

ARABIA PHŒNIX

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AN ACCOUNT OF A VISIT TO IBN SAUD CHIEFTAIN
OF THE AUSTERE WAHHABIS AND POWERFUL
ARABIAN KING

BY
GERALD DE GAURY

With a Foreword by Freya Stark
and
Sixty-four Plates in Half-tone



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Foreword

A DIGNITY UNATTAINABLE EVEN to the gods is given to mortal things by the mere fact of their mortality. The gaiety of young men going to battle, the mellowness of crumbling walls, the grace of flowers, the delicacy of age, all fragilities glow as it were in the light of their own annihilation; the transient world gets its nobility from the very heart of its weakness, and the lights and shadows are thrown by that vision of darkness which closes on blossoming days.

So it is with histories of nations. In the pages of Gibbon we read with a heightened emotion the least petty gossip of Constantinople as the Ottomans advance upon it; we follow the daily life of Rome with Attila already in the north, and study with the same poignancy many a nearer record of our day. To the heart's eye no visible catastrophe is needed; the ways we are brought up in, our fashions, fetishes, and hopes, also pass to their exits and gain dignity as we realize how temporary they are. And here lies the charm of Arab travel. We visit something that has vanished from our West long ago, and in the East can linger but a short while longer. It is this unconscious background of catastrophe which lures us to the Bedouin of the desert rather than to the modern effendi who lives in towns like ours and shares our future, whose transitory nature is as yet unapparent. In the desert life, in so much of the Eastern world, every detail counts because it may never be repeated: even the most casual traveller must feel that the light he strikes is much more important, because not one but two eternities, the past and future, are waiting to engulf it.

Gerald de Gaury is an old friend of mine. He knows and loves his desert world and has written this honest record of a journey with the sense of its fugitive quality in time. The trifles of a desert court, the ritual of nomad life, the details

of an embassy which reminds us of Ar-Rashid and Charlemagne, will soon be forgotten. Gerald de Gaury sees them with an experienced and loving eye, and, like a collector of butterflies, nets the remote moments for the pleasure of those who will never see them flickering in their own bright air.

FREYA STARK

Preface

Chains of mountains, destitute of shrub or tree . . . , elevate their sunburnt summits against a deep blue sky; yet in their rugged bosoms lie ingulfed verdant and fertile valleys, where the desert and the garden strive for mastery. . . .

WASHINGTON IRVING, *The Alhambra: Chapter I, "The Journey"*

THE LAST PHOENIX SEEN ALIVE, according to a Persian author, was a captive one in the zoo of the Fatimide Caliphs of Egypt.

Pliny thus describes the creature:

The phoenix, that famous bird of Arabia, is the size of an eagle, and has a brilliant golden plumage around the neck, while the rest of the body is of a purple colour, except the tail, which is azure with long feathers intermingled of a roseate hue; the throat is adorned with a crest, and the head with a tuft of feathers. It is sacred to the sun. When old it builds a nest—a nest of cinnamon and sprigs of incense, which it fills with perfumes—and lies down upon it to die. From its bones and marrow there springs a small brown worm, which changes into a very little bird; the first thing that it does is to perform the obsequies of its predecessor, and to carry the nest entire to the City of the Sun near Panchaia, and there deposit it upon the altar of that divinity. The revolution of the great year is completed with the life of this bird, and a new cycle comes round again, repeating the former seasons and appearances of the stars.

The "great year" and the mention of the stars are supposed to refer to the passage of Mercury every six hundred and twenty-five years.

The bird's name was taken from the people of Arabia, from the Phoenicians, just as the Greeks gave the name 'phoenix' to the date-palm, the tree of that land. Some scholars believe that Panchaia was the island now called Socotra—a name of Sanskrit origin—the "Island of Bliss," off the southern coast of Arabia, and home of the Kings of

the Incense Land. It is supposed that the bird spent part of its life in Mashu, or Central Arabia, "the gate of which is formed by the cliffs of Aga and Salma," and the creature is known in Arabic as *al'Anka*.

