long night trek home, a sad march. 'Abdul 'Azíz went with them.

In camp and before the sun had set that evening, nine graves had been dug side by side, and the eight men and the girl were laid in them and buried. Fiza' had lost his uncle Mudhrib and his cousin Shara'ib; 'Abdullah had lost his brothers Jásim and Muttar, and his sister's two sons Kera'im and Mutashar; 'Abdul 'Azíz had lost his brother Daud; and young Faisal, of the blue eyes, had lost his father Hassan.

And so night fell, and as the small band of survivors lined up for their evening prayers, they thanked the Almighty for all his mercies, even though their hearts were overwhelmed with grief. Their prayer ended:

"Al hamdu l'Illah. Allah yáti, wa Allah yákhud."

("Praise be to God. God has given, and God has taken away.")

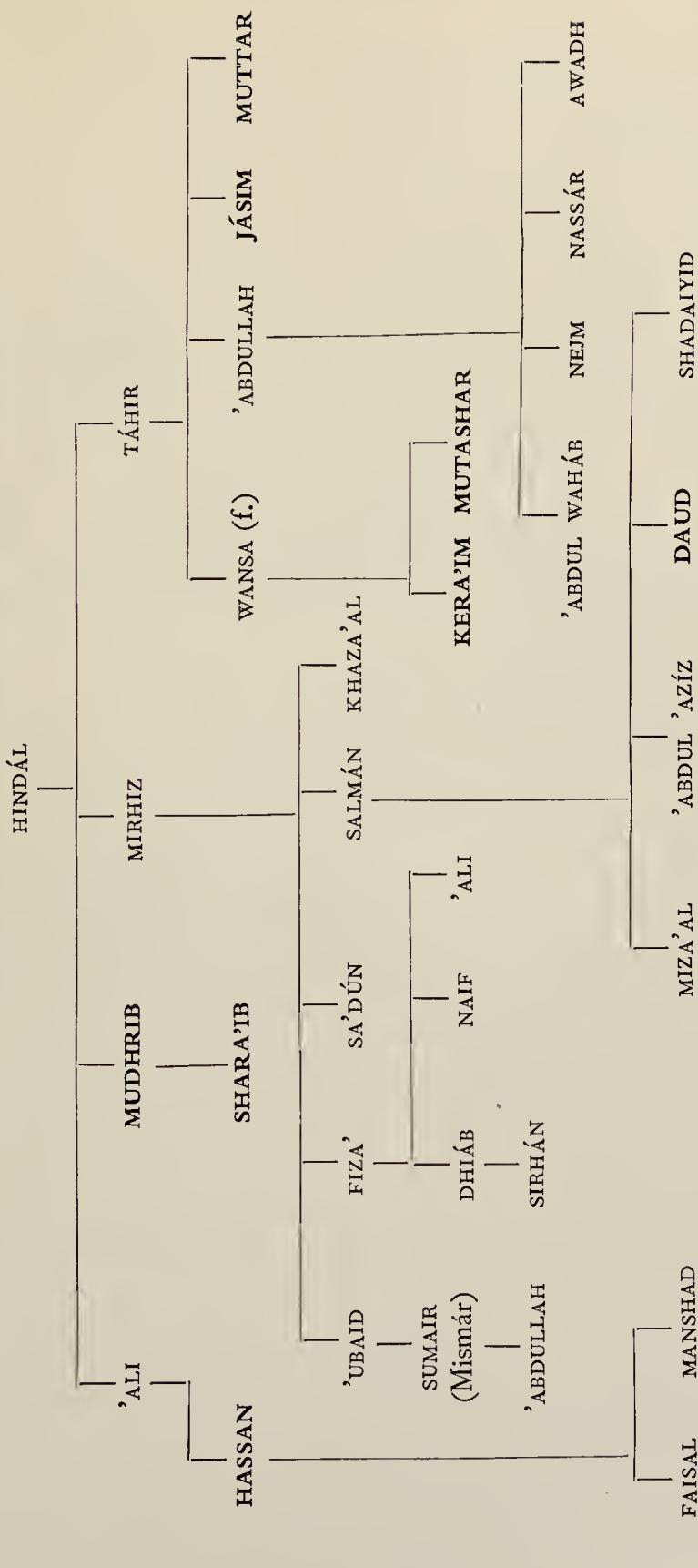
It was with difficulty that I got this story out of Fiza' and the others, for the Al Hindál do not like to talk about it. I do not know who fired the first shot, nor will the Al Hindál tell me. The spot has ever since been shunned by the Muntafiq.

In the spring of 1943 our camp was again pitched close by. When the sun went down in the west, we could look out of the tent and see the faint shadow thrown by the now small mounds of earth over the graves. Somehow we felt very near to our friends of the Al Hindál.

Fiza', Sumair and Abdul 'Azíz call on us regularly when they move down to Kuwait, and my wife and I as regularly visit their camp and

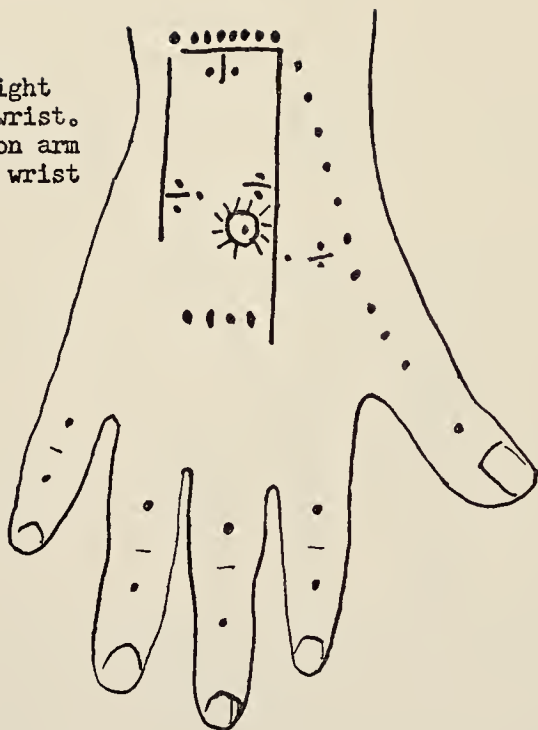


FAMILY TREE OF THE AL HINDÁL (BANI MÁLIK), MUNTAFIQ



The names of those killed are in bold type

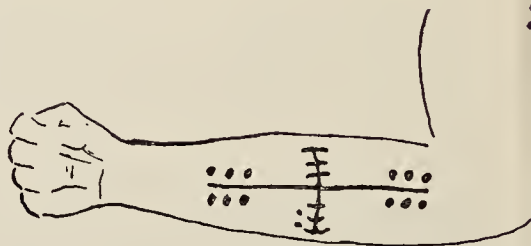
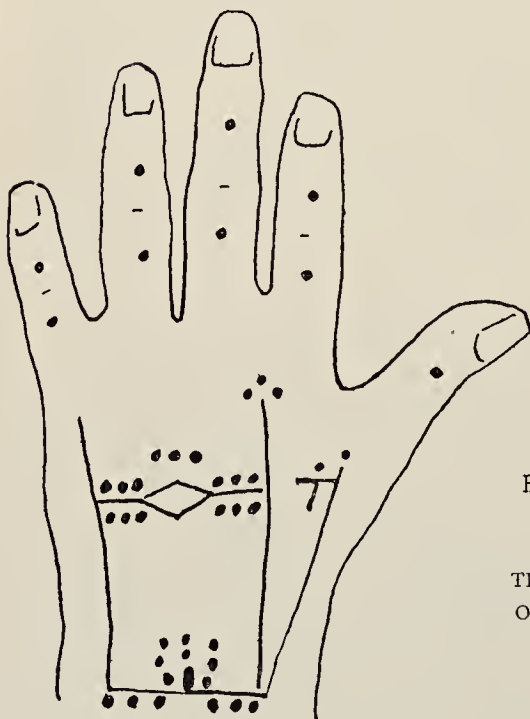
Back of right  
hand and wrist.  
No marks on arm  
or inside wrist



Right wrist  
underside



Known as  
"Baksha"



Outer edge of left arm between  
wrist and elbow.

Back of left hand and wrist.

TRIBAL TATTOO MARKINGS ON A GIRL  
OF THE AL HINDÁL SHEPHERD TRIBE

## Our Good Friends

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discuss old times. Sumair's wife is a particularly sweet girl and a great friend of ours. She produced 'Abdullah, her first-born and a very bonny child, in 1943. Early in the same year Fiza' was falsely charged with the theft of a camel and found himself in a Kuwait prison. We were fortunate in being able to effect his release. In the following spring, Sumair—or Mismár, as they like to call him—was rounded up near Rafi'iyah by the Iraq police, who relieved him of seven hundred *dinars*.<sup>\*</sup> A word in the right quarter did the trick, especially my testimony that I had had personal knowledge of him since my old Suq ash Shuyúkh days and had always found the family upright beyond other men and always very pro-British.

Our long friendship with the Al Hindál family has been a great source of happiness to my wife and myself during the many years we have spent in Kuwait. May they long remain our friends.

#### THE AIR AGREEMENT AT SHÁRJAH

Because of the Persian Government's ban on passenger aircraft flying down the Persian side of the Persian Gulf, and Ibn Sa'ud's refusal, at the instigation of the fanatical 'Ikhwán, to allow them to follow the opposite Arabian coast, the British and Indian Governments were very anxious to arrange for Imperial Airways to call in at Shárjah, on the Trucial coast, on their way to India and the Far East, and it had become a matter of prime importance to arrange an agreement with Shaikh Sultán ibn Saqar, ruler of Shárjah, so that a landing ground could be constructed and accommodation provided for passengers staying the night.

Tentative approaches had been made to Shaikh Sultán ibn Saqar, but he had refused to co-operate. Sir Hugh Biscoe, the Political Resident, had made a visit to Shárjah, but had found the ruler so intractable, raising difficulty after difficulty, that he had come away empty-handed.

On 14th July 1932 I received a telegram from Sir Hugh, instructing me to motor up to Basra, catch the down Karachi fast mail there and call for him at Bushire, his headquarters. He was going to have another shot, he said, at the Shárjah air concession, which it was his ambition

<sup>\*</sup> A *dinar* is the Iraq equivalent of £1.

to get. As I knew Arabic fluently he had a hunch that, with my assistance, he would meet with success this time. His plan was to pick up H.M.S. *Bideford* (Captain Denison, M.V.O., R.N.) off the Tamb island lighthouse, half-way down the Gulf, transfer to her and make Shárjah the following morning.

I was aware that Sir Hugh suffered from angina pectoris and was not fit to engage in any difficult operation during the great heat of the Persian Gulf summer. On his last leave to the United Kingdom, he had been told not to return to the Gulf, but he had put duty before personal feelings and had come back some few months before the time of which I write.

The night previous to my departure for Basra I had a bad dream and awakened my wife to tell her that I had a fey feeling that some disaster was going to happen on the trip. I could not say what it was, but my sense of despondency was so great that I was deeply worried throughout my car trip to Basra and the passage in the fast down mail steamer, which left Basra on the 16th. I reached Bushire at about five o'clock on the following afternoon, and Sir Hugh came out to the ship looking remarkably jovial and well. That night we had a merry dinner at the captain's private table, and my forebodings left me. Sir Hugh had only his secretary with him—Captain Chauncy of the Indian Political Department, an able and very charming personality.

The night was very hot and calm. We reached Tamb lighthouse at midnight, to find H.M.S. *Bideford* hove to and waiting for us. It did not take many minutes to transfer to the warship in a Naval launch, and, after a drink with Captain Denison, who received us most kindly, we all turned in. Sir Hugh and I slept on camp-beds on the boat-deck, with a large "Thermos" flask of iced water lying handy.

H.M.S. *Bideford* steamed slowly towards Shárjah, the intention being to make that place at daylight. At half-past two in the morning I was awakened by a touch on my shoulder. Sir Hugh was standing by my side, his face distorted with pain.

"Get the doctor quickly", he said. "I think I am dying."

He collapsed on my bed. Within three minutes I had fetched the ship's surgeon. He propped Sir Hugh against my shoulder and did all he could to save him, giving him an injection and breaking several small phials under his nose. It was of no avail; after vomiting several

times Sir Hugh lost consciousness and died in my arms in about half an hour. I recollect that his pyjamas were wringing wet, so great was the heat, and the pain he had suffered.

At the short conference that followed, Captain Denison decided to make for Henjám island at the entrance of the Persian Gulf, where the Senior Naval Officer's sloop lay with another warship at anchor. As a result of a series of signals to the Government of India (Foreign Secretary, Simla) and Lady Biscoe at Bushire, it was decided to bury the late Political Resident at sea. This took place at nine o'clock in the morning off Henjám island, with full Naval honours, and was a most impressive and moving ceremony.

Sir Hugh's death, in his fifty-second year, was a very great disaster. He had given promise of becoming one of the greatest Political Residents the Gulf had ever seen, if we except that magician, Sir Percy Cox.

The funeral over, I told the Senior Naval Officer and Captain Denison that I proposed continuing our journey to Shárjah and tackling the air agreement myself, as I knew Sir Hugh would have wished it so. Captain Chauncy supported me in this, as did Captain Denison. I accordingly signalled Simla to this effect, sending a copy to London.

We made Shárjah early next morning. I at once went ashore, gave Shaikh Sultán ibn Saqar the news of Sir Hugh's death, and said that I would start negotiations myself. This I did with the able assistance of Captain Chauncy. For three days and three nights, in desperate heat and living ashore, we laboured at the treaty documents, deleting here and adding there, but in the main following the Political Resident's draft, until, by the fourth day, I had got everything settled to the satisfaction of the shaikh and myself. It only remained to get him on board the *Bideford*, sign the document, and obtain Captain Denison's signature as witness. Shaikh Sultán promised to come at 4 p.m., be the guest of Captain Denison at a formal tea-party, then settle the business. I returned to the *Bideford* rather exhausted with my efforts and the great heat.

At four o'clock Shaikh Sultán came out in his somewhat worse-for-wear launch. He was met by Captain Denison and myself on the quarter-deck and conducted to the captain's cabin where a grand



display of foodstuffs, chocolates, biscuits, cakes, etc., was temptingly laid out.

With Shaikh Sultán was his *wazír*, whose name I cannot remember. He continually let it be known that he had once visited "Barís" (Paris), where he had gone to sell pearls, so I presumed that was his business in ordinary life. He certainly knew Victor Rosenthal, one of the great figures in the pearl world, and at one time a frequent visitor to the Gulf. Victor Rosenthal was a French Jew of Russian extraction; most attractive to meet and an old friend of my wife and myself, he was loved by the Arabs everywhere and was known as the father of the modern pearl industry of the Persian Gulf.

We enjoyed our tea, then Shaikh Sultán began to be awkward. There was in the cabin a large silver-framed photograph of King George V, signed by His Majesty. Shaikh Sultán said he wanted it. Captain Denison said he could not have it, as it was a personal gift from his King. The disappointed shaikh then pounced upon a large photograph of Mrs. Denison, also in silver frame, which he said he must have. Again the owner was adamant, very politely explaining that the lady was his wife. Nothing daunted, the worthy shaikh seized a large silver cigarette-box, a present from H.M. Queen Mary when Captain Denison had been an officer on the royal yacht. He explained—rather unwisely, I thought—that Shaikh Sultán could have anything in his cabin except those three things, so Shaikh Sultán at once pocketed two silver cigarette-lighters, a photograph of the *Bideford*, another silver cigarette-box, half a dozen teaspoons, and told his black slave in attendance to carry off a large tin of fancy biscuits and a cake that had not been cut. Thinking all the time of the agreement and the shaikh's signature, which we had still to get, I kept on whispering to Captain Denison such words as:

"Let him have it. Keep him happy—that's the main thing."

Captain Denison did not quite agree with me over the matter of the teaspoons, but I promised him another set. It was all very irritating, but nevertheless instructive.

At long last we came to business. I got out the air agreement, had the table cleared, and ink, pen and blotting-pad placed in position.

"Your Excellency", I said, "the time has come to settle the question nearest both our hearts, and upon which your Excellency has already

## The Treaty is Signed

### Chap. XIV

agreed. If you will sign here, I will sign under your name, and the friend of all [Captain Denison] will append his signature below mine. Lastly, the Political Resident's Honourable Secretary will sign after the estimable captain."

"Not so fast, my friend", replied Shaikh Sultán, "not so fast. I have certainly agreed to the contents of the document and have promised to sign, but before doing so, I must wait for the sun to go down and say my sunset prayers. Perchance God may have some message to give me then."

To all our arguments he was unyielding.

"What can be better", he asked, "than to sanctify one's signature by a preliminary prayer to God?"

An unanswerable argument.

After a long, weary wait, during which Shaikh Sultán sat on a carpet spread on the deck by his servants, drinking coffee and talking volubly to his *wazír*, the sun went down and Shaikh Sultán went through his prayers. He took fifteen minutes to say them, then, getting up, announced that he was prepared to sign the agreement, but only if Captain Denison would promise to give him a salute of one gun as he left the *Bideford*, and I undertook that in future he would be given a salute of one gun from every warship that came to his port and was boarded by him. He had felt, he said, that the good God would remind him of something he had forgotten about before saying his prayers, and this had come to pass.

To this naïve request, Captain Denison roared out:

"Not if King George himself asked for such a favour would I grant it! Does not the shaikh know that Admiralty regulations forbid all salutes after the sun goes down?"

This and much more were the arguments of the irate officer.

"For God's sake", said I, "don't start making difficulties now. Fire all the guns you have—if necessary, with live shell—but let us get Shaikh Sultán's signature."

The discussion was fast and furious. At length I got him to agree to fire one gun as the shaikh left the ship.

"I'll give him a live round from my four-inch gun", he growled.

Victory in sight, I gave the necessary assurance to the delighted shaikh, and the document was completed.

By this time it was an hour after sunset, and black night had set in. The heat seemed worse than anything we had ever experienced. It was dead calm and stifling.

As the shaikh (who, incidentally, had also pocketed one of Captain Denison's fountain-pens) went down the gangway to his rickety old launch, the four-inch gun, trained out to sea and over the top of the launch, went off with a deafening roar that nearly blew us off the quarter-deck and as nearly sank the launch. The live round went sailing into the darkness.

What an experience! We thanked God and entered the cabin again, where we gulped down a strong whisky and soda apiece.

Captain Denison now got out of a drawer a radiogram and presented it to me. It was four days old and came from the Foreign Secretary, Simla, addressed to Commander *Bideford* for Dickson's information. It instructed me to do nothing in the matter of the air agreement until such time as the new Political Resident, Sir Trenchard Fowle, arrived in the Persian Gulf and took over. The message concluded with the advice that it was considered unpropitious to continue with negotiations so soon after Sir Hugh Biscoe's death, and that the Shaikh of Shárjah would be the first to think so too.

Nelson-like the gallant Captain Denison said with a grin:

"I withheld the message from you, Dickson, as I judged the time for action had come, and that unless you acted at once, the air agreement would never have been put through now, or ever more."

I was dumbfounded, but not ill-pleased, for I felt that His Majesty's Government could not exactly sack me after our successful efforts. Captain Chauncy, I suspected, had been in the plot to keep the contents of the radiogram from me till all was over. Denison and I concocted a tactful radiogram to Simla, explaining our success, and explaining too how a great storm had raged whilst I was for three days ashore, making communication between the ship and myself quite impossible—a necessary lie.

The one-gun salute for the future did, however, scare me. As we started debating the matter, the navigating officer came in to report that what looked like a hurricane was bearing down on us. The barometer had fallen to nothing, he said, and, as we were on a lee shore, we must get out to sea at once.

Steam was up, and we got away from that dangerous coast in double quick time, laying a course for Basra. The storm broke half an hour later and blew with great violence all the way up to the entrance of the Shatt al Arab. I knew little about it, though, for I went to bed, completely down and out with *mal de mer*, till we sighted the Fao lightship on 26th July. I am the worst sailor in the world, and that voyage convinced me in no uncertain manner that this was so.

Some six months later, Shaikh Sultán ibn Saqar wrote me a nice letter, and reminded me of the two London shotguns I had promised him. I had never promised the old rascal anything of the kind, nor had shotguns ever been discussed.

### 'AMSHA AND FAIHA

After they had left us and gone to Riyádh, some of the ladies of the household of the late Faisal Al Duwísh had been allowed by Ibn Sa'ud to come up to Kuwait and visit us occasionally. It was, however, three years before we saw again the two nieces, 'Amsha and Faiha, who had so delighted us during their stay as our guests in Kuwait. We had heard that both had married.

While my wife was in England in 1933 with our son and daughter, Faiha arrived one day in Kuwait with her husband, 'Abdul 'Azíz ibn 'Abdullah al Májid Al Duwísh, of the Dushán clan of the Mutair. She did not like coming to our house alone, so sent a message asking if I would visit her in the small, two-roomed building they had rented near the hospital of the American Mission. I found that Faiha had developed into a tall and attractive woman, though she had still much of the girl about her. She was alone and told me that she was going to have her first baby and wanted to be in the town when this happened, so as to be near the hospital in case of complications. If they know and trust you, Badawin girls do not mind telling you about such intimate matters. I helped her with some money to buy certain articles necessary and dear to Arab women on such occasions and, in due course, her little girl, Khazna, was born.

Three days after the event Faiha gave up her house and betook herself into a small tent hired by her husband in the Safát, close to where other women of her tribe were camped. These had come up to



*sábil*—that is, buy provisions—and had soon found out that one of their shaikhs and his wife were in town. Faiha was now among friends, and she again asked me to come and see her. She proudly showed me little Khazna bound up tightly in her swaddling clothes, as is the way of the Badu, her small eyes well smeared and black with *kuhl* (anti-mony). I put a rupee in her little palm for luck; it was immediately clutched. Faiha told me that, for her husband's sake, she was sorry she had not had a boy, but Khazna would do for my son Sa'ud when she grew up.

A week later father, mother and child disappeared into the deep desert once again, but not before I had been able to give Faiha a new frock and 'aba, and make her husband a present of two bags of rice and some coffee.

Shortly afterwards 'Amsha arrived, doubtless having been told of the nice things I had given her sister. She was less scrupulous about coming to my house, and got Bakhíta, Faisal Al Duwísh's nurse, a negress, who now lived in Kuwait, to bring her along. 'Amsha was shorter and of slighter build than Faiha. Bakhíta said she was better looking than Faiha, but her *burqa*, the heavy black mask that covered her face, did not give me a chance of verifying this. As far as I was in a position to judge, her most attractive feature was her long, beautiful hair. At my request she pulled out from under her *burqa* and *thaub* (over-dress) two magnificent plaits reaching nearly down to her knees. These plaits she proudly displayed, saying mischievously of them: "Faiha has not *qurún* like mine."

She was certainly more lively than her sister, chatting away freely and telling me many stories of her desert home. She said she had come up to Kuwait without her husband, Sa'ud ibn Maziad al Májid Al Duwísh, second cousin of her sister's husband, and she hoped I would be as generous to her as I had been to her sister. Faiha was well, she said, and sent all *salá'ams*. They would come up together next time, but Sa'ud, her husband, was a jealous man, and they would not be able to come to my house. I told her that I would meet them both at Zaid al Sána's tent outside the city walls. Zaid and his wife, Hathala, were good friends of ours.

She stayed in Kuwait a week, during which time I got all the news out of her, including the latest about King Ibn Sa'ud and his family.



## My Wife is Welcomed

### Chap. XIV

I asked after Bandar Al Duwísh, son of Faisal; Mutluq ibn Shuqair Al Duwísh; Hazza ibn Badr Al Duwísh and his brother Muhammad; Muhammad ibn Watbán Al Duwísh and his cousin Mukharrib—all members of the Dushán clan and great shaikhs of the Mutair.

“Kul hum taiyibin”, she replied, “wa kul hum i salamún.” (“All are well and all send *salá’ams* to you.”)

Before going off again into the desert she promised to come up with Faiha as soon as my wife returned from England.

“How will you know when that is?” I asked.

“Oh, we shall hear quickly enough”, was her reply. “We know all that goes on in Kuwait, and as soon as Umm Sa’ud comes back, we shall get the news, even though we are many days’ camel journey away.”

The desert folk miss nothing.

She let me kiss her hand when she went. Though rather dirty it was the hand of a princess. Truly delightful are these Badawin ladies, once they know you.

On my wife’s return from England, ‘Amsha was as good as her word, promptly putting in an appearance with her sister. They came up from Al Hába wells in the Summan, twelve days’ march away, with a male member of the tribe. Their husbands, they said, would follow in a week. I asked them if they were not afraid to travel twelve days alone with a single man. They looked puzzled, and then my meaning seemed to dawn on them.

“As far as the desert is concerned, there is no danger”, they explained, “for Ibn Sa’ud has seen to that, but if you are referring to us two women travelling with one man as escort, why that is quite an ordinary occurrence in the desert. Women are always safe there, for the Badu are chivalrous and would not harm a lone female for all the gold in the world. Besides, are we not Duwíshíyahs and princesses in our own land? Our escort, after making us comfortable for the night behind the saddles, goes away and sleeps apart. Surely in your country men understand that to touch a woman is *harám*?”

I marvelled at this reply and their complete freedom from sex fear. It made me ponder a lot.

‘Amsha and Faiha were very sweet, but sadly thin after their long summer sojourn at Al Hába. They were also dirty and squalid and badly in need of clothes. Poor things! Theirs is about the hardest

existence human beings are called upon to endure: a minimum of food, no variety, no medical attention, no clean clothes, and a summer shade tent-temperature of some 130° F. Summer just wears these people out; they become by the end of it as odorous, dry-skinned and pinched-looking as their camels. No wonder the Badawin man and woman age quickly and rarely attain the age of fifty. On the other hand, and again like their camels, they recover rapidly if good rains fall in the desert during autumn, winter and spring, and, with the plentiful supply of camels' milk that results, put on flesh in remarkable manner.

We had quite a merry party when, four days later, the sisters were joined by the other 'Amsha, daughter of Faisal Al Shiblán, he who had come to me for advice before surrendering to Ibn Sa'ud. My wife entertained the three girls, together with some other Mutairi ladies, at a purely feminine luncheon party in our downstairs reception room especially set apart for Badawin women visitors. Bakhíta was there, also another negress, Mastúra, and her daughter, Mabruká, freed slave women of the Dushán who keep a sort of rest-house in Kuwait (a gift of Shaikh Mubáarak) and put up Mutairi shaikhly ladies who happen to come up to town.

We gave them a whole sheep, some roast chickens, tomato *marags* and heaps of rice. I joined them after luncheon, when the coffee-pot was doing its rounds, and I remember asking Faiha for her ring as a memento of the occasion. It was a handsome silver filigree affair mounting a large green turquoise about the size of a halfpenny, but oval in shape. She gave it to me with a coquettish smile, and I have it among my treasured possessions. I produce it sometimes when she visits us.

A day or two later the respective husbands called on us, as did also Hazza ibn Badr Al Duwísh, nephew of the great Faisal and now the husband of 'Amsha bint Faisal Al Shiblán. Hazza we already knew, but Sa'ud and 'Abdul 'Azíz al Májid were strangers: a fierce and forbidding pair, who looked as if they would stick at nothing. We paid the three men the honour due to their position, giving them the usual coffee and money presents. After we had met the ladies and their menfolk a couple of times in the tent of Zaid al Sána, 'Amsha and Faiha left Kuwait with their husbands. 'Amsha bint Faisal Al Shiblán and Hazza stayed on.

It must be realized, of course, that in a place like Kuwait, men tribal visitors of note have a more important duty to carry out than merely to call on Colonel and Mrs Dickson. They must pay their official respects to the ruler and other Shaikhs of the Al Sabah, receiving in turn *kisáwi* and *kharáji* (presents of clothing and money) before they depart. This is an age-old custom and makes for good relations between town and desert.

"Give gifts", said the Prophet, "and so bring about love for one another."

It is bad form for such tribal leaders to go back to their homes without asking permission to do so. Indeed, rulers like Ibn Sa'ud, the Shaikh of Kuwait and others maintain a regular staff of Badawin retainers, under a *mudhai'ifchi* (chief reception officer), whose duty it is to report important arrivals in the capital, ensure that they receive proper welcome and food, according to their status, and are given an opportunity to see the ruler, and then do not go away empty-handed. Proper modesty on the part of the visitors is *de rigueur*. They must not appear over-anxious to call or to accept presents. Hence, one of the *mudhai'ifchi's* tasks is to search out new arrivals and press them to attend their ruler's *mijlis*.

Some while after the events recorded above we received an underground message from Faiha and 'Amsha that dire misfortune had befallen them. Their respective husbands, 'Abdul 'Azíz and Sa'ud al Májid Al Duwísh, had shot and killed Sa'ud al Jaba'a, a powerful member of the Qahtán tribe allied by marriage to the Dushán, and had fled to Iraq to escape Ibn Sa'ud's vengeance. Apparently the murder had been the result of an old blood feud, the father of Sa'ud al Jaba'a having slain a forebear of 'Abdul 'Azíz and Sa'ud al Májid many years previously. King Ibn Sa'ud, whose policy was to prevent the great Dushán family from falling out among themselves, had decreed that blood feuds should cease, and cases of murder be referred to the *shari'ah* for trial and decision. He had forbidden reprisals by the Al Májid family and had fixed up some sort of settlement, but, with the lapse of years, Sa'ud and 'Abdul 'Azíz had conceived themselves in honour bound to exact the blood penalty, and had taken the law into their own hands.

The King had been furious. He had declared the property and camels

of the erring youths forfeit, and forbidden them to return to Sa'udi Arabia on pain of death. As an immediate precaution, he had forbidden the family of Al Jaba'a to attempt any act of vengeance, and there the matter stood. The young wives were now all alone, without camels and in disgrace, so it would be impossible for them to come up and see us for many a day.

For three years Sa'ud and 'Abdul 'Azíz remained in exile, during which time Faiha and 'Amsha kept away. Then one day we heard that Ibn Sa'ud had granted the murderers a full pardon and that they had both arrived in Riyádh to receive personal forgiveness and wordy castigation. What fine they had to pay in settlement, I do not know, but we were assured that Sa'ud and 'Abdul 'Azíz were at large again, and we hoped to see our little lady friends before long.

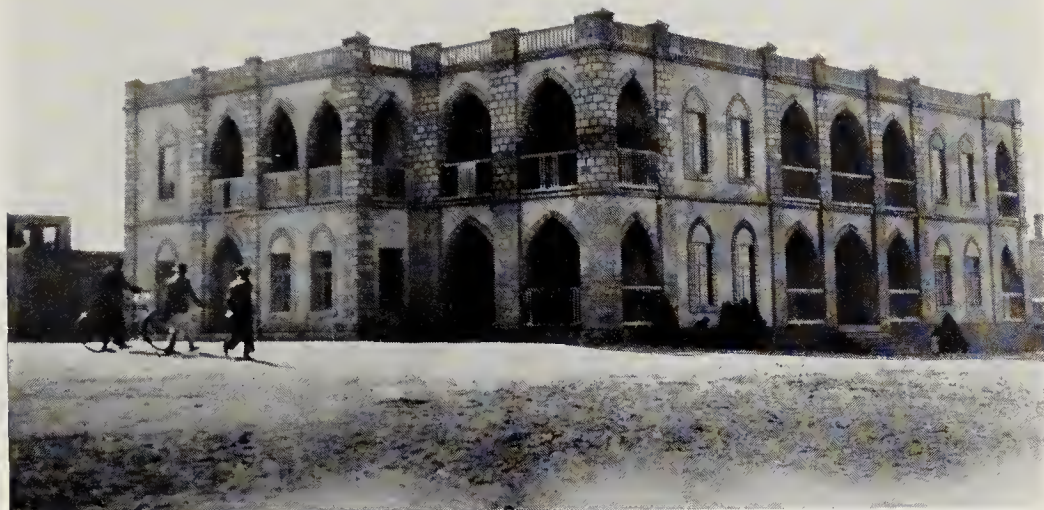
We were not wrong. Faiha and 'Amsha visited us shortly afterwards and we were indeed glad to see them. They brought their children, for 'Amsha was the mother of two boys by that time. Both women showed unmistakable signs of the rough time they had gone through, and seemed to have grown pathetically old. Poor 'Amsha showed me her once long and beautiful tresses, now half as long and thick as they had been when we had last met.

"Never mind", I comforted her. "With good food, camels' milk, and your husband with you again, your hair will assuredly recover."

We did our best for them, providing them with food, fresh clothing and money. My wife gave 'Amsha some highly scented face cream, which she applied to her cheeks with childish delight, saying it would make her pleasing in the sight of Sa'ud. From this we gathered that Sa'ud had grown somewhat tired of his little Mutairi maid. Possibly the three years' sojourn in Iraq, and the attractions of some northern beauty, had brought this about.

The forgiven Sa'ud and 'Abdul 'Azíz again brought their wives up to Kuwait in 1943, on which occasion Sa'ud had his rifle stolen when camped in the Shamíyah, the Badawin camping ground outside the walls of the town. He accused a shepherd of the Muntafiq of the theft and, after seven days' trial, got the man flogged and money restitution paid. Public opinion was not on his side and his wife knew it. Neither she nor Faiha came near us in consequence, so we went and saw them





Olcott Memorial Hospital for Women, Kuwait



A lonely tomb in the Christian cemetery of Kuwait of a great and lovable character





Shaikh Sha'iya abu Shayba of the  
Jiblán (Mutair) and his daughter  
Ajmiyah.



Munif al Munaifis of the 'Ajmán,  
hawker to Shaikh Násir al Sabah al  
Násir Al Sabah of Kuwait.



Khamis ibn Rimthán of the 'Ajmán,  
probably the greatest guide in Arabia  
to-day. An employee of Aramco.  
A great friend of ours.



Sa'ida, of the Ál Murra. Her infant  
is in the *miṭbah* hanging from the  
shoulder of the woman  
on the left.

## Husbands and Wives

### Chap. XIV

in their tent. 'Amsha was rather afraid of her husband, we thought. We hoped things were not leading to a tragedy.

Before going away after this last visit, the restless husbands asked if they could come and see our English drawing-room and two panther skins we kept on the wall. They did not bring the girls, and were shown round and entertained by my wife. Somehow, the offering of hospitality to murderers does not seem out of place in Arabia. I wonder when their turn will come.

#### A DESERT LUNCHEON

I have mentioned the party given to our two girl friends, together with the other 'Amsha, the daughter of Faisal Al Shiblán. Though not so high in the social scale as our two heroines, she was a rather interesting study. She had an inseparable friend called Wasmíyah, the wife of Shaikh Muhammad ibn Badr Al Duwísh, who was the brother of Hazza, 'Amsha's husband. Not being Duwíshíyahs themselves, both young wives were rather patronized by 'Amsha and Faiha, but all four were nevertheless on friendly terms.

'Amsha bint Faisal Al Shiblán doted on her husband and was delightfully merry and outspoken, just like an English girl in many ways. We both liked her very much. She knew, of course, how the cup of coffee with me had saved her father from arrest and had been the means of getting him back into the King's favour. She pretended to live in mortal fear lest Hazza take another wife, and was, in consequence, a grand person to tease. Another trick of hers was to make a most outrageous and unfeminine remark, then, realizing what she had said, wring her hands and cry:—

“Yá waili! Yá waili!” (“O misery! O misery!”)

One day she appeared in our house with her two little boys and blurted out:

“Yá Abu Sa'ud, I have such a pain in my chest and I ache all over. Do you think I am suffering from *balash*?”

Now *balash* is an unmentionable social disease and not usually talked about. I laughingly asked her to show me her tongue, which she did, exposing from beneath her *burqa* only a very pretty little mouth and a tattooed chin. I reassured her and gave her a dose of

quinine, followed by half a dozen acid-drops. She had seen the sweets in a bottle on my table and had been after them all along.

On another occasion, she pretended to be in great distress, explaining that she had heard her father was lying very sick some twenty-five miles away and was likely to die.

"You must take me to him in your car, Yá Abu Sa'ud. Please, please do, for he will be wanting me, I know."

My wife and I happened to be going out to our camp, thirty miles or so from Kuwait, so we took 'Amsha with us. On arriving at our camp we learned that Faisal Al Shiblán was some little way off to the south, and that he was quite well again. His daughter, however, enjoyed the car ride.

Wasmíyah, her friend, was of the languid, large-eyed type. Hers had been a love-match, Muhammad Al Duwísh having taken her in preference to his *bint 'am*, who was, according to Wasmíyah, a rather plain Duwíshíyah with an ugly mouth and protruding underlip. Wasmíyah was attractive in her way, full of fun when encouraged by 'Amsha, but she had two annoying drawbacks: she always spoke in an excessively loud and raucous voice, and she usually smelt of babies. She allowed her two infant boys to wet all over her lap, and did not think it necessary to change or wash out the frock. Poor thing, perhaps she hadn't a change, but all the same the odour was decidedly disconcerting at times. Last time we saw her Wasmíyah proudly told us that Muhammad still loved her madly.

"Huwaiya i habni, wa i mút alaiyi." ("He loves me greatly, and he is dying for me.")

Which, I suppose, is all to the good.

We saw Wasmíyah and 'Amsha at their best once, when we visited Muhammad ibn Badr in the Ash Shaqq, where he was camped with Shuqair ibn Shuqair. Hazza ibn Badr, whose tent was immediately next door to Muhammad's, had gone to see the King in Riyádh, so we made for Muhammad's tent. Before luncheon and after taking coffee with Muhammad, we received a peremptory message from 'Amsha bint Faisal Al Shiblán to the effect that we must in courtesy visit her absent husband's tent and pay a formal call on her, as, for the honour of the tent, she wished to give us coffee also. We did this, and 'Amsha acted the perfect host, receiving my wife and myself very cere-



moniously, as would a man, and insisting on making the coffee with her own hand.

Our duty done we repaired to Muhammad's tent, where we were served with a delightful luncheon of lamb and rice cooked in simple Badawin fashion. After coffee had been served and the hungry following had eaten their fill, we were formally invited to Wasmíyah's half of the tent for an Arab-made cup of tea. 'Amsha of course was there, and both women were all decked out in their best, and looking very pretty.

Then began an hour of delightful entertainment. Muhammad told stories, while the women played round with my wife's jewellery, clothing, earrings and hair, asking wonderful and impossible questions all the time, mostly connected with marriage, sex, babies and other delightfully embarrassing matters. Nor did they spare me, being ready, on the slightest encouragement, to start a violent flirtation right under the nose of my wife. I confess I joined in the spirit of the thing, telling both girls that as soon as their respective husbands divorced them I was going to ask the King's permission to marry them both, and that I already had my wife's consent to this. With cries of protest, they said their husbands would never divorce them.

"Don't be too sure of that", I said. "I happen to know that Hazza has already cast eyes on a lady in Riyádh, and as for Muhammad—well, everyone knows that he wants a change", etc. etc.

It was a most pleasant day out, and my wife and I were charmed to see how, in their desert homes, these well-bred Arab ladies and their husbands were very human and really not much unlike our folk at home. It was noticeable that Muhammad entered into the game of tease and horseplay, obviously knowing himself to be sufficiently important in the tribe to be able to fear no adverse gossip or wagging tongues.

Such are my desert friends. I have recorded the foregoing trivial incidents from a mass of similar experiences, to illustrate what simple lives these people live, and how normal and innocently attractive the Badawin woman can be, if only one can get behind the massive veil of suspicion and mistrust that normally divides them from the Western visitor.

'Ali ibn Shuwairibat, shaikh of the Al Birzán sub-section of the Mutair, will be remembered as having done his best, by surreptitiously visiting Baghdad on at least two occasions and trying to persuade King Faisal that the 'Ikhwán were bound to win, to drag Iraq into the civil war against Ibn Sa'ud.

After the collapse of that ill-fated rebellion, 'Ali had taken refuge for a period in Iraq, then, forgiven by Ibn Sa'ud, had returned to Sa'udi Arabia. I came into personal contact with him in the summer of 1935, my last year as His Majesty's Political Agent in Kuwait. Accompanied by his uncle, Fálah ibn Shuwairibat, he visited me one morning in the agency, and was obviously a sick man. The uncle, who did all the talking, explained that 'Ali had come up to see Dr Mylrea, of the American Mission, because he was suffering from the effects of a spell cast over him by his wife, and thought that perhaps the doctor, who was renowned for his skill, might know of a counter-spell that would have a more powerful effect than that of the lady.

Fálah went on to say that 'Ali's wife loved him very dearly, but, hearing one day that he was thinking of marrying another woman of a neighbouring tribe, had gone to a certain wise woman of the Sulubba fraternity who was famous for the weaving of her spells, had told her tale, and had asked for a specially powerful spell or love philtre wherewith to retain her husband's affections and wreck the machinations of her rival.

A heavy gift of money had got what she wanted, said Fálah, and she had proceeded to put the spell into force. He could not say whether some sort of *saqwa* (magic poison) had been put into 'Ali's coffee, but thought it more likely that something evil had been sewn up inside the pillow or cushion on which 'Ali was accustomed to lean or place his head when resting. This would have taken the form of a carefully written document mixed up with certain charms, hairs from 'Ali's beard, different-coloured pieces of silk, needles, etc.—the sort of evil magic, said Fálah, understood only by women who mix themselves up with Sulubba. Whatever had been the spell, the effect had been disastrous. Here was their beloved shaikh, once a fine, brave and fearless warrior, now reduced to a feeble wreck of his former self, and something had to be done.



Throughout the peroration of the older man, 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat had kept silent, merely nodding his head from time to time to signify that the narrator spoke the truth.

"Yá Shaikh 'Ali", I said, "do you love your wife still?"

"Yes", was the reply, "and she loves me as no woman in the world has ever loved before, but she has become *majnún* and is obsessed by the belief that, just because I want to marry another woman, I must have ceased loving her. She is foolish and unreasonable to a degree, but what can you do with a mad woman? I have told her again and again that to marry another wife is permitted to a man, but she will have none of it."

He finished up with: "Wa inta tárif hadha silkuna hanna al Arab." ("And you yourself know that this is our Arab custom.")

I wrote a letter to Dr Mylrea, asking him to examine 'Ali carefully, do his best for him and, if necessary, admit him into hospital. I mentioned that he was an important shaikh of Sa'udi Arabia, and that I would like to assist him in the matter of any hospital expenses or fees that might have to be met. I said nothing about the spell. I gave the letter to 'Ali and sent him and Fálah down to the Mission hospital.

Two days passed, then Shaikh Fálah presented himself alone in my office. After coffee had been served, I asked news of 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat. By way of reply, Fálah handed me a letter from Dr Mylrea, who wrote that he had examined the patient and found him to be suffering from tuberculosis in virulent and advanced form. There was not a shadow of doubt of this, so he had admitted 'Ali to hospital for treatment. He feared, however, that it was only a question of weeks before the man died, unless he could be got to the Hamana Sanatorium in the Lebanon, and even then only a miracle could save him.

I set to work to explain the contents of Dr Mylrea's letter. Fálah listened politely until I had finished, then surprised me by remarking:

"The *tabíb* is quite wrong. We Arabs know what *sil* (consumption) is. 'Ali's illness is not of this world, but the result of magic—and evil magic at that. If the *tabíb* holds to his opinion, then I must make other arrangements, although everything in the end is in God's hands."

I felt a bit nettled by this speech, and told the man that Dr Mylrea

was famed among the Badu for his knowledge and was also held in high esteem by both His Majesty King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud and His Highness Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait.

"Give the *tabíb* a chance", I urged, "before you do anything hasty."

Before he left me Fálah, who appeared wild-eyed and irresponsible that morning, passed the remark to me that, if Shaikh 'Ali died, he would hasten to Hafar al Bátin and slay the murderous witch wife of 'Ali.

"She shall not live if 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat dies", he said. "I swear it by Allah."

I pondered on the remark and, five days later, sent out a special secret message by word of mouth, warning her, 'Ali's wife, to take no chances, but to go to a place of safety. She accepted the advice, left her tent surreptitiously and sought sanctuary in the tent of the commander of the King's *sariya* (frontier guards), who was camped with his family at Hafar al Bátin. Protection was granted her, or, as the Arabs say: "Zabanauha" ("They gave her sanctuary"). I thought she was safe.

Next an urgent note arrived from Mylrea informing me that Shaikh 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat had been removed from hospital by Shaikh Fálah, who had come in a car and taken him away. Mylrea seemed annoyed, which was not unnatural. On inquiry I found that Fálah had taken his nephew to a well-known old woman of the town, who had special powers, men said, and had been engaged to read special passages of the Qur'án over the patient day and night.

"Pay me only if I cure your shaikh", she had said. "Give me nothing if I fail."

'Ali lasted about ten days and then 'atta 'amru—he gave up his life.

"But what would you?" said the old lady. "Rad i mút." ("He wanted to die.")

I heard no more for quite a season, then came the unpleasant news that 'Ajíb ibn Shuwairibat, brother of Fálah, had crawled into the tent of the commander of the King's *sariya* at dead of night and, whilst everybody slept, had shot 'Ali's widow dead. It was a dirty business and I felt bad about it. Some Badu, who love above everything to

embellish a tale, say that, before slaying the woman, 'Ajíb had gently awakened her and had whispered into her ear that her crimes were such and such, and that her time to expiate them had arrived. I do not believe this part of the story, but it may be so.

Shaikh 'Ajíb got safely away and, though search was made everywhere for him, he was not found. The Iraq border was conveniently near. He put up with this voluntary banishment for two years, then devised the plan of secretly returning to Sa'udi Arabia and getting someone in authority there to intercede for him under the plea that he had made *dakhála*. He made his way in secret to Hufuf, entered the house of Sa'ud ibn 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi Al Sa'ud, Amír of Hasa, and made *dakhála*. Sa'ud ibn Jilúwi telegraphed the news to Ibn Sa'ud and received in reply peremptory orders "slay the miscreant who has killed a suppliant who sheltered in the tent of the commander of our guard at Hafar al Batin".

Sa'ud ibn Jilúwi procrastinated cleverly, explaining that 'Ajíb had made *dakhála* to him and was at that very moment claiming sanctuary in his house. To slay him would have a disastrous political effect everywhere, especially among the Mutair. Had not Fahad ibn Jilúwi, his brother, slain Dhaidán Al Hithlain, shaikh of the 'Ajmán, after he had invited him to his tent and given him coffee, and had not that deed in 1930 roused the whole 'Ajmán to open rebellion? And had not King 'Abdul 'Azíz vented his wrath for a whole year afterwards on 'Abdullah ibn Jilúwi Al Sa'ud, the then governor of Hasa and father of Fahad and Sa'ud?

By these and other arguments Sa'ud ibn Jilúwi prevailed over the King, who grudgingly gave 'Ajíb his life, but insisted on his being imprisoned "with honour" for six months. At the end of this period the clever 'Ajíb, aided by the foxy Fálah, now shaikh of the Birzán in place of the late 'Ali ibn Shuwairibat, arranged that Sa'ud ibn Jilúwi's brother, 'Abdul Muhsin, should be given the lady Sulfa, pretty daughter of 'Ali, in marriage, and everyone was pleased and ready to let bygones be bygones.

Five years after the above events Shaikh 'Ajíb came up to Kuwait and pitched his tents near where I was camped at 'Abraq Khaitan. He called after dinner and whispered that he had with him in his tent over the way his niece, Sulfa, the wife of young 'Abdul Muhsin ibn Jilúwi

Al Sa'ud. He explained that the girl was ill and that he wanted my wife to see her and, if possible, bring out Dr Ruth Crouse,\* the Mission lady doctor, to examine her. He thought 'she was under the influence of some spell, and she was very frightened.

"Are you not", I asked, "the same 'Ajíb who, for no cause whatsoever, killed the innocent wife of 'Ali Shuwairibat?"

"Yes, I slew her."

This was said in the presence of some fifteen Badu who were taking coffee with me.

"And", he went on, "we later found the spell that she had put on 'Ali, our shaikh, so her death was justified."

"What sort of spell was it?" I inquired.

"Oh, a lengthy written document full of evil writings. It was found buried close to one of the wooden supports by which we draw water from the wells at Hafar. The place was marked by a camel's thigh-bone."

This very thin reply set me off. I gave 'Ajíb and the men sitting round a lengthy discourse on the foolishness of all Badawin talk concerning *saqwa*, *sahar* and other witchcraft stories. I told them that three hundred years ago we English believed similar things, and to-day were ashamed of our folly. I told them much more besides, yet felt as I did so that I was talking to completely deaf ears. I challenged 'Ajíb to prove that the blood of a pure Birzání tribesman, if given to man, camel, horse or sheep bitten by a mad dog or jackal would save the victim from rabies. This, as mentioned on an earlier page, is widely believed in Arabia. 'Ajíb quietly replied to all my sarcasm that only Arabs understood such matters.

"Nahnu na'arif shai wa intum ta'arifun shai." ("We know a thing and you know a thing.")

Next day my wife brought Dr Crouse out from Kuwait. Her diagnosis was that the fair Sulfa was suffering from tuberculosis, probably contracted from her father. She returned some months later to Hasa, where she died.

I am glad to record that not all the Badu are like the Al Birzán, who are widely recognized as stupid and bigoted. They certainly possess a fanaticism all of their own.

\* Miss Ruth O. Crouse, now Mrs J. L. Moore.



## Out in Camp

### Chap. XIV

#### DAGHAIMA AND THE FOX'S HOLE

Daghaima was the pretty little daughter of Maziad al Dhafiri, one of the servants who accompanied us in our treks across the desert around Kuwait. Together with her older friends, Wadha and Dhahaiyah, daughters of Dhuwaihi al Kharmít, an 'Awázim follower of ours, she was the inseparable companion of Husa, the daughter of Sálím al Muzaiyin, our Badawin guide and in charge of our desert establishment.

At the time of this story Wadha and Husa were fifteen years old, Dhahiyah twelve, and little Daghaima a possible ten. Daghaima had no mother, and looked after her father, Maziad, cooking his food at sundown and tending his six camels by day. She did not look very strong and seldom smiled.

Frequently, at festivals or 'Id time, all four girls would come round to our tent with their respective mothers and aunts, and after dark would give a little Badawin dance and singing performance for our special benefit, dressed in their gay holiday frocks, with their hair flowing loose over their shoulders. Their dancing was something all of its own, consisting of short little bouncing movements, with heads working in circular motion, first to the right and then to the left, so as to cause their locks to swing backwards and forwards in figure-of-eight manner. They stopped only when overcome by exhaustion and giddiness. Then, panting and blowing, they would come and kneel before us to receive our praise. Daghaima was always the shy one of the quartet.

In late November 1935 we were on one of our periodical treks with Sálím, Maziad, Dhuwaihi, their families and all their goods and chattels, and were moving towards the Ash Shaqq depression, in the western borderland of Kuwait. We had reached the vicinity of 'Arhaiyah hill and were camped there; some six tents in all, including our own black one, which had been newly repaired and looked imposing in consequence.

With Sa'ud ibn Nimrán, chief falconer to Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait, my wife and I had spent the day hawking in the neighbourhood of Umm al Chathathin and the Khad as Sa'ada ridge. We reached camp a little before sundown and handed over our bag of five *hubára* (lesser



bustard) to Sálím's wife, the fair 'Amsha—or 'Atsha, as she is nicknamed—for her to cook.

The evening had turned cold and we were glad to sit in front of the camp fire in our sheepskin *farwaks* and sip the friendly cup of coffee proffered us. Shortly after the sun had set, a marked change came over the weather, a not uncommon phenomenon in the high desert in the latter part of November. A heavy bank of clouds suddenly bore down on us from the north, preceded by an ice-cold wind that soon began to blow with half-gale force.

We piled brushwood on the fire, weighed down our rear tent-curtains by burying the lower edges under heavy loads of sand, and secured the tent-ropes all round by heavy anchorages. It was now quite dark and I remember going out to inspect the camp water-skins, which had been reported frozen solid in the incredibly short space of two hours from our reaching camp. The sheep had with difficulty been brought in in the darkness, and both they and Sálím's camels now lay huddled together for shelter, half in and half out of the tents on the lee side. To make matters worse, it began to rain—a stinging mixture of snow and hail, which still further darkened that already black enough night, and immediately drove under cover anyone trying to go out and face the elements.

Suddenly the cry went up that little Daghaima had not come in, nor had any of her father's camels arrived home. A hurried council showed that, dressed only in her dirty, thin, red-cotton *dishdásha*, and without even an old 'aba to protect her, she had gone out alone that afternoon to tend the camels, and had last been seen some four miles away. Maziad, her father, had gone into Kuwait to purchase supplies.

It now began to rain in a positive torrent. In spite of our being camped on slightly high ground, the interior of the tents soon became a sheet of water flowing in at one side and out at the other. All we could do was to make a pile of our bedding and rugs, and sit on top of them in the darkness.

Poor little Daghaima, however, took up our entire thoughts. Sálím and a couple of 'Awázim men made a gallant effort to reach her during the night, but could make little headway, and were forced to return much exhausted at midnight. We were all very worried, feeling sure that the child must have long ago succumbed to the intense cold.

At four o'clock in the morning the rain stopped, presenting a wild, water-logged country overhung with a thick fog. Visibility was restricted to ten yards, yet a further rescue party including myself and led by Sálím went out to see what could be done, feeling our way slowly forward along the camel-track that led towards Kuwait, and near which Daghaima had last been seen. The country on both sides of the track was hummocky, consisting of large clumps of coarse *thanda* grass around the bases of which had formed mounds of sand, some of them four feet high, which made the going difficult.

We reached at dawn the spot for which Sálím was making, but found neither signs nor tracks of Daghaima or her camels. Our party scattered and beat about, expecting to come upon the frozen body of the child. The camels counted for nothing now. Suddenly there was a shout and all ran towards the man who had raised the cry and was waving his *bhisht*.

Daghaima was curled up deep inside a fox's hole. She was alive, but exhausted and unable to move from the cold. We got her out and carried her home, greatly rejoicing. After warming her before the fire and giving her some hot food and drink we were able to get her story from her. In child language, she recounted how, when the rain had begun to fall, her camels had stampeded into the darkness and she had lost them. Being, as she put it, a clever Badawiyah girl, she had decided to try to make for home. In this she had been frustrated by the blinding rain and bitter cold. Drenched to the skin and overcome by the force of the wind, she had decided to shelter under one of the sand hummocks around her, and had staggered about in an effort to find a big one.

"I did not cry at all", she said, "but was a little frightened. God helped me and showed me a fox's hole, which I made larger and deeper. It was not difficult, because of the wet sand. I crept deep down into it and out of the wind, which was blowing the rain across the top of the hole and into the big roots of the *thanda*, and so only a little rain came down into the hole."

We tended Daghaima carefully the whole of the next day, not only because she had shown pluck and spirit of a high order, but also because she was a very dear little member of our camp family. Her father reached our camp two days later. He had been half-frozen from

exposure, but had carried on, being anxious about his camels. His only remark when he heard the story of his daughter's adventure was:

"Thanks be to God, she did well, but what can you expect from my daughter? She is a little *shaitána* of a Badawiyah."

Maziad's camels were later found all safe near the Jahra oasis. They had suffered no harm, but the blizzard had killed nine of Sálím's sheep and one sickly camel.

#### THE DREAM OF THE 'UTAIBA WOMAN

This curious story was told me in camp on 13th February 1937 by a prominent Kuwait subject of 'Anizah extraction, fresh from Riyádh, whose testimony I have no reason to doubt. He bears a reputation for reliability, is the head man of one of the Al Qusur villages, and is thoroughly trusted and respected by the shaikh. For obvious reasons I withhold his name.

A certain well-known woman of the 'Utaiba (he said), who had lived outside Riyádh for many years and had been looked upon by all the surrounding district as a wise woman and one who could interpret dreams, during the last fast of Ramadhán\* dreamed a dream.

She dreamed that she was sitting outside her tent towards evening spinning wool, when she espied a man coming towards her from afar. He was tall and big and kindly of face. Coming up to her he gave her a greeting and said:

"O woman, King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud has only three more years to live, and the first of those years has already been entered upon, it having started with the Ramadhán fast. When he dies there will be great wailing and sorrow throughout the land of the Arabs, and tribe will wage war against tribe, King's son against King's son. Rise up, woman, and warn thy three sons to buy arms and ammunition in preparation for that great tribulation to come, for verily every man's hand will then be against his neighbour, and none shall be safe. In five days' time, O woman, I also shall be dead, for the King has commanded his men of war to search me out and slay me, for verily the King will be extremely wroth that I have brought you this news of ill omen."

\* The month beginning 15th November 1936.

## The End of a Dream

### Chap. XIV

When she woke from her dream, the 'Utaiba woman was greatly troubled. She sent for her three grown-up sons and said to them:

"My sons, the spirit of God came upon me as I slept, and I dreamed that his angel came to me and spake such and such to me. Get you up, therefore, and go into the city to buy yourselves weapons of war, for it is written that Ibn Sa'ud shall surely die inside three years, and much tribulation is to come upon the land, and upon you and your children. As for me, your aged mother, my time is at hand, for it is revealed to me that I shall be slain in five days from this day."

The woman's sons, greatly marvelling, took counsel among themselves and decided to do as they were bid. They swore among themselves that they would tell no man what they had heard. Four days went by and nothing happened, but on the fifth day they saw a party of armed camel-men moving swiftly towards their tent. On arrival these men made their camels kneel down and straightway advanced upon them.

"Where is the *ra'iyat al bait* [lady of the tent]?" cried their leader.

"Inside, friend", her sons replied. "What wouldst thou of her?"

At that moment their mother came out from the women's portion of the tent and straightway was shot down and slain. All the mocking commander would say as he and his party rode away was this:

"The King's orders are strict, and his arm is long where witches are concerned."

My informant described this incident with sorrow, as presaging lamentation and wailing to come for Najd. The story, he added, was being carefully suppressed by the Sa'udi authorities, but nevertheless was being whispered from mouth to mouth among the Badawin tribes of Arabia. How had the King heard the story of the woman's dream?



## CHAPTER XV

# Riyádh, 1937

*Oil Concession to Kuwait Oil Company (1934)—Our Trip to Riyádh by Car—The King Discusses the Palestine Question—A Call on the Royal Ladies—Second Audience with the King—The War Dance—Farewell to Riyádh—The Return Journey—Reactions*

On 23rd December 1934 Shaikh Ahmad, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, had given an oil concession to the Kuwait Oil Company, a joint Anglo-American concern. In the summer of 1935 the shaikh had paid a private visit to London, where he had been very well received. On 1st April 1937 he was granted the title of His Highness by His Majesty's Government, and was shortly after given the K.C.S.I.

Having in 1936 reached the age for retirement from the Army and *ipso facto* from the post of His Majesty's Political Agent, I was now chief local representative of the Kuwait Oil Company. The new Political Agent was Captain (now Colonel) Gerald de Gaury.

In October 1937 my wife and I visited Riyádh as guests of Ibn Sa'ud, a distance of some five hundred miles by car in each direction. On our return, my wife recorded some of her impressions. My own talks with H.M. King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud during our sojourn in Riyádh, which are also recorded in this chapter, were illuminating to a degree and full of pathos, especially where he discussed the Palestine problem. In fact, the words of this truly great and magnificent man, undoubtedly a genuine friend of the British Government, were prophetic indeed and hold good to this day. As I promised I would do, I recorded in full after each interview all that he told me at three long interviews that he graciously granted me, and on my return to Kuwait I sent them, under personal and confidential cover, to Mr J. C. Walton, Assistant Under Secretary of State, India Office, for his and His Majesty's Government's information.



## We Start Off

### Chap. XV

#### OUR TRIP TO RIYÁDH BY CAR

By Violet Dickson

Hidden among the palm-groves, snugly set in a depression among the dry, rocky surroundings, lies Riyádh, the capital of Sa'udi Arabia.

His Majesty King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud had many times invited his friend Dickson to Riyádh. This summer, while I was in London, permission was obtained from the Foreign Office and the India Office for us to make this trip, and the Oil Company also saw no objection. A letter from King Ibn Sa'ud suggested we came to Riyádh either before Ramadhán, which began on 4th November, or immediately after the 'Id. The journey would necessitate a night or two in the desert, so the best time seemed to be before Ramadhán, when the weather would be beautiful, neither too hot nor too cold.

I arrived from England on 12th October, and all preparations were made for us to leave in two cars at dawn on the 21st, a telegram to this effect being sent to the King. *Jirbas* (water-skins) were tested, a small tent such as pilgrims take with them to Mecca was ordered, and only such other kit as was absolutely necessary to avoid overloading the cars for the crossing of the difficult sandy stretch known as the Dahana.

On the morning of the 19th 'Abdullah al Nafísi, Ibn Sa'ud's trade agent in Kuwait, came round to see us. He had received a telegram from the King, saying he was in camp and asking us to delay our departure for two days, as he wished to receive us in Riyádh itself.

One hour before sunset on 22nd October the cars were brought round into our back yard and loaded up with all our kit, coats, petrol (each car had a full tank and also carried five spare four-gallon tins), water, etc.—in fact, everything except the food, which was put in next morning. This consisted of seven chickens (cooked in Arab fashion with rice), four pounds of meat, forty round Arab breads, a biscuit tin of *halwa* (sweetmeat), some dates, a few curry puffs and a dozen hard-boiled eggs.

Our two guides, Sálím al Muzaiyin and Shaikh Ahmad's chief falconer, Sa'ud ibn Nimrán, together with the two drivers of our cars, arrived at our house an hour before sunrise, and, after a quick breakfast, we were ready to depart. Harold and I, both dressed in Arab clothes, were to travel in the back of one car, with Sa'ud ibn Nimrán

sitting in front with the driver, Muhammad al Ghathfán. The other car was driven by 'Abdul 'Azíz al Fahad, with Hamda my Arab maid in front, and Sálím al Muzaiyin and Ghulúm the cook in the back.

We left as the sun was rising. At the Jahra gate we found that grand old man Khan Bahadur Mulla Sáleh, *wazír* to Shaikh 'Ahmad, and his son, 'Abdullah al Mulla, waiting to see us off and wish us *bon voyage*. Some forty minutes later, as we were nearing Kabd, we were caught up by the Political Agent, Captain de Gaury, out for a day's hunting with 'Addas, the falconer, and a hawk. They came with us to the frontier near Minaqish.

After the broken ground, covered with 'arfaj bushes, round Minaqish, we came to Khabrat Jilhim and then to the long, smooth stretch of country known as the Qara'ah (or Gara'a), with no bushes at all, but covered with dry grass and *nussi* of last spring. The track here was very good and we sped along at a great pace. Here we saw two gazelle, which galloped across our tracks and disappeared in the distance to our right.

So that he could get out a report on the road from Kuwait to Riyádh, Harold took copious notes of the country lying on both sides, using a cavalry sketching-board, a compass and the odometer readings of the car. He also had with him his field-glasses and rifle.

On we went past Khabári Wadha—the place where the King had camped in 1930, and where Faisal Al Duwísh and the other two rebel leaders had been handed over to him by Harold—into *hamdh* country, which was then followed by more broken ground called the Al Wuraiáh plateau, until suddenly we saw lying in a hollow in the distance the great new fort of Jariya 'Ilya. To the right of this gradually appeared the mud houses of a small village, with a few 'athl (tamarisk) trees dotted among the buildings; and now in a depression in front of us appeared about a hundred and fifty black Badawin tents.

We drove up to the fort. The gates were open and a few men were seated on a *datcha* just in the entrance.

"Salaam 'alaikum."

"Wa 'alaikum as salaam."

Then, with great haste, two men rushed out from inside the fort and shut the great door in our faces!

Harold and our two guides got out of the cars. Then the Amír

appeared and invited them inside for coffee. They went with him into the fort, Hamda and I remaining in the cars.

We waited. What was happening, and why the delay? Had no news of our visit been received from the King? Had not permission for us to proceed on our journey been received? As far as I could make out from the guard, the answer was in the negative, and we were likely to remain there until three or four o'clock in the afternoon, it being then just midday.

One of our drivers prepared to take out our tent so that we could rest in it, but I prevented him, so the men from the fort produced one and began to erect it in the shade along the east wall. When all was ready they asked us to come and rest in it, which we were glad to do; sitting in the car, swathed in *burqa* and 'aba, was very hot and uncomfortable.

The drivers were then ordered to remove all our kit from the cars for customs examination. Everything had to be unloaded, inspected, then packed up again.

Harold and our two guides emerged at length from the fort, having persuaded the Amír to send a wireless telegram to the King, asking for permission for us to proceed. We then heard that a sheep and some chickens were being killed for our luncheon, and, being anxious to continue our journey immediately sanction came through, we sent Sa'ud off to them post-haste to beg them not to prepare a meal, as we had already lunched before reaching Jariya.