The phoenix, it may be, was kin to the Persian simurgh, an almost equally rare bird living in the Elburz mountain-tops, far from man; but the simurgh's nest was mounted on ebony columns and sandal-wood, and the sticks of its nest were of aloë-wood. When the bird approached the air was darkened, and it was like a cloud in which the rain-drops are of coral. It was also found in the mountain of Kaf—where the Arabian jinns live. It was the guardian of Zal and his son Rustam, and was killed by Isfandyar, in spite of the magically protective properties of its feathers. The phoenix has been rather more closely associated with the feng-huang (male-female) bird of China and the Indian garuda. The feng-huang, the natural companion of the dragon, was in one capacity said to be a cosmic symbol. The red bird, or heavenly chicken, was connected with the southern quarter of the four signs of the Zodiac, as the symbol of fire, heat, and summer, and it was supposed to crow up the sun each morning from the tree of life on top of the world. It was sometimes represented in the form of the golden pheasant, but also as the feng-huang, which was a composite creature with the wattle of a cock, the plumage curling from the neck in the manner of a very beautiful mandarin teal, legs with spurs like a cock, but toes arranged like a parrot's, and a mixture of the argus pheasant and the peacock in its tail-plumes. It was a divine bird and commonly called the king of birds. Another account says that its neck was like a snake's and its tail like a fish, its forehead like a stork's and its temperament like a mandarin duck's. It had dragon markings, a back like a tortoise, a throat like a swallow, a bill like a fowl, and five colours completely distinguishable. It came from the gentlemen's country in the East. When it appears there is peace everywhere in the land. Its voice is like a lute. It does not perch where there is no wu'tung-tree, does not eat anything but bamboo or

drink anything but clear water. Wherever it flies clouds of smaller birds follow, whenever it appears the monarch is equitable and the kingdom has moral principles. It is only seen in the gardens of equitable, just, and hospitable princes in time of plenty. In the age of Shun and Yu, says one author, "the unicorn and the phoenix wandered about the land together." Its home was in the caves where cinnabar is mined, in the Tu Hueh mountains. Yet another account says that it came from the most mountainous districts of Szechuan, from Korea, where one was seen—by a retired general—as late as A.D. 668. It is fond of music, comes to the sound of the lute, and sometimes accompanied the Queen of the Tao-ist fairyland. The divine feng is used to dancing among the clouds, and if kept in captivity it pecks at women and boys wearing embroidered silk. Whenever it wishes to alight on hills it first chooses a place to arrange its tail. It was often depicted with a peony.

The phoenix, in short, is rarely seen, lives in inaccessible mountains, combines many remarkable features, is divine, is good (if with a hint of justified regal irritability on occasions), is associated with the coming of peace and plenty, used to be reborn, but has not been since about the twelfth century. It is too late to be sure of the essence of the phoenix character, since obscured by the picture of him given by obviously bewildered observers; but it may be that he was the symbol of the desirable but unattainable, of the human wish to be reborn or to live for ever and to be everything, of the desire "for this man's art and that man's scope," of wishing for divinity to come, so long as the sun warms the earth—in brief, a sign of man's hope in future man, in spite of all reverses. He is in any case, for us to-day, the symbol of rebirth and of revivals.

Until some ten years ago Arabia had hardly been touched by the outside world. In its inner depths are countless garden townships, then never visited by any traveller from the West, among them the earliest outposts made by man in his fight against the desert. The way of life there had not changed in a thousand years. Here in the West our

garden of civilization has become so thickly and extravagantly cultivated that we can no longer see its beginning and we forget the nature of the struggle in which man is engaged. There it is daily borne in upon one.

I have recorded a journey through that country—upland or Nejd Arabia—and described the life at the Arabian King's Court before industrialization began or mechanized transport came into frequent use; and I am greatly indebted to many Arabs for information, to English friends whose interest in far Arabia encouraged me to write of it, to Mr Walter de la Mare for permission to print his poem *Arabia*, and to Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, who has read the proofs for me.

GERALD DE GAURY

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To the Pleiades

As the Pleiades and the Morning Star
Rise together to the sky
Every plant puts forth ears.

At the appearance of the Twins
The unripened dates take form
Upon the clusters of the date-trees.

At the emergence of Orion
Every hungry thing gets fullness of provender
And the bitter season will have passed.

Now when the Dog Star shows itself
It dries up the abundant waters
And drains the overflow of fountains.

And with the coming of ten and ten and four
Behold of last Canopus
Rising on the fifth and brightly shining ;

You may see this as you see
The constellation of the Dragon
Playing luminously upon the palm-fronds,

And fifty-one days pass ;
Beware of water and of thunder
And beware of lightning,

For behold the summer has passed over
Beyond the horseman, and nothing is left
But the palm-tree's downward-hanging leaves.

RASHID AL KHELAWI
(*eighteenth century*)

The Pleiades, rising in the autumn, represent to the Bedouin of Arabia the annual renewal of strength, the winter rains, the spring showers, which bring again sap into the desert bushes and life into flowers and man.

CHAPTER ONE

The Arabian Scene

The blood and social life of this race, . . . finest of the Caucasian type, owes to the natural barriers set about it an immunity from alien contamination which no other race above the savage state have enjoyed, and to singular conditions strong and simple intelligence which formulated again and again a conception of God strong enough to convince alien myriads of mankind.

DR D. G. HOGARTH, *The Penetration of Arabia*

WHEREVER YOU MAY GO IN THE Arab world the tribesmen assert that they are descended from the tribes of Central Arabia, and they speak highly of the people there to-day and of their manners and customs. It was an almost closed territory, but I had long had hopes of visiting it one day, of going to the fountain-head of the Arab race and of the Muhammadan religion.

At the beginning of 1935 I was travelling along the northern edge of the Sahara, when at one of the small forts then recently garrisoned by the French a telegram was given to me calling me to Jedda, at the other end of the Arab world—to Arabia itself.

I wished to go by the old routes—through the North African countries, back to the country whence the Arab ancestors of their peoples had come—rolling up as it were the ball of their history as I went; but practical details made such a long tour impossible, and I was obliged to go through London.

Had I been able to travel by the Arab ways I should have overtaken many fellow-travellers, for it was the time of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The Qaid at Aglawi, one of the Lords of the Atlas and Pasha of Marrakesh, had himself set out, accompanied by a large following. The number of pilgrims from all over the Muslim world was likely to be unusually high because King Ibn Saud had at last restored

peace everywhere in his country, and the war with his neighbour in the south, the King of the Yemen, was at an end. It was this peace in Arabia which brought me, too, an opportunity to visit it, and later to go with the first British Minister to Arabia on his first visit to Ibn Saud at Riyadh, the capital, in the interior. This new Arab kingdom and the new peace were then considered startling and as unlikely to last; and most observers, in bringing forward their gloomy prophecies, pointed out that for many centuries there had been continual insecurity in Arabia. A permanent kingdom, they thought, was therefore impossible. It was true that for at least four centuries the dangers of travelling in Arabia had been so great that hardly half a dozen Europeans had ventured there. If in much earlier times there had been peace and prosperity in the country the records from so remote a period were few and forgotten, so that the Western world had come to regard all the inhabitants of the interior of the peninsula as "Bedouin" and as characteristically, and not merely circumstantially, given up to a life of lawlessness and brigandage. That the majority of the people of Arabia live in oases and that the Bedouin, being a pastoral people, are disposed to protect their flocks of sheep and herds of camels and not risk them in war was overlooked.

The observers in the West failed to see that the dangers which rare adventurers into Arabia reported were the result of economic chaos brought about by changes in Europe. Once Arabia had been more than prosperous, and the people of the oases had a high degree of Oriental culture. In the south there had been a great maritime commonwealth feeding supplies to the Arab caravaneers on the mainland, who then transported onward the merchandise of the Indies and the produce of Arabia to the outposts of the West.

Forty centuries ago rival empires, in Egypt and Mesopotamia, fought for possession of that rich caravan traffic from Arabia and alternately captured the oasis of Duma—Duma which is mentioned in the Book of Genesis—to-day a northern provincial capital of Ibn Saud's kingdom. Arabia

was the possessor, or the transmitter westward, of all that then seemed most desirable: gold, incense, myrrh, powdered antimony, monkeys, panthers; and she brought up out of her mysterious depths precious stones, silver, spices, and "natives and their children."