At three o'clock the Amír, all smiles, informed us that the necessary authority had now been received, and he wished us a pleasant trip. Glad to be off, we left at once.

Hardly had we gone a mile when we noticed a car following us at speed. We pulled up and waited. Muhammad al Ghathfán, who had a guilty conscience about a bundle of tobacco he was taking to Riyádh, feared that the Amír had got wind of it. As the other car—a box Ford—drew level, he slipped round to the back of ours and threw the bundle among some bushes beside the road. But the Ford driver's mission was to hand us a telegram, together with a pencil and piece of paper for the receipt. None of us could read the telegram very well, but that it was a message of welcome from the King was quite clear.

Our road now turned due west and we travelled in this direction for some time. The desert scenery was wild in the extreme, with low

small hills, first on one side and then on the other. Gradually the road turned south-east and the ground became more stony, large black stones similar to those found along the Liyah near Kuwait appearing here and there. And so we came to Al Summan, the *dírah* (tribal country) of the great Mutair tribe.

Only two hours after leaving Jariya we struck camp for the night on a piece of hard and stony ground close to a large clump of dwarf *sidr* trees, known as *umm al 'asafir* ("the mother of small birds"), lying on the left of the road. Muhammad al Ghathfán was anxious to drive on for another two hours and get nearer to the Dahana, so that we could cross it in the cool of the morning, but we were tired and glad to get out and camp.

Our tent was pitched in no time and the kettle got boiling. Sunset was at 5.20. Before dark all was ready, enough firewood having been collected to keep Sa'ud and Sálím and the two drivers warm all night. We heated up and ate our chickens with bread, dates and tea, then later drank Sálím's coffee as we sat in the dark round the glowing fire of *hamdh* wood, telling stories for two and a half hours before turning in.

One hour before dawn saw our little camp astir once more, and after tea, eggs and bread, we left as the sun was rising. On, on across the Summan, past low, flat-topped hills and through depressions in which were growing the dwarf *sidr* trees so beloved of the Mutair Badawin. A single *hubára* got up and flew away as our car approached her. Gradually the numerous little hills were left behind, and we came to a hard, stony, undulating plain.

"Dahal al Faraih", said Sa'ud, pointing away to the right. "Do you want to see it?"

"Yes, yes", we said, whereupon our car turned off the track and went about five hundred yards until it stopped on the edge of a great almost circular crater in the earth's crust.

It was about eighty feet across. After a drop of about thirty feet, there was a smaller hole in the centre, only about five feet in diameter.

"This is where the Badu get their water, Yá Abu Sa'ud", said Sálím.

A *dahal*, known to geologists as a sink, is a natural well with subterranean caverns and passages, formed in ages past by water action, opening out from the bottom in various directions. Some of the passages run underground for three hundred yards or more. Before



reaching water a man has at times to crawl on all fours and at others to cross great cathedral-like caves. The rocky floors of the passages are much worn and polished by the water-skins that for centuries have been dragged through them. No man attempts to go in unless he is roped, as he may lose his way and die underground. Some *duhúl* are also very dark inside; others have occasional openings giving light.

I looked about for flint implements, and picked up one or two pieces that might have been used as scrapers at one time or another.

After I had taken some photographs of Dahal al Faraih we went on our way, passing on our right and left many small *duhúl* without names and probably having no water down them until the rains. The country was still rather rocky and undulating.

Sa'ud said suddenly, pointing away to our right front:

"Shúf, Al Dahana, Abu Sa'ud."

There in the far distance rose up what looked like a long, low, rocky ridge. My first thought was: How on earth can a car go over that if it is all sand? I wanted to suggest to the drivers that we be allowed to get out and walk through it! I said nothing, though my thoughts and fears were worrying me not a little.

The country now began to change, and there was *'arfaj* once more, at first growing rather sparsely, then thicker and better as we approached the mysterious Dahana sands.

Now across the track appeared to be blown a light covering of red sand some few inches deep, and, in several strips, five to ten yards across, but the cars took no heed of these, passing through as though it were only a dust track. The large sand ridge on our right slowly came nearer, and we saw its pinkish red colour in the sunshine. We were now travelling south-east and running almost parallel to it. Ahead of us it seemed to get much smaller and almost die away in the distance. This filled me with hope, as I realized that eventually the ridge became low enough to allow cars to cross.

At 9.30 our car turned to the right off the track, approached the sand rising steeply in front of us and stopped. Muhammad al Ghathfán got out and filled up the radiator with water from the *jirba*.

"This is where I always cross, Yá Abu Sa'ud", he said. "It is a much shorter route than following the main track across the sands, and I have done it many times. Hold tight, though, all of you, as I must



go all out and cannot slow down or stop until we have crossed the first ridge. This is the 'Ariq\* al Siru, one of the two worst strips of the Dahana. After that the rest is easy."

"Kaif ak", we replied, meaning, "As you please".

Having partly deflated the tyres, both drivers plunged us with a rush into the red sand and up the slope and along the top, dodging large bushes of 'arta as best they could. There were odd tracks of cars to the right and left of us, but no road. Mostly in top gear, occasionally changing down into second and bumping violently most of the time, we rushed across the sands all out and descended a smaller slope on to the firm, pebbly ground on the far side, a distance of approximately six miles. Across this we sped, then once more into another smaller drift of sand, and we were across.

"Al hamdu l'illah!" exclaimed Muhammad al Ghathfán. "Now we have good going until we reach the second 'root'—'Ariq al Rua'ichib."

There are eight of these 'arúq that have names, although they are not all very clearly defined, each one appearing to have many smaller strips on either side of it.

"We are across the second one now", they cried. "Those in front of us are only small ones."

It was an exciting experience, but not in any way alarming.

At eleven o'clock we halted for lunch, just short of Rumáh wells, having taken an hour and a half to get through the famed Dahana sands. Here I applied *kuhl* to my eyes and adjusted my *burqa*, in case we should be met by anyone at Rumáh.

The roar of a car was now heard, and a very old Ford appeared, coming from the north-east along the road we had just covered ourselves. It contained some shaikhs from Dubai, who had come from Hufuf, capital of Hasa, in three cars, two of which they had lost in the Dahana. Having been two days *en route* from Hufuf, they were hungry and thirsty, so they were glad to eat up the remains of our luncheon—chickens and meat cooked two days previously in Kuwait and by now rather smelly—and quench their thirst. They left ahead of us and waited at Rumáh for the rest of their party.

We did not delay at Rumáh. There were a great number of Badu camped there, who were preparing to move out into the desert. We

\* 'Ariq (pl. 'arúq), literally "root" or "tendon".

## Welcome Refreshments

### Chap. XV

crossed safely the wide sandy *bahara* (dry watercourse) lying immediately to the north of it and went on our way.

The country now changed again fairly quickly, and soon we had left behind all trace of the red Dahana sand and *'arfaj* bushes, coming to rocky ground with low hills and dry water-channels, with here and there an occasional acacia tree, or several along a *sha'ib*, and a small well or two, with a Badawi and his wife and two camels drawing water. On the sides of the stony hills now appeared huge blocks of black stone among the brown, looking almost as if someone had spilt a gigantic bag of coal on top, and it had rolled down the sides. Our track now wound about among low hills until there lay in front of us and many hundreds of feet below a great plain fringed by a high cliff. No road down was visible at first, then on our left we saw a group of men working on what was obviously the track down. We approached them.

"Not this way", they cried, "not this way. Over there."

They pointed away to the left, where more of their companions were engaged.

"Where?" asked our driver, upon which one of them jumped on the running board of our car to show us the way.

We now began the descent of this rocky cliff, which is known as the Buwaib or "Little Gateway" and must be quite six hundred feet high. The very steep track had been roughly hewn out of the solid rock. At the foot we were signalled by a man to bear to the left, so, leaving the road, we bumped across stones and rocks until, round a bend in the cliff, in a stony *sha'ib* under a large, spreading acacia tree, we saw a group of men standing beside a car. We drove up and were met and welcomed by one of the King's entourage, Fakhri Efféndi, Shaikh al 'Ardh, a young Syrian of good family employed at the court.\* He delivered messages from the King and the Amír Sa'ud, who hoped we had had a pleasant journey.

Carpets had been spread in the shade; coffee and tea were ready; meat, freshly cut from the carcase of a lamb hanging from a branch on the far side of the tree, was being fried over a small charcoal fire. We were thirsty and hungry—at least, the smell of the freshly fried

\* His brother, Dr Midhat, Shaikh al 'Ardh, was the King's private physician. "Shaikh al 'Ardh" is a family title, by which they are known in Damascus.

squares of meat made us feel so. After coffee, which in Najd is a much weaker brew than we get in Kuwait, then tea, more coffee and more tea, we were handed the meat on a brightly coloured enamel dish. It was slightly underdone and truly delicious. Sa'ud ibn Nimrán said to me afterwards:

"I couldn't eat that meat. It was terrible and the red blood was still in it."

"That", I replied, "is how we English like it."

I did really enjoy it. After half an hour's rest, coffee-cups and pots, kettles and tea-glasses, and all the other paraphernalia were slowly packed away and put in the car, as well as the meat from the tree. After prayers had been said we got into our cars once more for the final part of the journey.



"Only one hour from here to Riyádh", they said.

As we turned and drove out from the *sha'ib* towards the road, there was the great cliff towering above us. Away in front of us, where it turned away to the north-west, the rocks took the shape of a gigantic negro's face in profile, seeming to guard the entrance to inner Najd. As we came nearer, the features seemed to change, the lips, chin and neck becoming even better defined, until we eventually came level with it, when all trace of a human visage disappeared and once more it was only part of the great cliff that wound away in the mirage into the far distance on our right.

It was difficult to realize that, although we had come down that steep cliff, we were still very high up. According to Philby, Riyádh itself is 2,250 feet above sea-level. The cool, refreshing air and almost cold nights were the only things that made one appreciate this fact.

From here on, the track was very cut up, and in many places to right and left were signs of cars having sunk deep in the mud during the rainy season. Parts also were very dusty and the track bad, with large areas covered with thick, green-leafed plants resembling young oleander bushes, though I do not yet know their correct name. We were always on the look-out for any flowers or strange plants, at every opportunity picking what we could find.

Far across the stony plain were a few low hills to our left front, and away on the horizon to the right were the hills of Jabal Tuwaiq now outlined clearly against the sun.

"When we reach those low hills", said the driver, "you will see Riyádh."

But Fakhri Efféendi's car ahead of us was sending out a great column of dust from behind, and, there being very little breeze, it hung like a cloud in front of us and blocked our view. After a few twists and turns we were among the low hills and before us was a small descent into yet a smaller and inner plain. Away in the distance was what I thought must be the city of Riyádh: a great fortress with many towers rising above the walls and the tops of many buildings appearing over the walls and towers. To the left of this were two tall wireless masts. Of the date palms of Riyádh there was no sign.

Muhammad al Ghathfán pointed to a low hill, now slightly behind us and to our left.

"Al Makhrug", he told us. "A car can drive right up into it and through a tunnel out the other side."

The top of Al Makhrug has an opening like an enormous buttonhole, and there were visible the tracks of many motor-cars going right through it.

We had almost reached the fortress when suddenly to our left appeared the tops of the palm groves of Riyádh. What we now saw before us was no city, as I had imagined, but the King's new palace, Qasr Shamsíyah, then in course of erection.

The escort car stopped here, and we were told that the King wished us to go direct to one of his two summer palaces, which lay, a few hundred yards apart, at Budí'ah, a little under five miles to the west of the capital. He himself was now residing in his winter palace, within the city walls.



We left the date palms on our left and skirted the oasis along a hilly and very rocky road until, seven kilometres farther on, we descended a steep, zigzag, rocky cutting into what is known as the Bátin, the great sandy bed of the Wádi Hanifa, and there in front of us were the two palaces, behind which were more groves of palms reaching right across to the steep, rocky sides of the Wádi. This must be quite half a mile wide. The palaces and gardens occupy about two-thirds of the area, the rest being left for the rushing torrent that comes down after heavy rains. Under the garden wall in front of the palace for which we were bound, the King had had a small sitting-out place made for him, with a coffee-making enclosure beside it, so that during the rainy season he might sit and have his evening coffee by the side of the swiftly flowing stream.

"There are three things that delight a man's heart: a green thing, water and a pretty face", is the old Arab saying, and surely it is true.

On the other side of the Wádi Hanifa, our car, after crossing the dry river-bed, took a sharp turn to the right and bore us along a very narrow road with high walls on either side. Then, after another sharp turn, this time to the left, we stopped in front of a great open door. The guard presented arms, and out we climbed, I carefully following my husband in true Arab style over the stone threshold, along a gravelly path, first left and then right, and up the wide staircase into the palace.

It is a fairly recent building, for when His Highness Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait visited Riyádh in 1934 it did not exist. It consists of two courtyards with rooms around each, both upstairs and down, and a smaller courtyard for the servants. The upper portion of the first building is used solely for the ladies or, in their absence, for important guests. The second house is used as the King's own quarters, where he works and receives shaikhs and Badu when he is in residence during the summer months.

An upstairs veranda about twelve feet wide runs round the whole courtyard. It is supported by stone pillars covered with white plaster (*juss*). Between each pair of pillars are three beams of pale-yellow or fawn tamarisk wood, on which are painted in scarlet and black striking designs in lines and dots. The veranda is enclosed by a wall made of mud and *juss*. This is about six feet high, the top of it being shaped rather like the heads and shoulders of a long line of men, each over



## First Impressions

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a small triangular opening between high, round pillars of stone and *juss*, which in their turn support the roof of the veranda. On each side there is one extra-large opening to allow servants to call down to the coffee man below.

The beams are all made of tamarisk wood and are usually placed three together between each pillar, supporting smaller branches, covered with reeds and mud, that form the roof of the veranda—these, in most cases, being covered up by nailing white cloth over the ceilings. The beams supported by the pillars are decorated in true Najd fashion with paintings of dots and lines in scarlet and black on a pale yellow ground, as described above. Wherever these beams appear, they are all decorated, over windows and small doors, etc., even into the washing-room. Inside the large rooms there are two round pillars placed in the middle and supporting the ceiling. The walls are plastered with white *juss*, with various broad bands or circles.

These patterns are made in the following manner. The walls are first plastered over with a very hard, light-brown clay. Over this is laid the white *juss* one-third of an inch thick. While it is still wet the master mason cuts out the design so that the brown background shows through. Quite often a broad band of mud wall is left between one series of patterns and the next. The lowest bands of patterns commence about three feet from the ground. Variations of pattern occur round windows and the narrow shelves that are cut into the walls. Above the horizontal bands of ornamentation are placed large single circles, all cut out in different geometrical designs, no two being alike. The whole effect is most pleasing.

Silk curtains, made from material bought in the Kuwait bazaars, drape the windows. Round the walls are placed heavy wood-and-plush chairs and sofas from Baghdad. The floors are covered with heavy Persian carpets of all sizes and textures, and the ceiling cloth in the main reception room is gaily decorated with coloured blobs of silk in patterns representing moons and stars, and circles large and small.

The lower part of this house is used for the servants, and in a corner of the open courtyard is the rectangular coffee-making *wujár* (fire-place). The floor in the court is covered with clean white sand from some river-bed, and under the veranda the doors to the rooms are all brilliantly painted in various designs in red, black, blue, yellow,



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2



3



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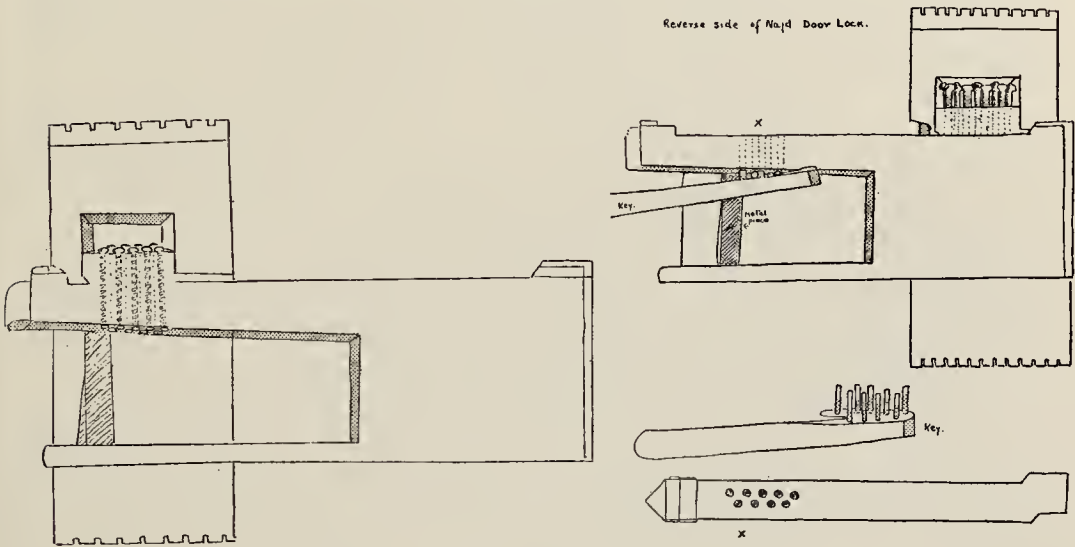
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FIVE DIFFERENT PATTERNS ON THE WALL OF THE GUEST-HOUSE IN BUDÍ'AH PALACE

# The Coloured Doors

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green and pink. The painting resembles a mosaic, each small square or triangle being of a different colour from those around it. The top, lower and centre sections of the large doors have raised wooden portions, which are boldly coloured in larger squares. The smaller doors are usually flat, with the designs traced out on them in the form of deep grooves and then painted. The best doors come from Qasím, and those painted locally resemble the patterns on the beams, having blobs of crimson, black, etc. Each door has a lock. The wooden, pronged key, rather like a toothbrush, is inserted sideways into the



lock and, by pushing up a similar number of prongs or pegs, releases the latch. The wooden window-shutters all open inwards. On the outside they are beautifully painted in a similar manner to the doors, but on the inside bear only some simple design.

Passing along a passage upstairs from the first house, and leaving the servants' courtyard on the left, one turns right and finds oneself looking down a veranda to where, at the end, it is furnished once more with chairs and sofas, with Persian carpets on the floor. A punkah hangs from the ceiling, and a large Bombay clock ticks slowly on the wall opposite to the King's own seat. One turns left once more, and still the whole length of the veranda is similarly furnished. On the inside there is a long adjoining room where the King goes to pray and rest. It is furnished in Arab style, with high, broad, padded sofas all round the wall and at one end a kind of throne, with two large, square, hard cushions on either side, each covered by three smaller



ones joined together and covered in silk. The ceiling cloth in this room is even more elaborate and ambitious than that in the ladies' quarters: pictures of coffee-pots, tea-pots and kettles cut out in coloured silk adorn it, together with more moons, stars and circles. A long, sloping, easy staircase down to a private entrance, which is used by men only, makes this neighbouring building entirely private from the one used by the ladies.

Although the King had left the palace for the town some twenty days previously, the large clocks in his *mijlis* were all going and keeping perfect time. Even coffee was ready prepared. As we wandered through the rooms, we sat for a few minutes in a cool veranda and coffee was brought. Here 'Abdullah al Misfir, one of King Faisal's officials from Iraq, who joined us, told us that he had been to New York with Mr Crane some years ago. We then went up on the roof, where in summer the King dines in a covered-in enclosure supported by two tall pillars, which were discoloured a deep brown about three feet from the ground, where the numerous tribal guests from time to time must have wiped their greasy hands after the meal.\*

A tall pole or two with cross-pieces at the top from which to hang big lamps were placed not far away. There was also a special pole with ropes attached for hanging the water-skins in the breeze to keep them cool.

The other main palace is built in somewhat similar style, though older. Here also the King receives shaikhs and notabilities.

To the casual visitor to Riyádh city, the houses of the better-class inhabitants look gloomy and mysterious from the outside, with their high mud walls on either side of the narrow, winding streets, and their plain, solid, wooden doors. No windows give on to the streets, except occasionally a small barred one in an upper storey. Yet the interior of the houses, all usually two-storeyed and built round a central court, are a delight to see, being as artistically decorated and painted as the rooms in the royal palace at Budí'ah where we stayed.

The sketches of patterns included here were all made on the spot by me.

\* This habit arises from the general shortage of water. The 'Ajmán tribe, in particular, take pride in such marks on their tents, which indicate the degree of hospitality extended to their guests.



SECTION OF DINING-ROOM WALL IN BUD'AH PALACE



## THE KING DISCUSSES THE PALESTINE QUESTION

We had covered the distance of approximately five hundred miles from Kuwait to Riyádh in exactly seventeen and a half driving hours. Weather conditions had been perfect, and we had found the nights distinctly cold in the heart of Najd. The desert scenery *en route* had been wild in the extreme. The only signs of life outside Jariya post had been six gazelle and one *hubára*.

As mentioned by my wife, I had taken notes of the country through which we had passed, and had discovered several mistakes in the official 1:1,000,000 sheet map of Arabia. I had been able to fill in many place-names, as well as mark in the exact course of the good motor route between the two capitals. I had had with me also Philby's 1:500,000 route sheets, printed by the War Office in 1933. These showed the Kuwait route out of Riyádh, but as this stopped just north of the great Dahana sand-belt, or a third of the way to Kuwait, the road map that I subsequently completed, though lacking the accuracy of Philby's, will be of use, I think. It also was reproduced by Army headquarters, Government of India.

We spent four and a half most enjoyable days at Riyádh and put in a very full programme of audiences, banquets and sightseeing, not to mention witnessing a grand 'ardha or war dance, given, it was said, in our honour, but in reality to celebrate the fact that one of the King's small sons had read completely through the Qur'án. *Khátim*, they call a boy who has finished such a task for the first time.

On the morning after our arrival I had a full two hours' audience with the King. After presenting myself at the office of the Foreign Minister, Sir Fuad Hamza, in the great palace, I was conducted by His Excellency to the King's *mijlis*. I found His Majesty King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud seated in the top corner of the imposing room overlooking the main square in front of the palace. To the right and left of him, though some way down the room and at a distance, sat the leading Amírs and officials of state. They were as follows:—

The governor of Ha'il: Amír 'Abdul 'Azíz ibn Musa'ad al Jilúwi Al Sa'ud.

Three members of the royal house of Al Rashíd: Amír Muhammad

## A Prince's Request

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ibn Tallál Al Rashíd, Amír Faisal ibn Tallál al Jabbar Al Rashíd and Amír 'Abdullah ibn Mita'ab Al Rashíd.

The King's nephew: Faisal ibn Sa'ad Al Sa'ud.

Two of the King's sons: Muhammad and Mansur Al Sa'ud.

The King's grandson: 'Abdullah ibn Turki Al Sa'ud.

Two members of the King's council: Saiyid Hamza Gauth and Saiyid Sharíf Sharaf.

The editor of the radio bulletin: Mahmúd Jassur.

Sitting in a corner were three small sons of the King: Tallál, Misha'al and Nawáf Al Sa'ud.

After the customary salutations His Majesty introduced me to the above, then asked me to be seated by his side. Sir Fuad Hamza took his seat by Saiyid Hamza Gauth. There followed polite inquiries after the health of my wife and myself, delivered with the King's customary charm of manner. He then ordered that the three small boys, Tallál, Misha'al and Nawáf, be taken away by the servant in charge of them, and they came up and kissed him good-bye. Little Nawáf, three years of age, he put on his knee for a minute or two in delightful manner. He asked him what he would like as a present, and Nawáf said a hawk, so that he could go hunting.

"It shall be so", said the King, who then kissed him good-bye, but not before the little fellow had pulled the King's beard and said:

"Promise, Daddy."

Solemnly the King promised that he should have his hawk, and passed orders to that effect. The three children were then escorted from the room. The King then turned to me and said with winning charm:

"O Dickson, not only are you our friend and the friend of the Arabs, but I see you come garbed as one of us and so are doubly welcome."

Early on he turned to the subject obviously close to his heart, namely the Palestine tangle, and for nearly an hour and a half he delivered himself on that subject. Naturally I made it quite clear that my visit was of a purely private and personal nature, also that I had received the blessing of both the India Office and Foreign Office before I came. Nevertheless he hinted that he hoped I would pass on to the

proper quarter what I heard, even if such proceeding was somewhat irregular.

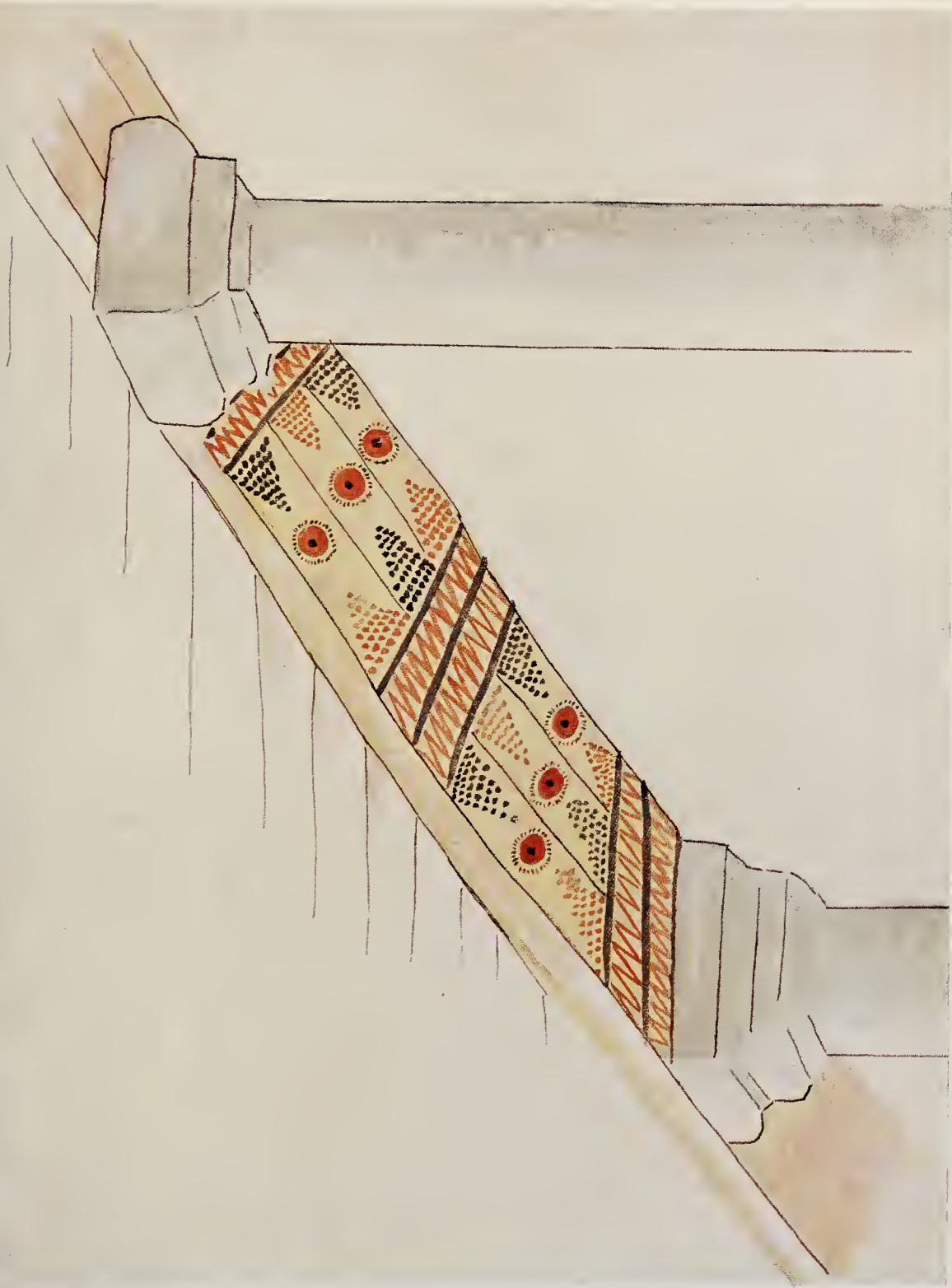
For the most part he spoke in low, earnest tones, as though his words were not intended for his counsellors sitting round, and he continually emphasized his meaning by placing his hand on my arm. Immediately after the audience I noted down what he had said and I give it here as nearly as possible in his own words, using the first person plural when referring to himself.

“We are aware, O Dickson, that you are no longer a Government official, but as you have held high and honourable office under His Majesty’s Government for many years, we know that you are trusted by your Government, and so not only do we make you doubly welcome, but we can open our heart to you, and we are glad that you have been able to visit us in our capital.

“We are most anxious that the British Government should send us every eight months or so an experienced officer whom they trust, or, equally well, an ex-official like yourself, who can listen personally to what we have on our minds, and what troubles our hearts, for times are deeply serious and full of danger these days. We feel that personal contact of such a nature will be far more efficacious than any amount of letter-writing or telegraphic representations, which, though well enough in themselves, must nearly always fail to convey the full meaning of our thoughts and anxieties and will, if anything, tend rather to breed misunderstanding and misconception than to remove them.

“But such person, if and when he is sent, must be thoroughly conversant with our language, understanding the wider meaning of our beautiful tongue, which is so full of parable and expressive phrase. It is no use sending a man who has to listen to what we have to say through the medium of an interpreter. He should know and understand our Arab psychology, be conversant if possible with our Arabian manners and customs, and above all should be acquainted with our Arab pride and our hopes, and have read something of God’s Holy Word, as vouchsafed to us in our blessed Qur’án.

“O Dickson, when will your London Government realize that we Arabs, by our very nature, can be bought body and soul by an act of



DECORATED BEAMS IN BUDJAH PALACE





kindness, but become implacable enemies for all time of those who treat us harshly or deal unjustly with us?

“To-day we and our subjects are deeply troubled over this Palestine question, and the cause of our disquiet and anxiety is the strange attitude of your British Government, and the still more strange hypnotic influence that the Jews, a race accursed by God according to His Holy Book, and destined to final destruction and eternal damnation hereafter, appear to wield over them and the English people generally.

“The Qur’án contains God’s own word and divine ordinance, and we recommend His Majesty’s Government to read and carefully peruse that portion dealing with the Jews and especially what is to be their fate in the end. For God’s words are unalterable and must be.

“We Arabs believe implicitly in God’s revealed word and we know that God is faithful. We care for nothing else in this world but our belief in the One God, His Prophet, and our honour. Everything else matters nothing at all, not even death. Nor are we afraid of hardship, hunger, lack of this world’s goods, etc. etc. We are quite content to eat camel meat and dates to the end of our days, provided we hold to those three things.

“Our hatred for the Jews dates from God’s condemnation of them for their persecution and rejection of ’Isa [Jesus Christ], and their subsequent rejection later of His chosen Prophet. It is beyond our understanding how your Government, representing the first Christian power in the world to-day, can wish to assist and reward these very same Jews who maltreated your ’Isa.

“We Arabs have been the traditional friends of Great Britain for many years, and we, the Al Sa’ud, in particular have been your Government’s firm friend all our life. What madness, then, is this that is leading on your Government to destroy this friendship of centuries, all for the sake of an accursed and stiff-necked race that, since the world began, has persecuted and rejected its prophets and has always bitten the hand of everyone who has helped it?

“It were far, far preferable from every point of view, if Great Britain were to make Palestine a British possession and rule it for the next hundred years, rather than to partition it in the way they propose.

Such partition cannot possibly solve the difficulty, but must only perpetuate it and lead to war and misery. Some people seem to think that we, the Al Sa'ud, have an eye on Palestine ourselves and would like to benefit by the disturbed state of affairs existing there, to step in and offer to take it over. That certainly would be a solution, but God forbid that this should happen, for we have enough and to spare as it is of territory.

"To-day we are the 'Imám, the spiritual leader as well as the temporal ruler of the greater part of Arabia. We also have not a little influence in all the great Muslim countries of the world. We are being placed in the most difficult and most invidious of all positions by the British Government, our friends. On the one hand we are being appealed to by means of myriads of letters and telegrams by day and night from all quarters of the Muslim world to step in and save Palestine for the Arabs. We are even urged by our own people of Najd, and all good Muslims in the outer world, to break with the English and save Palestine for its people by war. On the other hand, we see that it would be utterly futile to break with our old friends, the English, for to do so would bring untold woe on the world, and would be to play right into the hands of the Jews, the enemies of Arabia as well as of England.

"We definitely shall not wage war against you English and we have told our people this, because we are the only person among them who can see far ahead, and we know that by so doing we should lose the one potential ally we now have. For are not Italy, Germany and especially Turkey like ravening wolves to-day, seeking whom they may devour? They are all flirting with us at the present moment, but we know they will wish to devour us later. A friendly England will, we believe, always prevent them accomplishing their ends. Hence, though as a Muslim we have no particular love for any Christian European nation, political interest demands that we keep in with the best of them, which is England.

"The difficulty is our Arab subjects and the 'Ikhwán tribes of Najd. Over this Palestine business their senses are only in their eyes, and they cannot see one cubit ahead. They blame me even now for wavering and obeying the orders of the English, yet your Government expects me to keep them in check. Your Government should remember

that I am the Arabs' religious leader and thus the interpreter of the scriptures. God's word to them cannot be got round.

"Verily the word of God teaches us—and we implicitly believe this, O Dickson—that for a Muslim to kill a Jew, or for him to be killed by a Jew, ensures him an immediate entry into Heaven and into the august presence of God Almighty. What more, then, can a Muslim want in this hard world? It is of this that my people are repeatedly reminding me. Most assuredly your Government is placing me in the same dilemma as they did in 1929 and 1930, which ended in the 'Ikhwán going out in rebellion against me.

"The Jews are, of course, your enemies as well as ours, though they are cleverly making use of you now. Later your Government will see and feel their teeth. For the present, the Jews prefer to bide their time. Perhaps your Government does not know that the Jews contemplate as their final aim not only the seizure of all Palestine, but also the land south of it as far as Medína. Eastward also they hope some day to extend to the Persian Gulf. They cozen certain imperialistically minded Englishmen with stories of how a strong Jewish and pro-British state stretching from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf would safeguard England's communications with the East, both the Suez Canal and the Iraq corridor, saying that the Arabs are England's enemies and will always be so.

"At the same time they play on the minds of the sentimental British masses by telling them that the Old Testament prophets foretold how they, the Jews, would eventually return to their Promised Land, or again that they, the persecuted and wandering Bani Israel, should not be denied a small place in the world, where to lay their weary heads. How, O Dickson, would the people of Scotland like it if the English suddenly gave their country to the Jews? But no, it is easier to give away other peoples' countries and not so dangerous.

"That the Jews of Palestine are even now straining every nerve to cause a permanent split between the English people and the Arabs can be proved up to the hilt by the recent murders of officials in Palestine. It is as clear as daylight to us that the godless Arab gunmen, hired from abroad, who committed those vile deeds, were paid for with Jewish money. We state this to be an absolute fact, for did not the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem swear to us in the Haram of Mecca by the Holy



Ka'aba that he would never resort to any but constitutional methods in opposing the Zionist machinations in Palestine? We, the Al Sa'ud, believe him even to-day.

“What we fear so greatly, and what Great Britain must not allow to come to pass, is the turning of the Arabs of Arabia and neighbouring Arab countries into enemies of England. Once this happens an irreparable crime will have been committed, for, as we have said, the Arabs will never forget an injury, and will bide their opportunity to take revenge for a hundred years if need be. Enemies of England would not be slow to take advantage of this, and an England in difficulties or engaged elsewhere in war, would be the signal for the Arabs to act.

“The very thought of this happening is hateful to me, 'Abdul 'Aziz, yet be assured that partition in Palestine will bring this about, in spite of all your misdirected efforts. And I cannot help you for ever, as I cannot live more than a few years.

“We repeat, then, that the only solution we can see is for Great Britain to rule Palestine herself. The Zionists, of course, will not like this, but their views must not be asked. The Arabs will agree to this solution, and those who do not must be made to agree by such people as ourselves. The main thing is to prevent at all costs the Jews having an independent state of their own sliced out of Arab territory, with no one to guide their future acts and policy. From such would come a perpetual struggle with the Arabs living round them. First, because the Jews, determined to expand, will intrigue from the very beginning and not rest till they have created discord and enmity between Great Britain and us Arabs, out of which they will hope to benefit. Secondly, they, having the money, will create a highly effective, though perhaps small, mechanized army and air force, which they will assuredly use one day for aggressive purposes against the Arabs, seeing that their goal is the whole of Palestine, Transjordan and their old stronghold of Medína—the land they went to when driven out of Palestine and dispersed after the Romans had destroyed Jerusalem.

“On top of this, your Government must at once further restrict all immigration of Jews into Palestine, leaving alone those already there, but allowing no more to come in.”

I here took advantage of a pause in the King's rather forcible

## The King Dismisses Me

### Chap. XV

harangue to try to explain His Majesty's Government's point of view. Before I had got very far, he checked me in vigorous fashion with:

"By God, your Government has no point of view, except the wilful committing of an injustice. Every God-fearing man, be he Muslim or Christian, knows that it cannot be right to do wrong, however cleverly the committing may be served up to the people. If I, an ignorant Badawin Arab of Arabia, can see, as clearly as I see the sun rise, that the proposed partition of Palestine is wicked and wrong in God's sight, surely the more clever Western politicians, if they fear God at all, can see this also? Thank God we believe in Him and His Oneness, and we know that it is this very belief of ours that makes us see things as clearly as we do. We are as firmly convinced that we are right, and that God has opened our eyes to the right, as we are that He will punish us, the Al Sa'ud, if we lie to Him. Therefore there is *no other side* to this question, except it be bargaining with Satan."

The King here seemed suddenly to tire, as if the effort of talking for so long had been too much for him. After calling on Mahmúd Jassur to read out the latest news by radio from all over the world to the seated assembly, he dismissed me kindly but firmly.

After leaving the King's presence, I was stopped in the corridor by a messenger who said that the Amír Sa'ud would like me to call on him in his *mijlis*. I found the heir apparent holding court amidst a gathering of many Badawin shaikhs and others. He received me graciously and asked me to dine with him on Wednesday, the 27th. No questions of a contentious nature were mentioned and Palestine was avoided. Sa'ud talked much about his recent visit to England and the kindness he had received on all sides. He thought fit to mention that the two things that had impressed him most were the wonderful affection the English people had for their King and Royal Family, and the innate sense of law and order he had found everywhere. He instanced the remarkable English habit of queuing up outside theatres, railway stations, etc. This he thought very amusing.

That evening Sir Fuad Hamza came to dine with us at the Budí'ah palace. After coffee he asked me if I knew anything of the troubles between Bahrain and Qatar, which he said, rather gratuitously, could never have happened in the great days of Sir Percy Cox. I said I knew nothing of such troubles. He then turned to the Palestine

problem and gave it as his opinion (almost as if he was continuing the King's talk by order) that the immediate need in Palestine was for Great Britain to drop all question of partition and run the country herself. This would give renewed confidence and a breathing-space. On top of this, he said, England should at once restrict further immigration of Jews, until some such scheme as keeping the present percentage of Arab and Jewish population for ever unchanged was worked out.

To draw Fuad Hamza out further I suggested what I thought to be a better alternative, but made it clear that it was entirely a personal idea of mine, formed as a result of my having lived in Jerusalem as a youngster and seen how the Turks had faced the same problem. As far back as 1892 they (the Turks) had feared the return of the Jews to Palestine and the swamping of themselves and the Arab population, so they had passed a law that no European or American Jew could stay in the country for more than two months at a time. On the above analogy I put it to Fuad Hamza that all Jews to-day settled in Palestine should be allowed to remain there for good, but that further settlement of Jews in the country should be entirely forbidden. At the same time Palestine should be thrown open to any Jew who liked to visit it as a pilgrim, provided he left the country after a two-months' sojourn. In other words, visas for two months only would be given to Jews the world over by British consular authorities. This, I said, would work out rather like Muslims doing the Haj to Mecca. They could come as often as they liked, but could not settle except in very extraordinary circumstances.

Fuad Hamza said my suggestion was quite a good one and had a lot to be said for it, but he changed the subject somewhat abruptly, as though he felt he ought not to discuss so dangerous a topic with a person having no official status.

# The King's Palace

Chap. XV

A CALL ON THE ROYAL LADIES

By Violet Dickson

"On Tuesday morning at three o'clock the royal ladies will receive you."

That was the message that reached me on Monday evening.

Three o'clock corresponding to our nine o'clock, I left the Budí'ah palace by car with Hamda, my maid, at about half-past eight. Sitting in front with the driver was Sálím al Muzaiyin and a slave from the Riyádh palace, for which we were bound. We crept slowly along the rocky road that skirts the town and, leaving on our left the new Shamsíyah palace and the Qasr Núra, the palace of the King's sister, we turned right towards the city. A few Badawin tents here and there, the great cemetery on our left, and there we were at the main eastern gate of the city.

Along a narrow, straight street, and then suddenly we were in front of the King's palace in the great market square. The open space was crowded with Badu and camels, and seated in a long row on a *datcha* were those awaiting audience with His Majesty. It was only a momentary glimpse that we had of this scene as our car crossed the open space and went down along the side of the palace to a great door under a wide bridge. Here we alighted and were led inside through several courtyards where horses were at times brought in for the use of the royal children. Up an easy flight of stairs, along passages and verandas, and then we were ushered into a large, empty room.

It was about five minutes before anyone appeared, so I had ample time to have a good look round. Two large pillars stood in the centre of the room, supporting the roof with painted beams, as already described for the Budí'ah palace, while the floor was covered with large Persian carpets, mostly of the Kirman type and which seemed to fit in exactly between wall and pillars. All round the room, up against the walls, were large, square cushions, covered in a bluish cotton print and ornamented with a small frill along the edges. At one corner of the room was the *wujár* for making coffee. A few pieces of charcoal were alight, with a coffee-pot and kettle—"kettly", as the Arabs say—nearby. Above this in the wall were some shelves on which stood closely side by side two rows of brass coffee-pots, mostly of the



same size, all polished and shining. Below were two shelves of the more modern coloured enamel "kettlies". On the floor were coffee-cups and tea-glasses all ready. A bundle of bedding was roughly rolled up in one corner, as though someone had been resting or sleeping there. There were two doors to this room, one at one corner and the other in the centre opposite, also three windows neatly covered with wooden shutters, which they told me afterwards was a Hijáz fashion.

Hamda and I sat ourselves down by the fire in the corner, wondering how long we were to be left alone. Then in came a lady. She was unveiled, with both wide, hanging sleeves of her black *thaub* thrown across her head, around which was swathed a black piece of fine cloth. A crimson silk under-dress showed from her elbows to her wrists, made to fit tightly to her arms.

I got up and, after kissing her, gave her the usual Arab greetings. As I sat down another lady appeared through the other door. I rose again and repeated the process, and still again as a third lady of the land came in. They plied me with questions.

"How are you? How are your children? We hope you are not tired after your journey? When did you arrive? Where did you come from? Where are you going? Who is this?"

"My maid."

I gathered that the first one to enter was Maneira, the King's favourite wife, known as Umm Mansur—Mother of Mansur. The second was a very pretty, round-faced girl of not more than twenty-five summers, dressed in a purple *thaub* over a cream-patterned under-dress.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"She is Umm Tallál", the others answered for her, "and also Umm Nawáf."

"Was that, then, your son who pulled the King's beard in the *mijlis* yesterday?"

She did not know, not having heard of the incident during my husband's interview with the King.

The name of the third lady was Bézé. A fourth now came in. She was of a different type from the others, with a pretty face and almost brown hair, and was swathed in a black *thaub* over a purple and gold under-dress.

"Who is this?" I asked Umm Mansur.

"She is Múdhí, and Ramadhán is her month."

"May God grant you a son", I murmured, and Hamda went on to say all the usual polite things for some minutes.

During this time a slave woman had come in and was quietly making coffee and tea for us. This was handed round and we all drank. It was very quiet and peaceful up there, with no crowds of inquisitive and prying women at the doors and windows. A child began to cry in the distance. A low whisper from Umm Mansur to Bézé for her to go and see that it was silenced was instantly obeyed, and we heard no more.

Frankincense was now brought round and handed to me many times, the slave woman holding it under the sleeves of my Arab *thaub* and *milfah*.

"You must squat over it", said the ladies. "Men like it. Your husband will like it if you do."

They were greatly pleased when I complied.

The correct thing now was for me to take my leave, but this I was reluctant to do. It was only ten-fifteen and I had been told that if I could remain with them until eleven o'clock, there might be a chance—and it would be my only chance—of meeting the King, who always came up to the *haram* at that hour. I was very relieved, therefore, when Umm Mansur told the slave woman in whispers that she had done wrong to bring in the frankincense so quickly. I just sat on, determined to see His Majesty.

Umm Mansur appeared worried, keeping murmuring to herself:

"Where, oh where, is Mansur? I don't know. I haven't seen him since yesterday morning."

"He is sick with fever in his house", came the answer.

"I can wait no longer. I must go to him."

Silently, though rather stiffly, she got up and went out. I questioned the others, who told me that Mansur had been ill for two days.

"Do you remember Dr Thoms,\* who was here last year?" I asked, making conversation. "He is now in Kuwait."

"Oh yes, a nice boy", replied Umm Tallál. "We hear that Dr Dame\* is dead. Is that so?"

\* Both members of the American Mission in the Persian Gulf.

"I think not, as he passed through Kuwait only a few days ago. You know Mrs Dame?"

"Yes, very well. Last time she brought her little boy, Rob Roy, with her."

"I have known her for many years", I said. "She is very nice."

They told me about their journey to Mecca each year; how they left Riyádh at such and such a time and after so many hours camped and rested, etc.—all in full detail; how all the drivers now had to drive very slowly and carefully, or else they were beaten, until they came to the sand, when they could go as fast as they liked.

"We may not say anything to them, only hold on tight", said Umm Tallál. "I am always worried about my children. They will not sit, but always want to stand up on the seat by the driver."

"Did an English lady come to see you last year?" I asked, having in mind the Countess of Athlone.

"When we were out at camp at Khafs, one came who could speak no Arabic. She seemed so sorry, making signs that she would like to cut out her tongue because she could not talk to us."

We chatted about America, then they asked about "the land where day is night". I described the north near the Pole to them, but wondered afterwards whether they had meant Australia, where it is night when we have day.

The wireless was a great pleasure to them. Every evening they heard the great clock over the *mijlis* in London striking the hour. The music from London at four o'clock Arabic time (10 p.m.) was most enjoyable. Cairo was also nice.

"But when they read the Qur'án from there we do not understand their Arabic very well."

There was now brought in a large tray on which were dishes of tinned peaches, pineapple and biscuits, all very neatly arranged. We all sat round and enjoyed them, eating with spoons, the slave woman holding a water-jug and basin for us to rinse our hands before and after eating.

It was nearly eleven. The women came and went, sometimes only one being left to entertain me. Presently Umm Tallál came in and asked: "Would you like to see the King?"

"Is that possible? I would like to very much."

The great moment had arrived, I thought. Umm Tallál left us, and the others told me what to do when the King entered.

"He will come here", they said. "You need not hide your face, but rise, go up to him and kiss his hand. He will then ask you how you are, how you enjoyed the journey, and will express the hope that you are comfortable and have everything you want out in the Budí'ah palace. You must likewise ask after his health and family. He will then go."

I made them repeat all the instructions, for fear I should make any mistake, and waited. The next I knew was a sudden hiding of the ladies' faces as there entered a very "white" Syrian *effendi*, whom I later discovered to be Dr Midhat, Shaikh al 'Ardh, brother of Fakhri Effendi, Shaikh al 'Ardh, who had come out to meet us as we had approached Riyádh. Dr Midhat was the King's private physician. In extremely fast Syrian Arabic he now repeated a message from His Majesty. I did not understand very well, but gathered the gist of what he was saying, which was to the effect that the King had not known that I was calling on the ladies that morning and was very sorry not to be able to see me. If I liked to call on the King's sister, Núra, Dr Midhat thought she would receive me at noon, but would find out.

The ladies then told me in easier Arabic what he had said. He went out and presently returned.

"The Shaikha Núra will receive you in her palace after *salat al 'asr* [afternoon prayer]", he said. "Your car is waiting."

"I must take my leave", I said.

"Coffee, coffee!" cried the ladies. "You must have more coffee."

After drinking three cups, I kissed them good-bye. Dr Midhat showed us down the stairs, where a manservant escorted us to the car. We got in and drove back to the Budí'ah palace, I very disappointed to think that my only chance of meeting the King had failed.

As soon as the 'asr had come I left for Qasr Núra by car again accompanied by Hamda and Sálím al Muzaiyin. In about half an hour we arrived at the house, which, owing to the fact that a large new wing was being added to it, with many sun-dried mud bricks lying about, was somewhat confusing. However, a small slave appeared on the scene and guided our driver to the entrance, where I alighted, followed



by Hamda. Having gone through the entrance and turned sharp left, we found ourselves under a pillared veranda surrounding a small courtyard.

Several women were waiting to receive us, and the usual Arab greetings were exchanged. We sat down on carpets, and leant against large cushions along the wall. I wondered where Núra was—this wonderful lady of whom I had heard so much, and whose height was said to equal that of her brother, King 'Abdul 'Azíz. Surely she must be joining us soon. Or was it all a fable, and was the gracious lady now sitting by my side and talking like the wife of a great desert shaikh in that attractive and beautiful Badawin Arabic—was this the famous Núra? I took a shot in the dark.

"O Núra, I am so pleased to meet you. I have heard so much about you."

She smiled, murmuring nice things in a low tone. All was well. Now I knew where I was. In a sharper voice she then began to fire questions at Hamda.

"Who are you? Where do you come from? What is your name, your mother's name, your father's name?" etc. etc.

Hamda murmured in reply that she was the mother of my children, and that it was no use asking her parents' names or whence she came.

"You would not know them", she said.

"Tell me, tell me", demanded Núra, becoming rather severe.

She was told everything she wanted to know about Hamda, then, having been satisfied as to her identity, asked:

"How are so and so in Kuwait? Are so and so still alive?"

Many questions she put concerning the leading families of the town.

"It is a long time since you were there, O Núra", I said. "When your brother captured Riyádh did he leave you in Kuwait?"

"Yes, and then he sent for me to come here."

She then introduced me to a tall, pretty girl sitting opposite.

"This is my daughter, Al Jauhaira.\* She is the wife of Faisal ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz."†

We exchanged smiles.

\* A diminutive of Al Jauhara—The Jewel.

† Second son of Ibn Sa'ud, now viceroy of Hijáz. Became Crown Prince in November 1953.

"Ma sha' Allah, Yá Núra!"\* I exclaimed. "You are still only a *bint*. How have you a daughter so big? You are truly like sisters."

"I have been very ill", Núra said. "For four months I lay on a bed of sickness, but thanks be to God I am well again."

"Al hamdu l'Illah", we murmured.

"Who are the other two ladies?" I asked.

"They are the wives of my son, Muhammad", who, she added, had been out hunting for several days with her husband, Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa, known affectionately as Sa'ud al Kabír.

"You must come to Mecca with us", she said.

"How can I? I am a Káfir."

"You must be one of us and become a Musalmah.† You must pray as we do, and then when you die you will go straight to the presence of Almighty God. I can't bear to think of you going to be burnt in everlasting fire. Oh, say you will! Say 'Insh' Allah'."

I kept quiet, not knowing quite what to do. She almost shook me then.

"Go on! Say 'Insh' Allah'."

"Insh' Allah", I murmured.

Núra turned to Hamda and implored her to see that I really became one of the faithful.

"O Núra", I said, "let my husband become one first, though I fear that then he would take one or two pretty Badawin girls as wives!"

"That is all right. Never mind. They all do that and we don't mind. It is good to have lots of women about. Is your daughter married yet?"

"No; she is at school, learning to write."

"Why must she learn?"

Here Al Jauhaira chipped in with:

"I know. Your women are not like ours. If they do not marry they must work and earn their living."

"True", I said. "We have to sit and wait for someone to ask us to marry him, and many girls are passed by and left unmarried."

\* "God be gracious to you, O Núra" or "The favour of God be upon you". In admiring, for example, a child or a valuable mare, one should always prefix this phrase, e.g. "Ma sha' Allah, what a lovely baby!" It will avert the evil eye.

† Feminine of Muslim.

"Let your daughter marry one of us", suggested Núra.

I then proceeded to tell her how one day a Badawin shaikh had come and asked for her hand. "State the number of camels", he had said, "and I will give them to you." After thinking awhile I had replied, "Give me all the Shuruf camels", knowing full well that the King had just taken them away from his tribe, the Mutair. He had gone away rather sad, but still thinks and asks about her.

The telephone bell now rang. A slave woman came in and opened a small box with a pointed lid, which was on the wall over my head. She proceeded to talk and laugh into the instrument, repeated some message to her mistress, then sent the reply.

"I'm still nervous of telephones", I admitted.

"Oh, they are very good", said Núra. "I don't know how we should get on without them now."

We had been taking coffee and tea during this conversation.

"The Shuyúkh",\* she said, "always come here in the afternoons, so I expect they will arrive shortly. Let us go over there and have some fruit, so that we may finish before they come."

She led me across her cleanly swept, hard mud courtyard into the corner of the veranda opposite, where on a square of patterned American cloth were spread dishes of peaches, pineapple, pears, biscuits and Damascus fruit. We rinsed our hands and began to eat with the spoons provided. It was refreshing and most enjoyable.

"Why didn't you come when we had fresh fruit?" they asked. "Only a month ago it was beautiful."

"I have only just returned from England", I told them, "so could not come any sooner."

Hardly had I finished drying my hands, when there was a sort of air of excitement and the words "Al Shuyúkh!" caught my ears.

"Come on, come on", said Núra to me, then sailed across the court to greet her brother.

The King was now seated in a large chair on the very spot where we had been sitting a short while before. His eldest son, the Amír Sa'ud, was standing near the entrance. The great 'Abdul 'Azíz stood up to greet me with a kindly smile.

"How are you?" he repeated several times in Arabic.

\* "Shaikhs", the name given to Ibn Sa'ud by his entourage and guards.

## Sa'ud Accompanies His Father

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After I had responded in Arabic and had said "How do you do?" in English to the Amír Sa'ud, the King bade me be seated. I squatted down on his right, his sister on his left. Núra began telling him all that I had been saying to her and how she had made me promise to become a Muhammadan and go to Mecca.

"O 'Abdul 'Azíz", I said, "you would cut my throat if I, a Káfir, went to Mecca."

He laughed and laughed at this remark. Núra asked him:

"Who is her husband?"

"Dickson, my friend of many long years."

"She seems to know about everything", said Núra, "and has asked me for permission to see the great gate of the Qasr 'Ajlán with the spearhead still in it."

"Of course she must see it, but where does she get all her information from?"

Here the King looked at me and laughed.

"You know best, O King", I replied, and he understood.

"Have you visited my new palace yet? That you certainly must see."

"May God give you long life", I murmured.

His is a great personality. Sa'ud, his son, standing there some yards away from us, seemed nothing as compared to him.

Núra said: "She tells me I look like a young girl, like my daughter's sister."

"True, O Núra", I exclaimed. "If ever my husband divorces me I shall come and live with you always. I want to remain young like you. The hurry and bustle of the West makes us old quickly."

Again the King laughed heartily, and now got up to take his leave. When he had left us, the Amír Sa'ud came up to me. Núra put her arm round his neck.

"How do you see Sa'ud?" she asked with great pride. "Like his father?"

"Yes", I replied, "and how tall he is!"

Slowly he said in English: "How do you do?"

"Very well, thank you. This is splendid. I see you have learnt some English in London."

He did not understand all this. With a merry laugh and shake of his hand he ran off quickly to join the King.



We now sat down once more, and coffee and tea were brought. A small Badawin lady came in and was greeted by them all.

"This is the King's wife", they said.

"No, no!" she protested, shyly covering her face.

"It is true", said Núra. "She is the sister of Shaikh Fawáz of the Ruwala."\*

The little round face was covered with tattoo marks, as were her hands and feet, and she seemed rather a stranger among the smooth milky-white faces of the other ladies. Her hand was swollen, and each one was giving her advice about it.

"May I take my leave?" I asked of Núra.

"You are permitted to do so. My slave will go with you and show you all over the new palace. Hurry, though, or it will be sunset and the gates will be closed."

We departed and went across to the Shamsíyah palace.

\* Fawáz Al Sha'alan, head of the Ruwala section of the 'Anizah to-day.



DECORATED CEILING CLOTH IN BUD'AH PALACE



## A Gracious Audience

### Chap. XV

#### SECOND AUDIENCE WITH THE KING

Whilst in Riyádh my wife and I went all over the city and suburbs entirely unhindered. There were visits to the old city of Dhara'íyah, former capital of Najd; to the two wireless stations, the royal garage, the new power-house, the magnificent new Qasr Shamsíyah, the racecourse, the Rashídite fort of 'Ajlán, captured by Ibn Sa'ud when he seized Riyádh by his remarkable *coup de main* at the beginning of his career, and the bazaars.

Hearing that I was looking round these last during the morning of the 27th, the King sent for me. I found him seated in the same council hall as that in which we had previously met. After preliminary greetings and inquiries after the health of my wife, he asked if I had seen Dhara'íyah. On my replying in the affirmative, he very graciously said that I could go anywhere and everywhere in his capital, photographing anything I wished.

"You are one of us, O Dickson, and you are free to do what you like in our country, coming and going where and when you like."

When I thanked him for his words he went on:

"As you will no doubt want to go to Hufuf and Qatíf from Riyádh and see the oil wells there, I have telegraphed to Ibn Jilúwi and told him to make the necessary arrangements."

I had some difficulty in explaining that, as I had only a limited number of days' leave, I could not manage the visit. After the world's radio news had been read out in Arabic for my benefit, I took my leave.

We were due to set off back for Kuwait after luncheon on Thursday, the 28th. At seven o'clock that morning, we witnessed a great *'ardha* or war dance, which lasted for four hours in the great square in front of the palace: my wife from the royal ladies' quarters, where she sat with Núra and the princesses; I from a seat on the ground floor, near the entrance to the palace, where Fuad Hamza looked after me. On the next page is my wife's account.



## THE WAR DANCE

By Violet Dickson

There was to be an *'ardha* on the fourth day of our visit, and I was invited by the Amír Sa'ud to come and watch it all from the upper windows in the palace. An hour after sunrise Hamda and I left for the palace in a special car. We entered by the same gate as before. The small courtyards were now a mass of mares, all gaily caparisoned in saddle-cloths and halters of coloured wool.

We made our way through them all and on up the stairs, along many verandas, through rooms both small and large, until we came to a small room, the windows of which were crowded with ladies, among whom I recognized some of those who had entertained me on the Tuesday morning.

"Here is a good place", they said to me.

I looked out of the small window and could see right down into the open square, now a mass of white-robed, armed men, all swaying to and fro and chanting.

A strip of white cloth was nailed all along and over these windows. The women were all behind it and had also covered their faces rather heavily. Suddenly Hamda and I were wafted away.

"Come on, come on", said some stranger.

Not knowing why we were being moved or where we were going we followed her across the bridge spanning the court, along more passages and then into an enormous room. Here again each window was a mass of women. The large cushions from round the room had been collected into piles so that one could kneel comfortably and see out. Each window had iron bars and little wooden shutters gaily painted, as were all the larger doors, with designs of the Qasím. The ceiling and beams were all covered over with white cloth. A long strip of the same material was fixed over the windows the whole length of the room. Needless to say, by the time we left, it was all torn down and lying on the floor!

It was now about eight o'clock. Down in the court, drums were beating, and men dancing with swords in upraised hands, while long lines of others were swaying to and fro with linked arms and chanting

## The King Joins the Dancers

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some sort of war song, telling of love and courage. Presently the Amír Sa'ud appeared below us, dressed in white silk with a golden dagger strapped round his waist and wearing the light gold 'aqál over his white silk *kaffiyah* (or *ghutra*). With him were some twenty-seven lads: the King's own children and those of Amír Musa'ad al Jilúwi, governor of Ha'il, as well as other youngsters of the Al Sa'ud royal house.

Greater order and straighter lines were now demanded, Sa'ud pushing some back and beckoning others to come forward until these seven or eight hundred dancing men were all in perfect formation. The dance continued, Sa'ud joining in, all the time surrounded by men beating on small drums with short canes. One drummer was especially noticeable with his black-tasselled red fez held on by a strap under his chin.

The King had now come out from the palace and was seated on the raised stone *datcha* at the east end of the square, surrounded by the Al Mushaiyikh, the holy divines of Wahábi land. Slowly the dancers all moved towards the King, who then joined in, and there in the distance, sword in hand and towering above the multitude, he danced with them for what must have been twenty minutes. From where I was it was difficult to see him; he was immediately to our left, and the iron bars of the windows prevented a good view. I found it was only possible by removing my *milfah* and shutting my left eye completely!

After what seemed a very long time, and my knees were aching with kneeling, we saw the King and his sons slowly moving among the dancers and making for the entrance to the palace. Now we saw him beautifully as they all came under the window. I stayed looking out until the King had disappeared into the palace. When I got down from the window the room was empty except for Hamda and one slave woman, everyone else having rushed away.

The slave woman made as if to go also, but Hamda, who was rather frightened, implored her:

"Please don't go. Show us the way out, for we can never find it alone."

We followed her down the passages. As we came to the bridge there was a man standing there who said, seeming anxious to get all

the women back in their respective quarters: "Are you the last? Hurry along, please."

It was rather like *Alice in Wonderland*!

We passed through Dr Midhat's small dispensary over the gate and, still urged on with "This way, this way", finally found ourselves alone in Umm Mansur's reception room. Here we sat for some time, while a slave woman came and went, until we were joined by Umm Tallál and the lady they called Bézé, who were soon followed by Núra. They were all very nice, hoping I had enjoyed the 'ardha and had been able to see well. It had been in honour, they told me, of one of the small boys, who had completed his reading of the Qur'án—a *khátim* he is called. Núra said she had looked for me and could not find me. She had been watching from a room at the far end, beyond where we had been.

She now turned to the others and inquired the name of the stranger who had kissed her brother's hand down in the square. Had it been my husband?

"No", they replied. "That was the son of the Shaikh of Dubai."

How they knew and she did not puzzled me a little.

"Haven't you seen Dickson?" I asked her.

"Yes, of course I have. Send my very best *salá'ams* to him."

"He also sends many *salá'ams* to you, O Núra."

She now remarked on my earrings and admired them. I took them off to show her.

"Where did they come from?" she asked.

"I got them in Jerusalem many years ago. They came from Bokhara, far, far beyond Persia."

"What did they cost?"

"I think it was three pounds."

"Not dear."

She turned to examine the gold stitching on my black georgette *thaub*. The pattern of shamrock leaves woven in the georgette pleased her. I told her that this was material newly come into the bazaars of Kuwait and that I would send her some when I got back home. We chatted on other matters until Dr Midhat appeared in the doorway. He said the King would receive me and asked me to follow him. I

## Alone with the King

### Chap. XV

went with him along a passage, then round to the right, where, at the entrance to another veranda, he left me.

Sitting at the end in a chair, his face turned from me, was a man in a white cotton shirt and white *kaffiyah* without an *'aqál*. For a moment I did not recognize him as the King. Then he got up and welcomed me, bidding me be seated in a chair by his side. After the customary polite questions about my health, etc., he called for water. A slave woman came forward with a glass in her hand, and he drank it all off. He was obviously tired and hot after the war dance, for it was now nearly noon, but he had made this effort to see me before I left his capital.

For some time he chatted with me about his family—how he insisted that all the boys began to ride at an early age and also learnt to shoot well.

“They must all be soldiers”, he said.

I asked him for permission to visit the Summan in the spring and see the flowers. He smiled and answered, “Insh’ Allah”. I did not know whether he would dismiss me or whether I should ask to be allowed to go. Then I saw Dr Midhat beckoning to me from the end of the passage. After once more thanking the King for all his kindness to us both, I took my leave and returned with the doctor to the room where we had left the ladies.

Dr Midhat began to talk to me in French, as did also a Syrian lady doctor who had come in. The royal ladies left us once more, then Dr Midhat told me that he had taken some good pictures of the dance, and asked if I would get the film developed in Kuwait and returned to him. He added that, as he thought my husband had not taken any pictures, I could keep copies of any I liked. I gladly consented to do this, and as there were still two exposures to be made, he took a picture of Hamda and me sitting in the room, and another of me in the sunlight in front of one of the pretty doors.

“What a pity I can’t photograph the queens”, he said.