The caravans of the Arab alone brought this merchandise of great value; and which of it came from the peninsula itself and which from beyond was kept a secret by the Arabs, who thereby held the world's monopoly of their luxuries. Their route followed the coast of the Red Sea, at a distance of some forty miles or so inland, passing through Mecca and Medina, to Al Hujr, the present Mada'in Salih, to Taima and Duma. King Nabonidus of Babylonia, father of Belshazzar, thought it profitable to spend most of his reign at Taima, the "Tema" of Genesis, far over in Western Arabia, leaving the rule of what is now called Iraq in the hands of his son. He adorned Taima "with the glory of Babylon." The richness of the Arabia of that time can be gauged from the amount by which Esar-haddon increased the tribute to be paid by Hazaal of Duma, King of the Arabs, in return for the restoration of his captured gods. It was to be by "ten minas of gold, a thousand precious stones, fifty camels, and a thousand bundles of aromatic herbs." The great citadel of Duma, the castle of Marid, still stands; its lowest stones placed upon each other in the days of the Assyrian kings, its upper walls and towers built in the time of Romans and Arabs. From its ramparts can be seen, stretching far away beyond the palms, the camel-tracks along which must have come the urgent messengers for the King at Taima from his son in Mesopotamia. The ceremonies of the annual wedding of the gods would be incomplete without the King, who dallied, watching for the caravans of gold, hunting in the grassy Arabian uplands, and neglecting the rule of his people in favour of Belshazzar. Not knowing the life he had found there, they thought him witless, and his was the "madness" attributed to Nebuchadnezzar.

Farther south, in what is now the Yemen, there were

other prospering dynasties, and at Sana there was a castle of legendary magnificence, its walls of marble, porphyry, and granite, twenty storeys high, with bronze lions on its roof which roared when the wind blew. One of these rulers was said to be the first king to wear a gold diadem in token of sovereign power, and according to the Arab stories, their soldiers scoured the then known world. They say that the army of Shamir the Trembler, who came third after Balkis the Queen, captured Samargand, and the Arab geographer and historian Abu 'l-Fida' reported that there was an inscription there reading "In the name of God this building was erected by Shamir the Trembler in honour of his God the sun." To illustrate their enterprise, it is even told that Shamir, leaving Samargand, which he renamed after himself, marched on towards China, until the frontier king was frightened into an ingenious defensive measure. On hearing of the Arab approach he told his Minister of Court to make his way to Shamir as he came and to represent himself as having deserted his Chinese master because of his cruelty. To make the story more likely he was told to cut off his nose, thus deceiving the Arab, who let the Minister guide his army, with disastrous results. So Shamir and all his army perished in the Chinese desert from thirst and were not avenged until the time of his grandson, who forty years later, it is related, destroyed the Chinese King's capital. He then took part of Central Asia, where he left an Arab garrison, and returned laden with spoil.

These are legends, but legends with a core of truth. If there is doubt about the extent of Arab military enterprise there is none about the richness of their trade. Egyptian and Babylonian records are clear about it, and later the monopoly of merchandise from the East was alluring to Rome, which in the time of Augustus sent an expedition under the Eparch of Egypt, Ælius Gallus, to search for the source of riches and take it. This was the first attempt in historical times to find Arabia's wealth. He landed at Leuke Kome, a port on the Red Sea coast of Arabia between Umm Lajj and Ras Karkoma. Here the expedition delayed for many

months, gathering information and local allies. But the army suffered greatly from scurvy, and it was not until nearly a year later that they marched off with a contingent of Nabataean Arabs under their Prime Minister, Syllæus. The latter, if we are to judge by the result of the expedition, was no more trustworthy than the Chinese Minister of Court. They passed through the country of Aretas, or modern Harith, on to Negrana, which is present-day Najran, the southernmost province of Saudi Arabia, and successfully attacked the capital. When eventually they reached Mariaba, city of the Himyarite Arab sovereign, their hearts seemed to have failed them, in spite of the richness of the land, for they gave up after only six days' siege. It will probably never be known what made them turn back from the seat of Arab power and when only a few days away from the beginning of the incense country. Perhaps they came to know that half the Arab trade was that of a middleman and that they might reach its source by some other way. Whatever the reason, the Romans left the Himyarite Arabs in undisturbed ownership of their land.

Such are examples of tales from the misty depths of Arabia's history in the days of her early prosperity. Meanwhile disasters, or events which were to have disastrous effect, overtook her. In A.D. 45 one Hippalus, a Roman captain, had made a discovery of the first importance. Roman merchant naval expeditions towards India from Egypt had nearly always ended in shipwreck until Hippalus discovered the secret of the Arabs, who knew how and when the monsoon blew in the Indian Ocean: six months from east to west and six from west to east. From then onward Rome, building her own ships on the Red Sea coast of Egypt, could herself trade with India, and the Arab monopolist was reduced to competing with them. Then, in A.D. 447, the great dam of Marib, in South-west Arabia, burst, and the terraces and fields which had for so long fed so many thousands of families became once more dry and barren.