Múdhí, she whose month was Ramadhán, now entered and I took my leave of her. She ordered a slave woman to go and find the other ladies so that they also could say good-bye to me. After a few minutes the answer came that they were occupied and unable to come, so Hamda and I went downstairs to the waiting car.



## FAREWELL TO RIYÁDH

Before my wife's last meeting with Ibn Sa'ud, I had seen him myself. Sensing that the *'ardha* was nearly over, Fuad Hamza and I had repaired to his office in the palace. As we sat there drinking coffee the King suddenly appeared alone, somewhat hot and breathless as a result of his dancing efforts. After resting a few minutes he told me that he had heard we were leaving that afternoon and had come purposely to say good-bye.

He recounted laughingly how he had met my wife in his sister's palace and how both Núra and he had tried to make her a good Musalmah.

"But she hesitated because, according to her, she feared that you, O Dickson, would follow suit and marry three other wives."

Still laughing heartily he told me of my wife's assurance that if ever I divorced her she was going to come to Riyádh and settle down with Núra in the Shamsíyah palace.

Having made this little joke he again reverted to the inevitable Palestine question and, in half an hour's talk, recapitulated all the arguments and points that he had previously made, this time with more than marked earnestness. He appeared genuinely obsessed by the danger of a Pan-Arab split with the English.

"Your Government is digging an enormous chasm between itself and the Arabs. If it does not cease digging, both will be shortly engulfed. There still remains a small bridge across this chasm, but further digging will cause it to crash, and then that will be the end of all Arab friendship with England. Can nothing persuade your Government to pause?"

He went on to relate how the Turks had once been a great race and had known how to treat the Arab princes of Arabia with consideration and honour, not only taking their advice, but also giving them great titles and rewards. Those were the days when Turkey had had great men in charge of her destinies. In later times the Turks had failed to produce such men, with the result that they had not been able to retain Arabia or even the Arabs' respect. Bad officials had appeared everywhere and had gone out of their way to harm their central Government's prestige and good name. What had been the outcome? Turkey had crashed, weakened from within, and entirely owing to

## Our Departure

### Chap. XV

the fault of her miserable provincial officials—men who played for their own hand only, caring not what harm they did, so long as they could earn cheap promotion and make money by taking bribes.

“Your Government to-day”, said the King, “is going much the same way as the Turks did of old. Your officials in important localities are following in the footsteps of the later-day Turks and are not doing their duty to the central Government.”

Here he instanced the deposition in 1923 of Shaikh 'Isa ibn 'Ali Al Khalifah, ruler of Bahrain, which, he said, had done more to harm England in Arabia than any other action for a hundred years.

“Shaikh 'Isa”, said the King, “was the father not only of the Persian Gulf, but also of the whole of Arabia. We Arabs, especially we and our house, looked upon him with the greatest affection. We would even have died for him had he raised his little finger and asked for help. What happened? He was thrust out of his little kingdom, an old, weary man ninety years old, and died dishonoured and heart-broken. All for what? To please the personal ambition of a certain political officer. Such things should not be allowed to happen. Your Government should choose its officials better.”

That, he continued, was why he had asked that His Majesty's Government should send him specially selected officers from time to time, to hear what he had to say “min al ras illal ras” (“from my head to their head”)—that is, direct. After hearing some further diatribes against certain other British officials in the Persian Gulf who need not be mentioned, I snatched the opportunity to thank His Majesty for all his hospitality and kindness to my wife and myself, and prepared to depart. His last act was to have Reuter's telegrams read over to him in my presence.

“I live on the wireless news these days”, he said, “for world affairs are reaching a crisis everywhere and I *must* keep in touch.”

I then respectfully took my leave.

At the Bud'ah palace the cars were waiting loaded up for the return journey. We had luncheon and, after tipping all the servants (twenty-nine of them), said good-bye to everyone. The sound of the singing of the water-wheels in the garden behind the palace, which had been working day and night during our stay, was soon drowned by the roar of our cars. We felt sad.

## THE RETURN JOURNEY

By Violet Dickson

As it was 1.30 p.m. when we left, we camped for the night at Rumáh wells, ninety-two miles from Riyádh. It was a lovely evening. The ground around seemed full of jerboas' holes, though I did not see any of these rodents. I wandered about after dark with a torch, but came only upon a small brown bird roosting in the little hole she had dug for herself.

That night at supper much amusement was caused when our driver Muhammad broke a front tooth in the tough meat and swallowed it!

Next morning we visited Rumáh wells and took several photographs. There are five wells, each at the top of a small natural hill. The actual wells are all built up inside with masoned stone and are about twenty feet across their mouths. The water is thirty-five *ba'as* (fathoms) down—that is to say, at a depth of two hundred and ten feet. Round the one we were watching, five wheels on rickety poles had been erected and there were five camels, mostly ridden by women, pulling up the water by walking down the natural slope of the hill. There were hundreds of camels being watered, and the place echoed with the continual calling to each one by name to come and drink.

I wandered off to look at a *dhalla*, the large camel-litter used by women. It was gaily decorated with cowrie shells and coloured cloth, and hanging on one side of it was the lady owner's gold nose-ring, an imposing ornament with a large turquoise set at the bottom end, and having long, fine chains hanging down from it. The lady owning it had removed the ornament in order to draw water. She wanted me to buy it, but I had no money. They were all of the Sbei' tribe.

We crossed the Dahana again quite easily, this time following the main track all the way. It was even easier than the drivers' pet way used on the outward journey. We stopped at Dahal as Shámi, where the camel road goes off in the direction of Hasa, and got out. The *dahal* has a very small opening, not more than four feet across, and the sides are like polished marble, the ropes having cut into them to a depth of as much as ten inches. It must be very old. Underground, I believe, it is one of the biggest.

## Porcupine Quills

### Chap. XV

Our next halt was at an old disused *dahal*. It is known as Dahal al Nakhl, as it has two palm-trees growing on it. Here, as there was some shade, we decided to have luncheon. I picked up several porcupine quills, a barn-owl's feather and some ducks' feathers, which suggested that in the rains the *dahal* fills with water and flying birds settle there.

Our second night was spent in a very nice spot just north of Jariya 'Ilya, on the site of an old Badawin camp, where there was plenty of *jalla* and *hamdh* bushes. We left again at six o'clock in the morning and reached Kuwait at eleven.

'Abdullah al Mulla was out to meet us some way beyond the Jahra gate. We stopped a few minutes in the bazaar to see Mulla Sâleh, and an inquisitive crowd collected to look at me in my Arab clothes.

As shown on the car's odometer, the total for the double journey was 1,520 kilometres, just over 944 miles.



## REACTIONS

My personal reactions to all I had seen and heard in Riyádh can be briefly summed up.

While the people of Sa'udi Arabia, and especially the religious leaders, were manifestly in great excitement over the Palestine question, the King was definitely in control and would keep his people in hand. Though himself indignant and distressed at the trend of policy in Palestine, particularly the scheme for partition, he was determined not to jeopardize the friendly relations existing between him and the British Government. Hence he would make no move at all of an anti-British nature in Arabia, beyond giving advice and offering suggestions.

Nevertheless his policy of remaining neutral was going to harm his prestige in Arabia, and he could see this. I felt that if the British Government could grant him some sort of *quid pro quo* for standing aloof in the present crisis—something that would be of immediate benefit to the Arabs of the Arabian peninsula proper, and that could be seen and appreciated by all his peoples—the British Government would be wise to grant him such. He would have his own way of explaining the gift to his subjects, and a less hostile atmosphere among the Arabs would, I felt, follow. Any *quid pro quo* would, however, have to err on the very generous side. Anything niggardly would spoil all.

My wife, who had been most affectionately received by the royal ladies on three occasions, had been particularly attracted by the Lady Núra, whom she described as one of the most charming and lovable women she had ever met, with all the magnetism and nobility of her great brother, and clearly one of the most important personages in the whole of Arabia, sharing in the King's most intimate councils. She was deeply interested in the Kuwait Oil Company's new oil township at Maqwa. From what she said to my wife, she believed it to be some form of military fort or post erected to defend the southern frontier of Kuwait. My wife had some difficulty in making her understand that there was no fort of any kind there. No doubt Núra had in mind the Iraqi post of Busaiyah, in the southern desert, which had caused such a lot of trouble.

Núra bint 'Abdul Rahman al Faisal Al Sa'ud lived until 1950, when

she passed away peacefully in Riyádh. Every 'Ajmán adores her memory, not so much for her brother's sake as for that of Sa'ud Al 'Aráfa. She was undoubtedly one of Arabia's fairest, greatest and most famous daughters of all time, her name being rivalled only by that of the mighty King Ibn Sa'ud. Her son too is no ordinary man. He is named Muhammad, but by the 'Ajmán he is called Shagrán—"The Grey One". They just worship him.

## CHAPTER XVI

# Kuwait, 1939

*A Wedding in Kuwait—Noblesse Oblige—The Teeth of 'Abdullah ibn Hijji—The Woman Who Sneezed—The Turkish Pasha Buys a Mare—The Jew and the Prophet—The Curing of Sa'ud ibn 'Agáb—A Kuwait Mystic—Two Devils Cast Out of Batha—The Olcott Memorial Hospital*

### A WEDDING IN KUWAIT

By Violet Dickson

The prospective bride was Moza bint Fátima, niece of Hamda, my maid. Her father Khalaf was very poor and stricken with bad lameness in one leg, due probably to a slight stroke some years before. He earned his living working on a small piece of land given him by the shaikhs, growing lettuces, spinach, radishes and other vegetables in season, various herbs, and cauliflowers and cabbage from seed given him by me, and a few yellow daisies and sunflowers. His wife Wadha did not care for gardening, preferring to visit her friends and to attend any ceremony that might be taking place in the neighbourhood.

Some years previously Khalaf had engaged a young lad to help him in his garden. Shortly afterwards the boy's parents had died, leaving him an orphan. Now grown up, he had, Jacob like, been given Khalaf's daughter in marriage, really in sort of payment for his work and help during the last few years.

Marriage and divorce are extremely easy in Arabia. The marriage ceremony is very simple indeed: the *mulla* (priest) merely asks the man if he will take the girl and the prospective bridegroom replies "yes" in front of witnesses. He then asks the girl's representative (her father or brother) if she agrees to have this man for husband, and when the reply "yes" is given, the ceremony is over. Occasionally the girl is seated behind the tent partition and hears everything that goes on, but

this is rare. To become divorced a man need only say to his wife before witnesses that he does not want her any more. He has to make the statement three times for it to be valid.\*

The marriage is preceded by a short period of *milcha* (engagement), the celebration of which lasts for several nights. It was on the third night of this particular *milcha* that we were invited to take part in the rejoicing. It was about seven o'clock in the evening on a day in January 1939 when we went to Hamda's house. Her little courtyard was crowded with women, some veiled, some unveiled, and the whole lit up by an incandescent lamp hanging from a pole jutting out of the wall. We were ushered into Hamda's room, where we were given coffee, and then we both sat in her doorway, my husband somewhat in the shadows, while the chorus of *'aidaus*, who consisted mostly of old negresses, played their drums and sang songs befitting the occasion, some, of course, bringing in the names of our children, Sa'ud and Zahra.

From time to time one of the many Arab girls present, more smartly dressed than the others perhaps, would shyly undo her plaits, come forward into the small space before the door and do her dance. If she was an *'Azmi* girl from a neighbouring garden she danced the dance peculiar to the Badawin *'Awázim* women; if a town lass, dressed in short frock and cotton stockings, she danced the dance of the town women, which is a more sedate affair, but includes the wriggling of the hips and neck amid much ululation and applause. This is the achievement of a first-class dancer. Some girls danced well, while others were too shy, insisting that they did not know how.

The bride to be was conspicuous by her absence, having taken refuge in a neighbour's house. Her mother acted as major-domo, ordering people about, driving others away who tried to come in uninvited. She was never quiet the whole time. Every now and then she would take a handful of dried peanuts and melon seeds and scatter them over the heads of the dancers, upon which followed a rush by all the children present, who scrambled over anyone in the way, to get some of the spoil.

After about an hour and a half of this performance, during which time Hamda kept coming into the room and, sitting with us, told us

\* See page 506.



who so and so was or what the song they were singing was about, we decided to leave.

About eight days later came the wedding night proper, and once again we were both invited to attend. This ceremony was also to take place at Hamda's house. Having promised to lend her own bedroom for a week to her niece and the bridegroom, she did not come to work that day, and from early morning was cleaning out the room, removing her trinkets and clothes and preparing it as a bridal chamber. Borrowed from the neighbours were about twenty large glass vases in blues and pinks, which must stand in rows in each niche in the wall around the room. Placed between these were candles in handleless coffee-cups as, said Hamda, it would not be propitious to light a wedding chamber with an oil lamp. Blue silk mattresses and cushions were next placed on the floor round the wall of the room, and on Hamda's large bed were hung new curtains of pink georgette tied with bows of blue ribbon. On the bed was placed a new mattress and over that a new red cotton quilt—supplied by the bridegroom, following Arab custom—and a hard stuffed pillow of blue silk with a white frilled cotton covering round the centre.

From early morning, too, Wadha and a neighbour had been busy preparing Moza bint Fátima, washing her hair with the leaves of the *sidr* tree, bathing her and putting henna on her hands and feet, and finally sprinkling *dihin 'audh* (oil of 'audh) on her hair and perfuming her clothes by placing them over a small wooden, steeple-like frame under which, in an incense burner, burnt charcoal sprinkled with small pieces of frankincense. The bride's father had brought from his garden in a small palm-leaf basket the fragrant tops of the sweet-smelling *mushmu'*, sprinkled with water to keep them fresh. Before the ceremony began these were sprinkled with rose-water and scattered under and over the red quilt on the bridal bed.

At about six o'clock in the evening we went to the house, the courtyard being brilliantly lit as before and crowded to suffocation with women. We were greeted by the bride's mother and once again taken inside the bridal chamber, from there to watch the women dancing just outside the door. These continued to sing and dance until the warning was given that the bridegroom was approaching. He had prayed and washed at the mosque at 1.30 Arabic time, and

## Arrival of the Bridegroom

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now headed a moving procession of fifty or sixty male friends and neighbours. Bright lamps held up high preceded him to the house, and five or six men with drums danced as they came along.

The Persian *'usta* (master mason or craftsman) who had helped him with a money present had to be visited first, so the procession passed Hamda's house and stopped a little farther down the street where, outside *'Usta Ahmad's* house, the drums beat and the men danced for some seven or eight minutes. This is an old custom. At large weddings the procession takes several hours to get to its destination.

At last they were at the door of Hamda's house. Inside there was much scurrying and finding of *'abas* as the women hastily covered their faces and withdrew, some into another room. Others, heavily veiled, remained standing along the back wall of the yard.

The candles inside the room were now lighted and I was hurried out and into another room, from the open window of which I could watch the proceedings. Harold was left alone inside the bridal chamber, rather worried as to what he was expected to do. The bridegroom was taken straight into this room and sat down on the blue silk cushions next to Harold. This is the customary time for two or three friends of the bridegroom to sit with him and give him the final instructions and teachings concerning the duty of a bridegroom on his wedding night, but, owing to Harold being there, this part did not take place and the shy young man was left alone with Harold.

Outside in the yard the drumming and dancing of the men went on with great fervour, and rose-water was freely sprinkled over them all. Inside the room in which I had been put lay the bride on a bed, all huddled up under an old *'aba*. She was sobbing most of the time. Several of her girl friends round her were trying to cheer her up with jokes and rather lewd remarks, which seemed to make her more miserable. Every now and then they would drag away the *'aba* and put their hands on her heart, which they exclaimed was beating violently. She was rather quietly dressed in a simple silk under-dress and a black *thaub* with a little gold embroidery round the neck. Her hair was nicely braided and oiled, the palms of her hands and her feet being coloured black with a preparation of lime put on over the orange henna.

At about nine o'clock the dancers and their friends thought it was time to go home, so they all departed. Hamda now hurried in to the bridegroom, whispered final instructions in his ear, and took post with him preparatory to the entry of the bride. Just as she was being brought along, Harold was seized by some of the relatives and taken out into the yard.

Moza was covered up in an *'aba* and surrounded by about four women, who partly carried her along. Her mother was with the group, and they all took the bride inside the chamber. There the *'aba* was removed from her and placed on the floor. The bridegroom was brought up to it and placed facing *qibla*—that is, in the direction of Mecca—with the *'aba* on the floor in front of him, ready for him to say his prayers. After a few minutes, during which time the women arranged the bride's plaits and dress nicely around her, they kissed her and left the room, closing the door behind them. Moza's younger sister now burst into tears and rushed to the door as though to rescue her. She had to be forcibly dragged away by her mother, who by this time was also nearly in tears.

Inside the chamber the bridegroom must, of course, first pray on the bride's *'aba* before any consummation of the marriage takes place. This is the rule. All the invited guests sit around and wait in the adjoining courtyard and rooms, every now and then giving vent to the joy cry with great gusto.

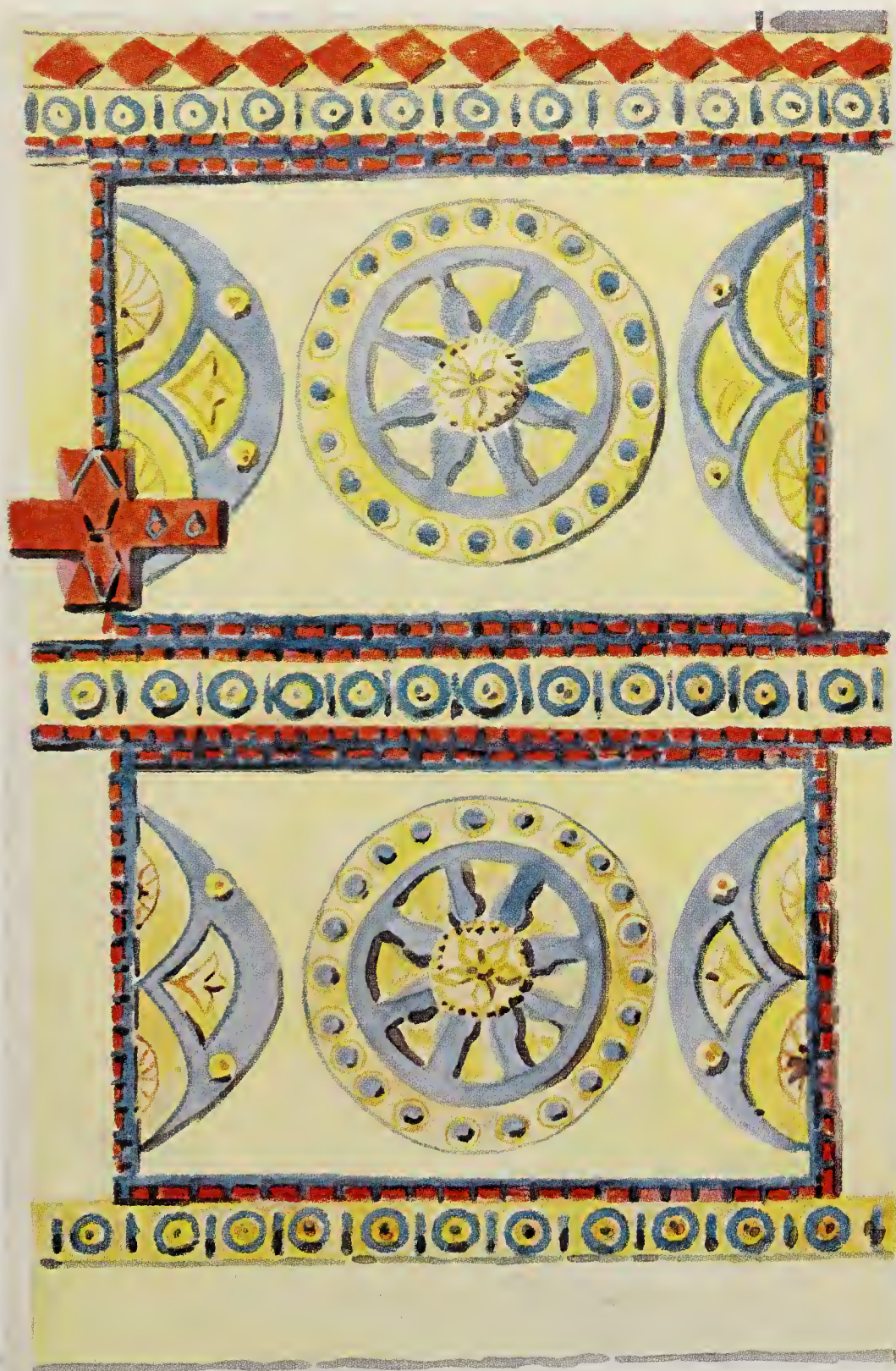
Not wishing to remain there until probably midnight, we now took our departure, though to all the other guests this part of the ceremony was not to be missed.

Next day Hamda regaled us with what had happened after we left. About midnight, she said, shrieks came from the bride, which was the signal for further loud joy cries from the guests. Then, some time later, the door was slightly opened, a small blood-stained piece of cloth thrown out, and the door closed once more. Her mother rushed forward, picked up the cloth and showed it to all the guests. This is an old custom and proves to the persons assembled that the bride was virgin and that she had been carefully looked after.

The neighbours and guests then departed.

About dawn, said Hamda, the bridegroom came out, washed himself all over, then prayed and went out. The bride's mother and friends





DECORATED DOOR IN BUD'AH PALACE





went in to her, washed her, which included the pouring of water over her head, changed all her clothes and prepared her once more for her husband, who would return to her later in the morning.

During that day and the next there are fixed times when the bridegroom goes in unto his wife, and only in the evening of the third day is she arrayed in golden ornaments and all her friends come and congratulate her. With that intention we went to Hamda's house an hour or so before sunset on the third day. We were ushered into a room full of women who had also called. We were given coffee and were sprinkled with rose-water, after which *'audh* was burnt and brought round.

The bride was next brought in and presented. She knelt before us in turn to be congratulated on her marriage. She looked really beautiful, a very different person from the one I had seen weeping in a corner on the night of the wedding. She had on a peach-coloured under-dress of silk and over it a blue georgette *thaub* beautifully embroidered in gold thread. On her head was a golden covering, studded with turquoise and with a fringe of golden Dutch guilder, which lay on her forehead. She wore golden earrings and a nose-ring of pearls and turquoise. A necklace of golden chains hung down on the front of her dress. Down her back hung long black pieces of cloth on which were sewn solid golden ornaments in the shape of tiny inverted basins. Her wrists were adorned with many golden bracelets, her ankles with two large, heavy golden anklets.

Unfortunately for her all these were borrowed jewels, lent by the various shaikhly ladies for three or four nights to any family who asked for the loan of them, after which time they are duly returned tied up in some old headcloth or silk handkerchief.

The bride then becomes a very ordinary person once more. After a seven-days' honeymoon spent in her mother's house (in Moza's case, her aunt's), she returns to her husband's home with him.

Poor Moza's married life was short-lived. At the end of 1941 her husband was taken very ill after a meal of prawns and died within the week, leaving her with one little boy.

## NOBLESSE OBLIGE

'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún will be remembered as he who murdered 'Abdullah ibn Ahmad al Sána, governor of Baghdad, in 1931. After our meeting at Basra on his release from prison I always sent 'Abdullah Beg two greetings cards every year, one on the occasion of the 'Id al Fitr, the other on the 'Id al Dhahíyah. Beyond this I had not met him or written to him. He lived in complete retirement, only going out into the southern desert, south-west of Zubair, every spring season with a few friends to enjoy the green pastures of the desert and to hawk.

That he still had the interests of every member of the Al Sa'dún close to his heart and could be trusted to help any one of them in need, is well illustrated by the following little story. It was this attitude of his in a rapidly changing Iraq, where loyalties and old friendships were for ever clashing, that made one like him.

In 1939 a certain Bandar Al Sa'dún, accompanied by his wife, two small boys, a girl and an infant, arrived in Kuwait from Riyádh without my knowledge. Bandar was a hot-headed young man who had served Colonel Leachman, of desert fame, during the First World War and had accompanied him on many of his desert journeys and forays. After Leachman's death Bandar had apparently been granted a small pension by the British authorities, but when the Arab Government had come into power in Iraq, it had ceased to be paid—a not uncommon complaint among those who had served and fought for the British. Bandar was too stupid or proud to try to find out how to go about getting his grievance put right. Instead he went round grousing against the Iraq Government and every Englishman in high place in Baghdad, accusing the one of having deprived him of his pension because he was a Sa'dúni, and the other of breaking faith and letting down friends.

In the end Bandar had removed himself and his family from Iraq and gone to live in Riyádh under the aegis of that truly great champion of any Arab in trouble, His Majesty King 'Abdul 'Azíz Al Sa'ud. There Bandar had resided for a couple of years and received treatment befitting his station in life. The King made no mistakes in such cases. Having completed his two years of voluntary exile Bandar thought

## Imprisonment

### Chap. XVI

the time ripe to return to Iraq and get his grievance put right. In Kuwait he decided to leave wife and family behind and proceed alone to see how the land lay and whether the moment was propitious for advancing his claims on both British and Arab Governments. He did not come near me before his departure for Iraq, nor did I know that his family was in the town. He had, I fear, become rather anti-British.

Bandar, hot-headed as ever, got into trouble in Iraq almost at once, though I did not know of this till later. Apparently he went to Samáwah to see about the recovery of some local debt and a car that had been confiscated when he had gone to Riyádh, and fell foul of the *qaimaqám* there. He was accused of speaking against the *hakúma* and of disloyalty, and was locked up for an indefinite period, without having been tried or given any particular term of imprisonment. Nor apparently was he allowed to write to anyone, even to his family.

Bandar's wife in Kuwait could get no news at all of her husband's whereabouts, and soon began to be in financial difficulties. Bandar had told her that he would return in under a month and take her away, but when two months went by and there was no sign of him she began to feel the pinch. True to type and proud to a degree, she preferred to try to tide over her difficulties by selling her jewellery. This she did, living on the proceeds for a third month. Nothing would induce her, as she told my wife afterwards, to beg help from anyone.

But the crash had to come, especially as the landlord of the house that Bandar had rented was pressing for back rent. In despair and after having gone without decent food for several days, she at last decided to send her two small sons, 'Ali and Muliammad, to see my wife and myself and solicit our aid. They were aged about ten and eight respectively, and beautifully mannered and dressed they were. Haltingly and shyly they told us their story, and of their mother's plight. Underground news had just reached her, they said, that their father was in prison in Samáwah. They then asked if we could lend their mother three hundred rupees, which would be repaid when their father returned. Little 'Ali bravely added that with a hundred rupees of this amount he would proceed to Baghdad and see King Gházi. He felt confident, he said, that he could get the King to order his father's release.



My wife and I were shocked by this news. We at once went round with the boys to see their mother. I remained in another room while my wife saw the lady, who was quite young and appeared capable. My wife at once took a great fancy to her and very soon found out the true state of affairs. Apart from themselves they had a manservant and maid to cater for, and there was absolutely nothing at all to eat in the house.

We left her with enough money to see her through another month. I also paid the arrears of rent and reported the family's presence in Kuwait to the ruler Shaikh Ahmad, who, no less distressed than we had been by the lady's predicament, immediately sent round two bags of rice, a bag of flour, and several baskets of dates to meet immediate needs.

The next day little Muhammad came to report that his brother 'Ali had left for Basra and Baghdad with part of the money we had supplied, taking the servant with him. This was a plucky effort and deserved success. A month later we received a letter from 'Ali saying that the servant had absconded *en route* to Baghdad and that 'Ali had seen the King, who had promised to look into the matter. On his return journey 'Ali had stopped at Samáwah and seen Bandar for a few minutes. In anticipation of his father's release he was staying with his grandfather Fahad Beg al Sulaimán Al Sa'dún on his estate near Nasiriyah. This news was passed on to Bandar's wife, who had been in the depths of despair at receiving no tidings of her son, believing that he had been gaoled along with his father.

After my first visit to the lady, I had got busy and had found out who were her husband's nearest relatives. To three of these, all prominent persons of substance in Basra, I wrote asking them either to send down funds to enable Bandar's wife to support herself and her children, or to take her away to Basra and look after her. It was unthinkable, I said, that a Sa'dún lady should be left to starve in a strange land.

I received no replies to these letters. Time-servers all, they obviously feared to assist the wife and children of one of their number who was in the bad books of the Government, and no doubt argued that it would be safer to disown relationship. I then tried my friend Shaikh Farhán al Rahama of Hartha, who had been my Arab assistant at Bahrain, asking him to use his influence with Bandar's relatives and

## 'Abdullah Beg Al Sa'dún's Generosity

### Chap. XVI

explain the state of affairs. He did his best and saw them all, but reported failure. I believe he accused them to their faces of cowardly betrayal.

In the end I bethought me of 'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún at Kutaiban. I wrote him a soberly worded letter explaining all the circumstances and urging, for the honour of the Al Sa'dún, that help be afforded to the destitute wife of one of his clansmen.

'Abdullah Beg was only very distantly connected with Bandar and had no family ties at all with the wife, yet my letter met with an immediate response. 'Abdullah Beg sent down his own personal negro servant in a specially hired taxi with a bag of eight hundred rupees in cash, which the man handed to me with a letter from his master. In a few charmingly worded sentences 'Abdullah Beg thanked me for my wife's care of Bandar's wife and children. He said that Bandar's wife was indeed a great and noble lady in her own right and that our recognition of this had filled him with deep pleasure, for by honouring her we had honoured him, the head of all the Al Sa'dún.

"Would that other Europeans in Iraq", he wrote, "thought and acted as you and Mrs Dickson have done, for many misunderstandings and misconceptions would thus have been avoided in the past."

He asked me to be sure to let him know if at any time I wanted more money, adjuring me to come to him and to no one else for further assistance. He added the good news that Bandar would shortly be freed; he had had a personal note from the King to this effect.

A month went by, during which we visited Bandar's wife many times. Then came Bandar himself with little 'Ali and great was the happiness of the reunited family. Bandar left his wife in our care while he went to Riyádh to pay his respects to King Ibn Sa'ud. On his return he took mother and children to Riyádh once more. I believe they eventually went back to Iraq, but am not sure.

The point of this story is, of course, 'Abdullah Beg's immediate coming to the rescue when everyone else had failed. This showed the type of man he was, and also that *noblesse oblige* and courage were not mere words to him. I, for one, shall always be grateful to him, and trust that others, on reading what I have written, will form a better opinion of this great and proud leader of the Al Sa'dún.

## THE TEETH OF 'ABDULLAH IBN HIJJI

'Abdullah ibn Hijji had been servant of four Shaikhs of Kuwait. At the time of this story he was in charge of the Darwázat al Burai'isi (now named Darwázat al Sha'ab), the second most important gate leading out of Kuwait. He and his wife Fátima were special friends of ours. When we went out riding we would send our horses out to the Burai'isi gate, to which we followed them in the car, which we parked outside 'Abdullah's house ready for our return. When we came home from our rides we would dismount inside the gate, send our horses home and have half an hour's chat with 'Abdullah and Fátima on rugs spread out on the floor inside their little compound and in the shade of their small house.

He was a great gentleman, was 'Abdullah, and his coffee was the best in Kuwait after that of His Highness Shaikh Ahmad himself. He had a very cheery way with him and if one ever felt tired or disheartened with the affairs of this world, a quarter of an hour with 'Abdullah would alter one's outlook entirely, and one came away happy and with every care dispelled.

'Abdullah had a great fund of humour and spoke beautiful Najdi Arabic. I have been told by that great scholar, the late Dr John Van Ess of Basra, that 'Abdullah ibn Hijji's Arabic was a delight to hear and quite up to the best he had ever heard. Fátima too was an equally charming person, devoted to 'Abdullah, with two adopted children, Jásir and Maneira, son and daughter of her brother and sister respectively. She had never had a child of her own.

Fátima always sat by my wife when 'Abdullah was regaling us with some story or other after he had given us coffee. When he wanted to tease Fátima his chief topic of conversation was the type of girl he was next going to take to wife. Fátima invariably rose to the bait, explaining that 'Abdullah was in his dotage and that it was all his fault she was childless.

"Did he not have another woman as wife six years before he married me?" she would say. "And tell me, did she ever bear him a child? Of course not, but everyone knows that as soon as he put her away and she married another man, she had five hale and hearty brats in the space of as many years. If that is not proof of what I say, what is?"

## Fátima Goes on the Haj

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In 1939 Fátima went off with the children and her brother on the pilgrimage to Mecca. She was away four months, and in her absence 'Abdullah fell grievously ill. Indeed, had it not been for Dr and Mrs Mylrea of the American Mission hospital and ourselves, who visited 'Abdullah daily and forced him to eat various jellies, soups, etc., and generally nursed him in Fátima's absence, I doubt if he would have pulled through. Dr Mylrea said he had enteric fever, but when Mylrea went on leave and Dr Thoms came in his place, it was not long before Thoms decided that all 'Abdullah's ills were due to his teeth, which should all come out.

The operation was performed very suddenly, and it was with horror that we next saw our friend emerge to meet us from his little house, looking very wizened and old and minus all his teeth.

"Never mind", he said. "I've ordered a new set from that clever one, 'Abbás the Persian, and soon I shall be a *walad* again. When Fátima comes home she will think me wonderful with my new set of top and bottom teeth."

In due course 'Abbás fitted 'Abdullah out with his teeth—a ready-made set costing thirty-five rupees, which 'Abdullah could only wear when not required to eat with them.

"Why, your honour, you don't suppose I wear them when I eat?" said he. "They are only to make me look young, so I remove them, of course, when I have my meals."

In vain I explained that with a good set of false teeth a man can eat as with his own teeth. 'Abdullah's reply was always:

"'Abbás has done well. In fact, he is a grand dentist, only charging me thirty-five rupees for a complete new set of teeth. What more do you want? Why, when the Shaikh saw me the other day he stopped his car and cried out: 'Hullo, 'Abdullah! You look quite young again. What have you done with yourself?' I ask your honour, was that not worth everything to hear?"

Fátima returned from the Haj and great was her homecoming. She wept copiously with joy. 'Abdullah decorated the house and gave dinner party after dinner party in her honour, for had not the "light of his eyes" and his two little adopted children returned again to comfort him?

But when Fátima had time to settle down and had been told about



her husband's sickness and the subsequent removal of his teeth, and—biggest shock of all—was shown the false teeth, her scorn knew no bounds.

"What fools men are!" she said. "And above all men, what a prize fool is my 'Abdullah!"

He would only laugh and say in an aside:

"Listen to her. She is afraid I am going to take another woman to wife."

When my wife and I returned from a visit to Syria in 1942 and I had greeted 'Abdullah at his gate, I chaffed him, saying that there was a chance for him yet, as I had met a man at Chtaura who was reputed to be over one hundred and thirty years old, who, besides having great-great-great-grandchildren, had now started growing a new set of milk teeth, but like all very old men, he had the mind of a child.

"For God's sake don't tell Fátima all this", whispered 'Abdullah with a wink. "I shall never hear the end of it if you do."

Unfortunately Fátima was listening behind the compound wall and heard all I said. Later, when we returned from our ride and entered her house to greet her and to do our coffee drinking, she said:

"Did I not hear you, O Abu Sa'ud, say that men when they get old take on the mentality of a child and want only mother's milk to drink, like a newly born infant? And did I not hear you say that if a man lost all his teeth, he had only to be patient and they would all grow again? When, O Abu Sa'ud, do you think 'Abdullah will get his first new baby teeth? He already must surely be nearing his dotage period."

Fátima's shaft hit fair and square. The discomfited 'Abdullah said:

"Do not listen to a foolish woman's talk. Verily the talk of a nagging woman above all things makes a man old before his years. Perhaps you have not heard the story of the two merchants who once had a dispute and took it for settlement to the three '*ulema*, who were brothers and lived in the same house? Then let me tell it to you.

"Two young merchants had a business dispute, but rather than quarrel and get talked about, they decided to refer their dispute to a family of three old '*seyeds*, learned in the religious law. They accordingly visited their house and craved permission to enter. The servant took them into the presence of the youngest of the three '*ulema*, an

## How to Keep Young

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aged, white-bearded man. He asked their business and, when told why they had come, politely said:

“‘I am the youngest of three brothers. It would not be fitting that I should try to settle your case. Better call on my second brother.’

“The merchants did this and found the second *'ālim* even older and more decrepit than the first. He too gave reply that as he had a still senior brother it was fitting that they should go and consult him about their dispute. This would not only please, said he, but they would also get a first-class decision.

“Rather surprised, and wondering what sort of man the eldest of the three brothers would be like, the merchants repaired to his room and knocked at the door. It was opened by a beautiful and desirable maiden who, with finger to her lips, whispered to them to come in, but not to make a noise, as her lord was sleeping.

“Greatly astonished they quietly entered the apartment of the slumbering *'ālim* and were motioned to a couch. Then they saw the lovely maiden return to her position at the head of her lord, gently raise his head and place it on her lap and start fanning him. What astonished them most of all, however, was the face of the sleeping man. Instead of the old, decrepit person they had expected to see, they saw a handsome, black-bearded man in the prime of life.

“Presently the *'ālim* stirred in his sleep, opened his eyes, sat up and with a disarming smile said:

“‘My friends, what seek ye?’

“The now thoroughly bewildered young men replied that they had come to get a small dispute settled by one of the famous brothers; that they had first been taken to the youngest, an old, worn-out man; that they had been referred to a still more ancient greybeard, and lastly had been sent to him, whom they had expected to be over a hundred years old. Instead they saw a young, handsome and charmingly spoken man, waited on by a beautiful and obviously devoted young lady. Their dispute, they said, was now quite forgotten and all they asked was an explanation. Nothing loth the *'ālim* replied:—

“‘My friends, behold a living example of the supremely contented man, who has discovered that the way to keep young in this life is to have the company always of a young and beautiful wife, who is above all sensible, secondly is devoted, and thirdly pleases with her conver-

sation. Once I had another wife who nagged day and night, so I put her quickly away. My two younger brothers have, as you see, grown prematurely senile because their wives do nothing but worry and nag them all day and all night. Their souls are no longer their own; they have become completely enslaved to their bickering partners and have arrived at the worst state of all: they now fear to get rid of the mill-stones that hang round their necks. My advice to you and to all men desiring happiness and perpetual contentment, which is youth, is to divorce a woman the moment she becomes cantankerous and starts bullying her husband. Discard her immediately and seek solace and peace with another who will serve, delight and please by day and by night.'

"The young merchants, greatly marvelling, took their departure in silence, having quite forgotten their dispute or the cause thereof."

Here Fátima turned fiercely on 'Abdullah, declaring him to be a wicked old man who had a black heart and meant ill.

"Believe not a word he says, O Umm Sa'ud and Abu Sa'ud. 'Abdullah has lately been casting eyes of desire on a pretty 'Awázim lass camped with her people nearby in the Nigara, and he is looking for a *hujjah* to get rid of me."

"Fear not, O Fátima", I said. "No woman would ever have your 'Abdullah without his teeth and his false ones will never deceive. Besides, if he puts you away we shall never come and have coffee with you again. And you, O 'Abdullah, wait until you get your second baby teeth before you think of pretty young things and fresh marriage."

General laughter ensued.

### THE WOMAN WHO SNEEZED

This true story was also related to me by 'Abdullah ibn Hijji.

There once lived in the Murqáb quarter of Kuwait town a poor tobacconist and his wife. They were respectable and worthy folk, but the wife had a habit of nagging, which sometimes drove her husband half-mad. Nevertheless, they were a happy couple and bore a good name. The tobacconist was a witty person, which added to his sales, for everyone likes a cheerful man who receives and gives back chaff.

## The Pasha and the Mare

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One day his wife developed a very bad cold in the head, and nearly sent our tobacconist crazy with her bouts of sneezing. He stood it for a while, but exploded when, coming up unnoticed behind him, his wife gave an extra-violent sneeze close behind his right ear.

“Yá hurma”, he cried between annoyance and joke, “yarhámich Rab’ al kiláb wa al qaháb!” (“O woman, may the God of dogs and of prostitutes forgive you.”)

With a cry of “Blasphemer and insulter of women!” the enraged wife picked up a thick stick lying handy and smote her husband a shrewd blow over the head. She then sailed out of the house, saying she would never come back or be wife to a man who coupled the name of Allah with unclean dogs and harlots.

It took all the skill of the lady’s family to explain to her that God indeed was God of all creation, including dogs, abandoned women, pigs and other unclean things. With difficulty they persuaded the woman to return to her husband, who never forgot his broken head, and put proper curb on his tongue.

#### THE TURKISH PASHA BUYS A MARE

In the olden days, when Iraq was a province of the Turkish Empire, there lived (or so averred ’Abdullah ibn Hijji) a certain Pasha in Basra who administered the *liwa* of that name. He was a keen horse-fancier and was for ever on the look-out for a nice animal to add to his stable. His fault lay in the fact that he liked to get his horses in the form of presents, a cheaper method than paying for them. In return he offered his protection and the light of his countenance to the giver. A nice old Turkish custom.

One day a young desert shaikh of the Muntafiq rode up on a fine young mare to pay his respects to the Pasha as he sat in morning *mijlis*. As he dismounted and tethered his steed to the railings in front of the Sarai in the shade of a large mulberry-tree, he was seen by the Pasha sitting at his window. After the young man had entered the *mijlis* and paid his respects, and coffee had been served all round, the Pasha mentioned the mare and asked if she was thoroughbred.

“May you live for ever”, replied the young shaikh. “She is of the



Hamdání strain and is *asíl*. Her family has been with us for the last ten generations.”

“Ah”, said the Pasha. “Is she for sale?”

The visitor was somewhat taken aback, yet as his purpose in coming to Basra was to lay before the Pasha in due course a land case that he hoped to win, he replied:

“O Pasha, the mare is yours, though from anyone else I should have demanded three hundred Turkish pounds, and even had that been offered I doubt whether I should have sold.”

Now, among Arabs, when a man gives a present to an important person such as another shaikh or the governor of a province, it is customary to receive in return a present of greater value, so, having given this broad hint as to what he expected, the young shaikh felt happy and asked the Pasha to instruct one of his servants to take over the mare. He then rose to take his leave. In returning his farewell salutations the Pasha said:

“Afarim, afarim, afarim.” (“Bravo, bravo, bravo.”)

This is a Turkish expression, well known to Arabs, and can be taken to mean that the Pasha thought his visitor a fine fellow and wished him every success.

The young man left his mare in charge of the Pasha’s servant and, taking with him his saddle, returned to the *khán* where he was residing in Ashár, suburb of Basra city. A week later, as nothing had happened, he called on the Pasha again in morning *mijlis*. He was received in most friendly manner, given a seat of honour and the usual three cups of coffee. The other callers took note of the warm greetings of the Pasha and thought to themselves that doubtless the young shaikh was a shaikh of great importance, probably of the ‘Anizah or Shammar tribes from the great desert.

“Come again, my friend”, said the Pasha as the young man got up to take his leave.

After four more days the young shaikh called again, but nothing happened, so he started calling every other day until he had been at least twelve times to the Sarai. As there was still no sign of the expected gift, he tried various subterfuges, including the raising of his land case. Still nothing happened; beyond greeting him in most friendly fashion the Pasha did nothing.

## Three Hundred Turkish Pounds

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In desperation the young shaikh thought out a plan. He went to the great Basra bazaar and bought from a well-known cloth merchant whom he had often seen in the Pasha's *mijlis* silken and brocade goods to the value of three hundred Turkish pounds. When he ordered them to be sent round to his quarters in the *khán* in Ashár, the merchant smilingly complied, knowing him to be the friend of the great Pasha and obviously a man of no little importance.

Ten days went by and the merchant repaired to the *khán* and presented his bill in person. Our young shaikh received him nicely with the words:

"Afarim, afarim, afarim."

"What do you mean?" asked the merchant. "I do not understand. I come for payment for goods purchased by you, and you greet me by saying, 'Afarim, afarim, afarim'."

"Aha", said the young shaikh. "Go and ask the Pasha what this means. He will explain, may his life be preserved."

The indignant merchant repaired to the Pasha and told his story.

"All I want is my money", he said. "I do not understand what our friend means by saying, 'Afarim, afarim, afarim'."

The discerning old Pasha thought awhile, then told the merchant to go back to his shop.

"My friend", said he. "Wallah, you shall to-day get back your goods or three hundred Turkish pounds, the cost thereof. Go in peace."

The Pasha then called for his *mahasabchi* (cashier) and said:

"Go quickly to our young shaikhly friend and place in his hands three hundred Turkish pounds, and after wishing him God's peace say unto him twice: 'Afarim, afarim, afarim. You are cleverer than your old Pasha friend thought you. As he has not forgotten his debt to you, so do you not forget your debt to the cloth merchant. Return to your country in peace!'"

The young shaikh politely acknowledged the receipt of the money and returned all the silken and brocade goods to the merchant forthwith, saying that he found he had no need for them and asking for them to be accepted back with his apologies.

"Perhaps", he added, "the Pasha might like to purchase them."

## THE JEW AND THE PROPHET

"Be it known to you, O Abu Sa'ud", said 'Abdullah ibn Hijji as we took coffee in his garden, "that not all Jews in this world are bad. God in His mercy has seen fit to soften the hearts of some of them, and through His Holy Prophet has guided more than one into the way of righteousness and welcomed them into the army of the elect. Great is the mercy of God.

"The following story, well known among all true Muslims, will make clear to your honour that I speak the truth.

"In the days of the Prophet Muhammad—salla' Allah alaihi wa sallam\*—there lived in Mecca and next door to the Holy Prophet a Jew called Khair. This Jew was a stiff-necked and hard-headed fanatic and, as is the way of all Jews, thought everyone's religion of no account except his own. He went further and endeavoured by every means in his power to heap insults upon and annoy the followers of the new Muslim religion and especially to hurt him who founded it.

"Knowing that every day at the hour of prayer the Prophet of God came out of his house and proceeded past Khair's abode to the Mosque, the Jew bethought him that the best way of hurting the Prophet's feelings and upsetting the minds of his disciples would be to scatter in front of the Prophet's doorway the contents of the family closet, saving your honour's presence, so as to cause if possible the Prophet of God to step on the same and force him perchance to defile himself as he entered the Mosque.

"He accordingly instructed his servants to collect daily all the human excreta they could find on the roof of his house and from his private closet, and to scatter it in the road in front of the Prophet's door. Having done this he watched from behind the *shanashil* [latticed window] of an upstairs room, gloating over his plan and waiting to see how the Prophet would take the insult.

"The Jew Khair got no satisfaction, however, for each time the Prophet came out into the street, he lifted his cloak high so that it should not be defiled and, picking his way carefully through the scattered dirt, made his way to the Mosque and prayed. The Prophet's

\* "the peace and protection of God be upon him." Whenever an Arab uses the name of the Prophet Muhammad, he uses this expression after it.

## He Falls Sick

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companions, indignant at the obvious attempts to annoy their master, were unable to restrain themselves and, after a few days, violently expostulated with the Prophet of God.

“‘Why’, they said, ‘do you not speak and order us to go in unto this accursed Jew’s house and chastise him—or at least bid him cease his unseemly behaviour?’

“The Prophet rebuked them, saying:

“‘My children, Khair the Jew is my neighbour, and after God, man’s primary duty is to treat his neighbour kindly. Leave him alone and may God be his judge.’

“To the further protests of his disciples, who inquired what their master meant by this primary duty of man, the Prophet declared:

“‘O my followers, after carrying out the commands of the one true God, three duties are incumbent on all Muslims. These may be summarized in the following words: “Járihim, thum járihim wa járihim.”’

“By which he meant that the first duty of man was towards his neighbour, and the second and third likewise. The disciples marvelled at this saying of the Man of God, yet murmured among themselves nevertheless.

“Time went by and never for a day did the Jew Khair cease from his vile methods; nor did he feel shame at what he was doing. For his part the Prophet continued to go forth unperturbed to his daily prayers and never by word or deed showed any annoyance with the fanatical Jew.

“A season passed and Khair the Jew fell grievously ill. The Prophet noticed that no more filth was placed in front of his door and inquired of his disciples the reason. They gave the news to him that Khair lay sick next door and was nigh unto death. The Prophet was greatly distressed by the news and said:

“‘Poor man, poor man. We must up and see what we can do for him, for is he not our neighbour? Go, friends, at once and give him Muhammad’s sympathetic greetings, and ask if there is anything at all I can do for him.’

“Unable to await their return, the Prophet himself went also to the Jew Khair’s house and asked to be admitted at once to the sick man’s chamber.

“‘All I have’, he said on seeing him, ‘and all that you may have



need of in your sickness, is yours, my friend. Ask me whatsoever you desire and it shall be yours—and may the All-compassionate One make you well.’

“The sick man gazed up into the face of the Prophet of God with deep wonder, and with feeble, trembling lips asked:

“‘Are you not the impostor named Muhammad who lives next door to me? And are you not the man whom, for months past, I have never ceased from trying to annoy and defile by ordering my servants to cast garbage and night-soil in front of your very door?’

“‘Yes, friend, I am that same man’, said the Prophet, ‘but the things you mention were nothing and I have forgotten all of them. I have in truth come now to serve you and do what I can for you in your sickness. Pray say what are your commands.’

“Khair, deeply marvelling, closed his eyes for a long time. When he opened them again there were tears of contrition in them, and his face assumed the happiness of one who saw Heaven open and the Glory of God revealed to him. He said, ‘Come near to me, thou chosen one of God’, and in a loud voice and with a joyful countenance exclaimed, ‘I bear witness that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is the chosen Prophet of God’.

“He then gave up the ghost, and the angels of Heaven came down and, after washing him and clothing him in clean raiment, took his body and buried it in the Muslim cemetery of Mecca, where his grave is revered to this day.

“In this way and by the power of God, the Jew Khair was converted to the true faith, and his name has become blessed for all time among Muslims. In his honour, at the end of early-morning prayer the good Muslim will often say, ‘Yá Allah, subah khair’ [‘O God, the morn is a good one’], which reminds him of the convert, the Jew Khair.”

The story loses much of its beauty by being recounted in English. The Arabic version from the lips of ‘Abdullah ibn Hijji was truly delightful.

#### THE CURING OF SA’UD IBN ‘AGÁB

Another friend of ours was Sa’ud ibn ‘Agáb, an ‘Anizah Badawi who was employed as a guard by the Oil Company. He was a good man, aged about thirty-five, and had been given to us by H.H. Shaikh

## The Sick Guard

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Ahmad. In those days all the guards were under my direct control. Guard Sa'ud's post was the old water pump station a mile south of Shu'aiba, on the coast. When my wife and I dropped in, as we frequently did, to have a cup of coffee with him, we were not allowed to partake of his hospitality in the guard's hut, but in the black tent where he was camped nearby with his family. This was a matter of pride with him and pleased us.

One day in the spring of 1939 Guard Sa'ud began to complain of terrible headaches, followed by rapidly failing eyesight. Unable to afford him relief in the way of aspirin tablets, hot fomentations, etc., my wife and I brought him up to Kuwait in our car and got him taken in by the American Mission hospital. Dr Mylrea did all he could to help, giving Sa'ud every possible attention, but without avail. Ten days later he informed me that he was satisfied that the man's trouble was a bad tumour on the brain.

Sa'ud gradually sank until Dr Mylrea had to keep him under morphia more or less the whole time, to save him from the unbearable pain he was suffering. One morning I went round to the hospital, where I was told by Dr Mylrea that he had instructed Sa'ud's relatives to take him home that morning. He had only a few hours to live and it would be kinder to let him die among his loved ones in the bosom of his family, a merciful arrangement of the hospital authorities and one much appreciated by the Arab population of Kuwait.

Mylrea assured me that Sa'ud's case was quite hopeless and he must die within an hour or two. I returned home and passed on the sorrowful news to my wife and to His Highness Shaikh Ahmad. We did not know where Sa'ud's relatives were taking him. In Kuwait one learns to take these death tragedies stoically. "Everything comes from God", and man's comment is always, "God gives and God takes away. It is wrong to mourn and weep for a person whom He in His wisdom has taken away."

Fifteen days went by, and my wife and I were out riding our horses among the Badu tents and reed huts in the Shamíyah, the area outside the city wall reserved as a camping ground in summer for the nomad population of the desert. We often did this, as we had many friends among these folk. Suddenly I heard a voice calling me by name.

"Yá Abu Sa'ud! Yá Abu Sa'ud!"

The cry seemed to come from a *sarífa* (hut made with mats). We rode up to it and saw in front of the door a fine, comely and rather fair negress, who was sitting spinning some wool.

"Who is calling my name?" I asked.

"Oh, it is your servant Sa'ud ibn 'Agáb. I am treating him. He is inside convalescing and saw you ride by. Come in and see him."

Greatly wondering, my wife and I gave our horses to some youths to hold, and entered the hut. There we saw the man whom we thought dead and buried two weeks ago. We sat by his side and heard his story.

"The kind English doctor", he said, "sent me home to die. He did not know that an evil *jinn* had taken possession of me and was killing me, but this *bint al haldl* [chaste woman] recognized what was wrong as soon as she saw me. She immediately shaved my head all over, and branded me with a deep cross from ear to ear and from forehead to the nape of my neck, to allow the evil spirit to come out. She then ordered the spirit to come out of my body in the name of God. He straightway came out of me, leaving me as one dead. When I awoke I found the good negress ministering unto me and reading the Qur'án to me. She does this every day and, thanks to her, I am now well, can see, being only somewhat weak."

Throughout Sa'ud's statement the negress had stood by, smiling sheepishly.

"I have this power from God", she now said simply.

We thanked her warmly and gave her eight rupees, which Sa'ud said he still owed her. Sa'ud thanked us too, saying that God had led us to his hut.

Sa'ud got quite well, but resigned from the guards. My friend Dr Mylrea smiled grimly when I told him the story. I do not think he was very pleased!

Although he was not well known in the outer world, his life's work being done in the Persian Gulf and mostly in Kuwait, "Myrilay", as the Arabs called him, must be classed among the great Englishmen of this century. A stroll with him through the bazaars showed how he was respected and loved. Everyone he met, whether shaikh, merchant, coolie or the poorest beggar, shook him by the hand

## Death of Doctor Mylrea

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and began to recall an illness from which he had recovered, often years previously, thanks to the care and treatment of Dr Mylrea.

He always had a happy word to say to everyone, in joy or sorrow. He would quote from the Bible—or perhaps from Dickens—a fitting sentence to give comfort and pleasure to all around him. A scholar in Arabic, as was also his wife Bessie, he knew his Bible by heart in both English and Arabic, and of a Sunday evening in the Mission Church it was like listening to some new story, not an oft-repeated tale, when he read the lessons almost without a glance at the Book.

He retired some years ago and went to live in southern India. In December 1951 he came back to Kuwait for a holiday and spent Christmas with my wife and myself. He died on 3rd January 1952. In an obituary notice in *The Times* my wife wrote this of him:—

“He loved everything around him: the winter sunsets from his home, the stars on a summer’s night, the sea and the sailing-boats, the spring flowers in the desert and especially the beds of purple iris. These he brought to his sandy hill and, together with the yellow and white desert daisies, were his only garden flowers. He actually died in the house he had built and lived in for so many years, and was buried in the Christian cemetery beside a memorial tablet to his friend, Captain Shakespear, once Political Agent and the only other Englishman in Kuwait in those days, who was killed in the battle of Jaráb in 1915.”

Dr Mylrea’s funeral was a very impressive affair, several thousands of Arabs attending at the Christian cemetery, where a touching funeral oration was read by the ruler’s brother, Shaikh Fahad al Sálím Al Sabah.

Every spring my wife endeavours to plant a new lot of iris bulbs on his grave. This year, 1954, they are growing nicely.

### A KUWAIT MYSTIC

The curing of Sa’ud ibn ’Agáb brings to mind two other strange cases that can be conveniently recorded at this point. The first concerns Seyed Yasín.

Before the coming of the Oil Company life in Kuwait was very primitive. We had our murders, blood feuds, raids from the desert, our fanatical ’Ikhwán, our *jinn*s, folklore and other superstitions. Nor,



in our Old Testament sort of existence, did we lack prophets as of old.

At that time the prophet and mystic of Kuwait was Seyed Yasín, an ancient man, good and kind, with nothing of the bigot about him. In winter and spring he lived with a few disciples on the peninsula of Rás 'Usha'irij, some fifteen miles west of Kuwait. During the height of summer he lived in a house in the centre of Kuwait town and not far from the sea, close to Hamad al Khálid, that staunch old merchant and friend of the Turks.

Seyed Yasín had remarkable powers of healing, especially where snake-bites and scorpion-stings were concerned. Coughs, colds, fever, tuberculosis—all sufferers came alike to him. Some might call it faith-healing, but Seyed Yasín described it as the hand of God working through him.

"I can of myself do nothing", he used to say, "but I ask God to relieve a sufferer and He in his mercy and goodness answers my prayer."

He would place his hand on a patient's head and say:

"Believe in God and He will cure you of your ill. Go in peace."

For medicine he used water. He would ask for a cup of it, go through the form of spitting in it without actually doing so, then tell the patient that he had but to drink the water and all would be well. It must have worked. How else can we account for the scores of sufferers who came to him daily and asked to be cured?

He would not take any fees and never killed a noxious or harmful animal or reptile.

"They are God's creatures", he said. "Why harm them?"

He could handle scorpions in an astonishing way. They never stung him and he could pick them up as if they were the most innocent of creatures. He would tell his friends that the scorpion would never hurt you if you but made it understand that you wished it no ill.

"Say to the scorpion, 'I mean you no ill, so do not harm me', and all will be well."

He had quite a number of disciples who followed his behests and could pick up and handle these very dangerous insects. Muhammad al Sána, who was at one time my car driver, was one of these.

Perhaps the most astonishing of the aged Seyed Yasín's powers was curing persons who had been bitten by poisonous snakes, mostly

vipers and cobras. Provided the bitten person was brought to him without delay, a prayer and a simple laying on of hands would bring immediate relief and a cure. Although we had missionary and other doctors with various anti-venin serums at hand, the Arab generally preferred to go to Seyed Yasín first. Twice I have picked up Badawin men half-unconscious and dying from viper bites, and on both occasions was begged not to take them to hospital, but to old Seyed Yasín's residence, which I did.

The most wonderful example of Seyed Yasín's power of curing snake bites that I personally came across was as follows. I knew the chief actors and can vouch for the truth of the story. I shall not pretend to try to explain the whys and wherefores.

In the early summer of 1945 my friend Shaikh Lá'fi ibn Ma'alath of the Diyahín section of the Mutair was camped with about forty of his people's tents on the wells of Tawíl, thirty miles due south of Kuwait. Shortly after sunset, while sitting by a small fire waiting for coffee to be prepared, Shaikh Láfi saw in the half-light a horned viper, attracted by the light of the fire, moving close to it. In sudden panic he gave it a sharp kick with his bare foot, but the viper was too quick for him, burying its fangs in his instep and, as is the viper's wont, hanging on.

Shaikh Lá'fi cried for help and it did not take his friends many seconds to pull off the snake and kill it. It was a fully grown specimen and easily recognizable as deadly. Shaikh Lá'fi's friends applied tourniquets above and below his knee in Badawin fashion, and decided to get him to Seyed Yasín with all speed on his camel. His younger brother, quicker witted than the rest, jumped on his riding camel and made for Kuwait, intending to see Seyed Yasín and beg his help. He knew that Shaikh Láfi could not make the town before morning, if ever. Travelling hard the youth reached Kuwait by midnight. He woke up Seyed Yasín and told his hurried tale.

"I don't think my brother can make Kuwait for eight hours or more, and by then the poison will have carried him off."

Seyed Yasín pondered awhile, then said gravely:

"Go in peace, my son. God has cured Shaikh Lá'fi of the snake-bite from this hour. Ride back now and meet your brother and you will find him saved and well."

Rejoicing yet fearing, the youth rode back into the night. Fifteen miles out of the town he met his brother riding slowly along, suffering from shock, but well.

“The effects of the poison”, said Lá’fi, “suddenly left me and I felt saved.”

By checking the time this had taken place, it was ascertained that the miracle had happened at the exact time when Seyed Yasín had told the young brother that Shaikh Lá’fi had been saved by God’s grace.

I saw Shaikh Lá’fi eight hours later in the *mijlis* of Shaikh ‘Abdullah al Ahmad, the Shaikh of Kuwait’s eldest son. He was describing how his life had been saved the previous night and was giving thanks to God. He showed me the fresh fang-marks of the snake on his instep. He told me and the listening audience how, about twenty minutes after he had been bitten, a great drowsiness had come over him and he had lost consciousness entirely after he had ridden a couple of miles towards Kuwait. His companions had lashed him to his camel and put another man up to guide the beast. They had been able to move only at a walking pace. About midnight Shaikh Lá’fi had awakened and had called to his friends to make the camel kneel down. This they had done, and after unbinding the thongs that bound him to the saddle, he had stood up, weak but greatly recovered.

“An hour later”, he said, “I felt so much better that I removed the tourniquets, which were giving me great pain. I reached Kuwait at dawn, thanking God for His great mercy. I went straight to Seyed Yasín’s house and expressed my gratitude. ‘Give thanks to Allah, not me’, he said. ‘Of myself I did nothing. I prayed to God and He heard my prayer. Blessed be His name.’ ”

I met Seyed Yasín only once and was much impressed by him. My wife and I often used to see him sitting out by the sea on his *datcha*. He died in 1948, apparently just of old age. He left no children and was mourned by all.

#### TWO DEVILS CAST OUT OF BATHA

My second story is about Batha, the comely little wife of Ma’azi ibn Baithal al Jibili, the Mutairi who acted as guard and orderly to us. Also concerned was Muhammad al Marzúk, another Mutairi, who

looked after our two horses in Kuwait. Muhammad was the husband of Múdhī, formerly wife of Fálāh al 'Ámir. A woman of character of the Rukhmán sept of the Mutair, Múdhī resided at Jahra, at the head of Kuwait Bay. We had known her for fifteen years and she used to come in and see us and her husband every now and then.

The incident I am about to describe occurred in March 1949, by which time Mylrea had retired and Dr G. H. Nykerk was the Mission doctor. Batha lived with her two sisters at Fahahíl, close to the tent of Khalaf, the Mutairi husband of Ma'azi's daughter. Khalaf was in the service of H.H. Shaikh Ahmad. Every week we allowed Ma'azi to go to Fahahíl and spend a day and night with his wife Batha and his two little boys, Faráj and 'Abdullah.

One day Ma'azi reported that Batha was ailing with a sickness that he could make nothing of. She got steadily worse and a week later Ma'azi informed us that she was very thin and her milk had failed, so he had been obliged to send little 'Abdullah away to the Summan, one hundred and fifty miles distant, to be cared for by his mother's tribal folk.

After a fortnight or more of this strange sickness Ma'azi reported that Batha was in such dire straits that he believed she was going to die. She was terribly thin, he said, could eat nothing, and was now unable to stand. This was after his last visit to her. He begged me to go and see Batha myself on my next visit of inspection to Mína al Ahmadi, which lay three miles from Batha's tent. Ma'azi was so despondent that he had already purchased a *chifán* (burial shroud) for his wife. To encourage him I left for Mína al Ahmadi next day, determined to visit Batha, see for myself her condition and, if necessary, bring her in to Kuwait in my car and get her admitted to the American Mission hospital. I told Ma'azi of my plans and he approved them entirely. He would not accompany me himself, he said, as he had not the heart to see his suffering girl-wife.

In due course I reached the long line of Badawin tents south-west of Mína al Ahmadi and was told that Batha and her sisters lived at the westernmost end. I drove along and brought the car to a stop outside the tent. Batha was not in it, but lay very sick in a small *sarífa* that her sisters had built for her nearby. They took me to her and I was shocked to see the wasted form of little Batha lying on an old quilt in the



middle of indescribable squalor and dirt and covered with flies. She lay moaning and, on my inquiry as to how she was, sat up with difficulty and gasped out between pitiful little sobs that she was going to die. She was as thin as a rake and looked more like a living skeleton than a human being. When I lifted her arm to feel her pulse, it was so fleshless that I could easily place my forefinger and thumb right round her wrist. Her hand was hot.

With difficulty she was able to explain that she could eat and drink nothing without vomiting it up, and was so weak that she could now only crawl on her hands and knees to the door of her hut. She had a dry cough and, she said, sometimes brought up blood, but not overmuch.

Poor little Batha. What a horrid change from the plump, healthy little girl we knew so well! It was obvious that her case was well-nigh hopeless. Galloping T.B., thought I, having seen too much of it among Badawin men and women to doubt for a moment that I was right. I told Batha that, with her husband's permission, I proposed taking her into hospital, and asked which of the neighbouring women would accompany her. Batha, in tears, begged me not to move her yet, as she was so weak and feared she might die in my car. She asked me to bring the Mission doctor to see her instead; afterwards perhaps she would be able to go. She was so pathetically insistent that I agreed. I knew Dr Nykerk would willingly come out from Kuwait, so a day or two's delay would make little difference. I gave Batha some bicarbonate of soda with a little water, and was glad to see she kept it down. I left some of the powder and told her sisters to give her more of it four times a day, and small quantities of warm milk with a teaspoon every two hours. Before I departed I lifted the girl up by both arms to see if she could stand. She collapsed on the floor as soon as I let go of her. It was pitiful and I was deeply moved.

I returned to Kuwait and reported all I had seen to my wife and Ma'azi the husband, who was almost distraught with anxiety. The same evening, before I could go and ask Dr Nykerk to take a trip out into the desert to see Batha, Khalaf arrived from Fahahíl with a message for Ma'azi from his wife, who begged him to take her to a certain wise old woman at Jahra, as she, Batha, felt that a branding would do her good and might save her life.

## Batha Cured

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This is the Badawin method of dealing with T.B. The operation is usually done with red-hot tent pins. Two straight small brands are put on the left wrist. If this does not bring about an improvement within about a fortnight, two similar brands are put on the right wrist. Finally, if there is no betterment in the patient's condition, he or she is branded on the under side of the tongue. This is terribly painful, causing the mouth to swell up, and for days the patient cannot speak.

Batha implored Ma'azi to accede to her request. As I wavered in my decision Muhammad al Marzúk, our syce, who had heard everything, stepped forward and asked leave to speak. He volunteered to go down to Fahahíl the following morning and take Batha to Jahra, where Múdhí his wife was. He did not want Ma'azi to come with him as he would only be a hindrance. He added that he would arrange a car and all details and that, insh' Allah, he would be back on the fifth day with a cured Batha.

Muhammad appeared so strong and confident, with his smiling, cheerful face, that both my wife and I yielded to his request. Ma'azi too raised no objection. Long experience had taught me that on such occasions, and among a people who place great reliance on faith, miracles often resulted.

"Go", I said to Muhammad, "and may God give you of His grace. Perhaps He may will that Batha be cured."

Muhammad left next day at dawn and we heard no more for four days.

"Perhaps God will be pleased to save her", whispered Ma'azi, to which both my wife and I responded with a genuine "Insh' Allah" and a still more fervent "Allah karím".

On the fifth day at noon Muhammad al Marzúk appeared. He was smiling and happy.

"I told you", he said, "that all would be right, for God can do all things. Batha is well again—quite well and cured. I have just taken her home to her sisters in Fahahíl and have hastened back to give you the good news."

He described how he had taken little Batha in a half-dead state to Jahra and to the wise old woman who lived there. Múdhí had accompanied them. After examining the patient the old woman had declared

that Batha's case was not one for branding, but for exorcizing an evil spirit, for a *jinn* had taken possession of her body and was so tormenting her that unless driven out would certainly kill her. The old lady had then called upon it in the name of Allah to come out.

"And lo", said Muhammad, "there came out of her not one spirit, but two. Each cried out in a small, squeaky voice, as is the way of the *jinns*, begging to be allowed to remain in the girl, but the clever 'ajúz [old woman] would have none of their nonsense and sternly ordered them in the name of Allah the Merciful and Omnipotent to come out and be gone to their dwelling-place under the earth."

Muhammad described how when the evil spirits had left Batha she had lain like one dead for a while. When she had come to she had been taken to his house by Múdhí and had made such remarkable progress in two days and nights that he had decided to take her home to Fahahíl.

"Wallah, she now eats like a *nága* [she camel], praise be to God!" added the beaming Muhammad. "Indeed, she walked this morning to the Jahra lorry, a distance of a quarter of a mile, carrying her *maksar* [camel-litter] on her head, and you know how heavy that is, Yá Abu Sa'ud. She climbed into the high lorry all by herself too."

The story was so astounding that I thought the worst had happened and that this was Muhammad's way of breaking the news of Batha's death to us. I told him quite bluntly that I did not believe him and that until I saw Batha in person and in the state he described, alive and well, I would reserve judgment. I did, however, send off Ma'azi post-haste to Fahahíl, telling him that if Muhammad spoke the truth he was to bring Batha up to our house in Kuwait in five or six days' time, for us to see her with our own eyes.

This was on a Monday. On Tuesday evening Muhammad ibn Marzúk complained of headache and fever. We gave him aspirin and an aperient. On Wednesday morning he was much worse and asked to be allowed to go to his home in Jahra, where Múdhí could look after him. We agreed to this and he took the midday lorry of 'Abdullah ibn Khalaf. As the day was very cold we warned him to cover himself up well and to sit in the body of the lorry behind the cab.

We never saw Muhammad ibn Marzúk again. On Friday a Badawi brought his rifle and bandolier to me and gave me the news that

## Death of Muhammad

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Muhammad had died very suddenly. From later details that we got from Sa'ud ibn Thuwairan, the husband of Múdhī's sister, it appeared that Muhammad had reached home in a very bad way and, in spite of all that Múdhī could do, had expired quietly and painlessly with his head propped up in her lap, his only complaint being that he felt very cold about the legs and body and wanted to lie in the sun, facing Mecca.

"But what would you, Yá Abu Sa'ud?" remarked my informant mysteriously. "Everyone in Jahra knew that it was due to Muhammad that Batha was taken to the 'ajúz and that she cast out from her two evil *jinn*s. Those same *jinn*s had to have their revenge, so instead of going underground to their own place, they entered poor Muhammad's body. Neither Múdhī nor Muhammad guessed this, or they might have got the 'ajúz in to help."

My wife and I were very much distressed, for Muhammad had been an exceptionally fine syce and trustworthy beyond the ordinary. After the period of her mourning was over Múdhī came to see us. It was all very sad, for she also now believed the story of the wicked *jinn*s.

A week after Muhammad's death I received word that two Badawin girls wished to see me. I found them sitting at the bottom of the back steps leading down to our stables. Ma'azi I saw lurking behind a pillar with a broad grin on his face. The girls rose and greeted me. I could not identify them until one said from behind her *burqa*:

"It is I, Batha, and this is my sister. I have come to show you that I am quite well again."

Greatly astonished I called up Ma'azi, who said it really was Batha, made well by God's miraculous mercy. Delighted beyond measure I took Batha's hand and bared her arm to the elbow. It was plump and round. I tried to encircle the wrist with my finger and thumb, but could not do so by about two and a half inches. Little Batha laughed at my efforts and said:

"Yá Abu Sa'ud, it is really and truly I. Ma'azi has not replaced me by another girl, and you can see I have grown as fat as once I was. Now I have plenty of milk and shall soon be fetching my little 'Abdullah from the tribe."

It did not take me long to fetch my wife, who, in an alcove where no one else could see, discreetly lifted Batha's *burqa*. She duly reported



to me that this was indeed our Batha, with the round and dimpled face, just as we used to know her.

What mystery or miracle had taken place? Only a bare ten days before, I had seen a living skeleton far gone, I had thought, with tuberculosis, who had collapsed on the floor of her mat hut when I had lifted her up.

It so happened that Dr Guthrie, the K.O.C.'s lady doctor, was visiting us at the time. I ran upstairs and fetched her down from the drawing-room.

“Come and see a miracle!” I said.

After examining her Dr Guthrie pronounced little Batha a very fit and well person, without, as far as she could ascertain, a trace of lung trouble.

All this time Ma'azi had stood on one side, a smiling and very happy man.

“Al hamdu l'Illah, al hamdu l'Illah”, was all he could say.

Verily much happens in Arabia that is quite beyond man's ken.\*

### THE OLCOTT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

We must return to 1939. In that year the Olcott Memorial Hospital was built on the site of the former small hospital for women. It was formally opened in the early summer by H.H. Shaikh Ahmad.

Mrs Calverley, who had returned to America with her husband in the spring of 1929, writes:—

“Mrs Kate Van Santvoord Olcott, in whose memory the hospital was given, had long served as Secretary for Arabia on our Mission Board. She had once visited Kuwait. How we wish she might have lived to see the fitting tribute to her devotion to Arabia's women through the years! Never had the people of Kuwait seen any building comparable to this two-storey hospital of concrete and steel. Persian arches support its wide verandas and airy corridors connect its rooms, while electric lights and running water are installed throughout.

\* It is pleasing to record that the Kuwait Oil Company opened a small clinic at Ahmadi in 1954 especially for wives and children of its Arab labour: a most popular and wise measure.

## A Hospital for Men

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The number of beds provided was thirty-four, not counting those for children and infants. . . .

“Besides Dr Mary Bruins Allison, who is at present in charge of the hospital, Dr Esther I. Barny and Dr Ruth O. Crouse have in turn served in Kuwait. For six months after our departure, until Dr Barny arrived, Miss Van Pelt carried the whole burden of medical work alone. During other intervals when there was no woman physician, Dr Mylrea and his successors, Dr L. E. Scudder and, later, Dr G. H. Nykerk, with the assistance of their wives, treated women patients. . . .

“Since Miss Van Pelt’s retirement from Arabia, soon after the Olcott Hospital’s opening, there has been no nursing superintendent. At present Dr Allison has three graduate Indian nurses and one Syrian Christian girl whom she is training as a nurse. Until to-day Muhammadan customs of early marriage and the seclusion of women have prevented the training in Kuwait of a single Arab nurse. There are ten illiterate women helpers and servants, besides a boy not too old to associate with women who serves as clerk. Around the place where he sits to deal out dispensary tickets, a fence has been built to keep him from being ‘smothered’ by the crowd which now arrives by busloads as well as on foot. . . .”

It is a pleasure to record in 1954 that the board of the American Mission plan to build a magnificent new hospital for men in Kuwait. It is to be named the Mylrea Memorial Hospital and will cost two and a half million rupees, mainly because of the high cost of materials existing to-day. This is going to be difficult for the Mission authorities to raise. Already H.H. Shaikh Sir 'Abdullah al Sálím Al Sabah has set a fine example by donating a very handsome sum of money, but much, very much more is sorely needed, and it is hoped that all right-minded men and women throughout the world will heed this appeal and contribute all they can towards this most worthy undertaking.\*

\* On 19th November 1954 H.H. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálím officially laid the corner stone of this new hospital for men. A great day for the people of Kuwait.

## CHAPTER XVII

# Kuwait, 1939-1942

*The Second World War—Muhammad al Saiyid Shows His Powers—  
The Trail of the Claw—'Ali al 'Ariq Does Not Forget—The King's  
Mercy—Preparing for Al Sifr—The Berthing Operation—Ruins  
of an Ancient City—The Islands of Birds—Migrating Birds Through  
Kuwait*

### THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Working through Dr Grobba, the German ambassador in Baghdad, Hitler had skilfully established in Kuwait town a Young Men's Party of Freedom known as Al Shabíba and, by adopting exactly the methods and tactics used in Czechoslovakia, brought about a sudden revolution that had as its objective the overthrow of H.H. Shaikh Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, the denouncing of the British Government as Kuwait's ally and protector, and the placing instead in that privileged position of Iraq, a Muslim state.

Due mainly to bad timing, the attempt failed, as did Rashíd 'Ali al Gailáni's subsequent pro-Hitler revolution in Iraq, but not until a number of lives had been lost, the Kuwait arsenal captured for a few days, and King Ibn Sa'ud had moved up to the Kuwait frontier a strong force to assist H.H. Shaikh Ahmad in restoring order.

The Second World War brought Kuwait once again on the side of Great Britain, Shaikh Ahmad justifying the great trust that His Majesty's Government had so long reposed in him.

Early in 1941, soon after the occupation of Basra by a British air-borne force sent from India to counter the rebellion by which Rashíd 'Ali al Gailáni had gained control of Iraq, the ladies of the Kuwait Oil Company were evacuated as a precautionary measure to India via Basra. Feeling that her presence would be of assistance if an air attack were made on Kuwait, and preferring to remain among her Arab friends rather than flee the place, my wife refused to go. The ladies of the American Mission remained also, and continued to work in their hospital all through the war. It was a difficult time for everyone,

## Shortage of Food

### Chap. XVII

especially the poor of the town and in the desert, for food, clothing and medicines were almost unobtainable, and great distress prevailed.

At the end of April 1941, when the then Political Agent in Kuwait, Major Galloway,\* was appointed liaison officer with the newly arrived British forces in Iraq, I was asked to take over the duties of Political Agent again until the appointment of Major Tom Hickinbotham† on 16th August of that year. It was then that my wife and I managed privately to import by sailing-boat from Persia a hundred pairs of grinding-stones, which we issued to the starving Badu of the hinterland (one set to every ten tents), to enable them to grind barley, which we also bought for them, and make a coarse kind of cake out of the meal so obtained, by cooking them in ashes. At that time there was practically no wheat or flour in the town, rice was terribly scarce, and the price of dates had reached a starvation level.

Meanwhile life had gone on without any war incident in Kuwait, giving us numerous opportunities, apart from helping the sick and needy, to add to our knowledge of the Arabs of the desert and assist them with food, sympathy and especially with clothing. Their state was worse than that of those residing in the town.

#### MUHAMMAD AL SAIYID SHOWS HIS POWERS

The uncanny tracking powers of the *Ál Murra* were brought to my personal notice by an incident on 25th June 1940 on the southern border of Kuwait. I was inspecting one of the Oil Company's guard posts, situated near oil well No. 4, *Burqán*. The day was fairly hot and I arrived at the post at ten o'clock in the morning, to find Guard Muhammad ibn *Watyán* of the *'Ajmán* alone on duty, the other two guards having gone to *Wára* post to draw rations. Muhammad welcomed me as I got out of my car. He said he had just finished making coffee for a very sick man, so my arrival was propitious.

The guard post was a one-roomed *sarífa*, with no windows, the door at one end facing south. I entered and sat down by the *wujár*, the

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel Arnold Crawshaw Galloway, C.I.E., O.B.E., United Kingdom representative of the Bahrain Petroleum Co., Ltd.

† Now Sir Tom Hickinbotham, K.C.M.G., C.I.E., O.B.E., Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Aden Protectorate.



coffee-making hearth, which was immediately opposite the doorway. In the far dark corner lay a figure covered over with a *bhisht*. Muhammad said the sick man was a Murri tribesman who had arrived the previous evening with high fever on him and had asked for a night's shelter. Muhammad did not know his name, but gathered that he was going up to Kuwait in search of a job as tracker with Shaikh Ahmad.

I had sat with Muhammad for about twenty minutes, discussing matters connected with his duties and the security of the post generally, when two Badu approached from the south, one on a brown camel and the other on a white one. From where I sat I could see them without getting up or going outside, but they were not visible in any way to the sick man, who could not possibly see out through the doorway or the thick mat walls of the *sarífa*. This is an important point and has a bearing on the story.

With the politeness of the desert man the two Badu made their camels kneel some one hundred and fifty yards away from the *sarífa* and began to tie up the knees of the animals to prevent their getting up. The camels were obviously thoroughbred and of the fast-riding type, showing the men to be travellers of substance, possibly shaikhs, for they had gaily-coloured saddlebags hanging from their saddles. The bags were bulging, which indicated also that they had come from some distant place.

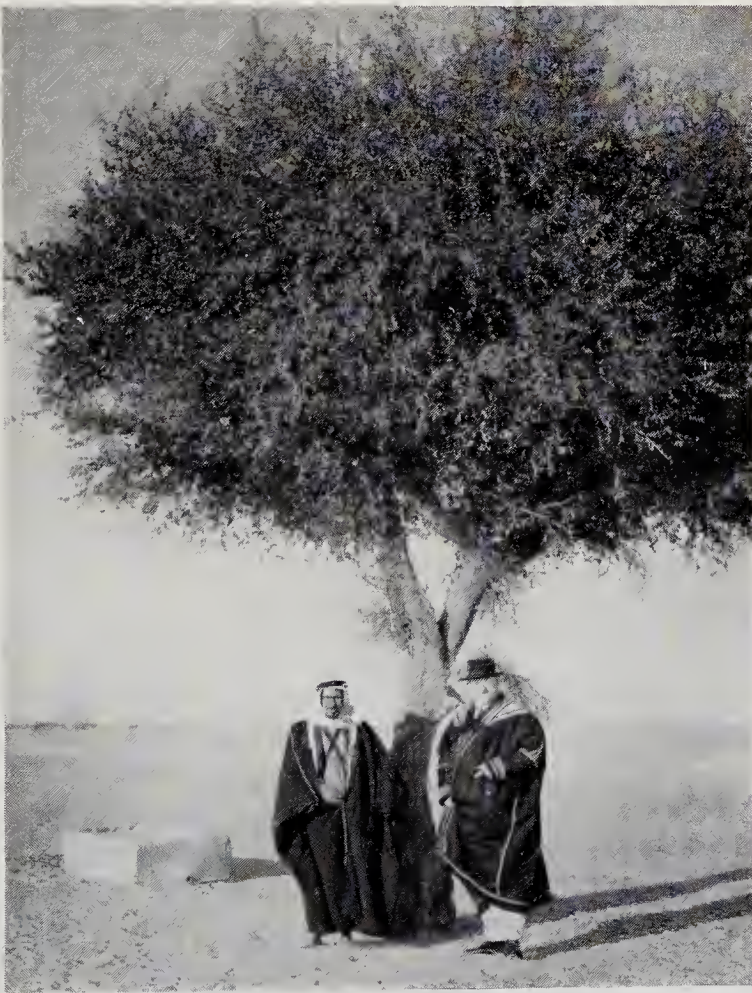
I told Muhammad ibn Watyán to invite the strangers in for a cup of coffee. He went out to them, but came back alone to fetch some water, which, they had told him, was all they required. They would not stop for coffee. Doubtless they had seen my car by the hut and, guessing that an Englishman was inside the hut, had decided to pursue their journey. Having drunk the water supplied by Muhammad they rode away. Muhammad sat down again by the *wujár* and continued his conversation with me. I had not moved from my position, nor had the sick man lying under his *bhisht* in the far corner so much as stirred. To my question as to the identity of the strangers Muhammad replied that he had not the faintest idea and that they had not deigned to enlighten him.

For another half an hour I sat with Muhammad, while I partook of a light luncheon that I had brought with me. When I had finished eating and was preparing to go, the sick man in the corner suddenly



THE SULPHUR SPRING OF 'AIN AL 'ABD, IN KUWAIT NEUTRAL  
ZONE

(reported haunted)



THE AUTHOR AND HIS MURRI GUARD FAHAID,  
CHRISTMAS DAY, 1952

The famous *sidr* tree indicating the centre of the Burqán oilfield





Bow of *khansha*, showing stem ornamentation only found in this type of sailing-craft



A *khansha* showing stern windows and rudder. This boat had arrived from Súr, Omán



Haji Ahmad al Atram's boat-building yard, Kuwait

sat up, arose, made his way towards me and salá'amed in the usual fashion. He looked very ill. I invited him to sit down and have coffee, then asked him how he felt.

"The fever", he replied, "has nearly left me and I am better, thanks be to God."

I felt his wrist and found it cool. He complained, however, of giddiness and weakness.

In appearance he was thick-set and of medium height. He had a striking, jet-black beard coming half-way down his chest. After taking coffee he felt sufficiently recovered to talk and I soon gathered that he had heard that the Shaikh of Kuwait was in need of a good tracker, and being a Murri tribesman he was on his way up to Kuwait to seek employment. Muhammad al Saiyid, as his name turned out to be, was quite talkative and soon I had him telling stories of his tribe and the country they lived in, far away to the south.

Presently Guard Muhammad, to make conversation, rather mischievously remarked that as the Ál Murra were reputed to be such great and famous trackers, perhaps he could say who the two travellers were who had called for a drink whilst he slept. Muhammad al Saiyid replied quite seriously:

"I doubt if I can tell you their names, but if you will show me where their camels knelt down, and the strangers' tracks as they stood by their camels, I might be able to give you some information."

I pointed out where the two men had halted and Muhammad al Saiyid went out alone to examine the ground. I purposely did not allow Guard Muhammad to leave the *sarifa*. After a long and careful scrutiny Muhammad al Saiyid came back in about ten minutes and, sitting down, again partook of coffee. I did the same.

"Well", I asked, "what luck did you have?"

"Pretty good. From the camels' tracks it is evident that they are thoroughbreds, one being a *wadha* [white camel] and one a *khadira* [brown camel]. The *wadha* and her rider have gone north-west in the direction of Jahra village; the *khadira* and her rider in a north-easterly direction, probably to Fahahíl village on the coast. The travellers are both minor shaikhs of the Bani Hájir tribe, coming from the Qatar peninsula or the hinterland of Qatíf. I cannot tell you the men's names, but I suspect that they are looking for a runaway slave of theirs and



have been following the fugitive's tracks, for not far from where they dismounted I saw the faint prints of a barefooted negro going in a northerly direction. The tracks show that the negro passed the post by night, fear preventing him from calling in for shelter. Both men of the Bani Hájir were young, between twenty-five and thirty years of age, and they were very weary after their four-hundred-mile ride."

"Any more?" I asked, completely astonished.

"No, but they certainly are Bani Hájir shaikhs and carry Mauser carbines, which they laid on the ground as they drank water. Their names I would do wrong to try to guess. Only God can do this."

Marvelling greatly and disbelieving nothing, for I knew these remarkable folk, I took my departure, but not before I had got some aspirin tablets from my small medicine chest in the car and given them to Muhammad al Saiyid.

Four days later, at eight o'clock in the morning, I was sitting in the *mijlis* of H.E. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárah Al Sabah, the ruler's deputy in charge of public security and Badawin affairs. In the warm weather this *mijlis* is held in the deep veranda in front of his office, and I had come to pay my respects, as I often did. There were many callers that morning, and on glancing round I suddenly saw my black-bearded Murri friend squatting on the floor among the shaikh's score of armed retainers. He saw me at the same time and, after a swift glance of recognition, looked away.

I sat beside Shaikh 'Abdullah for another twenty minutes, when up rode two men on beautifully caparisoned camels, one white and the other brown. After making their camels kneel down and tying their knees, they walked together towards us. Their clothing marked them as Bani Hájir tribesmen and both were in the middle twenties, he with the white camel seeming to be the elder. They stood respectfully before Shaikh 'Abdullah, as if waiting permission to speak. He greeted them courteously and asked what he could do for them.

"O 'Abdullah Mubárah", the elder replied, "we are of the Bani Hájir and relatives of Ibn Sháfi, our paramount shaikh. We have come from afar, even from Qatar, the land of Ibn Tháni. One of our slaves has absconded and we have been following his tracks for fifteen days. My brother has searched Fahahíl village and the other coastal villages of the Al Qusur, whilst I have been to Jahra to make sure the runaway

## Another Example of Muhammad's Skill

### Chap. XVII

had not passed through there *en route* for Basra. We failed to locate the man or obtain any news of him, so we believe he has reached Kuwait, your hospitable town, and is in hiding. Without your help we can do nothing, and we beg of your honour very respectfully to assist us in our search, and may you live for ever."

Here was truly astonishing corroboration of Muhammad al Saiyid's story to me in the guard's *sarífa* at Burqán. From among the men-at-arms my black-bearded friend looked up and flashed a smile at me.

"I told you so", it seemed to convey.

#### THE TRAIL OF THE CLAW

Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárák told me later that the runaway slave was never captured. Nor did I see Muhammad al Saiyid again. Failing to obtain employment with Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait, he then tried to get Shaikh Sabah al Násir Al Sabah to interest himself in him. Shaikh Sabah was at that time encamped near the seashore some five miles south of Shu'aiba village on the coast. He did not engage Muhammad, but kept him with him for some days and gave him a good present when he departed.

Shaikh Sabah told me later that one day the driver of his car complained that his wrist-watch had been stolen from him while he was bathing. The tide had been going out when he had arrived and, having undressed, he had put his clothes on the sand, laid his watch on top of them and gone into the sea. He had not noticed anyone coming along the beach, but confessed that he had not paid much attention. When he had come out of the water, he had found his clothing undisturbed, but the watch had disappeared.

He reported the theft at once to Shaikh Sabah. Muhammad al Saiyid was present in the tent, but his advice was not sought or his help enlisted. Being interested, however, he walked quietly down to the beach, where the tide was now lower. He found quite easily the place where the clothes had been laid on the sand, and the driver's footmarks going to and from the water. Though he wandered about for a while and examined the ground everywhere, Muhammad could find no trace of any other human being having been in the vicinity. The only marks in the sand were those left by crabs, which had been

running about all over the place along the shore. These crabs are rather small, with one claw much longer than the other. They live in holes above high water, each building a small sand-castle just to one side of its hole.

One of the tracks left by a crab led towards the spot where the clothes had been lying, formed several circles round about, then led away again. Muhammad did not think anything of this at the time and came to the conclusion that the driver was a liar, had lost the watch on some previous occasion and had then told his master a cock-and-bull story in order to get him to give him a new one.

Muhammad returned to camp, but kept on thinking of the robbery incident. He was worried. Next morning he went down to the same spot on the beach. This time the tide was high and all marks of the previous day had gone. He sat down near the shore and waited till the tide went out a bit.

One by one the crabs came out of their holes and began to run round in the sand. Muhammad walked down towards them and they all started scurrying away and disappearing down their holes. After looking closely at their tracks for a while, Muhammad suddenly recognized from among fifty or sixty of them one that he immediately identified with the track he had seen near where the clothes had lain on the previous day. He followed this carefully for fully a hundred yards until he reached the crab's hole, down at the bottom of which he found the wrist-watch intact.

Shaikh Sabah al Násir assured me of the truth of this, but being sceptical I made further inquiries and obtained the corroboration of one 'Ali ibn Lá'fi, an 'Awázim shepherd, on 10th July. He had nothing to do with Sabah al Násir or his camp, but had his own tent not far away. The Murri had come across and supped with him before his departure, so he had got the story direct from him.

### 'ALI AL 'ARIQ DOES NOT FORGET

In the service of King Ibn Sa'ud were three famous trackers of the Ál Murra tribe, the brothers 'Ali, Muhammad and Sálím al 'Ariq. A tale concerning them was told to me on 13th August 1943 by Shaikh 'Ubaid al Mutalaqim of the 'Ajmán, a lifelong friend of the King. It was also

## The Murra Have Good Memories

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confirmed by 'Ali al 'Ariq, who, at a later date, came up to Kuwait and called on me.

At the time of the Yemen expedition in 1934 Shaikh Jufrán al Fuqm, head of the Al Suhabba section of the Mutair, went up to Riyádh with a party of shaikhs and their followers on their annual visit to King Ibn Sa'ud. This usually takes place during the month preceding Ramadhán and, after paying homage, they return to their families with the customary presents of money and clothing.

Word was brought in to Jufrán one morning that two of his *dhulúl* (riding camels) had been stolen by night from the little herd that grazed daily outside Riyádh. The footprints of the three robbers had been found and carefully preserved, together with the tracks of the two animals, by placing bowls and basins over them.

The news soon reached the ears of the King, who sent for 'Ali and Sálím al 'Ariq. Having examined the footprints they set off on their camels and tracked the robbers from the Batha camping ground, just outside Riyádh, to Rumáh, whence the trail led them across the Dahana sands and up into the Summan, until they came to Jariya Sifla, a distance of two hundred and fifty miles. Here they tracked the men right into their tent, where they were sitting with their womenfolk.

One man escaped and fled. 'Ali and Sálím arrested the other two and, having beaten and bound them, brought them back to Riyádh with the stolen camels, which were duly restored to Jufrán al Fuqm. The captives, who turned out to be Mutairis of Jufrán's own tribe, were cast into prison, where they remained for a year before being released.

Five years later in Riyádh, 'Ali al 'Ariq happened to be outside the mosque as the Friday prayers ended. One of those who emerged was a complete stranger to 'Ali, but, seeing his footprints, 'Ali at once recognized them as belonging to the man who had escaped him at Jariya. The robber was immediately arrested and later beaten and cast into prison, where he died some time later.

'Ali assured me that he could remember the footprint of a man or a camel for ten years, and that he never made a mistake.



## THE KING'S MERCY

It was 'Ali al 'Ariq who told me the following tale:—

In the autumn of the year 1941 three minor shaikhs of the 'Utaiba tribe were returning to their camp after paying their usual yearly visit to the King in Riyádh. They were overtaken by three men on camels who asked to be allowed to journey with them. Although the shaikhs did not know them personally, the men were obviously 'Utban—that is, men of the 'Utaiba—so they welcomed them as travelling companions.

A few days later the whole party arrived at their destination. While they were all sitting drinking coffee together in a tent, there rode up two of the King's servants and dismounted from their camels. These two men were named Muhammad ibn Da'ús of the Ál Murra and Kharbush ibn Sadha of the 'Ajmán.

After coffee had been passed round and the usual greetings exchanged, Muhammad and Kharbush explained to the shaikhs how they had followed the tracks of the three other men, who were wanted by the King for being connected with a camel theft that had taken place in Riyádh a short time before. The wanted men submitted and, without being manacled or bound, set off back for Riyádh with Muhammad and Kharbush.

They camped for the night in a lonely spot some two hundred and fifty miles west of Riyádh. After the evening meal the two guards apparently fell asleep and the prisoners stole their rifles and cartridge-belts. Whether the guards awoke before the prisoners could escape into the night will never be known. What is certain is that the prisoners set upon them and killed them, stripped them of their clothes and made off with the five camels in a northerly direction, hoping to escape into Iraq before the hue and cry was raised.

It was not until ten days later, when the King became anxious at the non-return of Muhammad and Kharbush, that a search-party was organized. Three cars were got ready, also a party of men on camels. In each car were several armed men and a Murri tracker: 'Ali al 'Ariq in the leading car, and his brothers Muhammad and Sálím in the second and third respectively.

After travelling slowly for some days, stopping every now and then

## The Child's Petition

### Chap. XVII

to examine and pick up tracks, the party came upon the naked corpses of Muhammad and Kharbush. They decided to camp for the night, and after digging two graves and burying the dead men, they killed a sheep and cooked it for their supper. ('Ali made rather a point of this, which suggested a sacrificial offering of sorts.)

The tracks now took a northerly direction, but they were very difficult to follow, being after that lapse of time practically invisible. After nearly a month of careful tracking, however, they eventually reached Qasím, from where they telegraphed to the King, reporting the finding of the corpses and informing him that the cars were still following the murderers northward. The King was glad to get this news, as he had had no word from the party for six weeks. He ordered wireless messages to be sent to all frontier posts immediately, instructing that a look-out should be kept for three 'Utban with five camels.

Remorselessly our three Murri men tracked the fugitives and finally ran them to earth at Rukhaimíyah, near the Iraq border. The frontier police post at that place had captured two of the wanted men, the third having been shot and killed as he was trying to escape. The King was duly informed and the captors set off with the two prisoners for Riyádh by way of the Summan, stopping *en route* at Raudat Khuraim, in the vicinity of which the King and his family were in camp. When the three cars reached there the King was out hunting. Somehow one of the prisoners managed to get a message to the King's favourite wife, the Princess Maneira, begging her to use her influence with him and perchance save their lives.

Just before sunset on the following day, the King returned from hunting. He had had good sport. His party had shot many gazelle, and *hubára* had been plentiful. That evening the Princess Maneira brought in to him her small son Bandar, whom she sat in the King's lap, saying, as if it came from the lips of the child:

"Talabtak." ("I ask a boon of you.")

Knowing full well the meaning of the request the King immediately replied:

"Allah atta hum i yak." ("God has given them to you.")

And he kissed his little son.

The order then went forth to take the two men to Riyádh and put them in prison. The next day, however, a second order arrived

instructing that they be released, and they each be given five hundred rupees, two new *bhishts*, two riding camels and a complete set of clothing, and that they be sent home to their families. The sum of fifteen hundred rupees each was donated by the King to the families of the murdered men, Muhammad ibn Da'ús and Kharbush ibn Sadha.

Everyone was amazed at the time at the King's strange action and it was only some time after, when the story of the Princess Maneira and Bandar, her infant son, became known, that men began to understand the reason behind this act of mercy.

# The Baghala Prepares to Sail

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## PREPARING FOR *Al Sifr*

By Violet Dickson

*Al sifr*, which means literally "the voyage", is the name given to the season when dhows set out for India, Africa and Zanzibar. It falls in the early autumn of each year. At one time the largest seagoing sailing-vessels were all of the *baghala* type, with square stern and rear windows, while the *búm* type was confined to medium-sized and small vessels.

"The *baghala* belonging to 'Abdul Waháb al Qatámi al Záyid, a wealthy *naukhada*", I wrote on 5th September 1940, "is having the final touches put to her before going out of harbour on the high noontide to-day.

"For the last fortnight all hands have been busy working on her. She needed a new sail, so in the roadway behind the house of Hilál al Mutairi, that well-known pearl-merchant, about thirty men have been sewing the strips together. First the shape is pegged out on the ground with ropes and nails, then the narrow strips of sailcloth are sewn together across it. As well as in the early morning and late afternoon they work at it by hurricane-lamp after the sun has set. This largest sail, known as *al 'aud*, has fifty-five strips of cloth.

"The *baghala* herself has been oiled with fish-oil, vile-smelling stuff from India, and has been caulked below the water-line. Lastly, all necessary repairs having been done, she is being whitened this morning below the water-line with a mixture of sheep's-tail\* fat, special lime and a very little paraffin, boiled over a fire in the harbour at low tide. The tins of fat come as a rule from India in these boats each spring. The cost is ten rupees a tin, and the *baghala* needs thirteen of them. The lime is brought from Makalla, Hadhramaut, on the Gulf of Aden, and is the best of all lime for this purpose, they say. Immediately above the whitened portion and below the deck of the boat there is a strip about two feet wide that is as yet neither oiled nor caulked. This will be completed on reaching Basra, after the *baghala* has been washed daily for a week in the fresh water of the Shatt al Arab.

\* Not like the tail of an English sheep, but large and fat, weighing up to as much as eight pounds.



"It is now 1.30 p.m. The extra-high tide has just begun to run out and it is time for the *baghala* to be warped out of harbour. The large red flag of Kuwait is flying from her stern and a smaller one from the tip of her bow—the sign that she is to be moved. 'Abdul Waháb al Qatámi has swum out to the entrance and is standing on the molehead by a stout pole round which is wound a rope on which the crew are pulling. Clothed only in a white cotton 'izzár (waistcloth) he looks amazingly white standing out there like a statue on the rocks. He is a good-looking man with blue eyes and a fair skin.

"The *baghala* wends her way out from among the other craft in the closely packed harbour. She tows behind her a tiny boat and also her mainmast, which will be put up out at sea.

"The long bow of a nearby *búm* now gets in the way, and two of the *baghala's* crew jump lightly across onto it and push her off. Slowly the *baghala* glides along, her owner giving instructions and waving his arms until she is through the narrow entrance. As she leaves the harbour mouth several boys who had swum out and were sitting on the rocky *niga'a* (harbour wall) now jump into the sea and clamber onto the towed mainmast. Other small boys and younger brothers are seated under the white awning in the high stern of the *baghala*. In a large boat such as this, half the stern is given up to a small cabin with a window, the other half being a wash-place and privy, also with a window.

"Now up goes the sail on her second and smaller mast, and although there is very little breeze she is drifting out sideways with the tide. One by one the boys on her stern jump off with upraised arms into the water, some to ride farther out on the mainmast, others to swim up to the *niga'a*, on which they climb and run over the rough coral stones like water-rats. Those who are still having a ride finally slide into the sea and swim back as the breeze catches the sail and the *baghala* moves out to sea. 'Abdul Waháb has now gone from the molehead; he must have either swum ashore or swum out to a small boat and returned in it.

"For five or six days the *baghala* will anchor in Bandar ash Shu-waikh, the sheltered harbour for boats, lying two miles west of Kuwait town, while her crew make their purchases and other arrangements before finally sailing for Basra. Each member will take with him eight

## Division of Profits

### Chap. XVII

*dishdāshas* made by his womenfolk just before he leaves, as he will be away for eight or nine months. To-night they will be given their *salaf*, an advance of pay for the support of their families while they are away. The amount varies, but is usually about sixty rupees a man.

“At Basra the *baghala* will load up with dates and her long voyage will begin. Built thirty years ago she carries two thousand five hundred bags of cargo and a crew of twenty-five—one man to a hundred bags is the rule. The total receipts from such a trip are about ten thousand rupees. Port dues, food for the crew, etc. amount to about two thousand rupees. Half of the balance goes to the crew; the other half, after any deductions for any repairs to the boat, including new ropes or sails if required, is profit. The four thousand rupees for the crew is divided into thirty shares, while the profit is apportioned to the captain and certain members of the crew. The division is as follows:—

	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Profit</i>
<i>Naukhaha</i> (captain)	1 share	3 shares
<i>Sakkán</i> (steersman)	1½ shares	1½ shares
' <i>Usta'ad</i> (navigator)	1½ shares	1½—2 shares
<i>Muallim</i> (chief officer)	2 shares	—
<i>Seráng</i> No. 1 (boatswain)	2 shares	—
<i>Seráng</i> No. 2	1½ shares	—
Cook	1½ shares	¼ share
Crew (nineteen members)	1 share each	—

“If advances are given to the crew while in port—and, if the voyage is a long one, they usually are given at Bombay, Zanzibar and Mozambique—these are deducted from the final shares. Acts of bravery in danger on the part of the crew are rewarded by an extra quarter- or half-share.

“I feel a sort of sadness that this beautiful boat has once more gone to sea. Living so close to them all, I know each one almost personally, and the harbour has such a friendly feeling when they are all in from their long voyages, as year after year each lies up in exactly the same spot. It may be that 'Abdul Waháb's *baghala* will not return and this is good-bye. As storms rage during the autumn and winter I feel anxiety for them. The harbour too is empty and bare then, except for odd fishing-craft and water-boats.”

A year went by. 'Abdul Waháb's *baghala* had come safely back to

Kuwait in the early summer. 'Abdul Waháb was now owner of Kuwait's largest *búm*, with a cargo capacity of five thousand and five bags. It is claimed for this type of boat that it has better cargo space than has the *baghala*, and that with its pointed stern it is a faster and better sea-boat, particularly in a following sea. Its stern head is long and straight, its end painted black with a white ring. Unlike the *baghala* it has no stern windows.

'Abdul Waháb had promised to show me over his new *búm*, which was called *Al Dhow*, before it went out of harbour, so early in the morning of 2nd September 1941 I availed myself of this opportunity. The tide being out I put on my jodhpur breeches and an old pair of shoes before going down across the wet sand and mud of the harbour to where *Al Dhow* lay. Sailors were working hard on her, singing their chants as they whitened her below the water-line. Some little way farther back others were boiling up the mixture of sheep's-tail fat and lime in a cauldron.

While I was watching them 'Abdul Waháb appeared behind me and greeted me with:

"To-day is not a good day. The tide is already coming in. I will take you out to her in a *mashúwah* [rowing-boat] on a fine day when she is all ready to sail for Basra. It will be much better then."

The inky water of the incoming tide, due to the paddling of so many feet in the black mud, was already lapping round the crude ladder roughly tied to the side of the *búm* by a loose rope at the top. I was very disappointed.

"I have purposely put on these clothes, Yá 'Abdul Waháb, so that I can the more easily climb up the ladder. I don't mind the muddy water, for my shoes are very old ones that cannot be harmed."

He quickly called out an order to one of the men busily engaged in plastering the ship's side. His right hand still smeared to above the wrist in lime and fat, the sailor went off and dragged a log of wood to the foot of the ladder. Along this we stepped and up the ladder into *Al Dhow*. She was truly grand with her covered decks and hatches. We climbed the companion ladder up onto the *ním* (poop), from where 'Abdul Waháb explained every detail to me.

"This is my seat", he said, pointing to a small railed-in space about eight feet by two, on the starboard side. He then showed me the

## Details Explained

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navigator's seat, which was behind the large steering-wheel in the centre of the ship and was fitted with arm-rests. "Here, immediately in front of the navigator's seat, we put the compass, and underneath it a lamp by night. These are the davits for our *ka'it* [a tiny boat] and there on the deck, on the starboard side amidships, we place the *mashúwah*. Forward of that come two large fresh-water tanks, one on each side."

We now wandered down and along towards the bow.

"This is the cook's tin-lined box where he does his cooking, and beyond that is the *kashtíl* [raised forecastle]."

I climbed up into the bow and asked the name of the piece of wood with a wooden wheel in it, on the starboard side of the straight long nose.

"The *fakh* or *bulúla*, by which the anchor rope is lowered. Now you must see the lovely cabin we have. It is used only for very special passengers—on the last trip, by the son of 'Imám Yahya of the Yemen."

We went aft once more and up onto the poop, from where we descended a steep ladder on the port side. At the foot of it was the door leading into the cabin, a small room about twelve feet square and filled with sails, rope and junk. In the roof were two glass skylights, but there were no windows of any kind. As I became accustomed to the dimmer light, clumps of large, shining, fat cockroaches with their long, waving whiskers became visible all over the walls.

"Cockroaches!" I exclaimed.

"Lábud", he replied, meaning that it must be so. "Of course there are rats also."

So this was the cabin of which he was so proud!

"Some of the *naukhadas*", he added, "have their rooms very nice and all painted, but I don't bother."

The doors of the privy and wash-place, which were immediately adjoining the cabin, were fastened by a chain and padlock. A sailor was sent hurrying below for the key. He disappeared down another small hatchway and soon came back with several. The privy door was unlocked, but would not open, the privy being crammed full of boat-gear of all kinds. The wash-place was the same. I could not see inside either.



"These", said 'Abdul Waháb, "are kept exclusively for the use of women or important passengers."

I could never imagine myself occupying such accommodation on a voyage. As far as I could see there was nowhere else for the sails and junk to be stowed, so I suppose the privy and wash-place were never free from such gear.

The great masts were not yet in position, but the '*abd*', the short mast that supports the mainmast, stood there like a mast that had been cut off eight feet from the deck. Down to the base of this went 'Abdul Waháb, stepping across the hatch from side to side, to show me how the mainmast fitted in, and from where the bilge-water was bailed out. Every plank and every part of the *búm* seemed to have a name, and although he told me many of them, there were many, many more.

Here are a few notes I made at the time:—

## SAILS

For the mainmast:—	<i>Strips</i>
1. <i>Al 'aud</i>	55
2. <i>Sifdera</i>	49
3. <i>Turkayt</i>	36
For the second mast:—	
1. <i>Galúmi*</i> <i>al 'aud</i> or <i>Galúmi al kabír</i>	36
2. <i>Galúmi al zaghír</i>	26
Jib sail	23

Each strip is the width of the sailcloth, about eighteen inches.

## ROPES

1. *Amar mouli* is the twelve-inch rope.
2. *Amar cherki* is the ten-inch rope.
3. *Braidun* is the five-inch rope.

Rope is used on the anchor in sand or mud. In rocky anchorages chains (*sandjíl*)† are used.

The tide had now come in much more and there was about two feet of water at the base of the ladder. 'Abdul Waháb descended first and got planks and logs enough to give me a dry walk back to the shore.

\* *Galúmi* means a sail. I think it is used here to differentiate the sails for the second mast.

† Plural of *sangal*.

## Return of Al Dhow

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"Bon voyage and good luck, Yá 'Abdul Waháb, and may Allah give you a safe return."

*Al Dhow* went out in great style that evening, very quietly and with no fuss, being towed out to sea by a motor-launch and anchored at her mooring. At night on 21st September she sailed.

She returned in mid-June, very tired after her long voyage and leaking badly.

#### THE BERTHING OPERATION

By Violet Dickson

"To-day on the noonday tide", I wrote, "*Al Dhow* is to come into the harbour. She is lying at anchor about a mile from the shore, her mainmast taken down, the two flags flying at her stern and bow.

"At a given signal her sail is hoisted, her two anchors are raised to just above the water and she slowly begins to move. The crew now begin to beat the drums, slowly at first, then louder and louder as she nears the harbour, accompanied by singing and clapping of hands. A gentle breeze is blowing and, as she enters the harbour, members of her crew jump into the sea from her bow and swim to the *niga'a*, where they make fast a rope. Down comes her sail and she slowly swings round into her place in the *niga'a*. The drumming ceases for a while, as the crew busy themselves untying the sail, etc. The singing also ceases, and then the chant, 'Heela, hula', takes its place as they work away pulling on the rope, letting down the anchors, etc.

"Children, appearing from nowhere in tiny dugout canoes, enjoy the scene as they paddle around her stern. The tide is still coming in. Before it turns she will be in the place where each year she spends the summer months. All is quiet on board now as the crew are busy arranging the *farman* (yard carrying lateen sail) down the centre of the boat and loosening ropes in readiness for lowering the mast. This is now gently lowered towards the stern. At first it is pulled over by ropes operating from the stern, and then it is lowered by ropes from the bow until it rests on the poop of the ship. From there it is brought into its final position and laid along the whole length of the

ship—base on bow and top on poop—where it will remain. She is now oiled with fish-oil.

“The great care given to these vessels to protect them from two months’ sun shows how they are loved by their owner, in the same way as a Badawin loves his camel. It is his life. Reed mats are carefully placed from fore to aft, forming a roof about four feet from the deck. The masts and *farman* are rolled up in mats and laid on the shore. Chains and anchors are blackened with tar and put tidily in place. Coir matting strips are hung round the entire ship, to protect her sides from the fierce sun. Four stout props on each side keep her in an upright position at low tide.”

*Al Dhow* was confiscated by the Government of India in 1943 for running contraband. ‘Abdul Waháb was no longer her captain, I am glad to say.

Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait once told my husband that the word *dhow* was unknown to Arabs and had only received historical mention—and then very vaguely—in the account of the invasion of Kuwait by the Bani Ka’ab in the days of Mariam, when “five great dhows” were captured.

Subsequently Harold made further inquiries and learnt from the present ruler, H.H. Shaikh ‘Abdullah al Sálím, that although the word was quite unknown in the Persian Gulf, he had discovered that it was used occasionally by the seafaring population of Yemen. This information he had recently obtained from some Yemenis then in Kuwait. My husband told him that there was a Persian word *dawíd*, meaning “swift” and that possibly *dhow* was coined by the Bani Ka’ab to indicate a fast sailing-boat.

“Perhaps”, said His Highness.

Besides the Kuwait shipping, various types of foreign sailing-craft are sometimes to be seen laid up in the harbour during the summer months. There are, for example:—

‘*Abri* from Saihút, Hadhramaut. A two-masted ship with pointed bow and stern. The rudder is peculiar in shape, and it has a tiller like that of the Kuwait *jalibút*, metal rings for the rudder being inserted into the body of the stern.

*Zarúq* (or *zarúqah*) from Jizan (Qizan), Yemen. A two-masted ship with pointed bow and stern, the latter gaily painted.

## Different Kinds of Sailing-Craft

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*Sambúq* from Makalla and Aden. Slightly different stem and stern from the ones built in Kuwait for pearl-diving, and larger. Usually there are painted strips in blue and white along the side.

*Banouche*, a small boat belonging to a Makalla *sambúq*, corresponding to the *mashúwah* of the *búm*. Its peculiarity is that it is sewn together by rope, no nails being used in its construction. It has a pointed bow and stern.

*Menji* from Bombay. A two-masted ship with a bow somewhat like a large *ballam*, the river-boat of Iraq, and a stern like a *jalibút*. These boats ply mostly between Bombay, Karachi and Kathiawar.

*Badan* (or *badeni*) from Muscat, Omán. A medium-sized sailing-ship with one mast and of striking construction.

*Baqárah* from the Trucial coast and Omán. Has a very sharp-pointed clipper bow and one mast.

See illustrations on pages 38 and 39.



## RUINS OF AN ANCIENT CITY

In early April 1942 my wife and I were invited by the vice-president and general manager of the Californian Arabian Standard Oil Company\* to visit him at Dhahrán. We travelled down in two cars with Sálím al Muzaiyin, and Muhammad ibn Táhus of the 'Ajmán, as escort. I drove my own car and acted as guide. It was while we were at Dhahrán that I was told the following story by Amír Muhammad al Mádhí from the nearby town of Al Khobar.

"A year or two ago", said Amír Muhammad, "the King was proceeding on urgent business to an outlying district along the road from Riyádh to Mecca. He had only one car, the escort cars having been ordered to follow later.

"It so happened that the King's car stuck in a sand-drift, so he got out and rested under an '*arta*' bush while the rest of the party struggled to free the vehicle.

"A passing Badawi strolled up to the resting King and asked if the 'Imám had passed that way or was perchance coming along during the day. When asked by the King why he was so anxious to know, the man replied that he would greatly like to meet the 'Imám, whom all men praised and who was said to give money to the Muslims.

"'Moreover, the Badu say', he added, 'that the King gives little to persons when he meets them in a crowd, but that when he meets poor persons in *al Khalla* [the desert regions], he sometimes gives them as much as twenty-five *rials* or even thirty.'

"The King then replied and said: 'My friend, if you must know the truth, the 'Imám has gone on ahead. We whom you see are his servants and are following him as soon as we can get out of this accursed sand-drift.'

"He added that as he himself was a good Muslim and also feared God, he was anxious to do a good deed that day, so he would pay the man twenty-five *rials* out of his own pocket and give him another twenty-five *rials* in the name of the King, the master whom he served.

"The Badawi's face suddenly lit up and he seized the King's hand, bent down and kissed his nose and exclaimed:

\* Known then as Casoc. To-day it is the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco),

## Our Visit to Jubail and Tháj

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“Salá’am ’alaikum, Yá ’Abdul ’Azíz! Now I know that I am addressing the ’Imám himself!”

It was through the great kindness of the vice-president and general manager of Casoc that, on our return journey from Dhahrán, we were able to visit the Jabal al Bahri at Jubail and the ruins of the ancient city of Tháj in the Wádi al Miyáh, central Hasa. They gave us the services of their famous ’Ajmán guide, Khamís ibn Rimthán, who accompanied us and saw us safely back to Kuwait.

The Jabal al Bahri is one of two hills near the small coastal town of Jubail—or Ainain, as it is better known to the Arabs. The other hill is called Jabal al Burri. The Badu have many tales about there being treasure hidden in the heart of Jabal al Bahri. On a large, flat, upright rock is an Arabic inscription. When we came to study the wording, we found it difficult to see and copy because of a large rock that had fallen in front of it from above. It is said to read as follows:—

Min al Jabal al Bahri  
il al Jabal al Burri  
hammal sabat ad jumál  
fi sabat i yám  
Amánat Allah waháda

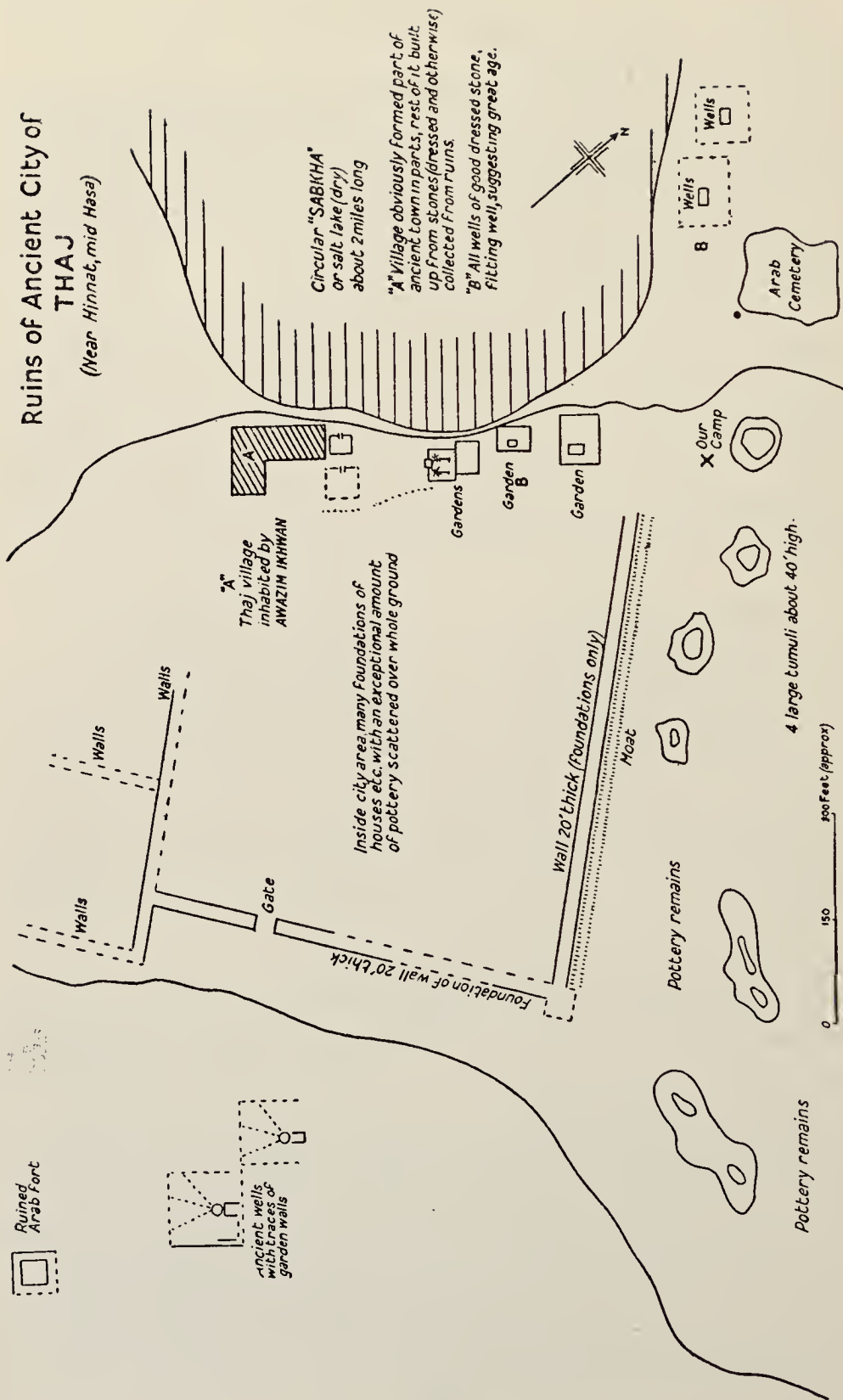
From the Jabal al Bahri  
to the Jabal al Burri  
Load up seven male camels  
in seven days  
The trust of the only one God

Above the inscription, which is cut well into the rock, is a hole some eighteen inches square, which terminates in a hole the size of a threepenny bit. They say that sweet-scented cotton or wool can be got out of this inner hole by means of a thin iron rod, or length of wire, two feet in length and hooked at the end.

On leaving Jubail, instead of taking the short and direct route up to Kuwait via Abu Hadriyah, we turned west and took the Riyádh road, which crosses the Dahana sands at Umm ’Aqala—or Ma ’Aqala, as it is more commonly called.

The first oasis we came to was Al Hinnat, where there is an ’Ikhwán *hijarah* (settlement) of the ’Awázim tribe. To the west of the village were traces of ruins, and the wells were built up with many pieces of large, well-cut blocks of stone, relics of a former civilization. In the distance to the south-west we could see a peculiar flat-topped, almost square hill, which our guide told us was called Al Guaidiyát and was four miles to the north-west of Tháj.

# Ruins of Ancient City of THAJ (Near Hinnat, mid Hasa)



Time was short, so we did not stay long at Al Hinnat. We reached Tháj at about 5.15 p.m., which gave us three-quarters of an hour before sunset to look around. While the servants and drivers pitched our tents close to a well and a small garden full of ripening barley we wandered over the ruins.

Tháj is also an 'Ikhwán *hijarah* of the 'Awázim. The majority of the houses, some built of mud and some of dressed stone taken from the ruins, were empty at that time of the year, being occupied only during the summer. A few gardeners live there permanently and grow crops. The settlement is built on the edge of a fairly large *sabkhah*\* and the ruins extend east of the village, covering an area of about a square mile. On a low ridge to the south-east, across a depression containing a well or two, were many small mounds, which, said our guide, were more ruins. We did not visit these.

Broken pottery was everywhere. Exceptionally large quantities of it covered four tumuli to the north-east of the village.† These mounds were some forty feet high, possibly the tombs of important personages or places of sacrifice.

Parts of the village were obviously remains of the ancient town, the rest having been constructed with stones collected from the ruins. Slabs, both dressed and undressed, now formed the walls of the houses, while the four-foot walls of the enclosures on the edge of the village had the appearance of built-up remains of original walls. Running north-west and south-east, then turning at a right-angle to run parallel with the Wádi al Miyah, were the foundations of what was once a long wall, some twenty feet thick, with the remains of a moat. Inside this former boundary of the city were many foundations of houses, etc., with potsherds scattered over the whole ground.

To the south of the village were what might have been tombs. A few thick, well-cut blocks of stone were visible near the surface, sometimes three making a narrow grave. In others only two stones could be seen. One large slab lying here was five feet long and was well cut and masoned. At one end, about a foot from the top, it had

\* See glossary.

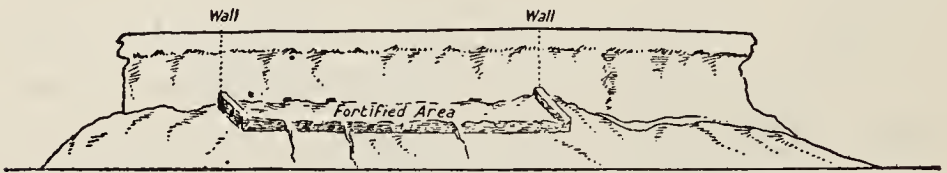
† For a fuller account of the ancient tumuli of Hasa, see an article entitled "Ancient Arabia: Explorations in Hasa, 1940-41", by Professor P. B. Cornwall, published in the *Geographical Journal* by the Royal Geographical Society, London, January-February 1946.



been cut and shaped with a groove about three inches wide, suggesting that the slab was once held in position by a strong rope tied round this groove. It had no inscription on it, nor could we find any that had.

There were visible in the walls of the houses many perfect flat blocks of stone, but they were placed horizontally and any inscription that might have existed on them was covered up. The garden walls and the stonework round the wells on the north-east of the village were mostly built of masoned stone. The wells were worked by donkeys. A small modern graveyard lay in the valley to the north-east of the village.

We did not pick up any flint implements among the ruins. The pieces of pottery strewn around were reddish-black, dark grey, light greyish red and red, with a cream glaze on inside and out, or a black



AL GUAIDIYÁT HILL

glaze on one side only. Several pieces of large jars had a similar decoration round the top. Two small square objects with four short legs, which may have been incense-burners, were interesting. We found them on two of the high mounds by our tent. One, in reddish black pottery, was almost white inside and had no decoration. The other (damaged) was in red pottery, with a pattern round the top and on the legs. Among the ruins we also found a few small pieces of metal, green with age, and, on the mound by our tent, what might possibly have been the stone head of an axe and a stone awl.

As the inhabitants of Tháj are rather fanatical we did not go right inside the village. Nor, in the short time at our disposal, were we able to examine the surroundings thoroughly. In any event, no one to-day can get a permit to dig in any ruin in Sa'udi Arabia, and only trenching through the mounds would reveal the secrets of Tháj.

After leaving there we stopped at the flat-topped hill called Al Guaidiyát, but did not climb up to the very top. It is approximately

## A Hill of Refuge

### Chap. XVII

three hundred feet in height and four hundred yards in length. The only ruins there visible were parts of a wall four or five feet high, built half-way up the side of the hill. The hill itself might once have been an outpost guarding the northern approaches to the city of Tháj, and the walled-in enclosure a fortified refuge area into which the flocks of sheep and goats were driven when danger threatened.\*

\* An article entitled "Thaj and Other Sites", by the author and his wife, was published in *Iraq* (Vol. X, 1948) by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, and subsequently reprinted in pamphlet form. The illustrations on pages 472 and 474 are reproduced therefrom.

## THE ISLANDS OF BIRDS

By Violet Dickson

I consulted one Ibrahím al Faudari, the light-keeper and fisherman of Maskán island, as to the best time to pay a visit to 'Auha island, as I wanted to see the birds nesting there. He told me that last year (1941) his sons had visited 'Auha on the 23rd of *Rabia tháni* (Rabia II), the fourth month of the Muhammadan year, and had collected some one hundred and fifty eggs, which they had sold in the Kuwait market.

"*Thuraiya*\* will set on the twenty-fifth of the month", he said, "and if you could come about the twenty-first the weather will be favourable."

I asked him to come and see me again a few days before it was time to go, to enable me to make final arrangements. He called on the morning of 5th May and said he had heard that his sons were proposing to go to 'Auha to collect eggs, but that he had forbidden them to do so until the *khatún* (lady) could go with them. So he advised an early departure.

All plans were made to leave Kuwait early on Thursday morning, 7th May. I arranged to take with me our Badawin servant Sálím al Muzaiyin, who at one time had been a pearl-diver, and his niece 'Amsha bint Ibrahím al Muzaiyin. My whole kit consisted of a small 30-lb. tent, a camp-bed and bedding, two locally made rugs and a couple of cushions. As a present to the Al Faudari family, whose guest I was going to be, I took half a sack of Karachi rice, half a sack of flour, one *waggíyah* of *dihin*, one *waggíyah* of coffee and a *maund* of firewood.

Early on Thursday morning Ibrahím's *ballam* came into the harbour in front of our house in Kuwait and, the tide being high, we soon loaded up our kit and were off on a nice westerly breeze. This veered slightly two hours or so later and we had to sail away to the north-west of Maskán. We eventually arrived at 11.30 a.m. in a very hot, steamy atmosphere. Ibrahím's home, a collection of small, low, stone-built huts, stands on the west shore. Close by is the white navigation light, which is hoisted on a mast every evening at sunset. One tamarisk

\* The Pleiades.

tree, some two hundred yards away, provides shade for his cows and sheep during the noonday sun.

The island covers about thirty acres and contains two good cement water-tanks, which are filled up from the rainwater each year. There is good grazing, and brushwood in the shape of *shinán*,\* which covers the island. These bushes are broken down—not pulled up by the roots—each autumn when they are dry and used as firewood. Each spring and summer the bushes shoot out again, giving a very nice green appearance to the island.

Ibrahím's livelihood is fish, which he and his sons catch in their traps and bring to the Kuwait market. His family was made up of his wife, three grown-up married sons with their wives and small children, his married daughter and three other daughters aged ten, eight and five. The ladies have a private sitting-out place, known as an *'arish*, on the edge of the shore and near their house. It is rigged up from spare boat-masts and poles, and roofed with discarded reed fish-traps, which are in turn covered over with mats made in the Iraq marsh country. I pitched my tent just beyond this, and sat by day under the shade of the *'arish* on a mattress and cushions.

Except for an hour or so before noon, there was either a south or west wind blowing and it was delightfully cool for this time of year. Two nice cows came in to be milked at early noon, then rested under the tree until about three o'clock, when they were milked again before wandering off to graze or pick up any odd dried fish that lay about. At sunset each cow was tied up and given a meal of date stones or a few dates, which they ate out of the empty shell of a large turtle. Some eleven sheep and goats also came in at dusk and were tethered up for the night under the tree.

The women of the household cooked me a most delicious luncheon of rice, both sweet and plain, a variety of fish cooked in several different ways, dates cooked in honey, as well as a bowl of *leben*. For supper there was more rice and fish, an omelet of pigeons' eggs with butter sauce and, as an aid to digestion, a glass of water flavoured with the pollen of the male date palm.

From midnight onwards a south wind blew, and there was a very heavy dew. It was not possible to sail to 'Auha the following morn-

\* *Seidlitzia rosmarinus* Bunge.



ing, as I had hoped, so another day was spent lazing about on Maskán. I went birds'-nesting with the children and watched the men make their fish-traps out of new reeds from Iraq, while others beat out the stems of the fruit of the date palm to make rope with which to bind them. This fibre is known as *'assu*. These fish-traps have to be continually renewed, as storms break them easily. The fish caught at the time of my visit were *zubaidi*, *subaiti* and *sha'am*, though in the fish-traps were usually as many as a dozen large stinging ray and their young.

There are two varieties of the dreaded stinging ray (*lukhma*) in these waters. One has rounded sides and is known in Kuwait as *saníni*. The other has pointed wing-like sides, with a much longer and thinner, whip-like tail. This is known as *insaiifi*. Ibrahím and his sons had all been stung at one time or another in many places on their thighs and legs by these vicious creatures and had been laid up for months at a time. Apparently the sting of the young ray can poison as much as if not more than the larger ones. The sting is in the form of a bone-like barb, two and a half inches long, which breaks off in the wound. It can only be removed by making an opening in the flesh opposite to the point of entry and pulling it through.