It was inevitable that internal struggle should follow upon

the new poverty and a new ideal upon its attendant misery. If there were strength enough in the race a renaissance would come out of the two. The tales of the Arab poets in the centuries just before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad are already stories of battles among nomad Arabs. Of these the tragic story told by the unhappy refugee, Imru al Qais, of the family of the rulers of Central Arabia, allies or dependants of the Himyarite King, is the best known to the Arabs. The capital seems to have been immediately south of the Wadi Rumma, on the road between Basra and Mecca, and from here they had been raiding Roman settlements in Syria, and one of the most enterprising of the Kinda dynasty, Al Harith bin 'Amr, had succeeded in making himself King of Iraq until he had to flee before the Persians. Two of his sons, Shurahabil and Salama, quarrelled over the rulership of the tribes. On the one side there was Shurahabil with Bekr bin Wail, direct ancestor of Ibn Saud and part of the Bani Tamim tribe, and on the other Taghlib and the remainder of the Bani Tamim under Salama. The encounter took place at the wells of Al Kulab between Kufa and Basra, and it ended in the defeat and death of Shurahabil. In the heat of the battle Salama had offered a reward for his brother's head, but Abu Hanash, who killed him, wisely anticipated his master's remorse and fled from the field without claiming his reward. The lament of Salama for Shurahabil is well known in Arab poetry. The Arabian poets rose to their greatest in these years preceding the coming of Muhammad, and according to tradition their best poems were hung in the pagan shrine built about the meteorite, one of the three hundred gods, at Mecca. Some of them have fortunately come down to us more or less complete.

While paganism was still alive Judaism and Christianity were progressing fast, and there were Christian hermitages in the Wadi al Qura, near Mecca; for the disarray of their economic order was accompanied by a groping after a new way of life. There is even an early Christian Arab saint, Aretas, Governor of Najran on behalf of the Abyssinian

kingdom of Aksum, which, supplanting the Himyarites, by the sixth century A.D. held more territory in Arabia than in Abyssinia. St Aretas and the Christians of Najran, converted by Phemion, a Nestorian, had been slaughtered by a Jewish rebel, Dhu Nuwas. Aksum, encouraged by the promise of naval aid from Byzantium, dispatched a punitive expedition, restoring order and gaining control of trade at the lower end of the Red Sea. The church in Najran was newly adorned with mosaics and marble sent from Byzantium, and the Christians prospered until ejected by the Caliph Omar. There were Jews in Medina; and in the Northern Hejaz, at Khaibar, there was a Jewish kingdom, with extensive irrigation works about its capital, the remains of which can still be seen.

Meanwhile obscure prophets preceded the coming of Muhammad. His own code was brilliantly well adapted to the needs of the people. Made strong by their new religion, inspired by their poets to emulate the deeds of their ancestors, impelled by an economic impetus and encouraged by the exhaustion of the empires beyond their borders, which had been weakened by securing in quantity those very luxuries which they themselves had formerly monopolized, the Arabs came pouring out of Arabia. City after city fell to them, and in little over a hundred years they were at grips with the King of France until at the battle of Tours both sides recoiled, beaten by the strength of the other. Only the swift information from his own peasantry enabled the French King to wheel about and defeat the Arabs before they too turned. By so little was their arrival at the English Channel averted. But the motive of their invasions, the decay of their home trade, had the seed of weakness in it. It was the move of armed populations rather than the expansion of an empire which Europe and the Levant were unwillingly suffering. They made new capitals—not one but several—neglecting Mecca, so that soon she had lost all secular control. It is possible that her armies in Europe and Africa even contributed unwittingly to her greater ruin, for they broke down the former courses of

trade, destroying the confidence of the western merchants in the coming of the caravans, so that by the end of the tenth century gold-mines like that of the Bani Sulaim, which had been worked from the time of King Solomon, closed down and remained so until reopened by Americans a thousand years later, in 1935.

Northern Arabia had nothing left to her save the prestige of Mecca among the Muslims. Year after year in accordance with the precepts of Muhammad and in line with the former pagan custom there came the devotees to perform the curious rites and age-old sacrifice. To hold the offices about the shrine, to be its guardian, its treasurer, its cleaner, was the honourable and profitable task of certain great families of the tribe of Muhammad's own clan, the Qoreish, or was in their giving. In the eleventh century the dynasty—if that it may be called—came to be overturned, and there seems to have been an interval of uncertain rulership until a Sheikh claiming descent from Hashim, grandfather of the Prophet, once more restored order. From this guardian of Mecca, Ibn Qitada, there is no break or uncertainty in the pedigree of the present Hashimite family, ruling in Mecca until the abdication of King Hussain in 1925, and now ruling in Iraq and Transjordan.