*Gúba*, the crested lark, were nesting. The children and I found one small nest under a *hamdh* bush. It was made completely and very neatly of dry *sama'a* grass, with three eggs in it. Under a bush was a similar nest. It was very small, only about an inch and a half across, and there were no eggs in it.

*Kadhari*, the green bee-eater, had some fifteen to twenty nests, all in burrows cut obliquely into the ground for quite ten feet. One small white, almost spherical egg was picked up at the entrance to one of these burrows.

*Qaráwi*, the Kentish plover, were nesting, usually on the dry, hard patches of earth away from the shore. The nests were just circular depressions lined with chips of dried mud and pieces of broken sea-shell. I found two containing three eggs, and one with one egg. One bird was seen running ahead of us trailing her wing and taking a zigzag shoreward course. She probably had young, but I could not find them.

*Juwaida*, the small tern, were also nesting and flew overhead screech-

## Our Hostess Tells a Story

### Chap. XVII

ing. One nest under a *hamdh* bush contained one egg slightly more pointed than those in the nests of the *qaráwi*. It might have been a tern's egg, though the nest was similar to the *qaráwis*'.

The remains of a *hubára* (lesser bustard) and many dead martins and swallows were lying about. Obviously they had been overcome with thirst and exhaustion while migrating. A number of the larger species of bee-eater, with orange and brown colouring, were picked up in an exhausted condition by the children. They were not nesting there. I noticed some other varieties of migrating birds passing through on their northern migration, but was not able to identify them. Six curlews were seen on the shore. In the early morning small chiffchaff drank the heavy dew from the *shínán* bushes.

After dinner on the first and second evenings of my visit, the lady of the house sat with 'Amsha and myself outside my tent and told us stories of the desert. She was originally a Badawin girl, she said, her father being of the Shammar tribe and her mother of the 'Anizah, and she had been brought up in the village of 'Aiyún close to Ha'il.

"In those troublous times", she told us, "everyone carried rifles, and the men would not think of going to the mosque to pray without one. Even girls were all taught to shoot, and to ride a mare. Round about Ha'il it was very hilly country and many deep caves existed in the hills. There was always a danger to our flocks and herds, for panthers and hyenas would come out at night and try to steal our sheep and goats.

"My mother told me the story of how, when I was only a tiny baby two months old, I was nearly carried off by a panther. My father had gone to the mosque to pray at sunset, while she returned home with me from the flocks. When my father had left home, he had forgotten to fasten the latch and, as my mother carried me into the yard, a panther that was inside made one spring and attempted to seize me from her arms. His teeth badly bit my wrists and fingers, but my mother uttered such piercing screams that the men came rushing out of the mosque, rifles in hand, prepared to meet raiders or an enemy. When my mother explained that it was a panther, immediate chase was given, but it was too late and the animal escaped to the hills. The scars are still on my hands. In the morning, when it is light, I will show them to you."

Our hostess also told us that somewhere in the hills, in one of these caves of her childhood, there lived a fierce woman who was suspected of being a man-eater. Some persons had at different times mysteriously disappeared, and there were rumours of a kind of witch or vampire-woman, seen after dark, who was out to kill and eat the unwary.

Ibn Rashíd, the Amír of Ha'il, was determined to put an end to these rumours, and if there was any truth in them, he would set his guards the task of capturing this woman. For months and months many of his mounted men were sent out by night into the hills. One night the report came that the woman had been seen stealthily emerging from a certain deep cave. At once a strong guard of armed mounted men was sent to the spot and the cave surrounded. As the monster creature returned to her hiding place before dawn, she was set upon and captured, bound and brought before Ibn Rashíd.

She was a terrible-looking woman with a large head, wild, tangled hair and teeth like the fangs of an animal. She spoke in a strange language that the men could hardly understand and confessed that on one or two occasions she had eaten human flesh and drunk human blood. She could not say from where she had come or who she was, but explained that she was half-man and half-woman—a hermaphrodite.

Before passing the death sentence Ibn Rashíd wished for evidence of her having killed and eaten human beings, and ordered her to take his men to her hiding place in the hills. The armed guards, on reaching the outskirts of the town, killed her and buried her by previous arrangement.

At 3.30 a.m. in the morning of Saturday, 9th May, I was awakened by Ibrahim calling outside my tent:

“The wind is from the west. Make ready and we will go.”

By four o'clock we were all aboard the *ballam* and sailing towards Sa'ad and Sa'id, the two ancient mounds or shrines on the south-west point of Failaka island.

'Auha lies off the south-east corner of Failaka, where there is a sand spit known as the Liwán (veranda). Khor 'Auha is the name given to the deep channel, about a mile and a half in width, that divides Failaka from 'Auha, which is about ten acres in size, with a sandy, shelving beach on its north side. Here we landed at nine o'clock.

A flock of birds sitting on the shore rose as we approached. As far

## The Rare Crab Plover

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as I could see they were terns and gulls, though two were of a much larger type of gull, with head and wings black and a grey back. After these birds had got up and given the alarm, a large pack of about a hundred crab plover also got up from the centre of the island, followed shortly after by another large pack. They twisted and turned once or twice before flying out to sea, where they broke up into smaller packs of ten or a dozen birds each. These small packs returned and flew round about at intervals.

Having landed on the shore, we found two large eggs close together and immediately above the high-water mark. Each was in a shallow depression with a few splashes of white droppings round the edge of the nest. The colour of one egg was pinkish buff streaked with bluish grey and blotched and dotted with dark to reddish brown. It measured 2.58 inches by 1.69 inches. The other was 2.57 by 1.77, and was creamy white with very faint blue-grey blotches and a few brown dots, lines and blotches. The Arabs call them the eggs of the *taráchi*, and they probably belonged to the two large birds we had seen get up from the shore.

As we walked up onto the island and approached the brown, bumpy patch that was the nesting place of the crab plover, single birds came out of their holes, ran a few yards with outstretched necks, then flew off. The Arab name for these birds is *kuwairi* (pronounced *chuwairi*). They say they do not eat fish, but live on small worms and tiny crabs picked up along the shore. Hence, having no fishy taste, the eggs are much sought after. The sailors began to collect them, a tiring and hot task. The holes, their mouths about six inches across, ran obliquely into the ground. Some were as much as four and a half feet long, others slightly shorter, with the eggs at the far ends. Only about one in three of the burrows yielded any result. Crab plovers' eggs, which are white in colour, are very large for the size of the birds. They vary slightly in size, as will be seen from the measurements I took that day: 2.57 by 1.82, 2.62 by 1.88, 2.64 by 1.79, 2.53 by 1.55. The usual number of eggs laid was one, but *very* occasionally two were found in one burrow.

I tried to shoot one of these birds, in order to identify them exactly, but failed; my 16-bore cartridges were old and the heat made things difficult. The only bird I managed to wing fell into the sea and we



could not get it. Its mate at once separated from the small pack and flew over it and round about it for some time, uttering a plaintive cry, until it swam out to sea.

Ibrahím and I left the three men collecting eggs and wandered across to the south side of the island. Here we found the nests of the three birds known to the Arabs as *zargi*, *ab al khasaif* and *sultáni*. All the nests were similar, being nearly flat, built of dry twigs and about nine or ten inches across. They were perched on the top of low bushes of *hamdh*, some twelve or fourteen inches from the ground. The eggs were bluish green with an occasional splash of chalky white. In each of four nests we found one egg, with three in a fifth one. One nest was placed on the top of some stones at the foot of a cairn; another on the top of an old iron navigation post that lay on the ground, having some years previously rusted through and fallen, leaving only about ten feet of upright post standing.

Along this shore on the rocks we saw the owners of the nests. Some appeared to be smallish black herons, others pure white herons or egrets of the same size. According to Ibrahím the white ones were male and female *ab al khasaif*, and the blackish ones *zargi*. The one he called *sultáni* had a sort of crest of long feathers down the head and neck. We found a broken egg lying on the ground close to a nest, and Ibrahím said the birds break them purposely if they see a person coming.

Crab plovers' burrows of last year and the previous year were to be seen in two other spots on the island. Again according to Ibrahím, each year the birds dig new burrows some little way away from the old ones. We found the old ones all closed, filled in probably by wind and weather. No plants or bushes were growing on them, although round about were bushes—*hamdh*, *tahma* (figwort), *shinán* and a mesembryanthemum.

On the island were a few dead swallows and the decomposed bodies of many small birds that looked like martins—white-breasted with brownish grey upper parts.

We left 'Auha at about half-past eleven, having collected seventy-four crab plovers' eggs, besides seven *zargis'* eggs and the two eggs of the *taráchi* gulls already mentioned. As we moved off to the boat the small packs of crab plover began to return and settle on the shore

## Black-Headed Terns

### Chap. XVII

some little way away until a large flock was collected, when they ran up the beach all together. Then a hundred or so flew in a body to their nests, followed by more and more. Ibrahím described them to me as having black legs about seven inches long and a body white all over except for a black streak on the back of the head and neck. I noticed also that they had some dark on their wings when flying, and that their legs were stretched out behind them. Ibrahím said that during the previous year he and his sons had taken seven birds on their nests out of their holes, and that one of them had laid an egg on reaching his house at Maskán. The birds were only about the size of a pigeon, but good eating. I found the eggs very tasty when cooked, though the white was tough. Some of those collected that morning were slightly sat on.

Last year, said Ibrahím, there had been on the shore many nests of *hamr mangar* (red-beaked tern) and *hamr maraikh* (seagull), and the *kuwairi* had been more numerous than this year.

As we returned to Maskán small black-headed terns flew continuously around the *ballam*, diving into the sea after the small fish that scattered away from the bows. Only some dives were successful; more often the birds caught nothing. Suddenly two terns overhead were attacked by a single larger, dark-speckled bird with a pointed tail, which appeared to be endeavouring to catch and kill them. They twisted and turned, screeching all the while, with the larger bird after them. Then abruptly the attacker seemed to take no more interest and flew quietly away, low down on the water, to settle some way off. Ibrahím then explained that this peculiar bird lives on the droppings of terns. It comes after them and attacks and frightens them until, out of pure nervousness, they do as wanted, when the larger bird catches the droppings, eats them in mid-air and flies off. Although I witnessed these attacks twice it was all so quick that it was impossible to see exactly what happened. Another theory is that the terns vomit up the small fish they have just caught. Ibrahím said that this other bird has a forked tail like a swallow, but I could not determine this properly.

On a strongish south wind we got back to Maskán at half-past two in the afternoon.

MIGRATING BIRDS THROUGH KUWAIT

By Violet Dickson

The northern migration is in the spring, the southern migration in the autumn. It is important to remember this. Over a period of years I made the following field notes:—

Swallows.—These arrived in Kuwait in great numbers on their northern migration on 17th February 1939, and many tried to find a place to roost in our veranda. On southward migration they usually appear on 10th August.

Little Crake.—One picked up dead in front of our house on 28th February 1939.

Green Bee-eaters.—Arrived on 28th February 1939. Many common bee-eaters arrived on 12th March 1939.

Hoopoe.—Is always seen in Kuwait on the first day of Mirzám (7th August), counting thirteen days back from the rising of *Suhail* (Canopus) in Najd, which is 20th August. Saw one round our camp at Araifján, on southern border of Kuwait state, on 4th March 1939; again on 1st March 1940 and 26th February 1949. Saw two on southern migration on 11th August 1940. In the spring of 1951 saw some two hundred passing through Kuwait from February until end of May. This was very exceptional, as usually only a score or more are seen.

Wagtails.—Grey wagtails arrived about 15th February 1931, on 5th March 1939 and 15th August 1940. Yellow wagtails on 15th August 1940. On 4th April 1941 considerable numbers of blue-headed and black-headed wagtails came to our tent out in the desert fifty miles to the south of Kuwait; also some grey wagtails, yellow wagtails and white wagtails.

Quail.—Seen at Tawíl wells, in south of Kuwait state, on 5th March 1939.

Bluethroat.—Saw one on 26th March 1939 and again on 29th March 1941 near the town; also at our camp in the desert fifty miles south-west of Kuwait on 4th March 1952.

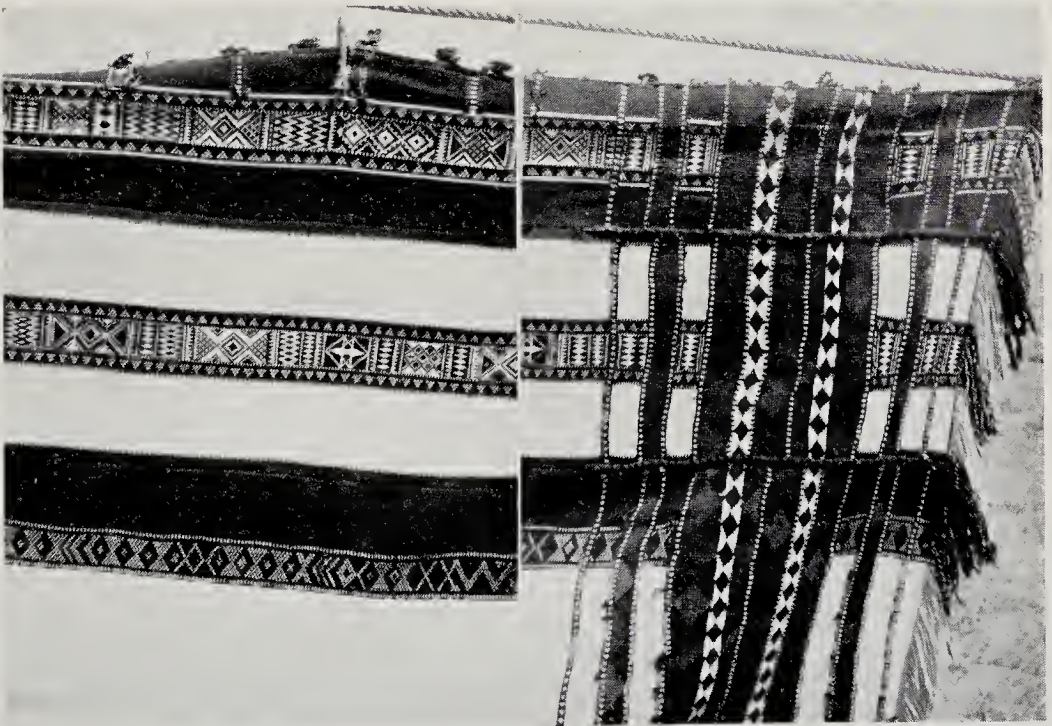
Wryneck.—Seen on 24th April 1939 and again on 4th April 1952. This bird is very remarkable. One was caught by a Badawin boy in our camp. It had come into the tent for shade and had crept under the saddlebags, etc., where he had caught it. It was about six and a half





### IN OUR TENT

The author's wife about to make coffee

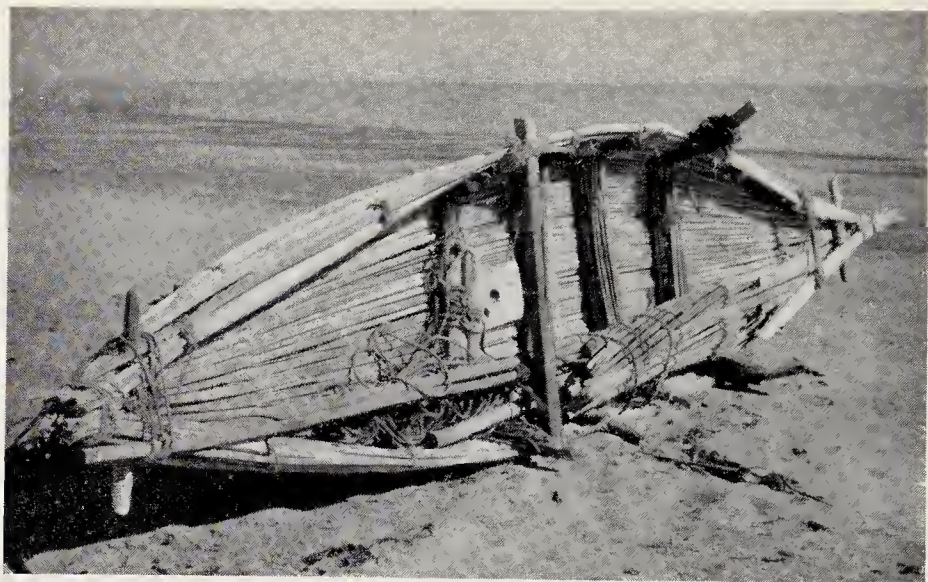


### THE *QĀTA* OR TENT DIVIDE CURTAIN IN EVERY ARAB TENT

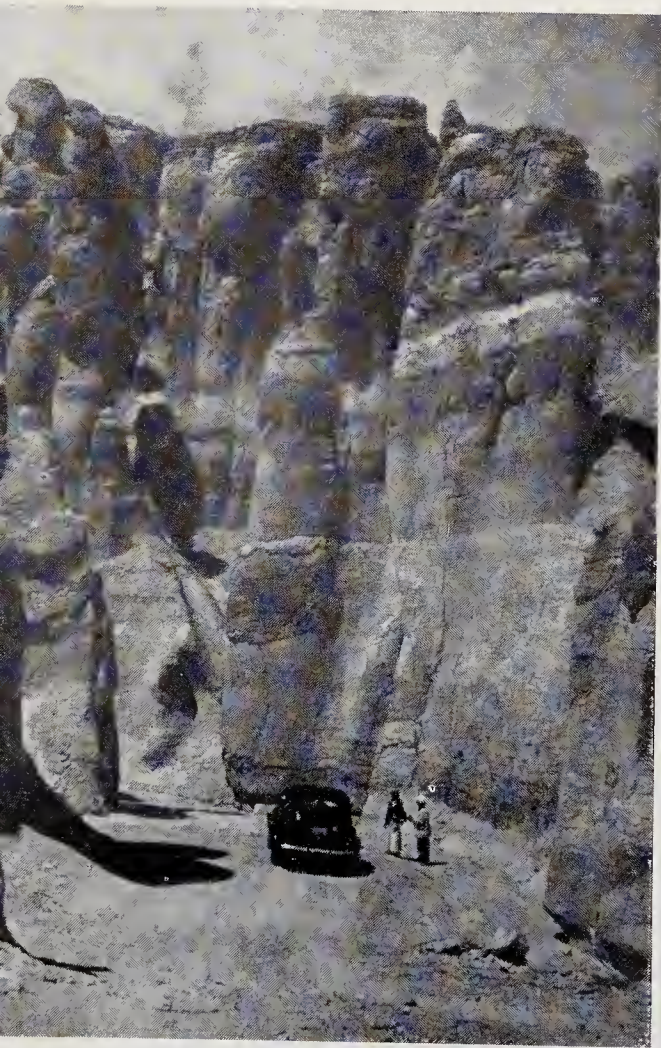
It separates the men's and women's quarters

The *qāta* is sometimes called *dharah* among Ajmán and Mutair tribes





The *wairjtyah*—primitive fishing-craft as used on Failaka Island



The towering cliffs of Jabal Qára in Hufuf oasis (Hasa) outside the entrance of the Cave of Abraham (to left, not visible)



The Shrine of Al Khidr on Failaka Island (reputed very ancient)



inches long, with a small, sharp beak, its colouring spotted, barred and blotched in greys and browns and russet. When I held it in my hand it twisted its neck and stretched it out and closed its eyes in the most extraordinary manner. Its claws were one long and one short in front and one long and one short behind, so it held onto my finger with two claws on each side. The boy said that a wryneck—"Shaitán" he called it, meaning it was a devil or a rogue—will feign death and let its head fall down limp with eyes shut. We saw a good demonstration of this. As the boy had twisted its wings I let it hop round the tent. After a good examination of its markings I untwisted its wings and away it flew, but not before it lay in my hand for some thirty seconds, apparently quite dead.

Little Eastern Stint.—Picked up one exhausted on 17th May 1943. Length six inches; beak half an inch; legs black; back ruddy brown and black; breast white; throat buff and white; tail brown, underneath white; foot with hind claw.

Chiffchaff.—Many were seen on 6th February 1940.

Cream-coloured Coursers.—Caught two young ones, five or six days old, on 17th March 1939. There are always many of these about in spring, migrating north.

Rollers.—Saw four on Kuwait aerodrome on 26th March 1939; also three on 1st August 1940.

Stonechat.—One found dead in our garden on 4th March 1942.

Persian Spotted Doves.—Seen on 17th April 1939, and passing through in numbers on 24th April of same year; also in large numbers on 8th and 15th August 1940, though usually not seen until 1st September.

Sand Grouse.—These, mostly spotted and pintail, migrate northwards over Kuwait in vast numbers from about 10th to 30th April. Early in May 1935, when normal northward migration had ceased, saw a considerable number west of the Dhahar ridge, that had evidently remained behind to nest. Eggs, brought to us by wandering Badu almost daily, confirmed this. They are shaped like a pigeon's egg, but are slightly larger.

When that well-known ornithologist, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, D.S.O., visited Kuwait in January 1951, he identified with me the following birds:—

10th January.—Flocks of skylarks and three wheatears among the corn crops and bushes outside the town.

11th January.—Small flocks of short-toed larks among the corn crops. He shot three. No skylarks. In the desert beyond Subaihiyah he shot two bifasciated larks, male and female; also two cream-coloured coursers.

12th January.—In the tamarisk trees at Malah oasis he shot seven Spanish sparrows.

13th January.—One young male kestrel and one tawny pipit shot at Jahra. Along the shore he identified dunlins, curlew, an oyster catcher, sanderlings, cormorants. He shot one large sand plover.

15th January.—Plenty of willow wrens and one redstart were seen in the trees around the village of Fantás.

## CHAPTER XVIII

# Kuwait, 1942–1943

*A Case of Desert Law—Thirst in the Deep Desert—The Mutair Come Up from the Summan—A Wicked Uncle—The City Under the Sands—The Song of Gharaihibán—The Son of Tè'etháb al Murri—The Battle with Shuwa'ir of Yemen—The Black Dog of Hufuf—Eaten Alive by Wolves—The Badawin Thief—"Kill the Man Who Slew the Dog"*

### A CASE OF DESERT LAW

I had already heard that there was bad feeling between Amír Haif ibn Hajraf, head of the Al Sulaimán section of the 'Ajmán, and his nephew Sa'ud ibn Schlash, and was interested, therefore, to obtain full details, especially as both men were old friends of mine. The story was told to me by Sa'ud ibn Schlash and Sirur ibn Farwan, a prominent Mutairi in the service of Shaikh Ahmad of Kuwait.

In the middle of July 1942, they said, an 'Ajmán tribesman of the Al Sulaimán section happened to be in the deep desert near the Riyádh road, a hundred miles from Kuwait. Seeing two strayed camels he rounded them up and took them to Jahra oasis, where the people of Amír Haif and Sa'ud ibn Schlash were camped for the summer. Apparently the camels had wandered from a caravan of Najdis going to Riyádh, but this was not known at the time. One of them later contracted *jarab* (mange) in a virulent form and died.

In due course the owner, one of the Najdis, came back to Kuwait, bringing with him a letter from King Ibn Sa'ud, asking that every assistance be given him in recovering the lost camels. At Jahra he recognized the surviving animal and lodged a complaint against a Dausari tribesman, the *qasír* (tent neighbour) of Sa'ud ibn Schlash, accusing him before Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárah Al Sabah, director of public security in Kuwait, of theft. Hearing that trouble was in the air the original 'Ajmi who had found the camels and sold them to the Dausari tribesman slipped away into the desert.

After listening to the case Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárah decided to



fine the Dausari three hundred rupees: one hundred and fifty for the dead camel, and one hundred and fifty for failing to report that the two animals had been found strayed. Sa'ud ibn Schlash then pointed out that such proceeding would be unjust, and that he could on no account allow his *qasír*—and a stranger in the land—to be fined. Shaikh 'Abdullah accordingly ruled that one hundred and fifty rupees be recovered from Sa'ud ibn Schlash, and one hundred and fifty from the senior 'Ajmán shaikh, Amír Haif ibn Hajraf, the whole amount to be given to the Najdi merchant, plus the surviving camel.

At the time of this hearing Amír Haif was in Riyádh on a visit to the King. On his return he felt injured that Sa'ud ibn Schlash had been the cause of his having to pay this fine. He believed that it had been on the advice of Sa'ud that the real culprit had disappeared; and while agreeing that the Dausari, being their guest and neighbour, should be asked to pay nothing, he considered that Sa'ud should have borne the total fine.

Hence there was now enmity between the Amír and his nephew. Before he left me I told Sa'ud that it was up to him to *taiyib khátir* (comfort the ruffled feelings of) the old man, or I would give him no more coffee in my house. He promised to do so.

#### THIRST IN THE DEEP DESERT

Every year, during the intense heat of July and August, when the sun temperature in the desert reaches 180° F., there are cases of death by thirst far in the hinterland of Kuwait. One naturally asks how it is that the Badawi, who knows the distances between the various holes and wells as he knows his own hand, and should be able to work out the exact number of *jirbas* needed for the journey, seems periodically to fail entirely in his calculations and runs short of water before he reaches his destination.

The answer is not ignorance or foolishness as much as sheer bad luck, due to the fact that in midsummer camels everywhere are weak and below par from lack of good grazing and, even though they look fit and well, are liable to sudden collapse, or are unable to cover the ground at their normal speed and so fail to reach the water ahead of them in the number of days usually taken. It must be realized that the

time taken for a camel to go from one well area to another in the Kuwait hinterland averages six to seven days. If a camel begins to fail half-way and can only make its destination in eight or nine days, there is going to be trouble for both man and beast.

The year 1942 was no exception as far as temperature was concerned, but it is pleasant to record that there were no deaths from thirst in that summer. There were, however, some narrow escapes, three of which were related to me by Shaiyah al Jibili at Water Well 13, which was bored by the Kuwait Oil Company in the area known to the local Badu as the Hamátiyat, four dry watercourses to the west of the Ash Shaqq depression and fifty miles south-west by west of Kuwait town. Shaiyah al Jibili, a minor shaikh of the Jiblán section of the Mutair, was in charge of H.H. Shaikh Ahmad's three large herds of camels, and was domiciled in Kuwait.

About 14th August 1942 a man of the Dahámshah sept of the 'Amarát section of the 'Anizah left As Sáfa wells in Sa'udi Arabia for Kuwait. With him went a Sulubba man, who acted as guide, and his wife. It was their intention to make for W.W.13, six days' summer journey from As Sáfa. When still fifty miles from their objective they finished all their water and their camels began to show signs of exhaustion. Nevertheless they continued for another whole night and day until, although they did not know they were so close, they were only ten miles from W.W.13. Here the camels all collapsed, having had no water for six days. It was now after sunset and the party had drunk nothing for thirty hours. The Dahámshah man told his companions that he could go no further on foot, but would remain with the camels and kit while they tried to make the wells.

"If", were his parting words, "you can bring help to-morrow morning, you will probably find me alive; if you cannot, then I bid you farewell."

The Sulubba and his wife went slowly forward on foot and by midnight had actually got some three miles beyond W.W.13 and the Mutair tents of Shaiyah al Jibili. In the darkness they had missed the camp by a mile. Suddenly the woman said to her husband that she thought she could hear a dog barking to their right rear. So exhausted was the man that he could not hear or speak or indicate his wishes, so his wife took him by the hand and, with slow and laborious steps, led

him in the direction of the barking until, at three o'clock in the morning, they staggered into the friendly circle of Shaiyah's tents, where both fell senseless.

It was not until six o'clock that they were revived after a copious drenching of cold water and small quantities of it to drink. On coming to, the Sulubba told Shaiyah of the companion they had left behind twelve hours previously. He begged for a party of camel men to return with him and effect a rescue. Unfortunately all the camels had gone off to graze in the Bâtin two days before, so the gallant Sulubba asked for a light *jirba* and having filled it went off on foot with two of Shaiyah's men. They found the Dahámshah man at about three o'clock in the afternoon. He had had nothing to drink for some fifty hours and was *in extremis*, but still alive. Having given him water sparingly and afterwards some food, the rescuers helped him back to camp on foot after the sun had gone down. They all reached W.W.13 about eleven o'clock amid quite a scene of rejoicing.

Shaiyah al Jibili told me that had not the party's camels been weak after the long, exhausting summer, they should have easily made his camp by sundown instead of being marooned ten miles short of it. The camels, not the travellers' lack of calculation, had let them down.

The second story concerned two 'Awázim men who were going up to Kuwait from Riyádh via Jariya Sifla in that same mid-August. One of the camels they rode was not their property, but had been borrowed from a fellow tribesman. While still thirty hours' journey from Wafrah they ran out of drinking water, this because one of the camels had wandered off during the night and they had to spend a whole day and night before recovering it. They tried to stick the rest of the journey without water, but, after making a brave effort for a third of the distance they had to travel, and feeling the danger signals of dizziness and unconsciousness coming over them, they decided to kill a camel and drink the foul water—a small amount at best—stored in that part of its anatomy known as *al kirsh*, which acts as the storage tank of a camel. This undoubtedly saved their lives, and both just managed to make Wafrah wells before they collapsed in front of some of their fellow tribesmen's tents. They are said to have remained unconscious for over four hours.

A rather pathetic aftermath, and one at which I was present, took

place ten days later in Kuwait, when Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubarak was sitting in *mijlis* dispensing tribal justice. The two men whose story is described above found themselves in court and accused of slaying not their own camel, but the borrowed one. Its owner demanded justice: a new camel or the price thereof. Why, he indignantly asked, had not the thirsty men killed their own camel? In vain they pleaded that in the situation in which they had found themselves, they had been incapable of thought, and that they had kept the stronger animal of the two only from a sense of self-preservation.

Shaikh 'Abdullah decided that the accused should pay the plaintiff one hundred and thirty rupees, a figure decided upon by neutral persons who had known the camel in question.

Little compassionate feeling is shown in such cases, and the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth must be enforced. I was sorry for the accused.

The third incident also took place in August 1942, not far from W.W.13. Two Harb tribesmen were coming up to Kuwait by camel from Hafar al Batin. They had intended to make for W.W.13, but lost their way in a bad sandstorm. When about twenty miles from the wells, and overcome with exhaustion, they killed both their camels and kept themselves alive by drinking the water from *al kirsh*. Unable to proceed on foot and not knowing the direction they should take, both men began to wander in circles and eventually collapsed.

Two days later they were picked up for dead by a party of Shaiyah al Jibili's men, who were bringing their camels back to water from the Batin, and were brought into camp. Both recovered eventually, although they had been four days in mid-August without water.

"The mercy of God is great", said Shaiyah al Jibili when he had finished the tale.

#### THE MUTAIR COME UP FROM THE SUMMAN

The Kuwait Oil Company had decided to close down all drilling operations for the period of the war, and by the end of 1942 the task was practically completed, only a skeleton staff remaining in Kuwait. In October of that year I was appointed acting general manager and left in charge on a care and maintenance basis.



In March 1943 my wife and I decided to pay a visit to Ash Shaqq. The year had been a remarkable one as far as rain was concerned; nine inches had been recorded since the autumn, a record for Kuwait. The high desert was in consequence at its best and we took the opportunity to pay as many visits as we could to our Badawin acquaintances in the interior, not to mention our own camp folk, now wandering farther away than ever from Kuwait town.

After a stormy night the morning of Wednesday, 17th March was fine though cloudy, but it began to rain again at 11.30 a.m., accompanied by thunder and lightning, with great, heavy, black clouds coming up from the west. At half-past two, although it was still raining hard, we decided to go out to our camp; away to the west it was already looking brighter and it promised to be a fine evening.

It was not possible to leave the town by the main road to Riyádh, for a large patch of *sabkhah* close by would be impassable after so much rain, so, once outside the town wall, we took the Jalíb al Shuyúkh road. We did not go as far as that small settlement, but left the wells on our right until we came to the car track leading from Maqwa and Chadadiyah, when we turned off on it to the right. It was still pouring with rain.

The *esheb* here was just wonderful and seemed to be standing up a foot or more high and looking such a brilliant rich green. A lone bustard, also enjoying the rain, fluttered across the track and ran off away to our left. From here on, until we reached the Mafráq al Darb ("Junction of the Road"), where the main Riyádh road turns off to the left and the Ash Shaqq road goes on, it was wonderful going. The track is usually very sandy, but the rain had made it firm and hard.

Around Kabd and Kubaida (Little Kabd) was a different picture: the water was running across the road like a veritable river into a bed on our right, along which it was pouring down and emptying itself into a newly formed lake. In places the road was completely obliterated by the *sail* (torrent after rain). There was now a danger of going off the track and sinking into the treacherous soft white mud to one side.

Rain came down now harder than ever, but it was the clearing-up shower and before we had reached the steep little hill by the upper *thamílah* the sun was shining. Our troubles now began. The hill was

## We Visit the Mutair

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so slippery that the car could not get up it. After several attempts at pushing it uphill, then pushing it down, each time getting splashed from head to foot with whitish mud, we gave it up as useless. The only way was to go round along the sandy river-bed and join the road farther on.

From then on all was well. The track had been cut into by the rain in parts very much, and in some places rivers were still running down the road. We met two cars, one full of *fidáwiyah*, the other carrying Shaikh Fahad al Sálím Al Sabah, younger brother of the present ruler and a friend of ours. After the usual polite exchanges, we went on our way. We learnt later that he had just left our tent, where he had been taking shelter from the rain since morning.

We came into the Shaqq at about five o'clock in the afternoon. It was a lovely sight after the rain. Lakelets were everywhere, and beside most of them lay the already filled *jirbas* and tins of many Badu. The tall *sama'a* grass was waving in the breeze, covering the whole area as far as the eye could see, and camels were grazing among it in tens of thousands. A week ago, except for our own little camp where Sálím al Muzaiyin now awaited us, there had been no living thing in sight. Now to the north-west, to the west, to the south-east were camels. From the south-east, slowly moving up the Shaqq, were the heavily laden animals bearing tents and other household goods, the large *dhalla* of the shaikhly women of the Mutair looming large here and there in the distance among the baggage animals. It was the great north-western migration of the Mutair coming up from the Summan, as word of the wonderful grazing and numerous lakes in this area had reached them. These were the advance guard. Bandar Al Duwísh and all his following were close behind, if not among them. The Mutair have a code of honour never to disclose in *mijlis* the whereabouts of their shaikh, Al Duwísh. It is for this reason that it is always difficult to find out where he is.

It was not easy to find our encampment, but our dogs rushing out after the car confirmed our view that the five tents away to our right were those of Sálím al Muzaiyin and the *raba'a*. Before sunset came, a whole family of Mutair arrived and halted quite close to our tent. The camels were made to kneel with much grumbling, the loads were undone, the *dhalla* deposited a little to one side, and up and away

went the camels to graze on the luscious grass, the family settling down for the night in a small circle. They did not put up a tent, knowing that they would move on to the north-west at dawn. As darkness fell, thousands of tiny lights from camp fires appeared all around us, like the eyes of distant unseen animals reflecting the light from a car by night.

Presently the dogs began to bark and a rider cantered up to Sálím's tent, dismounted and tied his mare to the tent pole. It was Mutluq al Asqa Al Duwísh, a young shaikh of the Dushán, who had come to call. He was ushered into our tent and coffee was brought. His tents were close to us, he said; they had arrived at noon in the rain. He had seen our car through his glasses, so had come over after dark to pay his respects. For an hour and a half he chatted, giving us all news of the Mutair and the correct wherabouts of Bandar, who was still south of the Shaqq and was expected on the morrow. After more coffee he took his leave. He called to a boy to bring his mare, a pretty thing, bay with white socks, and as fat and well as ever a mare looks in the desert in spring. Mutluq slung his rifle on his back and went up to her.

"Will you honour us and lunch with us to-morrow, Mutluq?" I asked. "We have a nice fat lamb all ready."

He would not give an answer, saying instead:

"Do you like my mare? I will give her to you. She is a Hamdá-niyah."

Without doubt she was very lovely, but we could not accept her. He leapt into his saddle and went off full gallop back to his tent in the darkness.

Round the camp fire that night I was discussing the fact that the world was round and that it was winter in England when it was summer in Australia. During the course of this old Zunaifir ibn Huwaila of the 'Ajmán called on us and after taking coffee joined in the conversation, which turned from the riddle of the universe to conundrums of another kind.

A certain shaikh (said Zunaifir) left seventeen camels to be divided among his three sons after his death. The eldest son was to get a half share of the camels; the second son, a third share; and the third son, a ninth share. A particular condition was added to the effect that no

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single camel could be given away, sold or killed, to make the division easier.

The shaikh died and no one knew how to divide the seventeen camels in the proportions laid down. A violent quarrel ensued and it was beginning to look as if bloodshed would result among the three sons and their partisans, when a stranger rode up on a camel, dismounted and asked what all the bother was about. He was told.

After a few moments' thought he asked if he could be allowed to settle the matter. The three sons agreed, whereupon the stranger ordered that the seventeen camels be collected together in front of him. To these he then added his own camel, making a total of eighteen, of which he gave nine (a half share) to the eldest son, six (a third share) to the second son, and two (a ninth share) to the third son. He then withdrew his own camel from the eighteen, mounted it and rode away.

"And everyone", said Zunaifir, "was happy."

As it grew light next morning, the camels began to move away from the tents near which they had spent the night, the herdsmen riding along with them and calling them to follow. Some of the herds belonged to the King; those grazing in front of our tent later in the morning had his own *wasm* on the left thigh. Some animals were in good condition, others not, after last year's bad summer. A good number had been segregated and were being treated for *jarab* with lime and arsenic. This disease will generally appear after a lean year of grazing. The herd given to the King by 'Abdullah Beg al Fáleh Pasha Al Sa'dún some years ago were all in the vicinity of our tent most of the day.

After luncheon we watched a herdsman collecting the whitened bones of a dead camel and build them up with care into a kind of skeleton, placing a bunch of wild flowers on the top. "To frighten the camels", he said when we asked him why he had done it, and only afterwards did we learn the reason. A camel will pick up and chew any bones lying about, which keeps it from grazing and so from getting fat, but when the bones are collected together in the way we had just seen, the creature becomes afraid and will not touch them.

Throughout that day there was continual movement as the camps of various shaikhs moved on up the Shaqq and others from the south-



east came and took their places. It was quite difficult for the herdsmen to prevent their charges from mixing up with those of their neighbours. The male camels were hobbled by a rope from the off hind to the off fore. The breeding season was now over and some of the young camels, two and three months old, were running with their mothers.

Shaikh Mutluq, hawk on wrist, was out early with his greyhound and a servant. We came upon him as we were going to make a call on Shaiyah al Jibili. As there was no hunting, Mutluq came with us and had coffee in the tent of Shaiyah, who, much to his delight, now found himself in the heart of the great Mutair migration. There was now much visiting going on among the ladies of the various Mutair sections, and many were the callers on Tufala, Shaiyah's wife, a very outstanding Badawin lady of good family, who had been away from her friends for some months. It was clear that they all thought a great deal of her. A small present from us of tea and sugar came in very useful in helping her entertain her guests. She had promised to come and have tea with my wife, but could not manage it.

The migration took about a week to pass our camp. Then it slowly turned left and finally began to move south-east again by a more westerly route through the Dibdibba and Qara'ah regions, the Mutair's objective being their Summan home once more.

We did not meet Bandar Al Duwish, paramount shaikh of the Mutair, until we were back in Kuwait, when he was brought into the American Mission hospital suffering from a bad kick in the stomach by a camel that he had been treating for *jarab*. His mother is a Sebei' lady known as Al Baidha because she is so fair-skinned.

#### A WICKED UNCLE

Before we returned to Kuwait my wife and I went out on a hawking expedition in our car. We were having good sport and were working the area south of the Musannat ridge, well in Sa'udi Arabia. The region was completely deserted, the last Badu we had seen having been in the Ash Shaqq depression, where we had left our tent with Sálím al Muzaiyin's people, fully thirty miles away.

Then in the far distance we saw two figures walking in and out of the *hamdh* bushes. Human beings alone and on foot in that lonely and

## We Find Thuraiya

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inhospitable region suggested that these were travellers whose camels had died, so we drove towards them to give them what help we could. On getting nearer we found to our great surprise that the wanderers were an old woman and a little girl of about eight whom she was leading by the hand. They both appeared very tired. When we came up to them the old lady explained that she was of the Al Juwarín shepherd tribe of the Muntafiq and that her tent lay on the north side of the Musannat ridge. Five days previously she had found this little Badawin girl lost and dying of thirst in the wilderness, and had taken her to her tent and revived her. Her two sons and herself were migrating towards Hafar al Bátin and did not know what to do with the child. She had seen our car from afar and, in the absence of her sons, had made her way towards us with the little girl, hoping we would take her off their hands and find her people for her.

We agreed to do this and in due course brought the child at nightfall to our tent in the Ash Shaqq. She was a sweetly pretty little thing called Thuraiya, which means Pleiades, not a bit shy and seeming extraordinarily grateful that we came from Kuwait and would take her there and hand her over to her mother. That night she told us her story.

She was the daughter of Jazza', a Mutairi widow who lived in the Shamíyah camping area outside Kuwait. She had a younger sister called Wasmíyah and a small brother whose name was Muhammad. An uncle known as Al Shigaihi kept a fatherly eye on the little family. He was not a nice man. Living in the desert alone with his sheep and a few camels, he had insisted on taking Thuraiya away from her mother to cook for him and care for the tent when he was away. Her mother had dared not say no, for Al Shigaihi was her late husband's brother and responsible for them. Six days before, her uncle had told her to go and graze the camels in the *hamdh* country. She had fallen asleep under a bush and found on awakening that the camels had gone. For a whole day she had tried to find them and had at last fallen down exhausted from lack of water. She had been come upon by the migrating Juwarín shepherds, picked up and cared for. But they themselves were in a waterless region and moving fast. They had looked after her for five days and were now glad to get rid of her.

We made little Thuraiya as happy as we could in our tent. She was

one of the sweetest little Badawin girls we have ever met in the many years we have been in Kuwait. She accepted us straight away as sort of fairy father and mother, rushing at us and throwing her arms round our necks to kiss us when we came back from our hawking trips, and cuddling up close to us in our tent at night, to get warm under our sheepskin coats.

It took us some time to find her mother after we got back to Kuwait, and for three days the child lodged with one of our many friends in the town, 'Amsha bint Ibrahím al Muzaiyin.\* In our search for Jazza' we were helped considerably by Rijá'an, the Mutairi gate-keeper of the Darwázat Naif. Through his agency we located her, and great was her delight at getting Thuraiya back. We made friends with her and met little Wasmíyah and Muhammad. For a whole year we paid them regular visits. With no bread-winner they were often hard put to it for food and clothing, and we were able to help them quite a lot.

Then the mother and three children disappeared mysteriously overnight. Neighbours said they had gone off to Zubair in Iraq for fear that Al Shigaihi, the wicked uncle, should force them to go out in the desert and fetch and carry for him. Others said that Jazza' had a man friend near Zubair who wanted to marry her and had told her to come secretly to Zubair, leaving no trace behind her.

We had got very fond of Thuraiya and we missed her greatly. But Badawin families have the homing instinct strongly developed in them, and we feel convinced that one day we shall meet her again, perhaps when the wicked uncle is no more.

## THE CITY UNDER THE SANDS

Reference has already been made in these pages to Muhammad ibn Sálím ibn Dráhim al Murri, who visited Kuwait in 1943 and told us some stories of great interest. One of these concerned 'Ád ibn Gin'ád, mythical King of 'Aubár (or 'Ubár),† and was recounted by Muhammad on 2nd April of that year, soon after our return from the Ash Shaqq.

\* She died in 1953, much to our sorrow.

† This is the name by which it is known to the Ál Murra, 'Awámir and other southern tribes. The people of Hasa and Najd call it Wabár.

The townsfolk (said Muhammad) know this mythical monster King as 'Ád, but we Murra know him always as 'Ád ibn Gin'ád. He lived at 'Aubár in the centre of the Rub' al Kháli. That wonderful city, which is called 'Ubár by the Al Rashíd tribe and people of southern Arabia, existed many hundreds of years ago in central southern Arabia. The battlements are said to have been covered with gold, and the palaces covered in silver and encrusted with rubies. In wonderful gardens known as Jennat 'Ád—the Paradise of 'Ád—there walked *huriyah*, ladies of Paradise, whose bodies were as clear as crystal. They never ate, drinking only water or milk, and when they drank from the running streams the water could be seen trickling down their throats. No unclean functions of their bodies ever took place, and they remained pure at all times. This was the heavenly part of the city; in another part there was a hell, where a fiery furnace was kept continually burning, and the souls condemned to it were always thirsty and calling for cool water.

King 'Ád, who had everything he could wish for on earth, one day decided that, riding on the back of a bird, he would visit Allah in heaven and kill him. He sent out a call to all the eagles and chose from them the biggest and strongest. Having hung a piece of raw meat on the end of his cane, he mounted on the eagle's back, held the meat in front of it, and away they flew. On and on and up and up they went for a very long time until, some two months later, they came upon some angels who asked King 'Ád where he was going and what he wanted.

"I am looking for Allah", he said. "I want to kill him."

"Allah is not here", lied the angels. "He is down below."

As King 'Ád leant forward he tipped downwards the stick and the meat in front of the eagle, which thereupon dived so swiftly and suddenly that 'Ád fell off its back.

His descent was gradual, taking twenty years, and as he fell his body slowly disintegrated, so that when he came to the end of this long journey, only his enormous skull remained. Allah now in his wrath ordered the winds to cover up with sand and bury the wonderful city of 'Aubár.

It happened that a wolf, wandering in the desert, came across the skull of 'Ád and, to shelter from the sun, went inside the cavity of the



left eye as into a cave. A gazelle also found it and went inside the cavity of the right eye to lie down in the cool. Then came a lone Badawi riding along on his camel. Observing this large white mass in the distance, he came to see what it was, and as he approached, the wolf fled out of it. He rode round to the other side, out of which then fled the gazelle. So large was the skull that neither wolf nor gazelle had seen the other. The now inquisitive Badawi, not yet knowing what it was, tapped the skull with his camel-stick to see if it was rock or bone. Immediately a voice came from it saying (in Ál Murra patois):

“Kub al fága ’an’ak. L’at imza.” (“Have no doubts. Do not laugh.”)

The Badawi was so taken aback that he rode straight off to Solomon the son of David and told him what he had seen; how he had come across in the desert the top part of a gigantic *jimjimman* (skull) and how, as he approached it, a wolf had rushed out of the socket of its left eye, and a gazelle had come out of the socket of its right eye, and so large was it that neither had seen the other.

“I tapped it with my cane”, he said, “and a voice came from it saying, ‘Kub al fága ’an’ak. L’at imza.’ ”

King Solomon then asked him if he could take him to the place where this thing lay.

“Of course I can”, was the reply. “Am I not a Badawi of those parts?”

Then King Solomon promised him that if a voice spoke from the *jimjimman* when he tapped it with his cane, he would reward him with gold equal to his own weight, but that if it did not speak he would cut off his head.

So King Solomon and his companions set off with the Badawi to see this great skull that lay in the unknown desert. In due course they came upon it and, riding up to it, King Solomon tapped it with his cane, but no sound came from it. After one or two more attempts with no results, the King ordered his servants to cut off the head of the Badawi. No sooner had his command been obeyed than the skull began to speak to the decapitated man.

“Kub al fága an’ak. Ana mai lak, ‘Kub al fága an’ak’? L’at imza alaiyi.” (“Have no doubts. Did I not tell you, ‘Have no doubts’? Do not laugh at me.”)

Now that the skull had spoken King Solomon was very grieved

that he had cut off the Badawi's head, and he stood wondering what he should do. He presently decided to summon all the birds of the air and ask them if they had ever heard of a wonderful king called 'Ád ibn Gin'ád. The birds came at his request, but none of them had ever heard of 'Ád ibn Gin'ád. Presently a very, very ancient eagle came creeping along, and so old was he that he had no feathers at all on his body. King Solomon asked him if he had ever heard of 'Ád ibn Gin'ád, who had lived in a wonderful city built of silver and gold and called 'Aubár.

"If you can tell me about him", said the King, "I will run my hand over your naked body and make all your feathers come back, so that you will be like a young bird once more."

"Yes, O King", the eagle answered, "I have heard of 'Ád ibn Gin'ád and I can show you where his wonderful city of gold and silver, marble and rubies is."

So the King ran his hand over the eagle's bare back and all his feathers returned and he became like a young bird once more. He now led King Solomon and his companions to the place where 'Aubár, the wonderful city, lay under the sands. The eagle then flew over the place and told King Solomon that 'Aubár was here under the sand.

Then Solomon called upon *shimál*, the north-west wind, to blow and to cause a mighty dust storm; and then he called upon *kaus*, the south-east wind, to blow and cause a dust storm; and then *gharbi*, the west wind, then *sharqi*, the east wind. At last, when the winds had ceased to blow, the dead city of 'Aubár lay uncovered before him, and Solomon went into it. With his own eyes he saw the wonderful buildings made of gold and silver, marble and rubies; the great deserted gardens that had been known as Jennat 'Ád, and the hell with the fiery furnace that never went out.

When he saw all these things King Solomon became afraid, fearing that if he remained there Allah might become displeased with him and punish him. So he went out from the great city of 'Aubár and called once more on *shimál*, *kaus*, *gharbi* and *sharqi*, which blew with all their force until the city was covered up once more. To this day it lies beneath the sands of the Empty Quarter.

So King Solomon returned to his own country. This took place at the time of King Solomon son of David and during his lifetime,

Thus ran the tale told to me by Muhammad ibn Sálím ibn Dráhim al Murri. At the end of it I asked him if he or any of his tribe knew the exact position of 'Aubár to-day. He replied that very definitely they could place it in an area ten miles square, but that the precise location had never been discovered, the depth of sand making excavation impossible. In this area, he said, the Badu sometimes picked up pieces of pottery and broken drinking-jars as the moving sand uncovered them. The sand is of a red colour and shines in the sun as though mixed with gold. The main sand dunes of the Rub' al Kháli are white and move northward seven *dra'as* (ten and a half feet) yearly.

Remembering that Philby suggests in *The Empty Quarter* that 'Aubár—or Wabár, as he spells it and marks it on his map—was probably destroyed by a meteorite, and that Umm al Hadída ("Mother of Iron"), where clearly a great meteorite hit the earth, now stands in its place, I then asked Muhammad if the Ál Murra have any tradition that 'Aubár was destroyed by a star falling from heaven.

"No", he replied; "it was overwhelmed by sand."

"How, then", I inquired, "have the Murra been able to fix its approximate position?"

He replied that many ancient tracks still exist in the desert, especially over rocky parts that have been exposed, and all converge on the area where the buried city lies. In the Ál Murra patois he described its general position as:

"Bain as siyáh Al Rashíd ou bain Wádi Duwásir, wa bain Umm al Hadída ou bain Al Dakaka." ("Between the country of the Al Rashíd and the Wádi Duwásir, and between Umm al Hadída and Al Dakaka.")

The area is known to-day by the Ál Murra, he said, as Muhamal as Said, which means "Full of Game." The oryx, ostrich and gazelle abound, and the *dámúsa*, the skink, thrives in numbers in the sand.

"From Umm al Hadída", I asked, "how far lies this 'Aubár?"

"Five days' camel journey in the direction where Suhail sets."

Which meant that it lay due south of Umm al Hadída.

"We Murra", continued Muhammad, "have a superstition that should anyone seek to uncover this city, God will punish the world and its end will come."

"Is it possible", I asked, "that the Murri guides who went with

## A Desert Champion

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Mr Philby became afraid as they drew near the spot and persuaded him that Umm al Hadída was the site of 'Aubár?'"

"Undoubtedly this was so", replied the voluble Muhammad ibn Sálím.

#### THE SONG OF GHARAIHIBÁN

In the vicinity of Najrán (said Muhammad ibn Sálím) there once lived a man of the Ál Murra and his wife with their two sons. Their elder boy appeared to be not right in his head, and his brother, who was normal, soon learned to make fun of him.

The father became sick and died, leaving the widow and her two children. She in due course married again and had six more sons from her second husband. The eldest son was called Gharaihibán and his life became miserable from the persecution of all his younger brothers. He went his own way, however, and was never without his hobby-horse—a piece of wood on which he rode about, pretending to be a shaikh riding on his mare. As he grew up he used to tell his brothers that he would kill them one day, but they made fun of him all the more.

One day Gharaihibán went to his stepfather and asked that he be given his share of the flocks and herds and that he be allowed to marry. His stepfather mocked him and would do nothing for him; but when he saw the lad was serious and the look of hatred that had come into his eyes, he became afraid. It was too late. Gharaihibán seized his dagger and with a short, swift stroke killed the old man. He then turned on his brothers and one by one slew them all.

Now all the wealth of the family was Gharaihibán's and in place of the discarded hobby-horse he rode a most beautiful mare. In course of time he married a girl in the tribe who was famed for her beauty, having long hair reaching down to her ankles.

Each winter and spring he wandered in the desert with his wife, his flocks and herds. One day he had to make a journey to Tuwai' in Najrán to buy provisions. During his absence a raiding party of an enemy tribe came and drove off his flocks and herds, took away his tent, his furnishings, his cooking-pots—everything that he had, even to the clothes and jewellery his wife was wearing, leaving her crouching naked in the sun.



On his return from the city Gharaihibán was terribly distressed to find what had happened and his first thoughts were for his naked wife. At the same time he was greatly struck by the whiteness of her skin and her beautiful long hair. He called to her to come to him, but she was ashamed and would not move, so taking the silk turban from his head he covered her with it. Placing her behind him on his mare, he quickly rode to a neighbouring friendly tent, where he left her and made haste alone to follow the raiders and recover his property.

His mare was as yet untried for speed, but proved to be worthy of her reputation. He came up with the raiding party at night, when the stolen flocks and herds were grazing, and killed the shaikh and seventeen others, the rest fleeing into the desert. The stolen animals he brought home.

After this brave feat Gharaihibán was proclaimed shaikh of a powerful section of the Ál Murra. His name is famous to this day among the tribe, and on their lone marches through the sands of the Empty Quarter they sing, in their haunting and inimitable half-tone, of his wonderful mare and of his courage in killing single-handed the raiders who had stolen his flocks and herds, his tent and everything that was his.

This is the song of Gharaihibán as I took it down from Muhammad ibn Sálím ibn Dráhim al Murri.

Illi sabak ma i thugt rákubha  
 Illa'l nahár waridaha a'la Tuwai':  
 Qud ma alla rejál al qasír i 'an ha  
 Illa'i 'aradhha shabwa as sanda'i.

Lam jait alla kabi maslúbha:  
 Tidri min dámat 'ainha inna nagla'id:  
 Baidha aw daght il biyádh bi safára,  
 Midhl laun al dhahab aw al fudha al baidha.

La hi bint qasíra, qasíra shaina;  
 La hi bint tawíla aw bai.  
 Aw ankal lahagt al bil walla raddaitha  
 Fin al raga'id ma al sauda'i.

Lahagt shaikh al qaum fem dhibahtha  
 Ghada al jimál, lailat as sidra, fi dhalma:  
 Dhibaht min hum tissa' aw thamániya'  
 Aw raddait hazlahum ala jezla'i.

## More Murra Stories

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As mentioned by E. S. Stevens in her *Folk Tales of Iraq* many of the syllables are reversed in these songs of the Ál Murra, who have a wild patois of their own. For example, *wa* (and) becomes *aw*. This song of Gharaihibán is almost impossible to translate faithfully; some of the words are not recognizable as Arabic. Here is a rough translation:—

I had never tried her paces  
Until I rode her to water at the well of Tuwai':  
No short man can place the bit in her mouth  
Unless he stands above her on high ground.

When I returned I found my wife left naked:  
Tears had spoilt her eyes which were so beautiful:  
Her skin was pure white but in places sunburnt the colour of gold,  
Resembling pure gold and white silver.

The girl was neither short, nor unseemly;  
The girl was not tall and ungainly.  
If I do not overtake the camels and bring them back  
I will sleep with a black woman.

I came upon the shaikh of the *qaum* and killed him:  
The lost camels, *lailat as sidra*,\* were quietly grazing in the darkness:  
I killed nine and eight of the raiders  
And returned everything to my family.

#### THE SON OF TE'ETHÁB AL MURRI

Muhammad ibn Sálím was able to confirm the truth of a story told to me during that same year by Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Latíf al Mána, a notable of Qatar.

Many years ago, he said, there lived in the Jafúra desert† a famous shaikh of the Al Bahaih section of the Ál Murra. His name was Te'etháb and he was of the family of Ibn Daila. He had married a young wife, but she did not please him. After living with her for about a year

\* This is a Badawin expression to denote sadness at leaving a summer camping ground near water. The implication here is that the camels were sorrowful for this reason.

Other words are: 'an, horse's bridle bit; *kabi*, wife; *maslúbha*, naked (cf. Arabic *musalakha*); *dámat*, tears; *nagla'id*, beautiful; *sauda'i*, black woman; *ghada*, lost, wandered.

† South-west of Qatar state.

without her having borne him a child, he decided to divorce her and marry another girl, not knowing that she had just become pregnant.

The law in Arabia to-day is that after a divorce, a woman may not marry until—as the Badawin women express it—three moons have passed and three menstrual periods have taken place. This is to ensure that she is not pregnant by her former husband.\* In those earlier times, however, this wild tribe did not follow strictly the Qur'anic law, and some fifteen days after being set aside, the former wife of Te'etháb married another man called Jábir of the Al Jábir section of the Ál Murra. In due season she bore a son and great was the rejoicing.

Some five or six years later it was rumoured among the Al Bahaih tribe that Te'etháb had a son living among the Al Jábir section. The skill of the Ál Murra being such that, by knowing the footprints of a parent, whether human or animal, they can identify his offspring, many men who had seen the footprints of this boy had recognized them as being exactly like those of Te'etháb.

When this story reached his ears Te'etháb made more inquiries and, eventually becoming convinced of the truth of it, demanded that his son should be returned to him. The Al Jábir section would not at first admit the claim, which led to a long period of quarrelling, fighting and raiding between the two sections of the tribe. Ultimately—by which time the lad, who had been called by the name of Hádi, had grown up—there took place a battle in which the Ibn Daila force beat the Al Jábir. This finally settled the dispute, for Hádi now realized that there was no doubt as to whose son he was, and he agreed that he should remain with his true father Te'etháb.

Hádi ibn Te'etháb al Murri soon became famed for his bravery and his hospitality to all. Tales are told of how at night in the desert he would light and keep burning near his camp a large fire to guide the traveller to his tent, where there was always a welcome and food prepared. On the death of his father Te'etháb he became the shaikh, being himself succeeded in due course by Ráshid ibn Daila al Murri and Muhammad ibn Yáralla al Murri as joint shaikhs.

\* The situation of a widow is not quite the same. The four months and ten days that she must wait before remarrying is purely an act of mourning. During this period she may not speak to any male person except her father, brothers and sons. She lives in her tent, others attending to her wants. A divorced woman is not so secluded; she can go about her business and talk to anyone she wishes.

THE BATTLE WITH SHUWA'IR OF YEMEN

It was Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Latíf al Mána who told me also this legendary tale of 'Ali ibn Murra, ancestor of the Ál Murra.

'Ali ibn Murra lived in Najrán in south-west Arabia. His people were not on friendly terms with the inhabitants of Yemen and, after many small encounters and quarrels, he decided to fight them in battle. He went forth with his *qaum* (adherents) against the famous Shuwa'ir of Yemen, who, it is said, was from the Qahtán tribe, and fought him for a whole day, many being killed on both sides. Seven times they renewed the fight until only the two leaders, 'Ali and Shuwa'ir, remained alive. They broke off the fight and returned to their respective families.

But only for a space, for 'Ali returned again to renew the conflict, taking with him his son. It so happened that Shuwa'ir had done the same, and once more they joined in battle, 'Ali's son fighting with Shuwa'ir and Shuwa'ir's son fighting with 'Ali. Shuwa'ir's son was overcome and killed with a dagger thrust by the old warrior, who now heard his own son calling on him for help. He rushed to him saying:

"Yá labúbuk, yá subbi, bi 'ammak. Illa badelt thahakt bil kiláhi."

He spoke in the Ál Murra patois and his words can be roughly translated: "O my beloved, O my son, I will help you. Before you laughed [at birth] you cried."

And as he smote the mighty Shuwa'ir and killed him with a thrust of his dagger in the heart, he said again to his son in a loud voice:

"Walla gumt mithl al 'air. A salli, haiya al'al faláhi." ("Like a donkey you have not got up. I pray, come to success.")

Then there was a trembling of the earth and a great rift opened at their feet, swallowing up Shuwair. 'Ali and his son became very afraid and cried:

"Wallah, gilt lal qasír l'at imza, Wallah, kan aba'irhu jarab aw aba'irhi assáhi." ("By God, I told my neighbour not to laugh, by God, even though his camels had mange and mine were well.")

And the earth closed up and God saw that 'Ali ibn Murra was a good man and blessed him, promising that his seed would multiply as the sands of the great desert.



THE BLACK DOG OF HUFUF

This is an 'Ajmán story, recounted to me on 13th April 1943 by a young leader of that tribe, Sa'ad ibn Muníf al Habaishi.

In the days long ago an ancestor of Yám called 'Ajaim ibn 'Ali was travelling on his *dhalúl* (riding camel) from Najrán, where he lived, to Hufuf. After travelling for about twenty-five days, he was passing through a very lonely spot among the sands, when he came across one whom he took to be a lone man, but who was really a *jinn*. This stranger hailed him and asked where he was going.

"To Hufuf in Hasa, on business", replied 'Ajaim.

"I too have important business in Hasa", said the stranger, "and do not know how I can ever get there on foot, for it is far."

"You are welcome to ride with me", said 'Ajaim, and put him up behind him on his *dhalúl*.

They travelled for some days until the *dhalúl*, under its double burden, showed signs of great weariness and finally lay down exhausted. 'Ajaim had now become the *rafiq* or *khawi* (responsible travelling companion) of the stranger, so he could not leave him in the desert. He therefore suggested that he himself should remain with the baggage while the other man went on alone.

"Take my *dhalúl*", he urged, "do your business in Hasa and return to me as quickly as possible."

The stranger refused to agree, well knowing the danger to a lone man in the desert of being eaten by wolves.

"If you will do my business for me", he said, "there is no need for me to go on, and I can return whence I came."

'Ajaim agreed to do all he asked, swearing by God and his *wejh* (face).

"When you reach Hufuf", said the stranger, "go in the afternoon before sunset to the east gate of the city, and there you will see lying in the shade a large black dog—completely black, without a white hair on it. Go up to it, kick it and tread on its neck. When it growls say to it, 'Ant Seyed Núri?'"\* Then it will answer you, 'Yes, I am he', and you must say, 'Muhammad Núri muwassin 'alaik, i gúl uchuk

\* "Are you Seyed Núri?"

## The Yellow Cock

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indhibba fi Najrán, aw ana madhím, aw ant lat khalíni.’\* You must be careful that no one is about who may hear this conversation. Then do as you are commanded.”

’Ajaim got on his *dhalíl*, which had now revived, left the stranger and in due course arrived at Hufuf. That afternoon he went as requested to the east gate of the city, where sure enough a great black dog was lying in the shade of the gate tower. But many people were about. On the second afternoon he went again. The dog still lay in the same place, but still there were many people about. On the third day he went at a later hour, finding no one about and the black dog asleep as before. He went up and kicked it and stamped on its neck. It growled fiercely at him.

“Ant Seyed Núri?” he asked.

The dog immediately became a man and answered: “Yes, I am he.”

’Ajaim then repeated the message he had been instructed to deliver. The man replied:

“I can do nothing to help him until there is removed from me the spell that turns me into a black dog every afternoon. Until I marry the beautiful daughter of one ’Isa al Qusaibi the spell will not be broken. The devils are in me now. Guarding her is a large yellow cock that will let no evil spirit come near her. You must become friendly with the family, then kill the yellow cock, so that I can come and marry the girl. Only then shall I be free.”

Having said this he turned once more into a black dog and slunk away.

Now ’Ajaim was very puzzled and set out to inquire for the home of ’Isa al Qusaibi. He was soon directed to a house where he made the acquaintance of ’Isa, who invited him to name a time to come and have coffee with him. ’Ajaim promised to come that afternoon before sunset.

When he returned to the house, he was shown into the *diwáníyah*, where carpets were spread and coffee was ready.

“Hát gidua”,† called his host, and there came into the room a beautiful maiden with a tray of dates and a bowl of water.

\* “Muhammad Núri has sent you a message. He says your brother has been killed in Najrán, and he himself is being persecuted, and asks you to have pity on him.”

† “Bring a sweet-tasting thing.” Dates are usually offered to a guest before coffee is passed round.

This was the daughter of 'Isa al Qusaibi. She busied herself in the room for some time before she went out, taking the tray with her. After 'Ajaim had had his coffee and sat for some time, he noticed a large yellow cock wandering about outside the door. When the time came to take his departure he slipped into his host's hand three golden pieces.

"When will you come again and honour us?" asked 'Isa. "My house is your house and at any time we shall be delighted to see you."

So the next day 'Ajaim again went to the house and had coffee. As on the previous occasion dates were brought in by the beautiful daughter; and this time the large yellow cock came strutting right into the room. On departing 'Ajaim slipped three golden pieces into his host's hand.

"We want you to come for a meal next time", said 'Isa, "not just for coffee. When will you come?"

'Ajaim promised to come at sunset on the following evening and have dinner with him. This came to pass and, as before, 'Ajaim slipped three golden pieces into the hand of 'Isa, who said:

"Treat this house as your house and visit us any time you like."

'Ajaim visited him several times more for coffee, never failing when he left to give two or three pieces of gold to his host. One morning when he went to the house there seemed to be no one about. As he sat waiting in the *diwāniyah* in came the large yellow cock. Now was his opportunity to kill it, so he rushed at it with his stick and beat it to death.

He had just removed all traces of blood from the floor, when 'Isa came into the room and saw the cock lying dead. 'Ajaim explained how it had attacked him and in self-defence he had killed it. The dead bird was removed and thrown away. As 'Ajaim departed from the house he thought he heard a girl screaming and crying in a distant room.

Now that the cock was dead the spell was removed. That night the black dog became a man and, entering secretly the house of 'Isa, he went to the room of the beautiful daughter and forced her to sleep with him. This also happened on the second and third nights, and the evil spirit went out of the man into the girl and she became as one possessed with devils.

Her father, who did not know what had happened, became terribly

## Complications

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worried and offered five hundred gold pieces to anyone who could cure her. Seyed Núri now told 'Ajaim that he must pretend to be a doctor, and must go and read over her and give her medicine that he now handed to him, and so get the five hundred gold pieces. So 'Ajaim went to the house once more and told 'Isa that he thought he could cure his daughter and had brought some medicine with him. After reading over her he gave her some of the medicine to drink and immediately she became quiet, falling into a deep sleep. The next morning she was completely cured, seeming as if nothing had happened to her. 'Ajaim received the five hundred gold pieces from 'Isa, and, after being thanked by Seyed Núri for all he had done for him, decided to return to Najrán.

Being a *jinn* Seyed Núri could travel more swiftly. He went to Najrán, killed the man who had killed his brother, and joined his other brother, Muhammad Núri, in the desert before 'Ajaim could reach there. 'Ajaim found them waiting for him. They had prepared a large feast and told him that in return for his kindness to them they proposed to give him their sister in marriage, the only condition being that he must never speak roughly to her and get angry with her. This he promised, and was duly married to the *jinníyah*, whose name was Yámiyah.

He took her with him to Najrán and they lived together very happily. After about a year a son was born, but it so happened that without anyone noticing it a great black dog got into the tent, seized the child and made off with him. 'Ajaim was very upset, but said nothing and was not angry with his wife.

A year later the same thing happened: a son was born, and again the large black dog rushed in, seized the child and disappeared with him. Still 'Ajaim bore his grief silently and said nothing to his wife. But when, a year later, a third baby son was lost in the same way, 'Ajaim was so grief-stricken that he became furious with his wife and cursed her for her lack of vigilance. She immediately disappeared and went back to her brothers, who took her back under the ground with them once more to her people the *jinn*s.

'Ajaim was also taken down to live among the *jinn*s, but he did not know that his three sons were now being brought up and looked after by Yámiyah's grandmother. After he had spent many years with the



*jinn*s under the earth, his wife's brothers gave him a *dhalúl* and a mare and told him to go up into the desert and return to his people.

"After you have been travelling for about an hour", they said, "your three sons will follow you. You will hear behind you the sound of galloping horses, but you must not look round. What you see in front of you will be good, but anything you see behind you will be evil."

He was then spirited up into the desert once more and went on his journey. Sure enough, after he had travelled for about an hour he heard the sound of galloping horses behind him. A few seconds later a fine lad on a beautiful mare galloped past him and swung round facing him, then dismounted.

"Father", he said, kissing him, "I am your eldest son."

A second horseman now rushed past and after doing many wonderful twists and turns dismounted before 'Ajaim.

"Father", he said, kissing him, "I am your second son."

Now in the distance could be heard the sound of another horseman, and so anxious was 'Ajaim to see his youngest son that, completely forgetting the words of the *jinn*s, he looked round. As he did so he saw to his horror the earth open with a great rumbling sound. Both rider and horse were completely swallowed up and he saw them no more.

His eldest son was called Marzúk ibn 'Ajaim and his second son was called Murra ibn 'Ajaim. These two lads, said Sa'ad ibn Muníf, became the ancestors of the 'Ajmán and Ál Murra tribes, and 'Ajaim returned to Najrán with them and lived there.

### EATEN ALIVE BY WOLVES

The *jinn* who was called Muhammad Núri would not go on alone to Hasa because he feared the wolves. This brings to mind a true incident described to me by the brother of Síta, an 'Ajmán lady friend of ours.

It occurred during 1948 in the country north of Hasa, where wolves are very plentiful owing to many water springs, near which grow untended young palm-trees in which the wolves hide during the day. A party of 'Ajmán travelling south halted for the night at a well

## Another 'Ajmán Story

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where the camels could be watered. Early next morning, when they moved off again, one man and his family delayed and got left some five miles or so behind. It had not been this man's intention to accompany his wife and children farther south, but now he went on with them until they caught up with the main party at another well. The man then returned alone.

Two days later he was found by some other 'Ajmán, one of them Síta's brother, who were proceeding north. The flesh of both arms and both legs had been completely eaten by a wolf, only the bones remaining. His face, neck, chest and stomach were untouched. He was still conscious and could speak, and begged these men to take him with them and not leave him for the wolf to devour. They said they could do nothing for him, but he pleaded so much that one of them took off his *bhisht* and, threading the lower end of it through the armhole to make a place for his head, put him in it and brought him back to their tent. Síta said he was a terrible sight, but was conscious and recognized people. They put ashes over his legs and arms, but in two days he died and they buried him.

#### THE BADAWIN THIEF

This story, which illustrates the bravery of the Badawi and the timidity of the town-bred man, was also told me by Sa'ad ibn Muníf al Habaishi of the 'Ajmán tribe.

There was once a famous man among the Badu of Arabia. Although he was a thief he was so clever that he was never found out and always managed to escape the justice meted out to thieves. It was whispered that he could open any lock and could enter any house by night and not be caught.

It so happened that one night he climbed on the roof of the house of a wealthy merchant in a certain well-known town and entered into an upper room. He looked around and saw a large and magnificent chest, which he thought surely would contain much treasure. Not wishing to delay, he put the chest on his back and made his way down from the roof and along a narrow lane that led out into the desert.

When he reached a spot some miles out of the city he halted and

carefully opened the box. Inside was a beautiful maiden, who jumped up and climbed out of the box. Now Muhammad al Harámi (Muhammad the Robber), for that was his name, was so taken aback that he could only stand and gaze at her for some minutes, so beautiful was she.

Recovering from his astonishment he stepped towards her, intending to take her in his arms, but there appeared behind her a *sahra* (spirit) in the form of a raging lion, which at once attacked him. Muhammad, however, quickly turned on it with his dagger and cut it down and killed it.

Determined to possess this beautiful girl, he once more approached her, and the same thing occurred: drawing his dagger a second time, he again killed the lion. Yet a third time the *sahra* in the form of a lion came to protect the maiden, and a third time it was slain.

The girl now spoke to him, saying she was a *bint bait* (daughter of a noble house) and that if he would promise by his *wejh* not to harm her she would tell him her story. At once he promised and she sat down beside him.

"I am the King's daughter", she said, "and I was betrothed to my cousin whom I did not like and did not wish to marry. On the eve of our marriage I fled to our neighbours' house for protection, and the lady of the house, who was my friend, took me upstairs and hid me in the chest. Then you came and stole the chest during the night and brought me here. Now I would beg of you to return me inside the chest to where you found me."

So Muhammad, having promised her that no harm would come to her, carried her back before morning and placed the chest once more in the room where he had found it.

There had been great consternation in the palace when the princess could not be found. They had searched high and low, but to no avail and the wedding had had to be postponed. The following morning she crept back into the palace and found her father in a great state of mind, as no one knew what had become of her. She would say nothing except that she had spent the night in a friend's house because she did not wish to be married to her cousin.

"You shall not leave this palace!" stormed the King. "And to-night the wedding will take place."

## The Princess Confesses

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The princess was filled with grief, but agreed for her father's sake. That night the wedding took place and, according to custom, her husband was conducted into the bridal chamber and there awaited his bride. She was brought in by her women friends, who then left her and the door was closed on them. For some time bride and bridegroom sat in silence. At the first sign of movement on his part there suddenly sprang down from the roof an enormous rat, which ran over the bridegroom. He was so terrified that he made no attempt to kill it, but crouched in the corner of the room for the rest of the night. The princess was indeed glad and laughed at his discomfort and fear.

The following night exactly the same thing happened, except that this time the rat was even larger than the first and so frightened the bridegroom that he fled into an adjoining room and there spent the night.

Again on the third night the same thing happened. The bridegroom could bear it no more and was so upset that he went to the King and explained exactly what had occurred. He was greatly distressed at having been made a fool of by the princess, expressing surprise that a young unmarried girl should laugh at his discomfiture when she should have been shy and afraid.

"I now ask your permission to divorce her", he said.

The King was mightily ashamed and upset on hearing the story, and sent immediately for his daughter.

"Father", she said, "promise me that no harm will come to me and I will tell you everything."

So she told her father how she had taken refuge with her neighbour and been hidden in a chest that had been stolen by a thief on her wedding night and carried off into the desert; how the thief had been so overcome by her beauty that he had tried to seize her; how each time a *sahra* had appeared and attacked him; how the man had slain the *sahra* in the form of a lion three times before she spoke to him and made him promise by his *wejh* that he would not harm her; and how she had begged him to return her to where he had found her.

"When", continued the princess, "I saw that my cousin, to whom you had married me, became so terrified of a rat that he became like a woman, I laughed and thought of the man who had killed the three wild beasts and had not been afraid of them."



Now the King, who had heard of this famous thief who had never been brought to book, straightway vowed that he would find the man.

"Would you recognize him again if you were to see him?" he asked his daughter, and the answer was that she was sure she would.

After thinking for many days how best this could be done the King had an idea. He sent out invitations far and wide requesting the attendance of everybody at a large banquet, giving orders also for ten camels to be killed as well as many sheep and chickens. On the appointed day the feast was spread in a very long corridor with an entrance at either end. One led into a side street by which the invited guests would arrive: this was the main entrance. The other opened into a sordid lane into which ran the drains of the neighbouring houses and kitchens, and which was in consequence always wet and muddy.

The King arranged that there be placed by the main entrance a monster bird of prey so very *'issad* (fierce) that it would terrify the guests. One by one they began to arrive and when they saw this fearsome bird they dared not pass into the banqueting hall, but inquired if there was not another entrance. Getting an affirmative answer they made their way round to the back, passed through the muddy lane and reached that entrance, on the threshold of which they left their sandals and shoes all covered with mud.

Presently there came along a simple-looking Badawi with his camel-stick in his hand. Seeing the bird at the front entrance he called out loudly to it and it became as if asleep, whereupon he passed into the hall, leaving his sandals just outside the door.

Next the meal was served, and very, very hot was all the meat and rice. As the guests dipped their hands into it they were burnt, and all shook their hands, unable to eat until the food cooled. But Muhammad al Harámi, for it was he, drew his knife out of his belt, cut up the meat with it and ate his fill. He avoided eating any of the hot rice.

All this time the King had been carefully observing the Badawin stranger who had been the only guest to enter by the main door. When the banquet was over at length and the guests were about to depart, the King went up to Muhammad, asked him his name, remarked on the clever way in which he had cut up his meat, and inquired why he had not partaken of the rice.

"I am but a simple Badawi", was the reply, "known in my tribe

as Muhammad. Rice I have in plenty, but meat I seldom get, so to-day I ate the meat and left the rice."

After coffee and the usual custom of passing round frankincense among the guests, one by one they took their departure, each leaving by the same door through which he had come. Muhammad prepared also to leave and made his way to the main entrance, where the King, his suspicions now thoroughly aroused, went up to him and asked him to follow him into the palace. Here the princess was waiting behind a curtain, and as she saw Muhammad enter she recognized him at once as the man who had carried her off during the night. Now the King called for his daughter and asked her if she identified the man.

"Surely it is he", she replied, and retired once more to her apartment.

The King's plan had worked well, but he was distressed and amazed to see what a lot of cowardly persons he had for his subjects, and especially that among them was his own brother's son.

"Verily", said he, "I find there is only one brave man who is worthy of the hand of my daughter. I ask him to accept the post of *wazîr* in my state, and I give him my daughter in marriage."

Muhammad accepted the King's offer, for he had not been able to forget the great beauty of the princess, and the marriage took place at once amid great pomp and rejoicing. The princess's cousin was banished from the kingdom, and Muhammad and his bride lived many, many years in great happiness.

### "KILL THE MAN WHO SLEW THE DOG"

The last tribal story I have to retail in these pages is intended to illustrate the importance of inflicting swift punishment for even a small offence, because if the Badu think that control is becoming lax they invariably get out of hand, a trait not uncommon to Arabs generally. I have heard two versions of this story, the first from the lips of K.B.\* Mulla Sáleh, grand old politician and *wazîr* to the four last rulers of Kuwait, who has now retired from public life in favour of his very able son 'Abdullah al Mulla Sáleh, who to-day is political secretary to H.H. Shaikh 'Abdullah al Sálim, the present ruler, and shows every promise of following in the footsteps of his famous father.

\* Khan Bahadur, a title conferred by the Government of India.

There once lived an old Mutairi Badawi (said Mullah Sáleh) who had three grown-up sons. They all lived together in one tent with their mother, the sons tending their father's sheep and camels. It so happened that the family were camped for the summer on a certain group of wells, as is the custom in Arabia. They had as their immediate neighbour a poor shepherd of the same tribe, whose sole possessions were ten sheep and two camels.

Now according to age-long desert law a man's most sacred duty is to protect his neighbour, for did not Muhammad the Prophet of God say to those who asked him what were man's first three duties in life, "Járihim, thum járihim wa járihim"?

A member of the tribe came one day to visit this poor shepherd. When he drew near the tent the *kalb* (sheep-dog) rushed out and started barking and snarling at him. Failing to drive it off, the visitor callously raised his rifle and shot it dead. There was much indignation at this extraordinary and inexcusable outrage, for a *kalb* is essential to a tent-dweller, not only preventing wolves attacking and carrying off sheep by night, but also keeping away thieves and undesirable persons. The three sons of the old Mutairi camped next door went to their father, recounted what had just happened, and sought his advice.

"Our neighbour's dog has been wantonly slain", they said. "What shall we do?"

The old man pondered awhile before he replied:

"Yá 'auládi, uktulu dhabáhat al *kalb*." ("O my sons, kill the man who slew the dog.")

The lads went out of the tent and took counsel among themselves. They decided that their father was in his dotage or spoke in parables, for it was absurd, they argued, to take a man's life for that of a dog. Instead they went round and called on the owner of the dead dog in order to *taiyib khátirhu* (comfort his ruffled feelings). Having thus endeavoured to appease him, they afterwards spoke loudly and indignantly in neighbouring tents of the disgraceful deed, and general sympathy was felt for the poor shepherd.

Public opinion was decidedly on the side of the shepherd, the killer of the dog receiving heavy verbal castigation. The matter appeared to have ended, when, a fortnight later, another and more



## The Sheep are Taken

### Chap. XVIII

serious breach of the desert code occurred. While watering his small flock of sheep at one of the wells, the poor shepherd was set upon by a group of wild young Badu, new arrivals of the same tribe, who, bringing their camels to the same well, thought they should come first. They beat him, picked up his *haudh* (leather watering-trough), broke it in pieces and tossed it aside—a bad case of bullying the weak and defenceless, and a quite unpardonable offence among members of the same tribe.

The discomfited shepherd retired to his tent and brooded over his wrongs.

“Must the strong for ever bully the weak?” he cried. “Where are ye, O people of the Mutair, that ye allow such injustice? Verily God does not approve this deed.”

Hearing what had happened the three sons of the old Mutairi again went to seek their father’s advice as to what action they should take to put a stop to this sort of thing. All he would say to them was:

“Uktulu dhabáhat al kalb.”

“Our father is indeed getting old and foolish,” communed the three. “We are not concerned any more with the dead dog, but with a new piece of uncalled-for trespassing on the rights of our tent neighbour by some young toughs who require punishing.”

Notwithstanding which they did nothing except talk and recount the wrongs and unfair treatment meted out to an unfortunate member of their tribe. As for the youthful aggressors, they tauntingly replied to those who did dare to reprove them:

“Begone, ye babblers! Know ye not that the weak must give way to the strong? This is the rule of the desert and has been since time immemorial.”

A month went by. Then a junior shaikh of the tribe, not over-well liked because of his stinginess, wanted a lamb for a small party he was giving. Having nothing suitable among his own flocks, he sent men to see if they could buy an animal from among the tents nearby. These, coming upon the small flock of sheep of the poor Mutairi shepherd whose dog had been killed in the first place, seized upon the bright idea of taking one of his lambs by force, for, said they:

“Is this not he who dared to complain that his sheep had the right to drink before the camels of the Arab?”



They told the protesting man that their shaikh required a lamb for a banquet and that he had better keep quiet or it would go hard with him.

This third and biggest offence raised a storm of indignation and sympathy for the maltreated man, yet nothing was done, for the shaikh whose men had stolen the lamb had a powerful group of retainers, and men were averse to starting a quarrel that might end in bloodshed—and all for the sake of a quite unimportant and poor member of the community.

“Better”, they said, “leave the settlement to God, who arranges everything.”

Again the three sons went to their old father and angrily remonstrated. The old man turned on them and said:

“Do not ask for my advice. As I told you before, I now say to you, go kill the man who slew the dog, and all these acts of bullying, aggression and preying upon the weak will come to an immediate end.”

Now thoroughly aroused the sons took their father’s advice. They sought out the original killer of the dog and slew him. This deed was received by all the Arabs as an act of just retribution, and public opinion was overwhelmingly on the side of the executioners. The relatives of the slain man, and those who had driven the shepherd’s sheep from the water, and the shaikh whose men had forcibly carried off the lamb—all now came round and asked pardon of the poor Mutairi shepherd. Indeed they insisted that no blood money need be paid to the relatives of the dead man, and produced compensation for the shot sheep-dog, besides giving the shepherd a new *haudh* and three lambs in place of the one of which he had been deprived.

Peace and quiet again reigned among the Badu camped around the wells, and a healthy respect and fear now filled the minds of all who had been inclined to persecute the weak. It was the kind of justice that the desert man appreciates.

When I told this version of the story to Othmán ibn Humaid al ’Utaibi, a leading personality of the ’Utaiba tribe, he said it was not the correct one, which concerned the ’Utaiba, not the Mutair. His version ran as follows:—

Many years ago there lived a well-known and wealthy man of the ’Utaiba. He had large herds of camels and many flocks of sheep, being

## The Clever Young Wife

### Chap. XVIII

looked up to and respected by everyone. He was, however, old and blind, but the three sons whom God had given him looked after him and the flocks and herds.

The mother of these three sons had died and, to comfort his old age, the old man had taken unto himself a beautiful girl-wife, who was clever, of very good family, and ran the tent well. The old man took pleasure with her regularly and was happy. The three sons were of little worth, a fact that their youthful step-mother was quick to note.

Now this lady had an admirer, a young blood from some neighbouring tents. He visited the old man regularly, outwardly from friendly motives, but in reality to see and hold converse with the strong-minded and lovely young wife. Their relations were, however, entirely correct.

When leaving the old man's tent one day, our young blood was followed by the camp *kalb*, which yapped at his heels and made as if to bite him. Not content with shooining it off he raised his gun, fired and killed it.

Hearing the shot the old man cried out:

"Wishu al ramiah?" ("What is the firing?")

His sons came running to him and said:

"Your caller has shot our *kalb*."

"What!" said the old man, "Then go and kill the killer of the dog."

"That is ridiculous," said the sons among themselves. "Our father is mad or grown feeble-minded. How can we kill a man for killing a dog, however valuable?"

The young wife saw that the youths did nothing, and pondered the matter deeply. A week later, while they were watering their father's camels, they met her at the wells, flirting openly with her admirer, who, being full of boastful pride and arrogance, struck one of the *hirán*\* and broke its leg. He knew that it would have to be killed, and he wanted meat to eat.

The three sons ran swiftly to their old blind father and in great excitement reported what had happened.

"What shall we do?" they cried. "What shall we do?"

"Do?" replied the old man. "Go and kill the man who killed the dog."

\* Plural of *huwár*, a young first-born camel (from birth to one year old).

The young wife saw the whole incident, and again pondered deeply, for she knew the youths would do nothing at all. A few days later she sent her admirer a cryptic message, telling him to meet her after dark in the dry, sandy watercourse not far from the tents. He did so and the two enjoyed themselves for a long time together. The young wife knew now that no punishment would be meted out, even if they were discovered and report made to her aged husband.

Some time later she found that she was pregnant and went and told the old man that she was with child and by him. Deeply moved he rejoiced greatly. In due course a boy child was born and joyful were the celebrations.

Sixteen years went by. The mother of the boy sent for her three stepsons and said unto them:

“My first-born is a man now. Give him a rifle that he may learn to shoot.”

They did so, and the boy waxed strong, becoming a skilful shot. Having previously related to him how the old man’s three sons had done nothing whatsoever when their father had urged them to take action many years before, his mother said to him one day:—

“My son, you are the pride of my heart. Go now and slay the man who killed the dog.”

Full of spirit and loving his mother the boy straightway sought out the man and killed him, proud to be the one to carry out at long last the behest of the man he believed to be his father.

The blind old man, hearing the shot, cried out:

“Wishu al ramiyah?”

When told what had happened he rejoiced long and greatly.

“Wife”, exclaimed he, “you have borne me not only a fine boy, but also a man indeed.”

He sent for the boy, hugged him to his bosom and gave him his blessing. Everyone respected them now and men came from far and wide to see the youngster who had killed the man who had broken all Arab customs and traditions by shooting the *kalb* of his neighbour.

As for the wife, at one sweep that clever woman had made her old husband happy, had reinstated the good name and honour of the home, had produced a fine man out of a boy, and had got rid of her lover.

## CHAPTER XIX

# Kuwait, 1943—1945

*A Lizard for Dinner—The Sick Wife of Fahad al Fādhil—The Skill of Dr Dame—The Wells of Al Tawīl—The Return of the Pilgrims—The Cutting of the Bracelet—Gumṣa's Daughter—The Ark of Ishmael—The Killing of an 'Ajmán Tribesman—The Meeting-Place of the Slaves—Fida'at Allah*

### A LIZARD FOR DINNER

By Violet Dickson

During his lifetime Hamad al Mikrād was a distinguished 'Ajmán tribal leader and a great friend of H.H. Shaikh Ahmad. He died in Kuwait from a severe fever in 1928, in which same year his brother Rakán died from the same cause in Riyádh. Their two sons, Khálid ibn Hamad al Mikrād and Hamad ibn Rakán, still mere boys at the time of their fathers' deaths, were now good-looking young men and acknowledged as shaikhs of the Al Mahfúdh section of the 'Ajmán.

In June 1943 the cousins were camped on the Dhahar ridge overlooking the small coastal village of Fahahíl, some twenty-four miles south-south-east of Kuwait, and my husband and I were invited to visit them there. Hamad ibn Rakán had come into town on 8th June to buy a few supplies for his family before leaving for Riyádh on his annual visit to King Ibn Sa'ud. We took him back with us in our car. It had been a hot morning, but the north-west wind known as the *bárih* made the afternoon comparatively cool. Nevertheless, as we drove south-east along the ridge, the following wind got hotter as we left the proximity of the sea, and the engine of the car became so overheated that on two occasions we had to stop, turn the car into the wind and fill up the radiator with water.

As the spring had been an exceptional one many sand-grouse had not migrated north, and were now nesting on the ridge. We passed several groups as we drove along, and Hamad told us that they had found many eggs.



We arrived at Hamad's tent at about half-past five. A great many other tents of the tribe were scattered over the ground in small clusters of two and three close together, while their large herds of fine camels were grazing everywhere around. Hamad's tent had been moved during his absence in the town, but he somehow knew exactly where it was, hidden below a small hill close to the road. A lone woman on the hill was all there was to be seen as she directed our car to go towards her. Then she signalled to us by swinging her 'aba over her head and down to the ground once or twice.

This was Maitha, Hamad's wife. She had moved camp that day and had only arrived there a few hours before. Because they were on the move to their summer camp near Abu Hulaifa, their large tent had not been pitched, but a piece of its back curtain had been stretched across two tent-poles, and another piece pinned up behind to keep out the hot wind and driving sand. The lady now hurriedly dragged out her gay *qáta* (tent divide) from amongst her baggage, put up a pole in the ground and tied the long coloured strip to it, thus dividing the small shelter into two portions and forming a deep shade for us to sit in.

Hamad threw off his *bhisht* and quickly spread a rug for us in the shade. He then pulled out his camel-saddle and cushions and placed them for us to lean against. Just in front of us he dug out a small hole for the fire and collected his coffee-pots and all the necessary gear around him. 'Arfaj and an apronful of *jalla* (camel-dung) were next brought and the fire soon lighted. Out of the wind and with the blazing fire in front of us it was really quite warm, but the sand flying about made it unpleasant to move farther out.

Rakán and Nahár, Hamad's two small sons, had meanwhile dressed up in the new white cotton gowns we had brought for them, and were sitting very happily eating some nuts and sweets that we had given them. Khálid, Hamad's cousin, now joined us. He had moved camp that day and taken his family down to Al Tawíl wells, close to Wára, where his wife's father and brothers were camped. His wife Sáraḥ was the eldest daughter of a great friend of ours, Zunaifir ibn Huwaila. She had been married twice before: first to Fahád Al Hithlain, and then to Ghalaifis, a member of King Ibn Sa'ud's bodyguard in Riyádh. Her daughter by her second marriage was called Khazna, a sweet little girl aged about seven. She now had a fine little son, Hamad, by

## The Runaway Camel

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Khálid and was very happy living with her third husband, who was very fond of her. He had now come up from Wára to help treat some of their camels, which had contracted *jarab*.

The coffee had been made and was boiling up on the edge of the hot ashes, when suddenly there appeared in view only a few yards off a large and beautiful camel, laden with bags full of supplies, rushing away at full speed. Hanging to its halter and being rushed along behind it was a young Badawin woman neatly dressed all in black, her clothes flying in the wind. After a very gallant effort on her part to halt the beast, she was forced to let go to save herself from being dragged, and the animal made off. Some fifty yards beyond us one the saddle-bags came loose and fell off, but the camel continued on at a fast trot, now making for the south.

As soon as Khálid saw what had happened he jumped up and ran for all he was worth to try to head it off, but after running at a magnificent pace for fully half a mile, he gave up the chase. Hamad quietly left the coffee-hearth a few minutes after Khálid and went off on a camel in pursuit of the runaway.

"Take off the pack-saddle!" the women called out to him as he rode off.

Quickly he couched the camel, untied the ropes of the saddle and mounted again barebacked.

Hidden behind another small hill were several more tents belonging to the tribe. As Hamad came into view of them a young Badawi rushed out waving for him to halt. Once more Hamad made his camel kneel and, as he slipped off, the other man took his place.

"Thou must attend to thy guests, Yá Hamad", he said as he continued the chase.

When Hamad had left us he must have asked the man from the next tent to come and look after us and give us coffee. We recognized him as an old man we had passed on our way out. He had been riding along with his daughter, having also been into the town to buy supplies. It seemed that the camel had stampeded just as he had dismounted at his tent. His daughter had been unable to hold it. It was an ill-tempered animal, he said, though valuable, being a thoroughbred male riding camel. As he had left the town gate in the morning, it had knocked him over and hurt him. He showed us a grazed knee, saying that he

had also a broken rib and was in great pain. The bag that had fallen off contained dates, but in the other were coffee, water, some new clothing and other supplies. Thinking more about the possible loss of all these things than he did of his own injuries, the poor old thing limped back to lie down as Hamad returned and took his place at the coffee fire.

My husband now felt he must join in the chase, so he got into the car, went off to pick up Khálid, then drove away in the direction taken by the animal. Grateful thanks came from all the women, and there prevailed a feeling that all would now be well and the camel soon recovered. Coffee was now handed to me, but it was rather weak and did not please Hamad.

Rakán, the elder boy, aged about five, now produced for me a *dhub* or spiny-tailed lizard, which the man who looked after the camels had brought in for him that day. It was not a very big one, only eighteen inches long, though it seemed very fat. They said it was a female and that the eggs could be felt inside it. I said I did not want it, so they decided to cook it in the hot ashes and eat it. Hamad took it and cut its throat. It seemed rather limp and made no sound or movement. Only a little blood dripped out. Then, with the point of his knife, Hamad slit up its stomach from its tail for about six inches, pulled out its entrails and threw them away. There remained the liver and the eggs, of which there were about fifteen. They were the size of the end of one's middle finger and resembled the unformed eggs inside a chicken. Hamad carefully took them out and placed them with the liver in a small frying-pan used for roasting coffee-beans.

Maitha now took charge and began to cook them over the fire, stirring them all the time and gradually breaking the yolks until she had a small omelet, to which she added a little clarified butter. After a few more minutes' cooking she tipped the omelet into the wooden coffee-bean cooler and placed it in front of me. The two children were dancing with joy in anticipation of eating some of it. I ate several small pieces, and really it was very good, with a taste of locust about it, though a little salt would have improved it.

A visitor, followed by a fat black sheep, now came towards the tent. Hajalan the dog rushed out at him, barking furiously. Hamad got up to greet him and they both kissed. After greeting me the visitor sat



## The Camel Captured

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down by the coffee fire. Maitha went to fetch more *'arfaj* and *jalla*, which she put on the fire, making it blaze up, then sat down by my side. It was interesting that she had not disappeared on the arrival of the visitor. However, he was one of their tribe and may have been a relative.

Hamad now placed the lizard, stomach upwards, on the fire. For some time it moved its tail and legs as though it was still alive, much as a snake goes on writhing after it is dead. Then he proceeded to roast more coffee, as the first brew had been weak. He wanted, he said, good coffee for my husband when he returned.

It was now about sunset, the sun having disappeared in a haze to the west some little time before. Very soon the returning car came into sight and, a few minutes later, pulled up just behind the tent. Khálid called out as he alighted:

“Tiráhna.” (“We have rounded him up.”)

Everyone was delighted, none more so than the little group of women standing by me. Although it was late Hamad insisted on my husband having a cup of coffee, so we all sat down once more. A plateful of dates and the remains of the lizard-egg omelet were handed round, and, as the coffee was drunk, my husband told the story of how they had managed to catch up with and eventually hobble the runaway camel.

“Luckily the going was good and not too sandy”, he said, “which enabled me to catch up with him about twelve miles from here. The rider who was giving chase had been left far behind. We came upon the camel standing still in a small, dry watercourse, but as we approached it went off again at full speed. I tried to get ahead of the animal and turn him back, but he had no fear of the car and rushed along side by side with us in a place where I could not put on extra speed.

“About three miles ahead were grazing the large herds of milch camels of Shaikh Sabah al Násir Al Sabah. The camel made straight for them, reached them and stopped among them. We quickly drove up as close as possible, and Khálid got out, cleverly crept up behind him and got hold of his halter rope, a short piece of which was still hanging down. He quickly made him kneel and then proceeded, amidst much roaring and snarling from the beast, to hobble all four legs with ropes from the pack-saddle and the remaining saddle-bag.



Having tied him securely and put the saddle-bag into the car, we drove away, leaving the frantic animal vainly trying to walk away on his knees, his hind legs up in the air. Two 'Ajmán riders were coming along from another direction, so Khálid signalled them and they stopped. We drove up to them. Khálid pointed out the camel and asked them to bring him back to Hamad's tent for him."

During this time the final process of cooking the lizard had been going on. It had been completely buried in the hot ashes for about fifteen minutes and was now produced by Hamad. He brushed the ashes from it and then broke up its tail and handed me a piece. Khálid now took it from him and began to eat large pieces of it, skin and all. Little Rakán was handed the head and Nahár a leg, and they ran off eating with glee. Each time I broke off a piece of the tail the hot fat inside made a hissing sound! The meat was white and rather stringy, resembling lobster with a taste of locust. I must say it was good and cooked to a turn. My husband flatly refused to eat any and felt rather aggrieved when the ladies told him that he had already eaten her young in the form of the omelet!

Khálid wanted to make my husband a present of the camel, but he did not take it. Khálid said it had been given to him by King Ibn Sa'ud three years before, and was a thoroughbred *dhalúl*. He had since given it to the old man who had the broken rib.

Good-byes were said and we drove off home. It had been interesting to see how full of joy the whole camp had been at the recovery of the animal. It had shown how entirely wrapped up the Badawin is in his camels. My husband was entitled to claim *tiráhah* to the sum of three *rials* for rounding up a runaway camel.

We hoped the old man would recover.

## The Sick Wife

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#### THE SICK WIFE OF FAHAD AL FÁDHIL

On 25th July 1943 my wife and I met a delightful Murri named Fahad ibn 'Abdul Rahman al Fádhil, grandson of the man who dug Bir Fádhil, the famous well in the northern marches of the Rub' al Kháli. Fahad, a man of about forty-five, was a prominent member of the Nigadán group of the Ál Murra, and was at the time of our meeting camped with some forty tents of the Ál Murra on Arq wells, eighty miles south of Kuwait. He called at our house one morning and made himself known in rather quaint manner.

"I have heard", he said, "of all your kindness to Abu Laila and others of my people, and I have come a long way to ask a boon of you. I have a very sick and dear wife and I have brought her up to see the *tabíb* [doctor]. With us are my three small children and my old and feeble mother. I have no money to pay a doctor's fees, but I have a good Mauser rifle, which please take for that purpose."

"Where are you camped?" I asked.

"Outside the Darwázat Naif, in a small tent on the 'Ajmán *saihad*\* [hillock] beyond the Shamíyah wells. We are near the tent of the 'Ajmíyah woman called Sa'afiyah or Umm Mána."

We knew the lady and promised to go over that evening. Fahad begged us not to delay, as his wife was very bad and had suffered agonies on her camel ride of eighty miles from Arq.

We found a squalid little tent or shelter consisting of one pole and a couple of *rawwaq* cast over the top and drawn down the sides. "The easier to travel with", said Fahad, who had anxiously awaited our coming. Inside the tent was a very pathetic figure in the shape of an obviously young and attractive woman who was too weak to stand, and who stared at us with wild and startled eyes, hugging to her breast an emaciated infant of a few months.

"Gumi, Yá Wadha", said Fahad. "Here are Umm Sa'ud and Abu Sa'ud, who have come to see you and make you well."

Wadha did her best to do as her husband asked, but the effort to rise and greet us was too much for her and she could only groan. Fahad explained that she had on her neck a large abscess that had

\* To-day Mr J. MacPherson, of Aminoil, has his private residence on top of the 'Ajmán *saihad*.

appeared four months ago and had grown and grown until his wife was in utter despair with the agony of it. We asked to see the abscess and were shown a dreadful swelling stretching from the left ear to the point of the shoulder, having as its centre a great red spot the size of an orange. The girl's hair had all been cut off short and she was quite unable to move neck or head.

"We'll cure you, all right", said my wife. "To-morrow, first thing in the morning, my husband and I will be round with our car to take you to the American Mission hospital, where there is a lady in charge, and a very clever *tabib*."

Poor Wadha signalled her gratitude with her large suffering eyes and by a movement of her hands.

All this time a crowd of Badawin women and children, including Sa'afiyah, of course, were jostling and pushing us in the back as they tried to get a glimpse of things. It took Fahad all his time to keep them from actually hustling us into the tiny tent.

We left at last and, as promised, returned the next day and conveyed the girl, her husband, his mother and the three children to hospital. There an immediate operation was performed on Wadha and, as Dr Scudder and his efficient wife afterwards said, buckets of pus were removed. We sent our car every day for a week to take the grateful patient to hospital and have the wound dressed. By 6th August Wadha was on the high road to recovery, already able to walk and talk, and telling us of her life in the far south. Fahad came round to see us almost daily, saying he wanted to see more of us.

"My people", he said, "will assuredly hear of all Um Sa'ud's kindness to her sister, and even King 'Abdul 'Aziz will be told our story and will think well of her."

"Verily", replied my wife, "if we win 'Abdul 'Aziz's praise we shall indeed be rewarded. Be sure you come and see us before you depart."

They are very nice people, these Murra, and have such pretty ways of paying compliments. We did not take Fahad's rifle, but paid the doctor's bill ourselves.

## A Strange Sickness

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#### THE SKILL OF DR DAME

The well-known Dr Lewis Dame, who died in 1953 in the United States, was at one time an honoured member of the American Mission in Bahrain. He later worked for the California Arabian Standard Oil Company of Dhahrán until ill-health compelled his return to his native land. While in Arabia he was held in extraordinarily high esteem by the Badu everywhere, and was one of the few men who went regularly to Riyádh to attend members of the royal family and the many sick Badu brought into the capital for treatment.

Dame was a modern magician in the eyes of the Badu and well deserved the praise that was constantly showered on him by a grateful nomad world that has never ceased to talk about his sympathy, skill and healing powers. But this is not the least of the matter, for the Badu, who naturally react to a kindness and like to repay it a hundred-fold, have spread far and wide exaggerated stories and wonderful yarns, all intended to redound to the credit of the man who helped them and cured them of their strange maladies.

On 27th July 1943 'Abdul Rahman ibn Mádhí, Sa'udi Amír of 'Abraq al Kabrit\* in north Hasa, who had charmingly entertained my wife and myself when we had visited him in May of that year, returned our call in Kuwait. At a dinner party given by us in his honour he told us, among other things, the following strange story about Dr Dame.

One day at Shaqra there was brought to Dame a poor Badawi who was thought to be in the last stages of consumption.

"He wanted to die", said his companions, "but we have brought him to you in the hope that you can do something for him."

Dame examined the sick man all over and declared that he could find nothing organically wrong with him. He kept him under observation for some days, but all his efforts to bring about an improvement in the man's condition failed. Eventually Dame found out that for the previous one and a half years the man's only diet had been camel's milk and an occasional date. Dame then had a brain-wave. He inquired when the local butchers were going to kill a camel, and ordered to be brought to him a portion of the leathery pad that covers the knees of

\* Also called Jauf. Casoc had at that time a drilling camp there.



every camel. He then took a slice of this as large as a rupee and tied a thin piece of string to it. Next he ordered the patient to swallow the meat raw and, this done, he awaited results, having ensured that the end of the string that came out of the man's mouth was properly secured.

A day or so later Dame slowly withdrew the camel's meat from the man's stomach, and there, firmly transfixed to it, was found an enormous camel-tick of the kind that, when distended with blood, grows to the size of a very large grape.

"There", said Dame triumphantly, "is the cause of this man's sickness."

The man had apparently swallowed a minute camel-tick when drinking camel's milk, and this had affixed itself to a vital part of his internal organs, where it had been living and growing for some time. When the piece of camel's meat had entered the man's stomach, the tick had at once recognized it by instinct or smell and had immediately released its hold on the human body and ravenously seized upon its natural food.

The patient made a complete recovery.

I quote this story without comment. Whether it is a true yarn or a Badawin invention, I cannot say. One thing is certain: the story had got round and was firmly believed—Amír 'Abdul Rahman was careful to emphasize this—by the grateful Badu, who credited Dame with supernatural skill and intended their brethren everywhere to know it.

#### THE WELLS OF AL TAWÍL

They lie some thirty-two miles south-south-west of Kuwait and, together with Subaihiyah twelve miles farther south and Jahra, form three of the most important and best-known Badawin summer camping grounds in north-east Arabia. All three contain a great many wells dating from earliest times, and it is well worth visiting any one of them in the hot weather and wandering among the densely packed black tents of the Mutair and the 'Ajmán and seeing the herds of camels watering round the various wellheads or patiently awaiting their turn to drink.

It was 26th August 1943. Suhail, whose rising denotes the end of summer, had risen three days ago in Najd and already the nights were becoming cooler and the camels watering every third day. Man too—or so it is said—needs less to drink once this star, which we call Canopus, is up, for does not he feel cooler inside like the animal world?

Ramadhán fell on the first of September that year and only a few days remained when man could eat and drink his fill by day. Shaikh Khálid ibn Hamad al Mikrád—he who had joined me in the chase after the runaway camel—had been kicking his heels in Kuwait waiting for a car to take him to Riyádh. He did not particularly want to go, but the great King's commands were not to be disregarded lightly. Ibn Sa'ud had told him a month previously that he was to come to the capital and spend the fast month with him. The King always liked to collect round him a group of young and pleasing shaikhs during the fast, to keep him and other members of the family company. Young Khálid was popular and in favour, and hoped to be taken in the entourage of His Majesty on the pilgrimage to Mecca, seventy days after the 'Id al Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadhán. This would mean *kharjyah* (a gift of money) and *kiswah* (a gift of clothing), for the King never stinted his favourites or, for that matter, any tribal shaikh who accompanied him on the Haj.

Wishing to see his wife and children before leaving for the south Khálid asked me if I could run him out to Al Tawíl. I had some inspection work to do at Wára post, so I agreed to take Khálid first to Al Tawíl. We started off at 5.30 a.m. on 28th August. As we drew near Al Tawíl, Khálid asked if I could bring back in the car his best *shadád* (camel-saddle), which he wanted handy in Kuwait in case he was compelled to do the Riyádh trip by camel. I consented.

Al Tawíl was very picturesque. The Mahfúdh and Misra sections of the 'Ajmán had moved to Subaihiyah and Jahra respectively, so there were fewer tents than I had last seen, yet those remaining still numbered some five hundred and made a brave show. The wells were packed with the camels of the Diyahín (Mutair), whose paramount shaikh is 'Aiyád al Muttrugga, some grouped round the large circular *hiyádh*\* erected close to the mouths of the wells, and others waiting

\* Plural of *haudh*, a leather watering-trough.

their turn, crouched in rows by the tents and facing the early-morning sun, as is their way.

Camels of old Zunaifir ibn Huwaila and his sons were also in force, but their owners were busy finishing off the top of a new well, having just cleaned it out and revetted it with 'arfaj brushwood interspersed with camels' bones for greater strength.

We made straight for the tent of Zunaifir, Khálid's father-in-law, where Sáraḥ and the two children, Khazna and Hamad, were lodged. We were quickly surrounded by a group of women and children, while others went to fetch Zunaifir and his sons 'Abdullah and Ma'athad, who were working on the well. Sáraḥ spread a carpet in the men's portion of the tent, which is known as *al raba'a*, and made us at home. I was at once set upon by little Hamad and Nuriyah and Hussa, the daughters of 'Abdullah and Ma'athad respectively. They were not shy and offered in charming style their small faces to be kissed.

Zunaifir and his sons came up, a happy grinning trio all dirty and muddy from the well-digging, and sat down with us. Camel's milk in a large wooden bowl was produced by Sáraḥ. This was followed by coffee, a brew of which was all hot and at hand, prepared beforehand for the toilers at the well.

Khálid, who, of course, got a welcome due to his position as joint head of the Al Mahfúdh, soon slipped away quietly to have a private talk with Sáraḥ, whose place was immediately taken by old Nimsha, wife of Zunaifir, seeming even more scraggy and whining than usual. Her first words were:

"Have you brought me a *kiswah*? You always bring presents for Sáraḥ and the children, but forget me."

"Zunaifir, not I, will give you your *kiswah*, old lady", I replied. "Go and fetch Shagha."

Shagha, a great favourite of ours, was 'Abdullah's sixteen-year-old daughter by his former wife Sanwa, whom he had divorced.

After coffee the men insisted on my inspecting their camels and the new well, which latter had been given them by H.H. Shaikh Ahmad only a few days previously—and in perpetuity, they said. It had been filled in these many years, they told me, but the water was very sweet, though somewhat cloudy at the moment. They gave me

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some of it to taste and proudly showed me their *'arfaj* revetment round the mouth of the well, with the newly rammed earth on top. It at once earned my praise, for the task had been well and truly done. The *qáma* for drawing water had already been set up and everyone was smiling. I wished the well good luck by crying:

"Mabrúka, mabrúka!"

"Allah i tawil amrak", they replied in chorus. ("God give you long life.")

Old Zunaifir, more talkative than usual, then dragged me off to see his particular herd of fifty-three milch camels, crouched not far from the tent, and all wives of his fine 'Umaníyah *fahal* (male), which, he said, he had received some four years previously as a gift from Muhammad abu Laila, shaikh of the Nigadán group of the Ál Murra. With pride Zunaifir pointed out three of the 'Umaníyah's *banát* (daughters), aged three years, two years and one year. The old male was a fine animal, very fat and with an enormous hump.

As Zunaifir went back to work on the well, Khálid joined me, and together we returned to the tent. This time there was a much bigger mob of old men, young men and a crowd of dirty, half-naked, happy and curious little children, all anxious to see the fun.

"When will the war end?" was the first general question flung at me. "And why is the *hakúma* holding up foodstuffs and rice?"

This referred to the great shortage in Kuwait.

Another question was: "What will the *hakúma* do with Hitrer [Hitler] when they catch him?"

"They will put him in a cage and hand him over to the 'Ajmán", said I, "for isn't he the great-grandson of Rakán Al Hithlain, your one-time shaikh?"

The allusion here was to a jest of Ibn Sa'ud's. He liked to tease the 'Ajmán by saying that, when a prisoner in Constantinople some ninety years ago, Rakán Al Hithlain married a Turkish woman and produced children, the descendant of one of whom begat the braggart and liar Adolf Hitler.

"Yes, yes!" they chorused. "Hand him over to us. We will know how to care for him, the son of sixteen dogs."

I could stay no longer, so bade farewell to the men and, over the *qáta*, took my leave of Nimsha, Sáraha, Shagha and 'Abdullah's wife



Raiga, all of whom had discreetly retired to the women's portion of the tent when the men had started collecting.

The final good-bye given to Khálid and myself was rather a rowdy affair as far as the children were concerned, and I got a kiss on the nose from burly old Zunaifir.

"Come and see us again", he said, "and bring Umm Sa'ud next time."

Taking with us Khálid's *shadád* we proceeded to Burqán across country and, by a circuitous route, made for Wára post. Here to my delight I met Khamís ibn Rimthán, pleasing personality and chief guide of the California Arabian Standard Oil Company.\* Khamís had come up from Hasa to see his new wife Núra, sister of Muhammad ibn Táhus, the K.O.C.'s head guard in the Burqán oilfields area.

After taking coffee in the guards' hut, I was taken round by Khamís and Muhammad to pay my respects to the fair Núra and her mother. Núra had fixed up a clean and daintily curtained-off apartment for her husband in Muhammad's quarters, and Sáraḥ, her fat old mother, had betaken herself into a separate tent to make the necessary room. My wife and I had known Núra and her mother for some fourteen years, so I enjoyed the privilege of being treated as one of the family, and had the entrée into Núra's private quarters, whether accompanied or not by my wife. This is a typically 'Ajmán custom.

I spent half an hour chatting with Khamís and Núra, both being in good form. Núra did not, of course, forget to ask me for that elusive bag of rice that, in those hard times, seemed to get farther off than ever, and I promised to do my best for her. She was still almost a child in the way she talked and made up to one. It is little wonder that she won the heart of H.H. Shaikh Ahmad, who married her in 1931. Sad to relate, the marriage was dissolved two years later, because little Núra could not have a child.

Khamís gave me lots of news of my friends, both American and Arab, in Dhahrán, and we talked over old times and the trip my wife and I had made to Dhahrán and the ancient ruins of Tháj with him as guide. Verily these Badawin of the good class make delightful hosts when one visits them in their homes, and more than ever did I enjoy my day out with Khálid al Mikrád.

\* To-day "Aramco"—Arabian American Oil Company.

## The Pilgrims' Return

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We got back to Kuwait by 11.30 a.m. and before it was too hot. I kept my promise and did a similar round of visits to the same people on 7th October, this time with my wife. Our present to Sáraḥ was a pair of circular stones for grinding wheat, of which we had heard she was in dire need. The children were given a *dishdāsha* each and a small headcloth. Núra at Wára was not forgotten and had her bag of rice, but it was a terribly difficult thing to come by.

#### THE RETURN OF THE PILGRIMS

The return of the pilgrims from Mecca is always a very pleasing and happy experience. Whenever possible their friends and relatives go out a hundred miles or more by car to meet them, spend a night in camp with them and, after their long absence from home, welcome them with fresh food, water and other attractions. Have they not been to Bait Allah—God's House—and have they not had their sins forgiven and been washed clean? The welcome of their friends has special significance if the pilgrims have done the journey (two thousand miles) by camel, for this has meant an absence of eighty days from home, apart from time spent in Medína and the Holy City. The joy of the returning pilgrims is wonderful to behold, and it makes one's heart feel good when they distribute the many small presents and trinkets they have brought back for those dear to them. Above all else, this is what keeps Islám together—this wonderful pilgrimage to Mecca.

I remember so well Sálím al Muzaiyin's return from the Haj on 5th January 1945, a red-letter day for him and his family. I had given him leave to go on the pilgrimage with part of his household: his wife 'Amsha; his sister Maneira; Maziad al Dhafíri; Sulaimán, husband of Shaikha, daughter of Sálím's brother Ibrahím al Muzaiyin; and a slave boy whose name was Mubárák. We had missed them during their three months' absence, and it was with joy that we heard they had reached Rijm al Jahtán, fifteen miles west by south of Wára, where by previous arrangement their large flock of sheep was grazing.

No sooner had we received the news than my wife and I and our son Sa'ud, who was staying with us for a few days, prepared to motor out to Sálím's camp and welcome the tired party home. Taking enough food and bedding to enable us to pass the night with them in

their black tents, of which they had two, we reached their camp at about eleven o'clock in the morning. It lay in a small hollow slightly to the south of Rijm al Jahtán—the Cairn of Jahtán. As we drove up, dogs began to bark and men, women and children, led by Sálím, met us with happy cries of welcome. We loved our little Arab family and we were very glad to see them again.

After the preliminary greetings, speeches, etc., Sálím got down to making coffee and when we had partaken of it everyone crowded round us to give us their news and learn of happenings in Kuwait. They all looked lean, hard and well, though tired, for a two-thousand-mile ride by camel is not exactly a joke, especially for women. They had already met Muhammad and Hamúd, sons of Ibrahim al Muzaiyin, and Sálím's daughter Hussa, who had come out with the sheep and were glad to see us.

Having asked about our health and that of their many friends 'Amsha produced her small and rather pathetic gifts. For my wife she had a small circular tin containing water from Zam Zam, the holy well in the precincts of the Great Mosque at Mecca—water reputed to be the same as that so miraculously provided by the Angel Gabriel to save Hagár and her child Ishmael from death when they were lost in the wilderness many centuries ago. She also gave my wife some *daum* fruit, the legend relating to which was told to us later by her husband. For our son, 'Amsha produced a cheap pair of socks bought in the Mecca *suq*—a touching present. For myself there was what looked like a piece of meteorite with markings on it similar to those on the sacred Hajar al Aswad (Black Stone), which is built into the wall of the Ka'aba, the ancient and holy building in the centre of the vast central court of the Great Mosque.

"I found it", said 'Amsha, "a day's journey out from Mecca, and thought you might like to know what the Hajar al Aswad looks like."

It was greenish black, the streaks of white in it resembling possibly the letters of some ancient alphabet. I still keep it among my treasured possessions. It weighs about five pounds and was carried close on a thousand miles in one of 'Amsha's saddlebags.

Sálím now started on a most graphic description of the pilgrimage: the wonderful things they had seen, the various religious duties they



## The Bearing of Witness

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had performed. He had never visited Mecca before and was obviously deeply moved, describing its wonders with a sort of fervent ecstasy. His story, so simply and earnestly delivered, made us realize the profound effect on him and 'Amsha of this visit to the very House of God here on earth, and the forgiveness of their sins that they had won for themselves at Mount Arafat.

The sacred precincts extend over a large area around Mecca and are demarcated by a number of boundary pillars set up at a distance of about three marches from the city. On reaching the eastern boundary Sálím and his party had pitched their tents, washed, purified themselves and donned the *ahrám* garments—white for the men, dark green for the women—which are retained until the day of the great sacrifice, which is the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah, the month of pilgrimage. Before moving forward to Mecca the men had cut off three locks of hair on either side of the face and one lock from the centre above the forehead; the women, the last two inches of their main plaits of hair. From the first to the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah the cutting of hair and the pairing of nails is forbidden to both sexes.

Proceeding with bare feet and the men with bare heads, they had reached Mecca six days before the time due, and during this period had done the *tawáf*, which is the ceremonial sevenfold circumambulation of the Ka'aba, sanctuary of the holy doves, had taken their turn at kissing the Hajar al Aswad, had visited the place of Abraham and other holy shrines, and had drunk the water of Zam Zam. Such early arrivals as Sálím and family may, if they wish, perform these duties several times; it all counts for merit.

By far the most important ceremony, and the one that counts for merit above all others, is the bearing of witness at Mount Arafat. Failure to do this, whatever the cause of the omission, makes the whole pilgrimage null and void, even though the *haji* has done everything else required of him. *Wuqúf*, the bearing of witness, is the whole essence of the Haj and must be performed with the multitude on the ninth day of Dhul Hijjah, which is the last day of the Arab year.

Early on this day our little party had loaded up their camels with their tents, foodstuffs, goods and chattels, and had gone, via the village of Muna, to Mount Arafat, a low conical hill of granite some eighteen miles from Mecca, on the road to Ta'if. Here, from noon to



sunset, among hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, all wearing their *ahrám* garments, they had borne witness before the sacred mount, sitting in attitude of supplication, crying "Labbaika!"—"Here I am at your service!"—and joining in the prayers and other observances.

As soon as the sun had gone down, there had been the usual general rush to Muna, eight miles back towards Mecca, where it is incumbent on the *haji* to stay three days. Nearby is the "place of stoning": three pillars enclosed by a low wall and known as Shaitán al Kabír, Jumarat al Wasti and Shaitán al Zaghír—the Great Devil, the Middle Pillar and the Little Devil. On the first morning they had cast seven stones at Shaitán al Kabír; on the second morning, seven stones at Jumarat al Wasti; and on the third morning, seven stones at Shaitán al Zaghír.

Though the *haji* is expected to cast stones during each morning of his stay at Muna, it is on the first of these days—the tenth of Dhul Hijjah—that the rites of the Haj formally end. This day is known as the 'Id al 'Adha or 'Id al Dhahíyah, the Festival of Sacrifice. Having cast the stones at Shaitán al Kabír, Sálím had performed what is known as the Great Sacrifice by killing a sheep, and at the end of the three days in the plain of Muna, they had all changed into their ordinary attire and returned to Mecca, where the men had had their heads shaved, 'Amsha and Maneira having only the tip of one lock cut off. The party had spent another four days in Mecca, again going to all the holy places, and on the fifth day had set out for Kuwait. It had taken exactly thirty days of hard marching to reach their present camp at Rijm al Jahtán.

We had brought with us from Kuwait two fat lambs, together with such other necessities as coffee, rice, *dihin*, raisins and *nakhi*, which is parched gram. That night we gave the returning pilgrims their first square meal for many days. It was a wonderful dinner by the camp fire and everyone felt well fed and happy.

Sálím told us the legend of the *daum* palm, which grows in the gardens of a place called Marrán, which is on the pilgrim route to Mecca from Iraq and Kuwait, lying about one hundred and fifty miles north-east of the Holy City. It is one of the *Hyphaene* genus of branching palms, and its botanical name is *Hyphaene thebaica*. The fruit is of a rich dark brown colour, highly polished, and about the size of a small pear. One of the samples given to my wife by 'Amsha was

## Two Wolves Come Around

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65 mm. in length and 59 mm. in width. The fruit has no stone and is so hard, coarse, leathery and tasteless that the Arabs gave it the name *daum*, which means a stone.

The legend, said Sálím, goes back to the days of the Holy Prophet of God, Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah. It happened that the Prophet was travelling with some companions along the road to Mecca. Hot and weary they reached the vicinity of Marrán and paused to rest in a cool oasis of palm-trees, all laden with beautiful dates. The owner was engaged drawing water from a well and irrigating his garden. The Prophet approached him and asked him if he could spare a few dates for tired travellers—an act of hospitality that would help them on their way, for they were exhausted. The owner gruffly replied:

"Begone, thou beggar! I have no dates. What thou seest on the trees are not dates but stones."

This rude answer angered the Prophet, who, pointing at the dates, replied in rhyme:

"Allah y ja'alhum daum illa akhír yaum." ("May God make them verily stones until the last day.")

And ever afterwards, said Sálím, all the date-trees in that oasis and valley bore *daum* fruit instead of dates. As the pilgrims pass by on their homeward journey from Mecca they pick them and bring them back home as souvenirs—and as proof also of the truth of the word of the Holy Prophet of God, Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah.

When we turned in at about half-past nine it was cold, and heavy clouds began to bank up, with distant thunder and lightning. We had brought our small 80-lb. tent with us, and prepared for a possibly stormy night. Sálím ordered the sheep to be brought under the lee of his own tent for shelter and, as it was just the sort of night when wolves would be about, warned the shepherds to keep a good fire going throughout the dark hours.

Sálím's fears were justified. At about one o'clock in the morning two gigantic wolves, a male and a female from their pug-marks, raided the sheep and carried off a full-grown ram during the black darkness and whilst it was drizzling rain. In spite of the ferocious barking of the sheep-dogs the wolves got away with their prey. In the early morning we found the remains, entirely eaten except for the pelt and bones, three hundred yards away from the tents.

It was easy to reconstruct what had happened. The sheep-dogs had attacked well and boldly, but had been kept off by the male wolf while the female had her meal and *vice versa*. In the pitch darkness and rain Sálím and the menfolk had been unable to effect a rescue.

We ourselves returned to Kuwait somewhat sad, but the Sálím family, who followed us in a couple of days, did not seem to worry much, so thankful were they to get home and see their friends again.

Before we left Rijm al Jahtán, 'Amsha confided to us that she had decided to let Sálím take a new wife, in the hope that she would give him a boy child. After many years 'Amsha had failed to give him a son, and at Mount Arafat she had been told in a dream to act in this way. Sálím had loyally stuck to her till then, she said, and deserved a new wife. Sálím eventually married an 'Awázim lass, who gave him two baby boys. 'Amsha is now happy and mothers them as if they were her own.

There is one other thing I can record here. When Sálím had departed for Mecca from 'Abraq Khaitan, his permanent camping ground just outside Kuwait, he had left behind his two fine sheep-dogs, male and female, to care for his flock. Both were black and remarkably good animals at keeping away wolves, etc. When four days out from Kuwait Sálím had awakened one morning to find the black bitch outside his tent, wagging her tail and smiling at him. She had sensed somehow that her master was going on a long journey and had followed him, presumably by scent. Greatly surprised Sálím had decided to take her along on his thousand-mile journey; it was too late to send her back. The faithful bitch had followed her master and mistress until the sacred precincts of Mecca had been reached. Not liking to take her into the Holy City Sálím had asked a party of Badu who were camped by the roadside to look after her for twelve days. They had agreed and had tied her up with a stout leather thong to prevent her following.

On their return from Mecca Sálím had called for the bitch and had been told that the animal had fretted and fretted, and eventually had gnawed through the thong and run away. Sálím could not delay his journey and, after spending a day making inquiries, had proceeded on his way. When they had reached Rijm al Jahtán the sheep-dog that had been left behind had appeared broken-hearted that his mate was

## The Sheep-Dog Dies

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not with them. He must have known that she had gone with Sálím and had waited patiently for three months to welcome her home. After two days of dumb inquiry, and getting no hopeful sign, he seemed to understand. He set up a dismal howl for three nights in succession, then just lay down and died of a broken heart.

“Animals are like us human beings”, was Sálím’s comment. “Even they love their mates, praise be unto God, creator of all things.”



## THE CUTTING OF THE BRACELET

By Violet Dickson

During the winter of 1944 and the spring of 1945 we had our camp in the *hamdh* country just across the Ash Shaqq, some sixty miles from Kuwait. I spent several days there at the end of February, my husband remaining at home. Besides our guide Sálím al Muzaiyin and his womenfolk, there were several families of the Ál Murra, 'Adwán, 'Awázim and the Diyahín section of the Mutair.

Our *qusara* (tent neighbours) were Sáleh al Murri, his wife Gumza and his son Muhammad. Sáleh, who was related to Al Sa'ag, shaikh of the Bahaih section of the Ál Murra, was in service as chief tracker with Shaikh 'Abdullah al Mubárah Al Sabah. Gumza's second child had been born in camp in the middle of January. It was a boy and she had had rather a hard time, being afterwards so poorly that Sáleh had obtained permission to go out and be with her until she got better and could look after his sheep and camels. We had taken her out some medicine from Dr Miss Crouse, together with a little rice, as she was not able to eat ground wheat and barley, which was all they were getting on their ration card.

In the course of our first night in camp I was awakened by men talking close by and recognized one of the voices as Sálím al Muzaiyin's. He was talking to someone not far off. I had no idea what time it was and it did not disturb me; I just went off to sleep again. Next morning I went over to have coffee in Sálím's tent, and he told me of the stranger's arrival during the night.

He, Sálím, had been lying down in his tent when he had heard the sheep-dogs barking furiously. He had gone out to see what was the matter, for although no wolves were known to be around, it was just possible that one had come after his flock. He had heard a camel being made to kneel down and had then seen in the moonlight a Badawi alighting outside my tent. He had gone up to him and asked him to come over to his tent, where he had made coffee and given him dates and *leben*. The stranger had rested a few hours and had then gone on his way towards Kuwait. He had bags full of truffles that he was going to sell in the town and, having heard that prices had been high

the previous day, had been in a hurry. All this was quite a usual occurrence.

While we were talking about it Sálleh al Murri came over from his small tent and joined us round the coffee fire. After coffee had been served I took him over to where the camel had knelt down outside my tent and asked him the colour of the animal. He answered at once:—

“A young male *'asfar* camel.”

By this he meant that it was yellow or pale brown.

He ran across to where it had knelt in front of Sálím's tent.

“A young male *'asfar* camel”, he repeated several times, almost to himself.

“Who was the rider?” I asked.

But many people had come and gone in front of the tent since early morn, and the footprints of the stranger could not be found. Sálím, wishing to tease Sálleh, whispered to me:

“By God it is true that the camel was *'asfar* and a young male, for I saw it quite clearly in the moonlight; but I am going to tell Sálleh al Murri that he is wrong; that it was a young dark-brown female camel.”

“No, don't”, I said. “It would not be fair.”

Then I said to Sálleh: “You are right, Sálleh.”

And Sálím confirmed it.

Next day I went out with Sálleh for an all-day picnic collecting truffles. We were accompanied by the two *'Amshas*, wife and niece of Sálím, and a young man called Hamúd, who was looking after Sálím's camels at that time. We took a donkey to carry our luncheon of *leben*, dates, tea, coffee and bread. After walking for nearly three hours we came to a lovely depression with large *rimdh* bushes, and wild flowers growing nearly two feet high. Here we lit two fires, one for the women and one for the men, and had our luncheon. We roasted truffles in the ashes, as one would potatoes at home, then peeled them, dipped them in salt and ate them.

Sálleh soon spotted some fresh tracks and called to me that there was a hare somewhere not far away.

“I cannot follow its tracks”, he said. “The ground is hard and there is too much *esheb*.”

After luncheon I wandered away and came across three small

leverets asleep under the bare twigs of a small bush. Not wanting him to catch them, I did not go back and tell Sáleh, but continued my ramble. I was picking flowers some distance beyond the leverets, when out of a *rindh* bush close by there dashed a large grey hare. On rejoining our little party I told Sáleh what I had seen. He explained that the mother hare never remains near her offspring during the day and comes back to them each evening.

"Without doubt those were her young", he said. "If I had seen them I would have set my trap and caught her this evening as she returned to them."

During our walk home I said I wished I could find a *hubára's* nest and eggs. Sáleh replied that he knew how to set a trap to catch a *hubára*. Apparently this bird makes a track as she goes to her nest, and when she comes off the eggs, she leaves the nest by another less-marked track. By building round her eggs on three sides a small bank of pebbles and earth only about five inches high, and setting the trap in her track at the entrance to the nest, she is invariably caught. The trap, which is similar to our old-fashioned rat-traps, is not covered with earth but with a dirty piece of cloth, which prevents the bird's leg from being broken. Sometimes, said Sáleh, the male bird displays by walking round and round a bush not far away from the nest, and can be caught by the same method. Unfortunately we did not see any sign of *hubára* on that occasion.

On 1st March Abu Sa'ud, as the Badu call my husband, came out to camp. It so happened that this was the fortieth day after the birth of Sáleh al Murri's second son. After luncheon he came over to our tent, sat down by the fire, then explained rather formally that when a baby boy was born it was the religious custom of the Ál Murra to tie round the child's right wrist a piece of cord to which was attached a piece of myrrh. On the fortieth day the cord was cut.

"This", he explained, "is only done by a brave, upright, good and generous man."

He now wished to ask Abu Sa'ud if he would be so good as to do this. Although there were many brave, upright, good and generous men around, he and Gumza his wife could think of none better than Abu Sa'ud.

My husband gladly consented and we both went over to Sáleh's

## The Naming Ceremony

### Chap. XIX

little tent. The baby boy was asleep in his *mizbah*,\* tightly bound in a piece of grey flannelette by a woollen cord. When we had sat down his mother took him out of the hammock and untied the cord just enough to allow her to pull out his tiny right arm. Sáleh produced a small pair of folding nail-scissors, which he handed to my husband, then pronounced:

"B'ism Illah ar Rahmán, ar Rahím." "In the name of God the Merciful, the Forgiving."

My husband cut the cord, at the same time wishing the child, in the name of God, long life, good luck and happiness, and expressing the hope that he would turn out a fine warrior like his father. This seemed to please the parents very much.

"He is called Daksan", said Sáleh. "All the Murra tribe know this by now, for I sent them word long ago."

Gumza was quite willing for the babe to be called Daksan, but we knew that she really wanted it to be Sálím.

"He shall be Sálím Daksan", said my husband, and everyone was pleased.

"Now I must find", said Sáleh, "a male lamb aged six months and ten days, to kill as a thanksgiving for the birth of our boy. Insh' Allah, by next Friday I shall have one and I invite you to come and share in the feast with us all."

"I will supply the rice", I told him, "and next week will bring out twenty-five pounds of it for the feast."

### GUMZA'S DAUGHTER

By Violet Dickson

It was just about the middle of November 1947 that Gumza had a baby daughter. I saw it next morning: a sweet little, round-faced thing.

"She is named after you", said Gumza, "for we have called her Khatún."

\* A leather hammock slung between two tent-poles, or used as a portable cradle hanging from the mother's shoulder. *Mizbah* is the Ál Murra name for it; the 'Ajmán call it *habába*.



*Khatún* means lady, and I am usually called this.

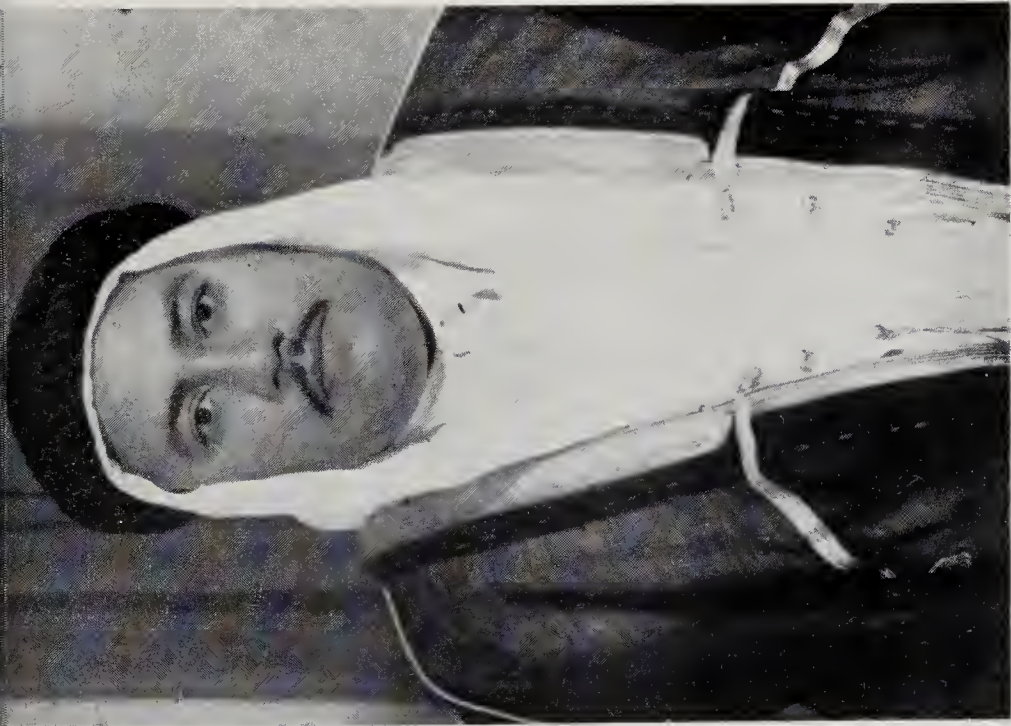
On 9th February of the following year I wrote of Khatún:—

“She is now getting on for three months old and is just as lovely a baby as ever, tied tightly up in her swaddling clothes and sleeping peacefully in the *mizbah* hung over her mother’s shoulder. Although the day is very cold she is just as warm and dry as can be. Gumza showed me the secret. The large brass coffee-mortar was full of freshly pounded camel dung. Khatún was unwound, taken out of her wrappings and allowed to play for a short while on her mother’s lap. Then, as she was feeling cold, Gumza took her over to near the fire, where the wheat porridge was cooking for their supper, and spread out a dry piece of cloth. She then took a double handful of the dung and placed it in the centre of the cloth. The baby was then placed on this, the dry dung put all over her little thighs and legs, and she was folded up with her two arms on her chest and her legs stretched out. Another piece of cloth was put round her, then the long thong with a slip knot at one end was slipped over her head and tied round and round down to the tips of her toes. Smiling and warm she was given a drink before being put back in her hammock to sleep.

“Gumza explained that the dung of the white female camel has a very nice odour, and by using this method and allowing the wrappings to be smoked with incense gum, her baby was always sweet and clean.

“‘See how fat and nice her legs are’, she said. ‘That is all because I keep her dry and warm. I change her each morning and evening. Look at Sálím al Muzaiyin’s baby. It is thin and cold, as its legs are not kept warm. His mother says she is a townswoman and always washes out his clothes, so he remains wet and cold.’

“These Murra women certainly know how to look after their babies. When Khatún is four months old Gumza will make her a little circular collar stuffed with sweet-scented herbs, which she will tie loosely round the baby’s neck. This prevents illness, they say.”



HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH MUBÁRAK AL HAMAD AL SABAH  
 in Charge Customs Police and security Sea Front generally  
 Grandson of the great Shaikh Mubarak al Sabah



AFTERNOON TEA IN THE OIL COMPANY'S GUEST-HOUSE AT AHMADI

*Left to right:* Mr L. T. Jordan, General Manager, Kuwait Oil Co., Ltd.;  
 His Highness the Ruler of Kuwait; Shaikh 'Ali ibn Thani, Ruler of Qatar;  
 Lt.-Col. H. R. P. Dickson (author)





THE INVESTITURE OF HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH SIR 'ABDULLAH AL SÁLIM AL SABAH, C.I.E., WITH THE K.C.M.G., 1953

*Left to right: Mr Pirie Gordon, Sir Rupert Hay, Political Resident, His Highness, Mr C. J. Pelly and Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf*



HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH 'ABDULLAH AL MUBÁRAK AL SABAH, C.I.E.,

## We Meet Colonel Stirling

### Chap. XIX

#### THE ARK OF ISHMAEL

With the termination of the Second World War the operations of the Kuwait Oil Company were taken over by an American general manager with a large Anglo-American staff, and in the autumn of 1945 drilling was started again.

Meanwhile my wife and I were enjoying a short holiday in Chtaura, a small township in Lebanon on the road to Damascus and in the plain of Beka'a. A rebellion had taken place in Damascus during the previous June, and the French had shelled the city from their barracks in the hills near Salahiyah. All was quiet now and the final departure of all French troops from Syria had just been completed. The whole of our 31st Indian Armoured Division was camped close to the city, the British now being looked upon as the friends of all. Our son Sa'ud was in Hodson's Horse, which formed part of the 31st Indian Armoured Division, so we had an opportunity to meet him in Damascus.

Lieut.-Colonel Stirling,\* who had just returned from leave in London, was living in Damascus and running the desert area. We met him quite by chance as he came into our hotel at Chtaura one morning. It was to him we mentioned our long desire to see the famous Markab, or Ark of Ishmael, of the Ál Ruwala section of the 'Anizah. The Amír Fawáz ibn Núri Al Sha'alan, paramount shaikh of the Ál Ruwala, who inhabit the Syrian desert in the vicinity of Damascus, had just returned from a three months' trip to the United States and England. It so happened that Colonel Stirling had met him in London only a few weeks previously and had entertained him to dinner at the Savoy. He said that a visit to the Amír's summer camping ground at 'Adhra, some twenty miles to the north-east of Damascus, could quite easily be arranged.

The Markab is an extra large and specially shaped women's camel-litter, consisting of a light wooden frame made from branches of the pomegranate tree and covered with the feathers of the *na'am*, the Arabian ostrich. It is known as the Ark of Ishmael in honour of the

\* James Erskine Stirling, D.S.O., a very remarkable man, with an unrivalled knowledge of the Near East. Eighteen months later he survived a determined attempt to assassinate him: five gunmen entered his house in Damascus and shot him in six places.



first Arab nomad, son of Abraham by his wife's Egyptian maid Hagár, it being claimed that Ishmael built the original Markab. Certainly it is extremely old, probably over twelve hundred years, and as the ostrich feathers and parts of the wooden frame get worn



“AL MARKAB”—THE “ARK OF ISHMAEL”

Also called Al Makraba, the means of approach to God—Abu Duhur,  
the Father of Ages

The tribal emblem of the Ruwala

or damaged, the Ruwala replace them and so keep the Markab in good shape always.

When the 'Anizah go into battle the daughter of the shaikh rides in the Markab and moves forward in the centre of the force, to spur the

## The Amír's Tent

### Chap. XIX

warriors on to deeds of valour. It is said that when the battle is joined the camel bearing the Markab is hobbled with a chain so that it cannot retreat. Should the battle go against the 'Anizah, retirement is allowed only as far as the Markab, where all must rally in a fight to the death in defence of it and the lady seated in it.

Shaikh Ahmad once told me that a similar litter was used by Ibn Sa'ud at the battle of Jaráb in January 1915, another by Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait in December 1901, when Ibn Rashid, at the bidding of the Turks, threatened an attack on Jahra. Then Mubarak's daughter, one of the fairest ladies of the Al Sabah, was put in it with her hair flowing, her head uncovered and face unveiled. Had not Ibn Rashid withdrawn, the Kuwait force would have rallied round the lady to a man.

There can be little doubt, however, that both these were merely glorified and richly decorated tribal litters, more properly called *maksars*, the common type of camel saddle used by the women of the Mutair, 'Ajmán, Harb and Dhafir tribes. Shaikh Khálid Al Hithlain ("Zib Sahmán") told me in 1934 that the 'Ajmán still use such a litter when going to war, putting up their fairest maiden unveiled to shame the laggards into pushing forward to the forefront of the battle, but that they call it a *maksar*. As far as I am aware the Ruwala are the only tribe to use the true Markab as a tribal fetish or banner. It certainly dates back to most ancient times.

A few days later Colonel Stirling called on us again. He had seen the Amír Fawáz, who was going to give a dinner party in his tent on Sunday evening at sunset, and had invited us to attend. At about 6.15 on Sunday, 16th September, my wife, our son and I arrived at Colonel Stirling's house, where we met the others who were going with us: Mr Trevor Evans, the Acting British Consul and his wife; the G.O.C. British Forces; Colonel Morgan of the Intelligence Dept.; and four or five other colonels and majors from G.H.Q.

With Colonel Stirling we all drove out along the main Baghdad road to near 'Adhra. Here a track led off from the road and brought us, after half a mile or so, right up to the Amír's tent, which, the sun having just set, was such a blaze of electric light that any view of the surrounding black tents of the tribe was completely obliterated. The throb of the small generator that provided the electricity came from a

building to our right. Parked close by the big tent were already several cars and a fifteen-seater bus.

The tent, its long frontage facing south, was supported by eleven central poles. At the fifth pole from the western end it was divided into two by a magnificently embroidered *qáta*, which, twelve feet in height, reached up nearly to the top of the tent and stretched outwards for about ten yards from the front of it. The western portion was beautifully carpeted, with mattresses and cushions spread for the guests. As far as I could ascertain, the eastern section was occupied by the Amír's ladies.

As we walked to our places at the eastern end of the western portion, there in front of the great dividing *qáta* was the Markab, a truly impressive affair, with armed slaves on guard to left and right of it. About fifteen feet long and some seven feet high, it was in excellent repair, with nine tall tufts of brown and black ostrich-feathers placed in pairs on the top and waving in the gentle evening breeze. The sides were all covered in small tufts of smaller dark grey ostrich-feathers fastened to the supporting wooden framework.

As we took our seats on the spring mattresses placed in front of the Markab, the Badu outside closed in round the three open sides of the tent, forming a living, silent wall. Not a word or murmur came from any of them; they all just stood and watched. There must have been quite five hundred men.

Two slaves with rifles and dressed in *yókhs*, the long, scarlet, gold-embroidered smocks of Najd, stood in the centre of the tent, facing us and awaiting orders. The Amír's small sons—Muhammad, Mita'ab and Sultán, I think they were called—came and sat among us. Mita'ab, twelve years of age, spoke English well and told about his life in the desert, etc. In his pocket he had a fountain-pen that his father had brought back for him from America, but as he had no ink he could not use it! Mrs Evans promised to send him a bottle. I hope she did not forget.

The Amír Fawáz was the perfect host, moving from guest to guest and talking either in Arabic or French, or through his *kátib*.

The signal for dinner to be brought in was the spreading of the long, black, shiny cloth down the whole length of the tent, and then the movement among the Badu at the far end indicated the bringing



## A Sumptuous Feast

### Chap. XIX

in of the meal. The slaves then entered carrying the five large trays of meat and rice, two of them at least six feet across, which they placed at intervals down the centre of the black strip. The trays were of the familiar Badawin type known as *abu kursi* (father of a chair), which is a large round copper tray (*saniya*) whitened the colour of silver and welded to a circular metal base eighteen inches high and is carried by means of handles at either side. Small dishes of stews and large paper-like breads were next placed around each tray.

“Sammu”, said our host.

Obeying this invitation to fall to, we all got up and sat down to dinner. A spare plate, knife, fork and spoon were provided for each European guest, and a new white linen table napkin was placed on the knee of each person. On top of the mound of rice piled high on every tray and in the centre of a pile of meat cut up into small pieces were five sheep's heads. If counting the heads meant anything there must have been twenty-five sheep slaughtered for that dinner.

Our feeble effort made little or no impression on the amount of meat and rice before us. I sat on the right of the Amír, who did not eat himself but helped me and his other guests to tasty pieces of meat. When we had finished we got up, and those who had eaten with their hands, as we had, washed them at the edge of the tent before taking their places as before.

Now the senior shaikhs closed in on the food. They soon got up, having taken their fill, and moved away, leaving appreciably less on the trays. Two more sittings took place before the trays were removed practically empty. Not even the bones remained, for it is the custom for each man to take one or two pieces away with him for some small person in his tent not privileged to come and eat with his parent. After the last dish had gone and the black cloth had been removed, there still remained on the carpets a white edging of fallen rice grains. Quickly four slaves picked up the central carpets, shook off the rice just outside the tent, then as quickly replaced them.

Coffee was then served by a slave who carried a number of small coffee-cups in his right hand and a coffee-pot in the other. Tea-glasses were next brought and filled up with black, sweet tea from a kettle. It was after this that Colonel Stirling suggested a move, but the Amír only said:



"You have not yet had the fruit."

He called for this to be brought and there was carried in a long, low table twelve inches high and laden with dishes of white and black grapes, red water-melons, yellow melons and peaches. Plates, knives and forks were provided and we all closed in round the table and really enjoyed ourselves. The Amír remarked that recently in London he had paid seven pounds for less grapes than were on the dish after we had all eaten from it. When we had finished, a slave poured water over our hands into a basin, and we sat once more in our places. Again coffee came round.

A short while after this we took our leave and the Amír escorted us to our cars. We were on the point of departure when we were told that a speech had been forgotten and would we all go back. So back we all went and sat down again. In front of us stood little Mita'ab with a piece of paper in his hand. He read out a charming little speech welcoming us English to their tent and looking forward to a great friendship with those who had saved them all from the French.

Subsequently I was given an interesting account of the almost sacred store the Ruwala put on the Markab. My informant was the Amír's brother, Naif ibn Núri Al Sha'alan, who is an official in the Sa'udi Government at Ta'if.

"It is", he said, "the only one of its kind in the world to-day. Some other tribes, such as the 'Amarát section of the 'Anizah, have much snaller and ordinary litters, which they decorate with ostrich-feathers and follow to battle, but they are not like ours—only copies. The Markab can best be compared to your regimental standards. If ever it were captured by the enemy, our tribe would be finished for all time, and all of us would die in the attempt to save it. Should it ever be taken, which God forbid, no new one may ever be made to take its place in our tribe."

"In case of war with another tribe", I asked him, "who would be the maiden to ride in it?"

His answer was that it must be one of the Sha'alan ladies, either the shaikh's own daughter or, failing her, the daughter of his brother or nearest male relative.

## The Hot-Headed Shaikh

### Chap. XIX

#### THE KILLING OF AN 'AJMÁN TRIBESMAN

During our absence from Kuwait there took place, in early September, an incident not far from Jariya wells. It involved Faisal ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz al Májid Al Duwísh, eldest son of our great friend Faiha, the sister of 'Amsha.

The Dushán had spent the summer months on their wells at Hába near As Sáfa. They were very shortly going to move away, but would remain in the vicinity of the wells until the first rains fell. Young Faisal decided to go off with a friend, an 'Utaibi, down to Hasa, where they had business connected with the new crop of dates.

They set off on two nice *dhulúl*\* and after a few days' travelling came at noon to where a couple of 'Ajmán tribesmen, belonging to the *qaum* of Shaikh 'Abdullah ibn Juma', were tending their camels. They rode up to them, dismounted and, after the usual salutations, asked for a bowl in which to milk one of the camels, as they were thirsty. The men showed them a skin full of milk and told them they could drink from that, as the camels had been milked a few hours before, leaving just enough for their young calves. Faisal refused to do this, insisting that he be given fresh milk from one of the camels. Words ensued, but he took the bowl and went off to capture and milk by force one of the animals.

Fearing trouble one of the 'Ajmán men went up to Faisal's camel and, without being observed, removed the breech of the rifle slung on the saddle and threw it away into the bushes. He then followed Faisal. They soon came to blows and were fighting with each other on the ground. Faisal was unarmed, but the 'Ajmi had a curved dagger in his belt. Before he could draw it Faisal seized it and managed to inflict a bad wound in the stomach of the herdsman. He did not wait to see if the wound was serious, but left the man lying on the ground while he and his friend quickly mounted their *dhulúl* and rode off away to the south-east.

After tending the wounded man, the other herdsman went off post-haste to the tents of some Murri tribesmen who happened to be camped close by, and brought back with him one of the three 'Ariq brothers. He examined the tracks, then stated that the stranger who had stabbed the 'Ajmi was of the Dushán family of the Mutair.

\* Plural of *dhalúl*, a riding camel.

The wounded man was placed on a camel and taken into Jariya 'Ilya, where he told the Amír the whole story before he died of his wound the following day. The Amír reported the incident to Riyádh and received instructions to send off a party with the Murri tracker to follow the two culprits and bring them back to Jariya, and to send some more men to Hába wells to bring in as hostage one of the young shaikhs of the Dushán.

The tracker and party came up with the two travellers on the outskirts of Hasa some days later and brought them back to Jariya, where they were put in prison to await justice. The whole 'Ajmán tribe were very indignant over the murder, and all agreed that they would not accept any blood money, but would demand the life of Faisal ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz. The Dushán shaikhs, headed by Bandar Al Duwísh, paramount shaikh of the Mutair, came up one and all to Jariya to await events.

The whole of the month of October went past with the refusal of the 'Ajmán to accept any money in payment, and with the Dushán and 'Ajmán shaikhs all remaining camped at Jariya. It would have been unheard of in the history of Arabia to take the life of a member of the Dushán for an 'Ajmán tribesman.

In November, by which time my wife and I were back in Kuwait, King Ibn Sa'ud settled the dispute by ordering the 'Ajmán to accept twelve thousand rupees '*idiya*. It was typical of the greatness of the King that he did not order the Dushán to produce the money at once. Instead he sent orders from Mecca, where he then was, to his two sons, Muhammad and Násir, who were in Riyádh at the time, for each of them to pay to the 'Ajmán five thousand rupees. Faisal and his friend the 'Utaibi were to pay one thousand rupees each. On payment of the money the two prisoners were released and went back to their families.

The whole wisdom of this settlement lies in that the *shari'ah*, the religious law of Islám, required that the money be paid, but, in order to prevent war between the 'Ajmán and the Mutair, the King had virtually bought off Faisal. The money paid by Muhammad and Násir would come from Government funds as assistance to the Dushán.

The story was told to me by 'Abdul Muhsin al Habaishi, Shaiyah al Jibili, Sálím al Muzaiyin, Zaid al Sána and Faiha, the mother of Faisal ibn 'Abdul 'Azíz.

## A Night in October

### Chap. XIX

#### THE MEETING-PLACE OF THE SLAVES

By Violet Dickson

The *'abd*, or negro slave bought for money, is comparatively rare in Kuwait town; but the *mu'allid*, the domestic slave, born in captivity of slave parents who may have been in one family for generations, is often to be found in well-to-do households. Masters are generally kind to these domestic slaves, bringing them up as they do their own children, who mix with them on terms of equality. The *mu'allid*, either male or female, frequently holds a position of considerable responsibility and trust.

Despite the fact that they are outwardly Muslims, and that the ruler frowns on such goings on, members of the slave community like to keep up some of their old African voodoo customs. Every Thursday night, and some other nights on special occasions, they come together in Al Nubán, which is the name given to their meeting-place. There are two of these in Kuwait town: the main one in the Murqáb quarter to the south-west of the town; the lesser one in the small eastern quarter known as the Maidán, which, inhabited mostly by Persians and Bahárinah, is not far from our house.

It was to this smaller one that, at the invitation of Bakhíta, I went with Barún, our Persian *farásh*, about 9 p.m. on the night of the full moon, 22nd October 1945. Bakhíta is a freed slave who once belonged to the wife of Faisal Al Duwísh. She flew in the 'plane to Iraq with her master when he surrendered to the British in 1930.

The house and small courtyard are on a main road, and a striped flagpole in one corner of the yard is all that distinguishes the place from any ordinary house. As we neared the door the sounds of drums and music, accompanied by a peculiar swishing noise, indicated that the dances had begun.

Silence fell as the dancers rested and the music ceased. We furtively knocked on the door. It was opened a few inches and a negro asked what we wanted.

"Is Bakhíta here?" asked my servant. "She has promised to meet the *khatún* here to-night."

The door was closed once more. A few seconds later it was opened



again and a voice said that Bakhíta was not there, but would the *khatún*, meaning myself, come in. I carefully removed my shoes and went inside. Many women were on one side of the court, and a few men spectators sat against the wall on the opposite side. I was taken across the court to where two chairs had been placed ready, for they had expected my husband to be with me. I took my seat on one of them. Barún removed his sandals and sat down with the men near the wall. There was an air of religion about the place, the men and women talking mostly in soft tones.

A tall negress beautifully dressed stood beside me and fanned me with a palm-leaf fan. The whole air was heavy with incense that burnt in a small earthen mould in front of the stringed instrument known as a *tambúrah*, before which, as if in deep thought, stood an old grey-bearded man. Then he turned towards one of the slaves and nodded his head several times. The slave got up and came across to the *tambúrah*, but then said he did not know how to play it, so a young negro took his place. The *tambúrah* has a very sweet sound, like the few centre strings of a harp. Three or four drums placed on the ground to one side of it were now beaten and the singing began. It was a song quite unlike anything I had heard among the Arabs, or even among the slaves on the pearling boats. It was really a very pretty tune in a minor key.

A tray placed on a low table was just to my left. On it were three candles burning, three rose-water jars, one centre dish containing seven raw eggs and *mushmu'*. Round these were thirteen saucers full of various things. Bakhíta afterwards said they were:—

*Mahalab* (or *Mahalibi*).—Sweet arrowroot, semolina or ground rice sprinkled with nutmeg. The Arabs call it *mahalabíyah*.

*Sandál*.—Oil of sandal-wood.

*Sa'ád*.—A variety of mint.

*Juáni*.—I am uncertain of the meaning. It is a negro word, probably African in origin.

*Allúk* (or *Allúch*).—A negro word for chewing gum made from frankincense.

*Mushmu'*.—A sweet-scented herb.

*'Audh 'azrak*.—A sweet-smelling wood stained a dark blue colour. When a small piece is put on a charcoal fire it gives forth a white smoke of delightful fragrance.

## Weird Dances

### Chap. XIX

*Ma'múl.*—A negro word for frankincense.

*Milah.*—Salt.

*Shab.*—Alum.

*Hail.*—Cardamom, a spicy seed used as seasoning and in medicine. It is always used with Arab coffee.

*Grumfel.*—Cloves.

*Mistiki.*—Same as *allúk*, but of better quality.

As the singing went on, men and women got up and danced with a curious bowing, jerky movement; and as the spirit possessed a man here and there, he would take a raw egg from the tray and hold it in his clasped hand as he danced. One of the men wore a sort of skirt made of many dry lambs' hooves hanging from a broad belt round his waist. His swaying to the music caused the hooves to strike each other and give out the swishing noise we had heard before we entered.

When the song ended so did the dance and all resumed their places. The charcoal was renewed in the burner and more frankincense put on. There came a knock on the door, and a young slave was let in. He came straight up to the *tambúrah* and touched it with his hand, which he put to his forehead before sitting down.

On either side of the courtyard were two rooms. In one the men made coffee, the other being reserved for women who wanted to go in and rest and smoke. No woman may attend this ceremony if she is unclean; should she attempt to do so a string of the *tambúrah* would snap at once, it is said.

I stayed for three dances, but left before they really got worked up and rolled about the ground, which they do later in the evening. Already the slave of Shaikh 'Abdullah al Ahmad, son of the ruler, had his face covered in dust through doing this. He wore a bunch of *mushmu'* round his neck.

Bakhíta sent word later that she had gone home, as she had been very tired. She came to see me next morning and explained it all to me. I gave her twenty rupees to buy some coffee for the Nubán.

## FIDA'AT ALLAH

So much more could be set down, but here, save for a summing-up of the contemporary situation, I must bring my narrative to a close. If the experiences and anecdotes recorded in these pages by my wife and myself will help to paint a picture of the day-to-day life of the inhabitants of Kuwait and her neighbours, we shall have achieved our purpose. Many of the incidents narrated are, perhaps, trivial in themselves, yet their united effect must surely be to demonstrate that the Al Bádía of the desert and the Al Hadhar of the towns are men and women as human as ourselves, with all the virtues and weaknesses to which *Homo sapiens* is heir.

“Fida’at Allah”—“In the custody of God”—is a form of farewell. Carl Raswan put it in this way after he visited us:

“May God bless you both and your beloved children. May God bless your work and your friends—English, Arab and American, high and low, rich and poor, but all so devoted to you and you so devoted to them.”

On that note I can end this third part of the book.

PART FOUR  
WHICH IS SUPPLEMENTARY

*Ma dumtum fi dárihim, dárihim*

(When you are in his house, do as he does)





# The Coming of Oil

## CHAPTER XX

*The First Shipment of Oil—The Lebanese Point of View—Discontent in Sa'udi Arabia—The Impact of the West—Progress of the Kuwait Oil Company*

### THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF OIL

30th June 1946

The opening ceremony (wrote Mr C. A. P. Southwell in his report) was performed by H.H. the Shaikh of Kuwait, who turned a silver valve wheel on the loading pipe and started the flow of crude oil from his country's field to the markets of the world. The ceremony was attended by Col. W. R. Hay, C.S.I., C.I.E., His Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf; the British Political Agent; Mr William Carter Burdett, junior, American Vice-Consul at Basra; and all the notabilities of Kuwait. Mr C. A. P. Southwell, representing the British and American directors of the Kuwait Oil Company, received His Highness, and Mr L. D. Scott and Mr T. E. Patrick conducted him along the raised walkway across the pipelines to the main operating valve. As the shaikh turned the silver wheel opening the valve, the sound of the oil flowing out to the tanker *British Fusilier* could be heard. His Highness then broke out a signal from the signal station notifying that loading operations had commenced.

Mr Southwell addressed the gathering. On behalf of the directors and staff of the Kuwait Oil Company, he said, he wished to express great and sincere appreciation of His Highness's presence.

"We have met here to commemorate the first shipment of oil from Kuwait, an outstanding event in the development of Kuwait's oil resources, which Your Highness entrusted to our Company some twelve years ago. We greatly appreciated the confidence which Your Highness then placed in our Company's ability to fulfil this task, so important for the prosperity of your state. Now we are happy to celebrate with Your Highness to-day's event, marking one more stage in the successful progress which, with Your Highness's encouragement and assistance, our efforts have achieved. May to-day be

auspicious for Your Highness, for the State of Kuwait and for the Kuwait Oil Company.

“Your Highness is aware that the work so far done by the Company has had to be carried out in successive stages. In the first place the Company’s geologists examined the country in order to see whether, from surface indications, there was any likelihood of finding oil. In the course of their search they discovered what seemed to be some promising locations. The second step was to determine whether these indications were merely the vestiges of what had once been an oilfield in the remote past, or whether, far down in the earth, there were still large quantities of oil. The answer to this question was obtained by means of the drill, by which the Company has, after lengthy researches, found that under part of the soil of Kuwait there is a big store of petroleum. The third stage in these operations has now been reached, namely the actual production of the oil and its transportation to the markets of the world.

“Your Highness will agree that this successful result of the Company’s preliminary endeavours represents no mean achievement, particularly as much of the work has had to be carried out under the very difficult conditions caused by the war, when the manufacture of essential drilling and other equipment was often greatly delayed and the shortage of shipping imposed further limitations on activities.

“The success that has so happily crowned our efforts would never have been possible without Your Highness’s unfailing patience, loyal friendship and close collaboration, the excellent work of our Kuwait personnel and the technical skill and large resources of this Company, in which British and American interests and personnel are so happily blended.

“There can be no shadow of doubt that, if God will, this shipment which we are celebrating to-day is but the first of many that will convey Kuwait oil to the markets of the world. We are proud that our Company, as the instrument chosen by Your Highness, has been able to make such successful progress and thus to contribute to the prosperity of your state and people. In order to express our warm feelings of gratitude and friendship, I now present Your Highness with this humble gift which our craftsmen of the west have designed and made for this most auspicious occasion.”

## The Town Rejoices

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Mr Southwell then presented the shaikh with a gold and enamel-work casket, made by the Goldsmiths' and Silversmiths' Company of London and inscribed in commemoration of the ceremony.

In reply the shaikh said:

"To-day is a very happy day as we celebrate the first shipment and exportation of oil from Kuwait. Undoubtedly every one of my people and my friends will rejoice with me in this happy event, which by the grace of God is for our future welfare.

"I highly appreciate the Company's activities, which they have performed for the completion of the operations, both before and after the suspension of work during the war. I thank God for such an opportunity as this, which will help us to continue to carry on various improvements which we desire for the happiness and welfare of my state and people. I wish to mention the assistance rendered to us by the Company during their operations in my state. Also I thank His Majesty's Government for their help in the success of operations, as well as my personal friends the Company's directors, both British and American. I also offer my thanks to all the Company's staff, both those from abroad and from my state, all of whom have rendered such valuable assistance. I accept with many thanks the memento of this memorable occasion which the Company has given me. I trust that our friendly relation with the Company will continue to exist in a spirit of cordiality and goodwill."

The ceremony was followed by further celebrations in the town, including a ceremonial war dance and a very popular firework display. The Kuwait Oil Company gave an Arab dinner to the shaikh, state officials, notabilities and foreign representatives at the house of Mr L. D. Scott, and many Kuwait notabilities gave private dinner parties. A dinner was also held by the Junior Staff Unity Club, followed by a film show given by Padre White from Basra, another dinner dance was held at the Senior Staff Club, Maqwa, and out-of-door meals in the traditional Arab style were provided for the artisans and labourers.

### THE LEBANESE POINT OF VIEW, 1950

In Beyrout on 31st August 1950 I had an illuminating talk with a prominent Lebanese politician whom I have known for some years.



He holds strong views. The discussion started as a result of a remark by me that it was a great pity that Syrian-Lebanese relations were so bad, especially as the chief victims were innocent traders and travellers going about their business. I instanced the fact that on 21st August my car had been stopped four times for passport and baggage examination between Damascus and Chtaura.

He replied with some heat: "Yes, I agree entirely, but do you know whose fault it is?"

"No."

"Then I will tell you. It is all due to the intrigues of the two supposedly greatest democratic nations of the world—the U.S.A. and England, your country. They are intriguing night and day to divide up the Middle East countries between them, or at least to set up for themselves separate spheres of interest. For example, the U.S.A. is trying to get Lebanon under her influence. England is egging on Iraq to take over Syria in conjunction with King 'Abdullah\* of Jordan. This brings in Sa'udi Arabia, which, with American backing, has allied herself with Syria, is giving dollar loans to the present Government there, and is determined to drive a wedge between King 'Abdullah and Regent 'Abdul 'Illah of Iraq, to prevent the success of the British Government's plan.

"Again, you have America backing Israel, with Great Britain supporting King 'Abdullah, and Egypt becoming more and more hostile to both for what she believes is a barefaced attempt on the part of both England and the U.S.A. to try to smash the Arab League by setting every part of it against the others. The net result is that anti-European feeling is increasing every day throughout the Middle East countries, and especially against England and America, who obviously think they stand to benefit by causing disunion among the Middle East countries.

"The pity of it all is that while England and America have very many able men and advisers in the Middle East—men who have lived for years in these regions—their advice seems to be neither sought nor wanted at home. All this is deplorable and is definitely tending to assist Soviet Russia to win over the goodwill of Middle East countries, especially the rising generation. Indeed Russia is in the happy

\* Later assassinated in the Mosque of Al Aksa, Jerusalem.

## Fear of the Jews

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position of just leaning back and smilingly awaiting the fruits that when ripe will drop into her mouth. Already she has her agents all over the Middle East, in touch with her strong embassy staffs everywhere, who never cease preaching that the big bad wolf who makes everybody unhappy in the Middle East is America, with her satellite England."

"But surely", said I, "both President Truman and Mr Attlee must, if not to-day, then to-morrow, listen to their experienced advisers on Middle East affairs. Then things will run more smoothly."

"No, that is just where you are wrong. Truman's advisers-in-chief to-day are the powerful Jewish bloc in New York, and the same applies to London, but to a lesser degree. Believe me, the Jews are to-day dictating your country's policy in the Middle East, with deplorable results. They actually favour the idea of England and America taking over the Middle East countries, or dividing them into respective spheres of interest, as they believe that then and then only they will be able to make good in Israel itself, and improve their parlous economic position. They are already a bankrupt state, and must trade with their neighbours. How do you suppose they are going about their work now? Obviously by using the great oil companies of the Middle East, Sa'udi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. They are even now at this moment trying to spoil Middle East Arab Governments' relations with the great British and American oil companies by every means in their power, so as to force England and America to protect their interests by taking a stronger line with those Arab states than heretofore.

"Believe me, Colonel Dickson, it is not an accident that all the Arab states in the Middle East have recently been demanding an increase of royalties, under some sort of threat that something will happen if their demands are not met. In particular it is the Jewish plan to force those oil companies to appeal to their respective Governments for diplomatic and other assistance, so as to embroil them, the oil companies, with the respective states in which they operate. We have seen Sa'udi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq and Iran all demanding more royalties, and Syria and Lebanon following suit by making ridiculous demands over oil transit dues, etc. Their latest recruit is Kuwait, which now is demanding an increase."

The above is an illuminating example of how nowadays the whole

Lebanese world discusses the Palestine problem and is ever ready to lay down the law where delicate oil problems and Middle East politics generally are concerned. In particular it shows how close are the relations between Beyrout and Kuwait.

“England’s only chance to-day”, he continued, “is to refuse to follow in America’s footsteps. England is an old friend of the Arabs and understands the background of the Muslim nations of the Middle East far better than do the Americans. She must co-operate with the Arabs, *not* threaten them. Above all, oil companies must attempt to co-operate with local Arab countries and their rulers, not rush in and appeal to their home Government for help when misunderstandings arise. They should be friends and not wave the big stick every time trouble or misunderstandings arise. That is the great mistake of the A.I.O.C. in Iran, and that is where they will fail. The Jews have already seen to it, by underground means best known to themselves, that the Arab states are made aware of the fact that England and America intend, in due course, to take control of their countries on the plea that their oil interests are at stake and they cannot or will not tolerate any threat to such interests. This has made them, the Arab countries, all extra suspicious. England must allay those suspicions *now*. ‘Run your own show’, should be her attitude, ‘and we will help you to the best of our power whenever you ask us to do so.’

“Don’t forget, Colonel Dickson, that the Soviet authorities are watching the Middle East oil situation like cats these days, and will support any propaganda that increases ill will against England and the U.S.A. in the Middle East. As regards Kuwait we in Lebanon already know of the British Government’s attempt to foist a financial adviser on the new Shaikh, as well as to force him to get rid of his popular Lebanese secretary—or *chef de cabinet*, as he likes to be called—and appoint a prominent pro-British member of the Al Sabah as heir apparent. That the British Government now realizes the imprudence of this step is patent from its not attempting to follow up its original demands.”

#### DISCONTENT IN SA’UDI ARABIA

Some three years before the death of the great King ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Al Sa’ud on 9th November 1953, I wrote as follows:—



## The Ageing King

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“As far as one can visualize things from the Kuwait end of Arabia, Wahábi doctrines and influence have now been discarded by Ibn Sa’ud as political aids to an end. Firmly consolidated in his position in Arabia, he is turning his attention to the development of his relations with outside powers, and the strengthening of the methods that make for stronger internal control. He appears bent on insuring that, in the event of his death, his heirs and successors will be able to carry on the work begun by him without, as has so often been prophesied, their having to face rebellion and a general breaking up of the kingdom.

“Ibn Sa’ud has aged considerably, is unable to walk or use his legs, and has handed over much of his powers to his sons, and their Syrian and Egyptian advisers, who, according to the Badu, keep their beloved ruler largely in ignorance of what is happening. This is one of the probable reasons for the growing dislike of the Sa’udi regime that is slowly but surely manifesting itself throughout tribal Arabia. Some of his late *’Ikhwán* leaders go so far as to refer to the *hákim jabbár*—tyrannous ruler. They do not mean this to apply to the aged King, but to the present-day regime, which, under the younger generation of the Al Sa’ud family and foreign advisers, is becoming centralized, harsh and westernized, and no longer in sympathetic touch with the people, as of old. They are also said to resent bitterly the visits of members of the royal family to Europe and America, where, they say, they consort with wine-drinking Christians, acquire evil habits and forget their duty to God. In fact, the approach to modernism is at the bottom of the whole trouble. Men long for the return of the personal rule of their King, when he was accessible to the very humblest of his subjects.

“It is said by those closest in touch with events that, should anything happen to Ibn Sa’ud in the next few years, which God forbid, there will break out troubles that will tax to the full the resources of Sa’udi Arabia. I personally do not believe that this will occur. In their hearts the people of Najd are still proud of ‘Abdul ‘Azíz Al Sa’ud, their mighty champion and valiant King, because of his past paladin-like feats inside Arabia, and because of the great stand he has always made against foreign influence and aggression. Like Chaka, King of the Zulus of old, he has always made the white man tremble, and his people are proud of this and will never forget it.



"Apart, however, from Ibn Sa'ud's personal popularity, his people definitely want less control at the centre, and as definitely fear the coming of the white man's civilization, which means to them irreligion, forgetfulness of God and eventual slavery. Better than this, they say, would be complete return to the tribal system in all its strength and glory, with their own tribal leaders and no one else to direct them. But this certainly is not the intention of any member of Ibn Sa'ud's family, for whom, say the Arabs, 'power and rule are the dearest things on earth and the veritable breath of life'."

Subsequent events have shown that the heir apparent, the Amír Sa'ud, in whose hands most of the power devolved when his father fell ill, slowly began to realize what the people were thinking, and wisely decided on a stricter regime where religion and religious practices were concerned. For example, he completely banned the import of alcoholic beverages by the American officials of Aramco, his oil company, and, furthermore, made it a capital offence for any of his Badawin population to be in possession of a bottle of spirits.

But was he in time?

#### THE IMPACT OF THE WEST, 1953

My friend Dr W. Harold Storm, a member of the American Mission of the Persian Gulf and now running a hospital in Hufuf, wrote a book entitled *Whither Arabia?* In offering the following comments on the important subject of Western influence in Arabia, I have ventured to draw upon Dr Storm's masterly summing-up of the situation, and where I make use of conceptions that are not my own, I do so with grateful acknowledgments to Dr. Storm and the publishers of his book, the World Dominion Press.

There are probably few parts of the world where the old and new exist side by side, as they do in Arabia. In the deep desert to-day, life as it was in Abraham's time can be seen in all its details. The Badawin nomad still relives the scenes of the Old Testament. His thoughts too are much the same as in the days of Job. His arrogance, independence, pride and self-sufficiency have only been intensified by Islám, while his religious life has been moulded into a rigid system of creed and formality.

## Destruction of Game

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Western influence, however, has changed the complexion of many of the sea-coast towns, into which centres the hungry Badawi comes in search of food and supplies. He looks at the changes about him with unmistakable scorn and returns to his desert home more contented than ever with it and the life there. Yet the wheels of progress grind on inexorably, and the sons of the desert cannot escape.

Probably no single factor has done so much to alter the thinking of the desert Arab as the motor-car. The Haj journey by camel across the Arabian desert from Kuwait to Mecca used to take at least forty days; now the trip is done by motor-car in six days. When the ruler of Sa'udi Arabia travels from his interior capital, Riyádh, to Mecca, he and his *entourage* are conveyed in ultra-modern aircraft or anything from two hundred to five hundred cars, nearly every one of which is driven by a chauffeur from another country: Kuwait, Pakistan, Egypt, Somaliland, Syria and even Indonesia. It is not difficult to realize the tremendous effect of all this, for it is not only the motor-car that makes the change, but also the driver, who brings with him new ideas, manners and customs. In Riyádh, for instance, one finds the drivers living in a small community outside the city wall. While this group elicits little thought or consideration from the members of the ruling class and the religious leaders, it has a constant stream of visitors from the town and desert. Ideas good and bad, with a background of Kuwait, Cairo, Damascus, Aden and Karachi, are being thereby disseminated among the Badu and are being steadily assimilated by these simple people.

The greater ease in transportation brings in its wake luxuries that tend to greater comfort. This very fact has a degenerating effect. No longer does the young Arab shaikh use his mare; he prefers to drive. Falconry, once the chief Arab sport, has developed into the systematic slaughter of thousands of *hubára* annually, for it is done by motor-car to-day. The gazelle too is hunted to such an extent in fast-moving automobiles that this beautiful animal is now nearly extinct. The old sense of sportmanship has been lost.

An even more noticeable effect of the motor-car is on the psychology of the Arab. Competition for the best and most expensive car is aroused among the wealthy princes and town merchants; inability to own one brings discontent among the middle and lower classes. On

the other hand, not all the results are bad. Distances are abolished, tribal independence lessened. Motor routes touch upon and penetrate the grazing lands of tribes once difficult of access; food supplies are more easily conveyed to distant camps. People and ruler are thus brought closer together.

More insidious is the effect of the motor-car on the ladies of the towns. Despite the fact that they must still ride in purdah, they are able to visit frequently places hitherto deemed inaccessible. More visiting is now done among the families of the same class, women hear more and see more, and it is likely that the motor-car will be an important factor in the eventual removal of the veil, though this is very, very far distant where tribal Arabia is concerned.

Although women in Arabia have not as yet been liberated in any real sense, certain amenities have been introduced into their rather drab lives. The radio brings them into a world of music, people, places and happenings of which their mothers did not even guess the existence. The Packard car and the Singer sewing-machine are found in the remotest Arabian villages and towns. Where formerly numbers of slave women spent hours and days laboriously preparing garments for members of the household on the occasion of feast days, now the work is accomplished in a few hours. These same women have a growing interest in cosmetics, perfumes, powders and soaps.

Modern medical science has also brought to Arab women relief from suffering and from anxiety over their own physical ills. Past generations were served by native women who carried on their ignorant practice of midwifery with no knowledge of cleanliness. Now the patient labour of British and American doctors, missionary nurses and others has created a desire for more scientific treatment and even a willingness, if need be, to enter a hospital. There is a growing interest in the proper feeding and care of babies and, as might be expected, this has brought about serious conflict in many Arab homes. The younger women, striving to follow new ideas of dieting, bathing and sleeping for their babies, meet with bitter opposition from the older women.

As the outcome of Ibn Sa'ud's inauguration of a wireless system throughout his kingdom, there are now a score or more stations in the larger centres, and a dozen or more mobile ones on wheels. These



latter are used by the present ruler, the heir apparent, his brothers, the viceroy of Hijáz and others holding responsible positions, so that, no matter where they are in the desert, they remain in direct communication with the capital and other parts of the country. The slightest uprising can thus be quelled almost before it starts.

Other parts of Arabia are connected with various cable and wireless stations. A change in price in the Bombay market is noted the same day in the bazaars of Bahrain, Muscat, Kuwait, Jiddah and Riyádh. Radios that tune in with Arab-speaking programmes from London, Beyrout, Jordan, Baghdad, Ankara and Moscow keep the people informed regarding world affairs. In the effort to unify Muslim thought, much Islámic propaganda is also broadcast. No sooner is some incident between Jew and Arab in Palestine announced than the Arabs hear of it and take sides and discuss it from their point of view. In Kuwait alone there are to-day some eight thousand receiving sets. Lebanese, Egyptian, Iraqi and Indian newspapers also interpret international affairs to every part of Arabia and the Arab world. Much anti-Christian literature is also spread abroad and the work of the missionary is often hampered by false reports of his activities. The recent deposing by the French of the Sultan of Morocco and his incarceration in Corsica caused heated controversy in the Kuwait bazaar and coffee shops two days later.

The desert Arab to-day, clothed in his ancestral dress, living as his fathers did before him, thinking the thoughts of the past, finds himself forced to face the modern progress of the world and to accept the influence over his life of such things as the motor-car and the radio.

The discovery of oil in Bahrain some years ago, and the still more recent finds in Sa'udi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar, have brought modern methods, customs and the influence of Western civilization to all parts of the Persian Gulf littoral. From a rather obscure and delightful small Arab state, Kuwait, through the remarkable growth of her oil industry, has suddenly blossomed forth into the metropolis of the Gulf, even though Great Britain has made Bahrain her naval base for the Gulf, and that island is now the headquarters of Her Majesty's Political Resident.

A new and deadly dangerous factor has, however, emerged. It can be called modern materialism, and its influence and outcome are hard



to estimate. In past days Islám came to grips with many religions and was never defeated, but now it would seem about to dissolve and break up in the home of its birth. With every motor-car and printed newspaper there enters the scientific materialism and unbelief of the West and that modern paganism which is the enemy everywhere of religious faith. How far this new type of unbelief will extend no one can say, but without question it is now coming in like a flood. Its influence has hitherto been limited to a small number of persons in the commercial centres, but to-day it is being felt in the remotest part of the desert and its power increases steadily. God-fearing Arabs and men of repute all over Arabia are to-day anxious and afraid.

Materialism, popularized by modern science, has weakened Islám in much the same way as Gnosticism undermined Christianity in the early centuries. Materialists claim, as did the Gnostics of old, that they are not antagonists but allies of religion. Therein lies a dangerous truth. Material progress, to be sure, is an asset to any religion, but when the acquiring of worldly possessions becomes the object of one's devotion—the driving force in one's living, instead of devotion to truth and righteousness—then religion does become affected. Material prosperity, which of itself is neither good nor bad, but, like fire, depends on how it is used, has tended to weaken rather than strengthen Islám.

Along with the growing influence of materialism and Westernization there has crept into the life of the Arab something of that spirit of nationalism found elsewhere in the world. This has not been so widespread or extreme as in Turkey and Egypt, but finds expression in an intense though somewhat perverted loyalty of the Arab to his race. The problem of Palestine has served to strengthen this loyalty, as have all the more recent plans and extensive propaganda for Pan-Arab unity.

In 1934, as we have seen, King Ibn Sa'ud, following a brief but decisive conflict, annexed 'Asir and also concluded a treaty of Islámic friendship with 'Imám Yahya of Yemen. This treaty was the precursor of other treaties and understandings between Muslim nations. Soon after it was concluded, negotiations began for a four-power pact between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time 'Imám Yahya decided to adhere to the treaty of amity and alliance signed on

2nd April 1936 by the Governments of Iraq and Sa'udi Arabia. Another treaty was concluded between Sa'udi Arabia and Yemen on 3rd November 1937. This brought the two largest independent Arab kingdoms into line with Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, the treaty between which was also signed in 1937. To further better understanding with Egypt, King Ibn Sa'ud ended not long ago the ten-year quarrel with the Egyptian Government, which agreed to send again annually to Mecca the Kiswah, or holy covering.

No one can venture to foretell the far-reaching effects of these political treaties. To the friend of the Arab it is most significant that Muslim nations are coming into better and closer understanding, which may lead to an alliance of the chief Muslim powers, but whether this will give rise to a revival of Islámic culture and religious zeal, or to the dissociation of political power from religion, it is impossible to forecast.

Foreign interests are largely British. Other countries, however, are concerning themselves with Arabian affairs. This is notably true of the U.S.A., which, following on the heels of the great American oil company, Aramco, at Dhahrán, has sought to obtain political influence in Arabia. In response to a general demand the British Broadcasting Corporation has for some years been sending out programmes in Arabic. American warships now regularly visit the Persian Gulf and vie with their British friends in good-natured rivalry.

The course of events in Europe is now being followed with increasing interest in Arabia, and this growing intelligence is leading people everywhere to form more accurate judgments regarding European affairs. It is not very likely that Arabia under Islámic rule will play any important part in international affairs all at once, though it will still remain the centre of Islámic politics and the religious world of Islám.

The social and political movements that have taken place in Egypt, Pakistan, North Africa, Lebanon and Iran have begun to have their effect on Arabia proper. These new movements cannot fail in the end to exercise an increasing influence in the trend of affairs. Already we see nationalism getting hold, which is nothing but a challenge to the West, especially to England. As recently as 28th October 1953 a leading Arab of Kuwait said to me:

“You cannot blame us Arabs for wanting to copy the West and

introduce such things as Trade Unions and other Western methods for protecting the rights of oil company labourers, when daily we are taught all about such things by means of blaring broadcasts on such subjects from England and America. If London has a strike of petrol-lorry drivers because they feel they are underpaid, why should we not do the same?"

The immediate and grave danger in a place like Kuwait state is, without doubt, the influx of Palestinians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Iranians, Egyptians and other foreigners on a scale undreamed of in the past, which to-day, with the town-development scheme in full blast, is the order. Whether these visitors come as displaced Palestinians, skilled workmen from Lebanon, unskilled labourers from Iraq and Persia, Arab journalists or business men from Beyrout, they one and all preach to the Kuwaiti "Arabia for the Arabs and Kuwait for the Kuwaitis" in its worst form.

Their approach is supremely clever, taking the line that Kuwait is an independent principedom, so why is there such strong British political influence in the place, and what is the idea of a British Political Agent? This must be put right, they say, and the Political Agent's influence eradicated—and the only people to do this are the Kuwaitis themselves. They criticize the British Order in Council—the Capitulations by which Great Britain is granted special privileges and the rights of extraterritoriality—and say it must be got rid of; that the Political Agent should be a consul pure and simple or a junior British minister accredited to the court of the ruler of Kuwait. They undoubtedly advise junior members of the Al Sabah to aim for a state of affairs as in Sa'udi Arabia, and say how good is the Aramco set-up at Dhahrán, and how well and truly do the Americans know how to work with the Arabs there, as well as with the Sa'udi Government. Throughout all these dangers it behoves both British and Americans, wherever they may be, to remember that the Arab of the unfriendly type, and who often holds extremist views, is always interested in spoiling relations between them. He is an adept at the game too.

This sort of vicious propaganda worries the senior and old-fashioned Kuwaiti, who likes the British, but conversely it pleases the young Kuwaiti extremist, who would like nothing better than to see Kuwait come under the political control of Iraq, a Muslim state and therefore



better than the Christian British. Iraq not unnaturally encourages these ideas in a dozen different ways, working through the thousands of her nationals who are engaged as labourers, skilled and unskilled, on Kuwait's development scheme.

The Iraqis' latest line of approach is to dangle before the Kuwaitis the advantages of bringing in water from the Shatt al Arab river in Iraq by means of a 32-inch pipe, which would enable large tracts of good soil in the vicinity of Kuwait town and Jahra to be turned into fruit and vegetable gardens, and would provide in addition a quadrupled supply of drinking-water for the town. They know that under this scheme the cultivators of the newly irrigated areas must of necessity be *fellahin* of the Iraqi riverain tribe, so, in one step, they would have their nationals in occupation of a large part of Kuwait and ready to appeal for protection in any dispute, fabricated or not, that might arise between them and the Kuwait Government. The young men of the extremist party in Kuwait—and there are not a few of them—who favour coming under the political control of Iraq, know all about this. They not only bless the scheme, but also, by day and night propaganda, push their ideas in Iraqi and Lebanese newspapers.

A sad fact is that while the Kuwaiti youthful extremist or nationalist is more and more becoming anti-foreign and anti-British, the genuine old-fashioned Arab of the desert and the elderly influential merchant of the town, both of whom still like and respect the Englishman, with whom they have had friendly and commercial contacts for centuries, is slowly turning against the Westerner generally, for quite another reason. Deeply religious at heart these men see in the impact of the West, with its terrifying materialism, a very real danger to their old manners and customs, and in particular to their religion. They see their children going bad, taking to alcohol, giving up their religion, no longer saying their prayers, becoming grossly immoral, and refusing to obey their parents. In consequence they are saying to themselves that such a state of affairs must be due to the impact of the West, its money, its irreligion and its drink.

In sheer self-defence those of this older conservative generation are slowly becoming hostile. More fanatical than before, they are adopting the new cry, "Our religion is in danger"; and because they think that the West is getting hold of their country, sons and daughters, their



cry to-day is, "Let us have nothing to do with the Westerner, for he is not what we knew him once to be". So the delightful Arab of the older school is also becoming anti-foreign, anti-British and anti-American, though not from the same causes as have led the younger generation to become so.

What is the answer to this tragic state of affairs? I venture to give it thus:

Let the West give up trying to force its concepts of civilization, such as better living, Western ideas of education, uplift, modern food and clothing, etc., and let it instead preach evolution and building on rock rather than sand. Let it preach that progress, though it cannot be stopped, must come slowly and surely, not as a devouring fire.

Let the West preach the virtues of character-building, the principles of religion, and belief in one God and His ordinances; and above all let it preach the universal sanctity of the Ten Commandments.

Let the West—and indeed all men of goodwill—be tireless in denouncing the evils that come with so-called civilization, commending instead only the good things that the West has to offer, for the evils that come in the train of such products of modern progress as alcohol, cinemas, etc. far outnumber the good.

# Kuwait Oil Company—A Review

## Chap. XX

### PROGRESS OF THE KUWAIT OIL COMPANY

1953

*(By courtesy of the author, Miss Margaret C. Clarke, and The Petroleum Times, in which the article appeared on 30th October 1953, the following account tells in admirably concise form the astonishing progress of the Kuwait Oil Company since operations began anew after the Second World War.)*

In June 1946 the first barrel of oil was exported from Kuwait. Early this month cumulative production from the almost fabulous oil reservoir beneath Kuwait's "burning sands" passed the 1,000 million barrel mark. A thousand million barrels of oil in less than eight years, this remarkable record—surely one of the most impressive industrial achievements of modern times—is unrivalled in oilfield history.

Never before has a major oilfield been developed so rapidly, and the success to which this new record testifies will stand as an example of Anglo-American co-operation of a high order. Until this achievement, only eight other countries had yielded a cumulative production of 1,000 million barrels of crude: the United States of America, Mexico, Venezuela, Roumania, Russia, Persia, Sa'udi Arabia and Indonesia. Now the Shaikhdom of Kuwait—one of the smallest countries in the world—takes its place among these oil giants, and it has achieved this in a far shorter time than did any of its eight predecessors; it is interesting, therefore, at this juncture to recapitulate the story which lies behind to-day's headlines.

The Kuwait Oil Company which operates the concession covering exclusive exploration and exploitation rights in the whole territory of Kuwait, although a British registered company, is jointly and equally owned by Gulf Kuwait Company (Gulf Oil Corporation) and D'Arcy Kuwait Company (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company).<sup>\*</sup> The concession was granted in 1934 for a period of 75 years. In November 1951 a

<sup>\*</sup> The general manager of the Kuwait Oil Company is Mr L. T. Jordan, from Texas. He commands the love, trust and admiration of every Arab in Kuwait, from the ruler down to the humblest Badawi in the land. The straightest man in the country, they call him.—H. R. P. D.

new agreement was signed by the company and the Ruler of Kuwait under which the former agreed to submit to an income tax so calculated that the profits will be shared equally between the Ruler and the company. The revised concession is to operate for 75 years from the date of its agreement.

The producing operations may be said to have begun on June 1, 1946, when, at Mína al Ahmadi, H.H. Shaikh Sir Ahmad al Jábir Al Sabah, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., opened a valve to load the first tanker, the *British Fusilier*, with a cargo of crude oil for Grangemouth—a pointer to the future, for Britain has been the chief consumer of Kuwait's crude oil ever since.

Operations have been carried out in the face of many difficulties which mostly stemmed from the fact that they had to be conducted in a territory far from existing industrial activity, and in a country and a climate which provided unusual complexities. Before oil was discovered in their 6,000 square miles of territory at the head of the Persian Gulf, the people of Kuwait had gained their livelihood from fishing, pearling, boatbuilding, and trading. Thus there existed no industrial tradition on western lines on which a new industry could be grafted—no skilled workers, no materials, no communications—and could this disadvantage be overcome there were no convenient markets to absorb the oil. Sun and sand are formidable enemies in an almost waterless country where the rainfall is less than five inches a year, and where day shade temperatures rise to 110°, 120°, and even 128° F. These difficult conditions under which men had to work and live, particularly during the early stages, make the success which has been achieved all the more remarkable.

Under a programme for fully developing the country's oil resources, 153 wells have been completed to date. A further three wells are nearing completion. The oil-bearing horizons in Kuwait are of Middle or Lower Cretaceous age. There are four sand-type oil-producing formations, three of which are clearly defined. The minimum depth to the top of the First Sand is 3,545 feet and the maximum to the bottom of the oil-bearing part of the Fourth Sand is 4,772 feet. Nearly all the wells in the field are dual producers. The Third and Fourth Sands are the most productive and the greatest proportion of the estimated field reserves are contained in the Third Sand. Individual production rates





HIS MAJESTY KING SA'UD IBN 'ABDUL 'AZÍZ AL SA'UD,  
RULER OF SA'UDI ARABIA

A great son of a mighty father



HIS MAJESTY KING SA'UD BEING ENTERTAINED TO LUNCHEON  
AT AHMADI BY THE KUWAIT OIL CO., LTD., 1st April 1954

The King, wearing white headdress, in centre. The Ruler of Kuwait on his left.  
Mr Jordan, General Manager, K.O.C., is on the King's right





#### A DISTINGUISHED ARRIVAL FROM LONDON

Mr C. A. P. Southwell, C.B.E., M.C., Managing Director of Kuwait Oil Co., Ltd., being greeted by Mr 'Abdullah al Mulla Sáleh, M.B.E., His Highness' representative, at the Kuwait Airport. Mr L. T. Jordan, General Manager, Kuwait Oil Co., Ltd., in centre



#### "MAC"

The dynamic maker of Aramco and Aminoil, Mr James MacPherson

## Gathering Centres

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vary between 800 b/d\* for wells in the First Sand up to 6,000 to 9,000 b/d for wells in the Third Sand. It is this remarkable productivity *per well* that contrasts Kuwait so favourably with older producing fields, especially with the fields of North America.

Although it was soon proved that the oil was there, in fact that in Kuwait lay one of the richest oil reservoirs in the world, and although in principle there is no difficulty in bringing it from the wells to the coast of the Persian Gulf, some 14 to 20 miles away, in practice it was another matter. Every piece of equipment used at any stage of searching for, transporting and loading the oil—down to the last nut and bolt—had to be brought from Britain and the United States, not hundreds, but thousands of miles away. The adjacent waters of the Persian Gulf are shallow for considerable distances from the shore and there is no inlet or bay to give protection from the strong winds that prevail. Even in Kuwait Bay, to the north, large vessels have to anchor several miles offshore. So equipment had to be trans-shipped in the bay into smaller vessels, unloaded at a barge quay, and then hauled across the desert to the site of the operations. At every stage, breakage and damage were likely to result; indeed, in the early years, breakages were a major problem. Nevertheless the amount of material that was brought in steadily increased as the development of the field went on.

In one month, February 1948, 25,000 tons of equipment were lightered ashore in this way. The total amount of equipment brought in during that year reached the record total of 190,000 tons. This was only one of the complications which had to be surmounted before the field was developed. In addition, local labour, unaccustomed even to the foot rule, had to be trained in western methods of workmanship. Technical men had to be brought from overseas together with every one of their requirements for working and living in the desert. The plain facts and figures that follow must not be allowed to obscure the magnitude of this task.

Oil from the wells flows to nine gathering centres and is then pumped up to the tank farm at Ahmadi, which is situated on a ridge some five miles from the coast. The tank farm has a storage capacity of more than four million barrels, and from it the oil runs down through six 22/30 inch diameter gravity lines to the port and refinery

\* Barrels daily.

COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE PRODUCED 1,000 MILLION BARRELS OF CRUDE OIL,  
SHOWING THE TIME TAKEN. FIGURES ARE BASED ON U.S. BUREAU OF  
MINES STATISTICS

Kuwait	1946-1953	8 years
Sa'udi Arabia	1936-1951	16 years
Venezuela	1917-1934	18 years
Mexico	1901-1923	23 years
Persia	1913-1940	28 years
U.S.A.	1859-1900	42 years
Russia	1863-1905	43 years
Indonesia	1893-1941	49 years
Roumania	1857-1943	87 years

at Mina al Ahmadi. Two further gravity lines are under construction: one, 34 inches in diameter, will, it is believed, be the largest diameter crude line in the world.

The results of this large-scale development have enabled production to rise at an astonishing rate thus:—

<i>Year</i>	<i>Barrels</i>
1946 (last seven months only)	5,927,976
1947 .. .. .	16,227,906
1948 .. .. .	46,546,795
1949 .. .. .	89,930,444
1950 .. .. .	125,722,396
1951 .. .. .	204,909,662
1952 .. .. .	273,432,895
1953 (first eight months only)	206,095,192

In the first six months of this year 152,049,319 barrels of oil were produced, thus bringing Kuwait for the first time to a position third among the oil-producing nations of the free world, being surpassed only by the United States and Venezuela.

Clearly only the most elaborate system of transportation, storage, and shipping facilities would have permitted the output of the field to have matched its rich potential in so short a time and, from the first, every care has been taken to ensure that handling arrangements should expand as fast as production.

At the beginning of 1946 operations were begun by laying on the sea bed to a distance of approximately a mile from low water mark the first of a series of 12-inch submarine pipelines. In addition, a hose



## Jetty at Mína al Ahmadi

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buoy to which the submarine line was connected and two mooring buoys to which tankers could make fast were put into position. Between 1946 and 1949, ten such lines, connected in pairs to five sea loading berths, were in use. By the end of 1949 the world's largest tanker-loading pier had been constructed at Mína al Ahmadi. This stretches 4,100 feet out into the open sea: it carries a roadway 24 feet wide designed to take the heaviest motor transport and a pipeway comprising eight crude oil loading lines 24 inches in diameter, together with a number of lines of smaller capacity for fuel oils and water for ships, and compressed air for cranes and hose derricks. The northern extension of the pier head, 2,800 feet long and 105 feet wide, has six oil berths at which tankers can be loaded at a high rate, while the southern extension, 1,050 feet long and 100 feet wide, provides two berths originally used for cargo vessels bringing in equipment. Now, however, they are more often used for tanker loading. At this pier vessels can load at the rate of one million b/d and loading can be carried out continuously by day and night.

As these elaborate oil-handling facilities were brought into use, tanker traffic increased thus:—

#### NUMBER OF TANKERS LOADED FROM KUWAIT

<i>Year</i>					
1946	..	..	..	..	61
1947	..	..	..	..	168
1948	..	..	..	..	436
1949	..	..	..	..	803
1950	..	..	..	..	995
1951	..	..	..	..	1,735
1952	..	..	..	..	2,280
1953 (first nine months)				..	1,813

It will be possible for still more tankers to be loaded next year since the oil-handling facilities are again being expanded. Three new sea-berths are now under construction, each connected to the shore with a 24-inch diameter crude oil loading line, bunkering facilities also being available.

The refinery at Mína al Ahmadi has a capacity of 30,000 b/d. In 1952 it provided sufficient motor spirit, kerosene, and gas oil to meet local marketing requirements, the company's needs, and fuel oil and



marine diesel oil for bunkering the tankers and cargo vessels calling at the jetty. A bitumen manufacturing plant has been built adjoining the refinery and was commissioned in the early part of this year. It produces 25 to 30 tons of bitumen a day which is used by the State in its road building programme.

At Mína al Ahmadi the company has also constructed a 22,500 kW power station, a sea-water distillation plant with a capacity of 600,000 gallons per day, pump houses, storage tanks, and an electrically controlled manifold to govern the flow of oil to the refinery and to the tanker loading installations. Throughout the field automatic measuring equipment has been installed so that as far as possible all operations are controlled remotely from central points, thus ensuring greater accuracy, more prompt adjustments, and a considerable saving in manpower.

A 27-mile pipeline links the refinery with Kuwait town to the north, to supply all the town's requirements of petroleum products. From a bulk depot in the town products pass to four service stations,\* from which they are distributed to consumers. There is also a gas-line, 30 miles in length, and 8 inches in diameter, taking gas from the oilfield to Kuwait town.

Parallel with the oilfield development, the work of providing for the welfare of the large number of company employees of various nationalities has had to proceed. It must be emphasized that, at the time operations began, the territory on which this progressive industrial undertaking now thrives was nothing but a desert where only a few patches of tussocky grass would grow and where the only natural resource which had been found was water—unfit for drinking—from a few brackish wells.

Now temporary accommodation has given way to a new township of attractive and well-built houses, and community buildings for recreation, medical attention, and education have been constructed. These include a hospital, a dispensary, schools, churches, a mosque, a laundry, a dry-cleaning establishment, ice plant, a bakery, and shops. In fact, all the facilities essential to everyday life in a civilized community have been provided for the staff and their dependants—a considerable task, for there are more than 900 American and British

\* Now five service stations, 1955.

## Training School

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workers there, 3,000 Indians and Pakistanis, 2,400 Kuwaitis and 1,820 other Arabs.

In addition, a training school has been established in which Arabs are trained in manifold skills, and many each month are weaned away from their traditional occupations in which economic progress is limited, to seek new and wider opportunities in skilled and semi-skilled trades in the service of the oil company. The company is also arranging to send suitable candidates abroad for further technical and even university education so that eventually Kuwaitis will be able to take their place in the higher levels of employment. All this has been no less essential than the field operations in enabling such a rapid expansion in oil production to be achieved.

But the effects of the development of Kuwait's oil resources do not end with this. The national economy of the country has been enriched progressively with the development of the field, enabling the present Ruler to plan the modernization of municipal services, including public health and water and electricity supplies. Full employment and good wages have contributed to a general rise in the standard of living. Since, however, the Ruler's share of the oil revenues amounted to some £50 million last year, and since such an income in a 6,000-square-miles desert State with a population of 200,000 cannot be absorbed even by the most extensive schemes of capital improvement and social welfare, the utilization of the oil revenues presents its own problem. The Ruler, perceiving that a sudden influx of wealth into his country might cause difficulties as great as those which in other countries result from poverty and insecurity, has devoted himself to the task of ensuring that the sudden transition from scarcity to plenty will be accomplished smoothly. Under his wise and prudent administration the present large surplus of revenue over expenditure is being invested for the future.

The main factor in enabling production from Kuwait in the past two-and-a-half years to reach its present record figures has been undoubtedly the opening in world markets which resulted when exports from Persia ceased in June 1951. A comparison of exports from Kuwait in 1950 and 1952 shows not only how exports themselves rose since the Persian *débâcle*, but also how individual countries have benefited.

The important place which Kuwait's oil holds in the international picture, a mere eight years since the first oil was shipped from Mína al Ahmadi, needs no other emphasis. It will be seen that countries outside the dollar area are, in particular, benefiting from Kuwait's oil; its low dollar cost relative to that of oil from the adjacent fields of Sa'udi Arabia and Bahrain has contributed to this. But the dollar area has also benefited. Oil from Kuwait accounted, for example, for 15·6 per cent of total imports into the U.S.A. in the first half of this year, and 45 per cent of the U.S.A.'s imports from the Middle East in the same period.

## CRUDE OIL SHIPMENTS FROM KUWAIT

<i>Countries</i>	1952	1950
	<i>In barrels</i>	
Great Britain	97,047,917	28,053,623
France	56,840,314	28,168,864
Netherlands	30,555,149	17,841,151
United States of America	27,223,087	26,361,428
Italy	14,721,965	10,631,532
Belgium	12,525,978	—
Argentina	9,072,194	—
Sweden	4,017,621	1,432,151
Other countries	12,024,046	4,216,254
Total	<u>264,028,271</u>	<u>116,705,003</u>

No country in the world, however, leans on Kuwait's oil more than Britain. The United Kingdom's post-war refinery expansion programme, which enabled 164,306,000 barrels of crude oil to be processed in British refineries last year, stands or falls by supplies of oil from the Middle East, and Kuwait is now the United Kingdom's principal consignor.

In the first six months of 1946, before crude oil was available from Kuwait, the consignors of crude oil were: Netherlands Antilles 44 per cent; Venezuela 26 per cent; Persia 15 per cent; the United States 14 per cent; others 1 per cent.

In the first six months of 1950 the picture changed and the consignors of crude oil were: Kuwait and Bahrain together 40 per cent (of which Bahrain's contribution cannot have been any considerable

ROCK  
leaning forward at angle  $45^\circ$

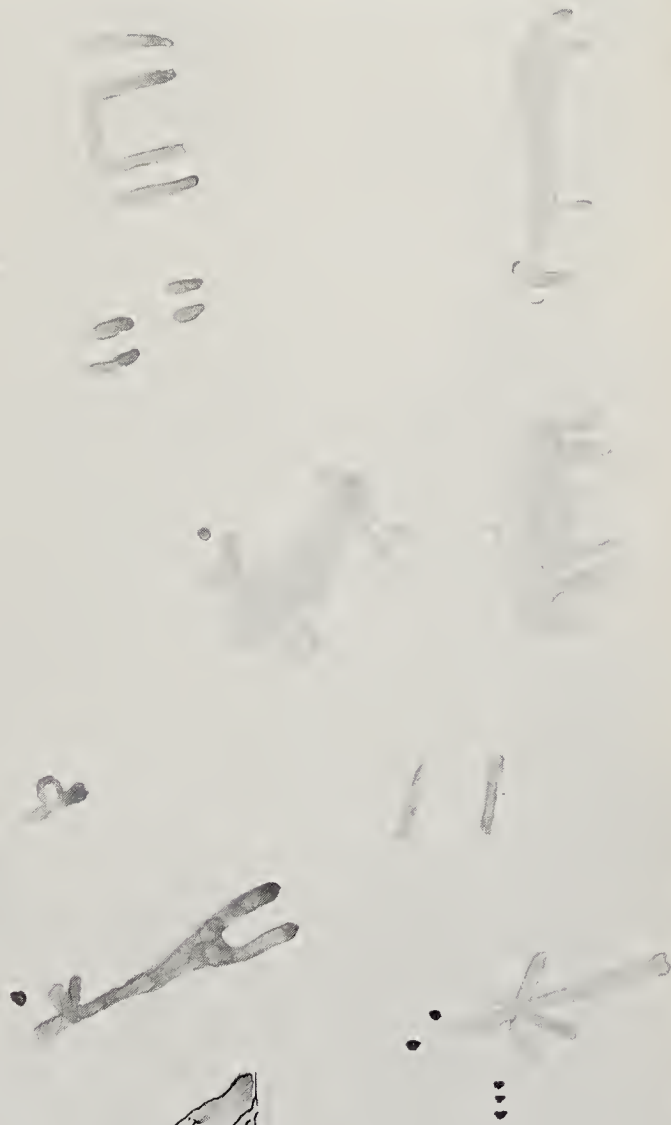


X - Position of Drawings

Side View of Rock



Animal drawings found on underface  
of a large conspicuous flat rock  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile  
due west of MUDAIRA wells (N. side of TRAY of KUWAIT)  
made in redish yellow pigment  
( $\frac{1}{2}$  natural size)







## Richest Oil Reservoir in the World

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proportion); Persia 25·1 per cent; Netherlands Antilles 12·4 per cent; Sa'udi Arabia 12·1 per cent; Iraq 4·3 per cent; Venezuela 2·9 per cent; and others 3·2 per cent.

In the first six months of this year, however, Kuwait was by far the biggest consignor of crude oil to the United Kingdom, supplying 57·8 per cent. Other main consignors of crude oil were: Iraq 28·8 per cent; Bahrain 5·9 per cent; Netherlands Antilles 2·4 per cent; and Venezuela 2·3 per cent. The contribution made by Kuwait's crude oil to Britain's economy is still increasing, for in the first nine months of this year the figure had risen to 59·1 per cent of imports of crude oil and, taking all oil imports into consideration, Kuwait has so far this year supplied 46·9 per cent of Britain's oil.

If this survey has gone over much that some may consider "ancient history", it is because the significance of Kuwait's oil in the British economy can hardly be exaggerated. Probably one out of two cars passing outside any London office window is at this moment running on Kuwait's oil—a fact by no means generally realized. It would not be fitting, therefore, in Britain especially, if the achievement which has brought the company to its present importance were allowed to pass unnoticed. Credit must be given to all those in the Kuwait Oil Company whose endeavours have contributed to the splendid result and to the Ruler of Kuwait and his subjects, whose understanding and co-operation have assisted the growth of a partnership between East and West without which the enterprise would not have come to fruition.

But even the present success does not mark the end of the story. Operations are carried out in such a way as to yield the greatest production consistent with good oilfield practice and the maintenance of the longest possible life for the field. Estimates indicate that in Kuwait lies the richest oil reservoir in the world, so that its oil-producing history—magnificent, although less than eight years old—is just beginning.

## GLOSSARY

(An initial apostrophe before a vowel indicates a hard sound. An acute accent denotes a long vowel or that the syllable is stressed. For some names there are two forms of pronunciation, e.g. Fahad and Fahád; Ráshid and Rashíd.)

- Ab*—father; *abu*, father of; *abúk*, your father (to a man); *abúyik*, your father (to a woman); *abúyi*, my father. A son does not refer to his parent as *abúyi*, but as *al wálid*, the begetter. It is considered in better taste. Similarly he refers to his mother as *al wálida*, “she who bore me”.
- 'Aba*—cloak universally worn by Arabs. In Syria and Lebanon the name is applied to the cloaks of both sexes; in Arabia proper it is used for a woman's cloak, a man's cloak being called a *bhisht*.
- 'Abd*, plu. *'abíd*—negro slave bought for money (cf. *Mu'allid*); short mast supporting main mast. The names *'Abdul* and *'Abdullah* both derive from *'abd*.
- 'Abraq* (pronounced *'abrag*), plu. *'abariq*—high, stony ground, with sand at base, usually overlooking a valley.
- 'Abri*—two-masted vessel.
- Abu*—see *Ab*.
- Abu kursi*—“father of a chair”, a large, round, copper tray (*saníya*) welded to a circular metal base that raises it off the ground.
- Afarim!*—Bravo! (Turkish expression well known among Arabs.)
- 'Afri*—smallest type of Arabian gazelle (*Gazella saudíya*).
- 'Agál*—see *'Aqál*.
- Ageram* (or *agrum*)—saline-tasting bush (*Anabasis articulata* (Forsk.)\* *Moq.*), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.
- 'Agúl*—camel-thorn (*Alhagi maurorum*), a low, spiny shrub growing mostly in Iraq on river banks.
- Ahl, ál*—family, people, inhabitants, e.g. *Ahl al Jazírah*, “People of the Island”; *Wain ahlak?* “Where are your people?” See *Ál*.
- Ahl al khibrah*—wise men, expert exponents of camel-law and other precedents; literally “people of wisdom”.
- Ahmar* (fem. *hamra*)—red.
- Ahrám*—special garment worn on entering the sacred precincts of Mecca.
- 'Aidau*—party of negress singers who perform at weddings, etc., and are paid for their services.
- 'Ain*, plu. *'ayun*—spring of water.

\* Peter Forskal (1736–63), Swedish traveller and naturalist.

## Glossary

- '*Aiyám al juhl*—"the days of ignorance", i.e. the pre-Islámic era. '*Aiyám* is plu. of *yaum*.
- '*Ajáj*—sand- or dust-storm.
- '*Ajúz*, '*ajúzah*—old woman; cf. Rás al '*Ajúzah*, a promontory in Kuwait.
- Akh*, plu. '*ikhwán*—brother; *akhúk*, your brother; *akhuha*, her brother.
- Akhdhar* (fem. *khadra'*)—green; cf. Jabal Akhdhar in Omán.
- Akhír*—last, final; *akhír yaum*, the last day.
- Al*, *ar*, *as*, *ash*, *až* (depending on the word following it)—the (definite article), corresponds also to *ibn*, son of, e.g. Ahmad al Jábir. See *Ál* for use of *al* and *ál*.
- Ál*—tribe, large family, clan. See *Ahl*. *Ál Murra*, *tribe of Murra*, but *Al Sudairi*, *the Sudairi*.
- '*Alaik*—on you.
- '*Alaikum as salá'am*—"On you be peace". This or *Wa 'alaikum as salá'am* ("And on you be peace") is the formal reponse to the greeting, *Salá'am alaikum*.
- Al hamdu l' Illah*—"Praise be to God".
- '*Ali*—high, lofty, sublime.
- '*Álim*, plu. '*ulema*—religious leader or priest.
- Allah karím*—"God is good (merciful)".
- Allúk* (or *allúch*)—negro word for chewing gum made from frankincense.
- '*Am*—father's brother, paternal uncle.
- Amánat Allah wahada*—"The trust of the only one God".
- Amír*, plu. *umara*—leader, prince. There are several grades. *Amír al Haj*, leader of the Haj.
- '*Amr*—life; '*amrak*, your life. See *Haiya'*.
- '*An*—horse's bridle bit (*Ál Murra* patois). See *Lijám*.
- Ana*—I.
- '*Aqál* (pronounced '*agál*)—head-cord for holding *kaffíyah* in position. (*Aggal* is word used for hobbling a camel.)
- '*Aql*—mind, senses.
- '*Aráb al 'Áriba*—Arabs of the Arabs, descendants of Yaráb, father of the Arabs.
- '*Aráb al Musta'* '*Áriba*—Arabs who became Arabs, descendants of Ishmael.
- '*Arád*—another name for *ageram* (q.v.).
- '*Araibdár*—Arabs of the *dár* (homelands), applying particularly to Kuwait state.
- '*Ardha*—war dance, parade, a showing off.
- '*Arfaj*—shrub (*Rhanterium epapposum Oliv.*), good grazing for camels.
- '*Ariq*, plu. '*arúq*—root, tendon; name applied to long strips of sand in the Dahana region, e.g. '*Ariq al Siru*.
- '*Arish*—private sitting-out place, or hut made of mats.
- '*Arjíyah*—water-lift.
- '*Arnab*—hare.



## Glossary

- '*Arta*—bush (*Calligonum comosum* L'Herit.\*).  
 'Asfar (fem. *saфра*)—yellow or pale brown; *nága saфра*, a pale brown she-camel.  
 'Ashtra, plu. 'ashai'yir—family, kin, tribe; settled tribes of Iraq.  
 'Ashurr—bush (*Calotropis procera* R. Br.) with mauve flowers and large kidney-shaped seeds, the bark being used to make gunpowder.  
*Asíl*, plu. *asílín*—pure bred, either human or animal.  
 'Asr—afternoon.  
 'Assu—rope made from fibre of date-palm fronds.  
*Aswad* (fem. *sauda'*)—black; *rajul aswad*, a black man; *hurma sauda'*, a black woman, i.e. an *abda* or negress.  
 'Athl (pronounced 'ithl), plu. 'uthul—tamarisk (*Tamarix aphylla* (L.)† Karst.).  
 'Atiba—threshold.  
 'Aud—great: *al 'aud*, largest sail of *baghala* or *búm*; Shaikh al 'Aud, the Great Shaikh, tribal name for the ruler of Kuwait.  
 'Audh (or 'udh)—sweet-smelling wood. When a small piece is put on a charcoal fire it gives forth a white smoke of delightful fragrance.  
 'Aula', plu. 'auliyah—saint, referring especially to Failaka island.  
 'Ausaj—Boxthorn (*Lycium arabicum Schweinfurthii*), believed by the Badu to be under the special protection of *jinns*.  
 'Awlád—see *Walad*.  
 'Ayál—male children, in a wider sense, family in general, household.  
 'Aẓẓ—dear one, one who is in favour.  
 'Aẓmi—member of the 'Awázim tribe.  
 'Aẓrak—blue.
- Ba'a*—fathom.  
*Báb*, plu. *abwáb*—gate, door.  
*Badan* (or *badeni*)—type of small boat with one mast.  
*Badawi* (commonly pronounced *Baduwi*, plu. *Badu*)—an Arab of the desert.  
*Badawin*—used adjectively, cf. British.  
*Badawiyah*—Badawin woman.  
*Bádia*, *Al*—generic term for the people of the desert, i.e. nomads.  
*Badu*—see *Badawi*.  
*Baghala*—frigate type of dhow with stern windows.  
*Bahara*, plu. *bahar*—dry, sandy watercourse subject to spate in rains.  
*Bahr*—sea.  
*Bahra* (before a vowel *bahrat*)—land, district, low place with water or marsh.  
*Baidhán*—almond sherbert.

\* C. L'Héritier, French botanist.

† Linnaeus, after Carl Linné (1707–78), Swedish botanist.

## Glossary

*Bain*—between; *bainak wa baini*, between you and me.

*Bait*, plu. *buyút*—house, building, tent, e.g. *bait al sha'ar* (plu. *buyút sha'ar*), tent of cloth made from goats' hair or sheep's wool; *bait tín*, mud hut or house.

*Bait al Hakúma*—Government House.

*Bait Allah, Al*—the House of God, or Mecca, often referred to for brevity as *Al Bait*.

*Baitan-ján*—Indian brinjál, the egg-plant or aubergine.

*Bakht*—honour.

*Balash*—Badawin name for syphilis.

*Ballam*—small river boat of Iraq, with rounded bottom and no keel.

*Bambar*—moderate-sized deciduous tree (*Cordia myxa*) with stiff broad leaves. The round yellow fruit is eaten by children.

*Bámia*—vegetable known as lady's finger.

*Banát*—see *Bint*.

*Bandar*—port, harbour, protection.

*Bani*, plu. of *ibn*—sons of; frequently occurs in names or tribes, e.g. *Bani Hájir*.

*Bani 'am*—members of a tribe or family with one male ancestry.

*Baqál*—leek.

*Baqilla* (pronounced *bajilla*)—bean(s).

*Baras*—leprosy.

*Barga*—lumbago.

*Bárih* (or *Búrah*) *al Thuraiya*—the ten days' north-west wind of the Persian Gulf. Also known as *Bárih al Saráyát* or *Bárih al Zaghír*, it blows any time between 15th April and 27th May. *Bárih al Jauza* or *Bárih al Kabír*, a forty days' wind from north-west, blows during June and early July; also called *Al Arb'ayin*. See *Thuraiya*.

*Barr*—land, desert as opposed to sea.

*Basal*—onion.

*Bat'ha*, plu. *bitáh*—broad pebbly bed, low sandy flat, open field.

*Batikh*—muskmelon.

*Batíl*—fast sailing-dhow of peculiar design, now almost extinct.

*Bátin*—depression, shallow valley.

*Batti* (Hindustani)—lantern.

*Bér*—see *Sidr*.

*Bhisht*—see '*Aba*.

*Bint*, plu. *banát*—girl.

*Bint 'am*—first cousin female on father's side.

*Bir*, plu. *abár* or *biyár*—well.

*Birkah* (pronounced *birchah*)—reservoir, pool, cistern, tank.

*B'ism Illah*—"In the name of God".

*Braidun*—rope used on ocean-going *búm*.

*Bulúla*—see *Fakh*.

## Glossary

*Búm*—largest type of sailing-craft used in the Persian Gulf.

*Burqa* (pronounced *burga*)—face mask worn by Badawin women in Arabia (south of Kuwait); also hood for falcon.

*Buwaib*—little gateway.

*Chifán* (or *kifán*)—burial shroud.

*Dáb*, plu. *díban*—viper.

*Dahal*, plu. *duhúl*—natural well with subterranean caverns and passages opening out from the bottom in various directions.

*Dahana*—comparatively hard, pebbly ground covered at intervals with parallel sand dunes (see '*Ariq*') of varying width. The best example is the well-known belt of red sand protecting inner Najd and called Al Dahana.

*Daím*—land situated on edge of a *khabra* (lakelet), or watered only by rain.

*Dakhála*—protection, sanctuary; the Arab law that ensures protection for a suppliant.

*Damat*—tears.

*Dámúsa*—skink, lizard living among the sand dunes, with the faculty of burying itself in three seconds—an astonishing and rare reptile.

*Dár*—homeland.

*Dará'a*—woman's garment.

*Darb*, plu. *durúb*—road.

*Darwáza* (when followed by a noun, *darwázat*)—gate.

*Dasha*—open strip of desert, free from all bush, vegetation and grass.

*Datcha*—mud seat along outside wall of house for guests to sit upon.

*Dauha* (before a noun, *dauhat*)—cove, land-locked bay; also a very large house.

*Daum* (ancient Arabic)—stone; also the wild palm of Hijáz, which produces a nut instead of fruit.

*Dausari*—member of Duwásir tribe.

*Dhafar*—to plait.

*Dhahab*—gold.

*Dhaháb*—journey.

*Dhahar*—lit. back. A ridge lying south of Kuwait and extending parallel with the coast for thirty miles is known as Al Dhahar, and to mariners as Laik al Bint, "the Girl's Eyebrows".

*Dhahíyah*—sacrifice. See 'Id al Dhahíyah.

*Dhalla*—largest type of camel litter for women. Having wings it is also known among Badu as *taiyára* (aeroplane).

*Dhalúl*, plu. *dhulúl*—riding camel, as distinct from milch camel (*nága*) and pack camel (*jamal*).

*Dhamrán*—see *Dhimerán*.

## Glossary

*Dhib*—wolf.

*Dhila'*—hill; *dhila'a*, low hill; *dhilai'a*, very low hill.

*Dhimerán*—saline-tasting bush, one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*. Latin name not yet determined.

*Dhimma* (before a vowel, *dhimmat*—safe-keeping, guardianship, e.g. “Ana fi dhimmatak”. (“I am in your safe-keeping.”))

*Dhow*—name used in Yemen but not in the Persian Gulf for lateen-rigged vessel of Arabia (etym. dub.).

*Dhub*—spine-tailed lizard.

*Dhul Hijjah*—the month of pilgrimage.

*Dihin*—clarified butter or oil, known as *semen* in Syria and Palestine, and *ghi* in India.

*Dín*—religion.

*Dírah*—Badawin name for a tribal range of country.

*Dishdásha*—cotton smock.

*Diwáníyah*—portion of tent or house where male guests are received.

'*Diya*—see '*Idiya*.

*Dohat*—see *Dauhat*.

*Dra'a*—the Biblical cubit (eighteen inches).

*Efféndi*—Turkish title of respect; gentleman.

*Esheb*—desert annual plants; good grazing in general.

*Fahada*—cheetah.

*Fahal*—male, male camel, ram.

*Fakh* (or *bukúla*)—contrivance for lowering anchor of *búm*. *Fakh* means also a type of bird-trap.

*Fálej*—paralysis.

*Fantás*—spring of water; name of village sixteen miles south of Kuwait; also name given to large wooden water tanks used in sailing-craft.

*Farásh*—office servant as distinct from house servant.

*Farman*—yard carrying lateen sail.

*Farwah*—long-sleeved, gaudy-coloured, braided cloak, with sheep- or lamb-skin lining, worn in winter by shaikhs and well-to-do Badu.

*Fasht*—shoal, reef.

*Fasl*—blood money (more commonly used in Iraq). See '*Idiya*.

*Fatwa*—document containing a religious sanction.

*Fellah*, plu. *fellahín*—peasant or cultivator in Egypt, Iraq, etc.

*Fida'at Allah*—“In the custody of God”, a form of farewell.

*Fidáwi*, plu. *fidáwiyah*—ruler's paid tribal retainers.

*Fitr*—see '*Id al Fitr*.

*Funaitís* (dim. of *fantás*)—small spring of water; name of village twelve miles south of Kuwait.



## Glossary

- Gaghráf*—saline-tasting bush (*Salsola baryosma* (Roem. et Schult.)), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.
- Galúmi*—a sail.
- Gáma*—see *Qáma*.
- Gara*—see *Qára*.
- Garáwi*—see *Qaráwi*.
- Gasír*—see *Qasír*.
- Gáta*—see *Qáta*.
- Gaum*—see *Qaum*.
- Ghada*—saline-tasting bush (*Haloxylon persicum* Bunge), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.
- Ghadír*, plu. *ghadrán*—tarn, depression in which water lies for a considerable period (cf. *Khabra*; *má ghadír*, very sweet drinking-water).
- Gharbi*—west wind.
- Gházi* (Turkish)—victor.
- Ghutra*—see *Kaffiyah*.
- Gidua'*—sweet-tasting thing, e.g. date, usually offered to a guest before coffee is passed round.
- Grumfel*—clove(s).
- Gúba*—crested lark.
- Gumásha*—woman's pair of bracelets.
- Gurma*—canal, wide waterway, delta stream; common in Iraq, e.g. Gurmat 'Ali.
- Gurún*—see *Qurún*.
- 
- Habb*—wheat. See also *Hintah*.
- Hadatch* (or *handhal*)—saline-tasting bush, one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*. Latin name not yet determined. Camels dislike *hadatch*.
- Hadd*—limit, boundary.
- Hadh*—protection, luck (see footnote, page 27).
- Hadharah*, plu. *hadhur*—fish-trap made of reeds.
- Hadhari*, plu. *hadhar*—town-dweller, a term used by Badu.
- Hadid*—iron.
- Hafaira*—small pit or cavity.
- Hafar*—depression or vale, somewhat similar to *raudha*, but deeper.
- Hafir*—pit or cavity.
- Hafrah*—ditch or hole in the ground.
- Hail*—cardamom, a spicy seed used as seasoning and in medicine. It is always used with Arab coffee.
- Hailah*—fallow field.
- Haiya'*—life; Badu word for rain. See *Rahma*.
- Haj*—pilgrimage to Mecca.

## Glossary

- Hajar*—stone.
- Hajar al Aswad*—"The Black Stone", the name given to this most sacred stone in the Ka'aba of Mecca. See *Ka'aba*.
- Haji*, plu. *hujjáj*—pilgrim, especially to Mecca; often prefixed as a title, e.g. Haji Muhammad.
- Hakím*—doctor. See *Tabib*.
- Hákím*—ruler, governor, government official.
- Hakúma*—government.
- Hakúmat al Muádhamá*—the Supreme Government, i.e. British Government.
- Halál*—lawful, permitted.
- Halba'*—clover-like herb (*Trigonella foenum-graecum* L.).
- Halwa*—sweetmeat, in particular the famous one of Omán.
- Hám*—black cobra.
- Hamátíyah*, plu. *hamátíyat*—wide, shallow and dry watercourse leading gradually from high ground to lower ground.
- Hamdh*—various forms of saline-tasting brushwood. See *Ageram*, *Dhimerán*, *Gaghráf*, *Ghada*, *Hadatch*, *Harm*, *Rimdh*, *Sharán*, *Shinán*, *Suw'ád*.
- Hamr mangar*—red-beaked tern.
- Hamr maraikh*—seagull.
- Handhal*—see *Hadatch*.
- Hanich*—common cobra.
- Haq*—right; due; *haqi*—"my right".
- Haram*—sacred thing or place, e.g. the city of Mecca and the Great Mosque of Jerusalem, known as Haram ash Sharíf; also the woman's quarter of the tent.
- Harám*—forbidden, evil, sinful; sin.
- Harámi*—robber.
- Harga*—"Burnt one", a famous breed of Arabian horse. The ancestress died of burns.
- Harím*—see *Hurma*.
- Harm*—saline-tasting bush (*Zygophyllum coccineum* L.), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.
- Harra*—good arable land.
- Hashm*—honour money, usually going with *fasl*, blood money.
- Haudh*, plu. *hiyádh*—reservoir or cistern; also leather watering-trough for camels and sheep.
- Hautah*—garden, enclosure or small house, yard.
- Hazám*—stony ground.
- Hijarah* (before a vowel, *hijarat*)—small town or settlement of the 'Ikhwán.
- Hintah* (pronounced *huntah*)—wheat.
- Hubára*—lesser bustard.
- Hujjah*—justification.
- Hukra*—Badawin name for shepherd tribes of Iraq. See *Shawíyah*.

## Glossary

- Humaiṭh*—sour sorrel (*Rumex vesicarius* L.), much eaten by Badu.  
*Hūri* (angl. *hourī*), plu. *hurīyah*—lady of Paradise.  
*Hūri*, plu. *hawāri*—small dugout canoe carried by a larger vessel.  
*Hurma*, plu. *harīm*—woman.  
*Husainiyah*—building set apart for religious reading among Shi'ah Muslims.  
*Huwa*—wind.  
*Huwār*, plu. *hirán*—young first-born camel (from birth to one year old).
- i*—my (suffixed to noun, e.g. *Dhahabī*—"my gold").  
*Ibn*, plu. *bani*—son of.  
*Ibn 'am*—first cousin, son of uncle; more commonly *walad 'am*.  
*'Id*—festival; *'Id al 'Adha*, last day of the Haj; *'Id al Dhahīyah*, festival of sacrifice (Haj); *'Id al Fitr*, festival of the breaking of the fast, terminating Ramadhán.  
*'Idiya* (or *'diya*)—blood price of man slain.  
*'Idmī*—small, reddish-brown gazelle.  
*Ifdán* (pronounced *fidán*)—plough.  
*Illa*—until, unless.  
*'Imám*—religious leader; name given to Ibn Sa'ud by the 'Ikhwán.  
*Imṣa*—laugh (Ál Murra patois).  
*Insaiṭi*—variety of stinging ray.  
*Insh' Allah*—"Please God".  
*Islám*—the Muhammadan world; Muhammadanism, its creed: "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is His Prophet." The word derives from the same root as *salá'am*.  
*Ism*—name.  
*'Issad*—fierce.  
*'Istakhfar' Allah*—"God forbid".  
*'Iyáh*—the name by which the black cobra (*hám*) is known in Hasa.  
*'Izzár*—loincloth used by sailors.
- Jabal*—mountain.  
*Jabbár*—tyrannous.  
*Jáhil*—child, ignorant one. See *Juhl*.  
*Jalibút*—a square-sterned boat of somewhat European appearance, with a straight up and down bow, and metal rings to take the rudder inserted into the body of the stern. The name is said to derive from the English jolly-boat, but this seems unlikely.  
*Jalla*—camel manure, dried and used as fuel.  
*Jamal*, plu. *jimál*—ordinary pack camel (male), or male camel for breeding.  
*Jámi'*—Friday congregational mosque.  
*Jár*—neighbour in next house, as distinct from tent; cf. *Qasr*, *Rafiq* and *Khawi*.  
*Jarab*—camel mange.

## Glossary

- Jarid*—palm frond with leaves stripped off, leaving a long, thin stick.  
*Járihim*—"your neighbour".  
*Jath* (or *Qatt*)—Alfalfa, lucern(e).  
*Jauf*, plu. *ajwáf*—vast plain, depression, hollow, e.g. *Jauf al 'Amr*, an oasis in North-West Sa'udi Arabia.  
*Jauhara*—jewel.  
*Jazírah* (before a vowel, *jazírat*), plu, *jazaiyir* or *juẓr*—island.  
*Jazẓia*—tax on Christians in early Islámic era, to exempt them from military service.  
*Jenna* (before a vowel, *jennat*)—paradise.  
*Jibla*—see *Qibla*.  
*Jihád*—holy war.  
*Jimjimman*—skull (Ál Murra patois).  
*Jinn*, plu. *jinún*—evil spirit (genie), usually residing in the ground.  
*Jinniyah*—female *jinn*.  
*Jirba* (or *Qirba*)—goat-skin for carrying water.  
*Juhl*—ignorance. See *'Aiyám al juhl* and *Jáhil*.  
*Juss*—lime, gypsum.  
*Juwaida*—small tern.

*K*—often pronounced *ch* by the Badu.

*Ka'aba*—the ancient and holy building in the central court of the Great Mosque at Mecca. The famous *Hajar al Aswad* ("Black Stone") is built into the wall. See page 538.

*Kabáb*—town dish consisting of rissoles made of meat and spices, served with rice, raisins, etc.

*Kabi*—wife (Ál Murra patois).

*Kabír*, fem. *kabírah*, plu. *kibár*—great.

*Kabrit*—sulphur. The Badu pronounce it *kibrít* or *chibrít*.

*Kadhairi*—wild duck (Iraqi word).

*Kadhari*—green bee-eater.

*Kaffiyah* (pronounced *Chaffíyah*)—headcloth, better known as *ghutra*.

*Káfir*—infidel.

*Kahal*—see *Kuhl*.

*Kaif*—desire, wish. *Kaif ak*—"As you please".

*Ka'it*—tiny boat.

*Kalám sharaf*—word of honour.

*Kalb*, plu. *kiláb*—sheep- or tent-dog. See *Sahmán*.

*Karím*—good, merciful.

*Kashtil*—raised forecastle of *búm*.

*Kátib*—scribe, secretary.

*Kaus*—damp south-east wind blowing up the Persian Gulf.

*Khabír*—an expert. See *Ahl al khibrah* and *Khibrah*.



## Glossary

- Khabra* (before a vowel *khabrat*), plu. *khabári*—lakelet formed by rain water in hollow ground.
- Khad*—pasture-land.
- Khadad*—ditch.
- Khadira* (or *khadra*)—brown camel.
- Khaima*—white tent made of cotton material, as distinct from the black tent, *bait al sha'ar* (q.v.).
- Khair*—good.
- Kháli*—empty, uninhabited.
- Khalífah*—caliph; name of the ruling family of the Bahrain Islands.
- Khalla, Al*—the desert regions, or empty spaces.
- Khán*—unfurnished building for the accommodation of traders and their trains when travelling; used in Iraq, Syria and Persia, but not in Arabia proper.
- Kharjyah*, plu. *kharáji*—money present, expenses.
- Khasaif, Ab al*—small white heron.
- Khátim*—boy who has read the Qur'án for the first time.
- Khátir*—mind, heart. See *Taiyib*.
- Khatún*—lady.
- Khaur*—see *Khor*.
- Khawi*—a travelling companion, similar to *Rafiq*.
- Khazna*—treasure.
- Khibrah*—wisdom, knowledge, experience. See *Ahl al khibrah* and *Khabír*.
- Khor* (or *khour*)—bay, inlet of the sea.
- Khubaiz*—common green herb (*Malva parviflora* L.) of mallow family, not eaten by sheep or camels.
- Khúsa*—small dagger worn in cartridge-belt by Badu.
- Kibrít*—see *Kabrit*.
- Kifán*—see *Chifán*.
- Kirsh*—cavity in camel's stomach in which water can be stored up.
- Kiswah*, plu. *kisáwi*—gift of clothing.
- Koda*—sheep tax introduced in Iraq by the Turks.
- Kohl*—see *Kuhl*.
- Koran*—see *Qur'án*.
- Kubbi*—famous dish of Mosul, Syria and Lebanon, made of pounded meat mixed with spices and kernels of nuts of the pine, placed between layers of crushed wheat (*burghul*) and baked.
- Kuhl* (*kahal* or angl. *kohl*)—antimony for putting on eyes (men and women).
- Kursi*—chair.
- Kút*—fort or keep.
- Kuwairi*—Arab name for the crab plover.
- Kuwait*—small fort (dim. of *kút*).

## Glossary

*Labbaika*—"Here I am at your service", used by pilgrims on first sighting Mecca. 'Ajmán women use short form, *Labbai*, for "Your pardon", or "Pardon me".

*Laháf*—quilt, blanket.

*Lail*—night.

*Leben*—buttermilk.

*Lijám*—horse's bridle bit. See '*An*.

*Liwa*—province (Iraq).

*Liwán*—veranda.

*Lukhma*—common variety of stinging ray.

*Má* (often pronounced ma'i), plu. *miyah*, *amwah*—water, rain; plu. often used in sense of sources, springs.

*Ma'adán*—name given to marsh tribes of Iraq.

*Mabrúka*—fortunate, lucky; also common name given to female slaves.

*Madhab*—religion.

*Madrasah* (before a vowel, *madrasat*)—school, university.

*Mafrag*, plu. *mafariq*—bifurcation, crossing of roads.

*Maftúl*, plu. *mafatíl*—war-tower commonly used in Iraq.

*Maghrab*—sunset. *Salát al maghrab*, sunset prayer.

*Magwár*—club with heavy hard bitumen round head, common in Iraq.

*Mahál*—abode, quarter; Mahallat al Nijáda, the Najdi Quarter.

*Mahalab* (or *mahalibi*)—negro word for dish of sweet arrowroot, semolina or ground rice sprinkled with nutmeg. The Arabs call it *mahalabíyah*.

*Mahasabchi*—finance clerk, cashier.

*Majnún*—mad.

*Makalah*—food expenses of crew.

*Maksar*—woman's camel-litter with rounded top. Other kinds of litter are *Dhalla*, *Ginn*, *Markab*, etc.

*Man*—basket of dates weighing 80 lb.; from *maund* (India).

*Maraq* (or *marag*)—meat-and-tomato stew.

*Markab*—Ark of Ishmael of Ruwala tribe; also a steamship, and a tripod on which the coffee-pot is placed.

*Masáh*—wooden rake or hoe.

*Másak*—food without salt, the diet of *jinn*s.

*Mash'huf*, plu. *mash'ahif*—Iraq marshmen's high-prowed, bitumen-covered canoe, of very ancient origin.

*Mashúwah*—small rowing-boat.

*Masjid*—place of prayer, small mosque.

*Maund*—a greatly varying Indian weight; in Arabia it approximates to 80 lb. See *Man*.

*Mijlis* (or *Majlis*), plu. *mijális*—council, reception, reception room.

## Glossary

- Mikhyál*—staff on which shepherd hangs his 'aba to keep sheep together.
- Milah*—salt.
- Milcha*—wedding engagement.
- Milfah*—veil for head or face, as distinct from *burqa*.
- Mirza*—Persian title prefixed to surname of any man of note.
- Mirzám* (or *mirzim*)—fourth period of summer; also south-east wind of second half of July. See *Saif*.
- Mishá'ab*—camel-stick, cut with small angular headpiece from the *sidr* tree.
- Mishásh* (or *mushásh*)—shallow well in clay area, into which rainwater percolates and does not sink into the ground.
- Mismar*—horseshoe nail; also cloves. See *Grumfel*.
- Mizbah*—child's portable cradle.
- Muádhama*—supreme, e.g., *Hakuma al Muádhama*—the Supreme Government, i.e. British Government.
- Muáf*—free of revenue.
- Mu'allid*—domestic negro slave born in captivity, as distinct from 'Abd (q.v.).
- Muallim*—chief officer of sailing-ship.
- Mubáarak*—happy, blessed.
- Mudhaifchi* (or *mudhai'ifchi*)—chief reception officer in charge of guests.
- Mudhif*, plu. *mudhá'if*—guest-house.
- Mudír*—director, governor, superintendent; Turkish name for junior administrative officer in charge of a *náhiya* (district).
- Mujtahid*—supreme religious leader among Shi'ah sect.
- Mulla*—learned teacher.
- Muqám*—shrine.
- Musábilah*—movement of members of tribes to towns for marketing.
- Musaiyaf*—late-grown crops.
- Musalakha*—naked.
- Mushaiyikh*, *Al*—holy priests of Najd.
- Mushmu'*—sweet-scented herb.
- Mushrik*—polytheist.
- Muslim* (fem. *Musalmah*), plu. *Musalmin*—believer in Islám; follower of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Muta'daiyanin*—the God-fearing; those who have been converted.
- Mutasarrif*—Turkish name for governor of a *liwa*.
- Na'am*—Arabian ostrich.
- Nafúdh*—sandy desert waste where dunes are blown into horseshoe-shaped hillocks. The Great Nafúdh lies between Ha'il and Jauf al 'Amr.
- Nága*—milch camel.
- Nagla'id*—beautiful (Ál Murra patois).
- Náhiya*—administrative area of a *mudír* (Iraq only).

## Glossary

*Nahu*—word used to describe classical Arabic.

*Naja'ar*—ship's carpenter.

*Najd* (or *nejd*)—plateau of elevated ground; used also as the name for the highlands of central Arabia.

*Nakhi*—parched gram.

*Nakhl*—palm-tree.

*Nakhwa*—war-cry.

*Naqib, Al*—name given to the religious head of the families of that name residing in Basra and Baghdad. *Bait Al Naqib*—the House of the Naqib.

*Naukhada*—captain of a sailing-vessel.

*Nidhr*—offering of vows.

*Niga'a*—harbour wall enclosing tidal basin.

*Nim*—poop of ship.

*Nussi*—a well-known desert grass (*Aristida plumosa* L.).

*Poshteen*—Afghan word for *farwah*.

*Putta*—Iraq word for silk brocade.

*Q*—often pronounced as *g* or *j* by the Badu.

*Qadha*—sub-province (Iraq).

*Qádhi*—judge, magistrate who interprets the religious law of Islám.

*Qahba* (or *Gahba*), plu. *qaháb*—prostitute.

*Qahwa*—unroasted coffee beans, or place selected to make coffee in tent, also coffee ready for drinking. See *Wujár*.

*Qaimaqám*—Turkish name for governor of a *qadha*.

*Qala'ah*—bastion, fort, strong point, castle. *Qalai'ah* is a diminutive.

*Qáma* (pronounced *gáma*), plu. *qiyám* (*giyám*)—wooden supports erected over a well, with a wooden wheel between them to take the rope.

*Qanár*—see *Sidr*.

*Qara* (pronounced *gara*)—pumpkin.

*Qaráwi* (pronounced *garáwi*)—Kentish plover.

*Qasíl*—cereal crops cut green for fodder.

*Qasír* (pronounced *gasír*), plu. *qusara* (*gusara*)—neighbour in next tent or house; cf. *Jár*, *Khawi* and *Rafiq*.

*Qasr*—fort, palace, castle.

*Qata* (pronounced *gata*)—sand grouse.

*Qáta* (pronounced *gáta*)—tent partition, divide.

*Qatt*—see *Jath*.

*Qaum* (pronounced *gaum*)—adherents, army.

*Qibla* (pronounced *jibla*)—direction of Mecca.

*Qirba*—see *Jirba*.



## Glossary

*Qur'án* (Koran)—the Muslims' sacred book.

*Qurún* (pronounced *gurún*)—two plaits of hair worn in front of each ear by both men and women of tribal Arabia.

*Rab*.—God the creator; *Rab'ak*, your creator; *rab'al manẓali*, lord of the house, master.

*Raba'a*, *Al*—men's portion of tent; followers.

*Rabi'* (pronounced *rabia*)—third (*Rabi'* I) and fourth (*Rabi'* II) months of Muhammadan year; the spring season.

*Rafiq*—lit. friend, comrade; travelling companion in the sense of neighbour; a man taken from the tribe through whose territory a traveller intends to pass, insuring him against all molestation on the part of any member of the tribe. See *Khawi*.

*Raggi*—see *Raqqi*.

*Rag-rúg*—perennial desert plant (*Helianthemum lippi* (L.) Dum.), near which truffles grow.

*Rahma*—mercy; also a Badu name for rain, e.g. *Rahmat Allah*, meaning the mercy of God, or rain. See *Haiya'*.

*Ra'i*—owner; *Ra'is*—leader.

*Ra'iyah*—camel herd (seventy). The plural varies according to the number: two to ten herds—*ra'aiyah*; eleven herds and over—*ra'iyah*.

*Ra'iyat al bait*—lady of the tent.

*Rajul*, plu. *rijál*, *arjál*—man. For emphasis the Badu will use *rajál* instead of *rajul*.

*Ramadhán*—lunar month during which Muslims fast daily from before sunrise till sunset.

*Raqqi* (pronounced *raggi*)—watermelon.

*Rás*, plu. *ru'us*—head, point, promontory, e.g. *Rás al 'Ajúzah*.

*Rashád*—cress (*Lepidium sativum* L.).

*Ratab*—dates in a yellow or semi-ripe state.

*Raudha*, plu. *raudh*, *raudhat*, *riyádh*—wide, open vale or depression containing good grazing, owing to rainwater having formed a lake during winter and kept the ground moist.

*Ráwi*, plu. *ruwi*—camel water-skin, i.e. made from the skin of a camel.

*Rhím*—largest of the Arabian gazelle (*Gazella marica*), conspicuous by its white flanks; from afar it looks white.

*Riál*—Sa'udi Arabian silver coin corresponding to the rupee, worth approximately 1s. 4d.

*Rijm*—cairn.

*Rimdh*—saline-tasting bush (*Haloxylon salicornicum* (Moq.) Boiss.), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.

*Riyádh*—see *Raudha*: also capital of Sa'udi Arabia.

*Ruáq* (or *ruág*), plu. *rawwaq* or *rawwag*—curtain surrounding back and sides of tribal black tent, usually four strips sewn together.

## Glossary

- Rub'*—abode, quarter, e.g. *Rub' al Kháli*, the "Empty Quarter" of South Arabia.
- Rubáhla*—annual plant (*Scorzonera papposa D.C.*), with mauve flowers and edible root.
- Ruwaid*—radish.
- Sa'ád*—variety of mint.
- Sabákhah*—see *Sabkhah*.
- Sábil*—Badawin word meaning "to go up to the market town to buy food".
- Sabkhah* (or *sabákhah*) (before a vowel, *sabkhat* and *sabákhah*), plu. *sibákh*—saline depression, salt ground, salt-marsh, always slippery and moist, especially if south wind blows. After rain such ground is impossible for camels. Salty areas seem particularly prone to mirage effects in summer and winter.
- Safát*—market-place, open space in Kuwait town for Badu and others to buy necessities.
- Safífa*—long special hanging cord forming part of the decorations of a camel-saddle.
- Safína*—large, round-bottomed, keel-less river craft of Iraq. It is of the same type as the *ballam*, but larger.
- Sagwa*—see *Saqwa*.
- Sahar*—witchcraft, spell.
- Sahára*—woman who casts spells; also box, lungs.
- Sahmán*—'Ajmán word for ordinary sheep-dog. See *Kalb*.
- Sahra*—spirit, phantom.
- Saif*—summer, subdivided into thirteen-day periods: *saif*, early summer, first *jauza*, second *jauza*, *mirzám* (*mirzim*), *kulaibain*, *suhail*. The period *mirzám* to *suhail* is known as *qaidh*, late summer.
- Saihad*—hillock.
- Sail*—torrent after rain, running water; to pour down in a torrent; *sail al má*, rivulet of rain.
- Saiyid*—a modern expression meaning "Mr"; cf. *Seyed*. In southern Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain an Englishman is addressed as "Sáhib".
- Sakhal wahshi*—Badawin name for *thár*, Omán wild goat.
- Sakhín*—large iron hoe with a short handle.
- Sakhla*—female milch goat.
- Sakkán* (Hindustani *sukkani*)—steersman, rudder.
- Sala'* (before a vowel, *salát*)—prayer. *Salát al fajar*, prayer before dawn; *salát al dhuhur*, prayer at noon; *salát al 'asr*, afternoon prayer, three and a half hours after *salát al dhuhur*; *salát al maghrab*, prayer at sunset; *salát al 'asha*, prayer after dining, calculated to be one and a half hours after sunset.
- Salá'am*—peace, safety.
- Salá'am 'alaikum*—"Peace be unto you"; reply *'Alaikum as salá'am*.

## Glossary

- Salaf*—loan, advance given to pearl-divers for support of their families at home.
- Salamún*—to send peace greetings.
- Sáleh*—peacemaker.
- Salla' 'Allah alaihi wa sallam*—"The peace and protection of God be upon him", an expression always used when mention is made of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Sallam*—protection.
- Salúqi*—Arab greyhound used for hunting hare and gazelle.
- Sam*—see *Sammu*.
- Sama'a*—Indian spear grass (*Stipa tortilis Desf.*).
- Sambúq*—pearling boat.
- Sammu* (or *Sam*)—"Pray fall to", expression used by host to guest when meal is ready.
- Sana* (before a vowel, *sanat*)—year; e.g. *Sanat al Jahra*, the year of the battle of Jahra.
- Sána*—servant class among tribes; metal-workers, etc.
- Sandál*—oil of sandal-wood.
- Sangal*, plu. *sanájil*—chain.
- Saníni*—variety of stinging ray.
- Saniya*—round copper tray for serving meals. See *Abu kursi*.
- Saqiyah*—water-channel.
- Saqwa* (pronounced *sagwa*)—poison, love potion.
- Sarai*—Turkish name for offices of governor and his staff.
- Sarífa*—hut with roof and sides of thick mats or reeds.
- Sariya*—garrison, armed party, patrol (camel or car).
- Sarkál*—junior shaikh of a tribe of cultivators (Iraq).
- Seráng* (Hindustani)—boatswain.
- Seyed*—title of one descended from the Prophet through Fátima his daughter; cf. *Saiyid*.
- Seyedna*—a term of respect: "Our Seyed", "O Seyed of ours".
- Sha'am*—fish similar to *zubaidi* (q.v.), but smaller; white with black spots on back.
- Shab*—alum.
- Sha'b*—following, tribe, party, political party.
- Shabána*—river police of Iraq marsh country,
- Shadád*—camel-saddle.
- Sha'ib*—watercourse, ravine, mountain cleft.
- Shaikh*, plu. *shuyúkh*—head of tribe or house; also an old man or religious leader.
- Shaikha*—chief wife of shaikh, title given to ladies of the Al Sabah, etc.
- Sha'ir*—barley.
- Shaitán*, fem. *shaitána*—devil, rogue.
- Shamál*—see *Shimál*.

## Glossary

- Shanashíl*—latticed window overlooking street.  
*Shára'*—street.  
*Sharaf*—pride, honour.  
*Sharán*—saline-tasting bush (*Anabasis setifera* Moq.), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.  
*Sharb*—embanked terrace.  
*Shari'ah*—religious law of Islám.  
*Sharíf*, plu. *shurafa*—honourable, noble; member of Sharífian family of Hijáz. *Shurufa* used to indicate the nobility of Mecca.  
*Sharq*—east.  
*Sharqi*—eastern, easterly.  
*Shatt*—river; e.g. Shatt al Arab, in Iraq.  
*Sháwi*, plu. *shawáwi*—term used by townspeople for shepherd, goatherd.  
*Shawiyah*—Iraqi name for shepherd tribes as a whole. See *Hukra*.  
*Shidda*—process of moving camp; a day's journey.  
*Shillahát*—man's white smock with long, wide sleeves.  
*Shimál* (or *shamál*)—cool, dry north-west wind, common to Najd, Iraq and the Persian Gulf, that blows down from the Taurus mountains of Turkey.  
*Shinán*—saline-tasting bush (*Seidlitzia rosmarinus* Bunge), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.  
*Shiqaq*—see *Shuqqa*.  
*Shu'ai*—type of small sailing-vessel used mostly for pearl-diving.  
*Shúf*—look, see.  
*Shuqqa*, plu. *shiqaq*—depression in surrounding country rift.  
*Shuruf*, *Al*—sacred black camel herd of the Mutair.  
*Shuyúkh*—plural of shaikh; also name given to the rulers of Sa'udi Arabia and Kuwait by their entourages and guards, e.g. Al Shuyúkh.  
*Sidr* (or *ber*)—tree (*Ziziphus spina-christa* (L.) Willd.), the leaves of which are used for washing women's hair, also for washing the dead. The small, apple-like fruit is called *qanár*.  
*Síf*—sea front, beach, landing-stage.  
*Sifdera*—one of the sails of a dhow.  
*Sifr*—voyage; the name given to the period in early autumn when dhows set out for India or Zanzibar.  
*Sil*—consumption; also known as *diq* and *maradh al khabíth*—the dread disease.  
*Sitt*—lady (used only in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt).  
*Siyáh*—country, lands, territory.  
*Siyási*—diplomacy, political acumen. *Hákim Siyási*, Political Officer.  
*Subah*—morning; e.g. *Subah al Khair*, good morning, greeting.  
*Subaiti*—fish, not to be confused with *zubaidi*; good eating; appearance bluish grey like a rock cod; length fourteen inches.



## Glossary

- Suhail*—Canopus, the rising of which denotes the end of summer. See *Saif*.
- Suhaili*—hot south wind, common in Kuwait, blowing usually between 13th March and 10th April.
- Sukkani*—see *Sakkán*.
- Sultáni*—small black heron.
- Sulubba*, sing. *sulubbi*—generic term for depressed nomad community in Arabia, said to be descended from followers of the Crusaders.
- Suq*, plu. *aswáq*—bazaar, market-place.
- Suw'ád*—saline-tasting bush (*Suaeda vermiculata* Forsk.), one of the varieties known under the general name of *hamdh*.
- Suwari*—Persian mounted police.
- Tabib*—doctor. See *Hakím*.
- Tahma*—figwort (*Scrophularia*).
- Taiyib*, fem. *taiyibba*—good, excellent, pleasant. *Taiyib al khátir*, to comfort, to make a person feel good; to *taiyib khátirhu*, to comfort him (*hu*).
- Tal*, plu. *tulúl*—mound, small hill.
- Tambúrah*—stringed instrument used by negroes in their cult worship.
- Taráchi*—gulls: also woman's earrings.
- Tarfah*—dwarf tamarisk (*Tamarix passerinoides* Del.).
- Tawáf*—ceremonial circumambulation of the Ka'aba. See page 539.
- Tawil*—long, e.g. *Allah i tawil 'amrak*, "God prolong your life".
- Tawila*—an ancient copper coin of Hufuf shaped like a short nail with the head split open like a "V".
- Thamílah* (before a vowel, *thamílat*), plu. *thimáiyíl*—shallow water-hole in bed of dry watercourse or *bahara*, where bed is of clay and so holds water.
- Thammám*—species of coarse grass (*Panicum turgidum* Forsk.), common in Kuwait and liked by camels.
- Thanda*—species of coarse, reed-like grass (*Cyperus conglomeratus* Rottb.), common in vicinity of Kuwait.
- Tháni*—second; *Rabi' tháni* (*Rabi' II*), fourth month of Muhammadan year; Ibn Tháni, ruling family of Qatar state.
- Thár*—Omán wild goat. See *Sakhal wahshi*.
- Thaub*—woman's over-dress; also woman's shroud.
- Thuraiya*—Pleiades; gold coins on *thaub*. See *Bárih al Thuraiya*.
- Tibbin*—chopped straw used as fodder.
- Tín*—clay, loam; *bait tín*, mud hut or house.
- Tiráhah*—fee paid to man who voluntarily restores straying camels to their owner.
- Tisyár*—Iraqi equivalent of *rafíq*; also as the equivalent of *wejh*.
- Tuhmáj*—hollow or small area containing several kinds of *hamdh* growing together.

## Glossary

'*Udh*—see '*Audh*.

'*Ulema*—see '*Álim*.

'*Umaníyah*—famous breed of camel found in Omán.

*Umara*—see *Amír*.

*Umm*, plu. *ummahát*—mother.

'*Usta*—master craftsman.

'*Usta'ad*—navigator of *baghala* or *búm*.

*Wa*—and.

*Wa'al*—wild goat, Arabian ibex.

*Wadha*—white camel; also name given to women.

*Wádi*—watercourse, valley, bed of stream.

*Waggíyah*—measure of weight (approximately 5 lb.).

*Wairjíyah*, plu. *waráji*—primitive fishing-craft built of date branches bound together by ropes and string.

*Walad*, plu. '*awlád*—boy, son of, descendant, e.g. *walad 'am*, first cousin male on father's side.

*Wáli*—Turkish name for governor of a *wilayet*.

*Wallah*—"By God".

*Waraqa*—paper, document, writing.

*Wasm*—tribal mark, brand; also rainy season.

*Wazír*—minister of state.

*Wejh*—security, lit. face. *Biwejhi*, "by my face", i.e. "under my protection".

*Wilayet*—Turkish name for a province.

*Wujár*—shallow circular hole in ground, used as fire-place for making coffee in camp; in a house, a more ornamental affair made of lime or cement.

*Wuqúf*—bearing of witness at Mount Arafat.

*Yá*—O; used before noun or proper name, e.g. *Yá Allah*, O God, often elided into *Yállah*.

*Yaum*, plu. '*aiyám*—day. See '*Aiyám al juhl*.

*Yokh*—long scarlet smock, or *dishdásha*, embroidered in gold, mostly worn by King Ibn Sa'ud's bodyguard.

*Zaghír*—small.

*Zakát*—taxes having religious sanctions behind them.

*Zam Zam*—holy well in the Great Mosque at Mecca, claimed to be the same spring as the one that saved the life of Hagár in the wilderness.

*Záptieh*—Turkish mounted policeman.

*Zargi*—bird of heron family.

## Glossary

*Zaríba*—Sudanese/Somali word for an enclosure of thorn bushes, built for defence against an enemy or lions.

*Zib*—penis.

*Zibún*—man's smock or full-length shirt, also worn under the *thaub* by women.

*Zubaidi*—large white truffle; also Indian pomfret, considered the finest of all edible fish; cf. Queen Zubaida, wife of Harun Al Rashíd.

## 'AJMÁN PECULIARITIES

(When the 'Ajmán word is followed in brackets by the name of another tribe, it indicates that the word is used by that tribe also.)

'AJMÁN	OTHER ARABS	ENGLISH
<i>Abal</i>	' <i>Arta</i>	Species of dwarf tree with red or yellow fruit.
' <i>Adáma</i>	<i>Dhila'a</i>	Low hill.
' <i>Adhara</i> ('Anízah)	<i>Bint</i>	Girl, lit. virgin.
' <i>Adwa</i>	<i>Dhilai'a</i>	Very low hill.
' <i>Ajam</i>	<i>Ta'am</i>	Date stones.
' <i>Anán</i>	<i>Lijám</i> (Ál Murra, 'An)	Horse's bridle bit.
' <i>Arjún</i> (Qahtán)	<i>Gumášha</i>	Woman's pair of bracelets.
' <i>Azibba</i>	' <i>Arús</i>	Girl after marriage, and before having children.
<i>Bh'ar</i> (Ál Murra)	<i>Qanáð</i> ( <i>Ganáð</i> )	Spice, flavouring, commonly used to describe <i>hail</i> .
<i>Bun, al</i> (Hasa tribes)	<i>Qahwa</i>	Unroasted coffee beans.
<i>Dím</i> (or <i>díma</i> )	<i>Alaina díma</i>	Thunder-storm.
<i>Gharur</i> (Qahtán)	<i>Kalb</i>	Sheep- or tent-dog.
<i>Ghat</i>	<i>Gaidh</i>	Very hot summer. <i>Shiddat al gaidh</i> , the height of summer heat.
<i>Gutba</i>	<i>Bait abu 'amúd</i>	Tent of one pole.
<i>Gutubtain</i>	<i>Bait abu 'amúdain</i>	Tent of two poles.
<i>Habba*</i>	<i>Dukhán</i>	Smoke.
<i>Hajáb</i>	<i>Ruáq</i> ( <i>ruág</i> )	Tent side-curtain.
<i>Hajala</i>	<i>Khabra</i>	Rain-water lake.
<i>Hanni</i>	<i>Maksar</i>	Woman's camel-litter.
<i>Issir</i> (or <i>ijir</i> )	<i>Bil 'Ajal</i>	Quickly.
<i>Jida', al</i>		Nickname given to an 'Ajmán woman who, at birth, had a piece of her ear cut off and eaten by her mother to preserve the child's life. Also name of inlaid wooden drinking-bowl among other tribes.
<i>Mandai</i> (Ál Murra and Bani Hájir)		In the vicinity of and within a day's march of drinking-water, i.e. up to a distance of forty miles.

\* "Wa ja'alna habba am mundhaura" ("And we created the smoke from fire").  
From the Qur'án.



## Glossary

AJMÁN	OTHER ARABS	ENGLISH
<i>Midrá'a</i>	<i>Dará'a</i>	Woman's garment.
<i>Mizáda</i>	<i>Ráwi</i>	Large water container made from the skin of a camel.
<i>M'rándan</i>	<i>Shillahát</i>	Man's white smock with long, wide sleeves.
<i>M'rauba</i> (Ál Murra, Bani Hájir and other Hasa tribes)	<i>Bait abu 'arba'a 'amdán</i>	Tent of four poles.
<i>M'thaulidh</i> (Hasa tribes)	<i>Bait abu thalath 'amdán</i>	Tent of three poles.
<i>Mundhaura*</i>	<i>Nár</i>	Fire.
<i>Rahíl</i>	<i>Shidda</i>	Day's journey.
<i>Ruág (ruág)</i>	<i>Qáta</i>	Tent divide.
<i>Sahmán</i>	<i>Kalb</i>	Dog.
<i>Seleb</i>	<i>Khám</i>	Cloth material.
<i>Shafra</i>	<i>Khúsa</i>	Small dagger.
<i>Sha'if</i>	<i>'Ajaj</i>	Sand- or dust-storm.
<i>Sináfi</i>	<i>Walad</i>	Boy.
<i>Siwan</i>	<i>Khaima</i>	White cotton tent.
<i>Taik (or Té'k)</i>	<i>Hunnák</i>	"Over there." <i>Issir taik</i> , "Quickly over there".
<i>Taut</i>	<i>Tal, dhila'a</i>	Small hill.
<i>Uskún</i>	<i>Jinún (plu. of jinn)</i>	Spirits of the earth.

\* "Wa ja'alna habba am mundhaura" ("And we created the smoke from fire"). From the Qur'án.

## BREEDING AND MATING TERMS

in common use among the Badu

- A male camel wanting a female is said to *i sín ha*.
- A stallion wanting a mare is said to *yabí ha*.
- A ram wanting a ewe is said to *i him ha*.
- A female camel wanting a male is said to be *miyessar*.
- A mare wanting a stallion is said to be *talba*.
- A ewe wanting a ram is said to be *háni*.
- A male camel that has served a female is said to have *dharab ha*.
- A stallion that has served a mare is said to have *shaba ha*.
- A ram that has served a ewe is said to have *agra ha*.
- A man falling in love with a woman is said to *ashaq ha*.
- A man marrying a woman is said to have *dakhal alai ha* ("He went in unto her").
- A man committing adultery is said to *yi'zni* (from noun *zina*, adultery).

# INDEX

## Abbreviations

Can. .. ..	Canal	Prov. .. ..	Province
Chan. .. ..	Channel	R. .. ..	River
I. .. ..	Island	Rdge. .. ..	Ridge
I.N.Z. .. ..	Iraq Neutral Zone	Si. Arabia .. ..	Sa'udí Arabia
K.N.Z. .. ..	Kuwait Neutral Zone	T. .. ..	Tribe
O. .. ..	Oasis	W. .. ..	Water wells
P. .. ..	Pass		

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