The army of Islam had fought in Central Arabia, but Mecca's control there, as in the more distant provinces, had faded away. Instead there rose small dynasties independent of any ties except tribal alliances. One of these princely houses was the Ibn Mu'ammār of the Bani Tamim tribe, whose citadel was deep in a ravine of the mountains in Central Arabia. In the east there had at one time sprung up a power, the Carmathians, strong enough to raid Mecca and take away for a time the sacred meteorite. It even dared to play off the Caliph in Baghdad against the Caliph in North Africa, but, as do powers who rely on such a position, they swiftly fell. The Sheikhs of the Bani Khalid tribe, possibly descendants of the Chaldeans, who roam to this day in Eastern Arabia, ruled the oasis of Al Hasa from the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century. There were

many others. They ruled for a time and were superseded. Even the Arab historians have not recorded them all.

The weakness of Arabia had exposed her to bold invaders, and when a crusading knight attacked her it was Saladin, a Kurd, and not the Prince of Mecca, who saved the Holy Land of the Muslims. Renaud de Châtillon, Lord of Kerak and Montreal, had conceived the plan of attacking Medina for her treasure. Descending on Ailat, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, from his own castle at Kerak, in Transjordan, he took it by surprise in the summer of 1182, and from the ports on the Palestine coast immediately began bringing over ships in pieces on camels, reassembling them on the Arabian coast. His raids upon the pilgrim caravans had already warned the Caliph of the danger to come, and his Admiral, Loulou, was similarly assembling boats as fast as he could on the Red Sea coast of Egypt. It was time that he did so, for by January 1183 the Christian force had landed at the port where the Romans had landed ten centuries earlier, and was making for Medina. The army was already within one day's march of it when the Muslims attacked, defeating them. Three hundred knights were killed or taken prisoner and the force utterly destroyed. Renaud himself was away in the north, but he was killed by order of Saladin when captured at the battle of Hattin four years later. He was regarded as a personal and unforgivable enemy by the Protector of Islam, and had long been known to the Arabs as "the devil from the West."

Arabia was no longer a goal for empires, and the Portuguese, when they came, took the island of Socotra and from there diverted the Indian trade from the Persian and Arabian seas to their own land by way of the Cape. This was the end of Arab prosperity and the beginning of economic chaos.

From then onward the Persian pilgrims going across Arabia to Mecca seem nearly always to have been robbed of most of their property by the predatory Bedouin or the marauding lords of the oases. They used the Persian

caravans as a cross between sport and trade, playing cat-and-mouse with them all across the peninsula. They offered and, indeed, enforced their protection upon them, in return for payment, and then they, or their friends, raided them as they went along. The only consideration which must have been restraining was that if they persistently and completely destroyed the caravans the pilgrims would come no more. With sadistic delicacy they usually postponed the final looting, if there were to be one, until the pilgrims were within sight of the Persian frontier. Tales such as these were brought back by the few European travellers who had entered the country. One of the earliest of whom there is a record went overland to Aden by order of King John of Portugal. He was shortly followed by a Bolognese adventurer, Ludovico di Varthema, who accompanied the pilgrims from Syria to Mecca disguised as a Mameluke and succeeded in visiting the Yemen. Varthema writes of the "Xeque" (Sheikh) of Aden, and was the first to mention in a European book the "Baden" or Bedawins.

In 1759 the Danish Court sent a scientific mission of five—Carsten Nieubuhr, a lieutenant of engineers, Peter Forskall, physician and botanist, Christian Cramer, a surgeon, Fred-eric von Haven, philologist, and George Baurenfeind, an artist—with a Swedish Hussar as a servant, to Jedda and the Yemen. Nieubuhr alone survived the journey, his companions dying from fevers and Oriental diseases for which they had no remedy; but undeterred he made the first reliable European report on the Arabian coast and the Yemen. He mentions that when on October 29, 1762, he arrived at Jedda he found there an English merchant trading in almonds from Taif and balm from Mecca. From the interior, at second hand, he heard stories of a new religious survival. His is the first account of the rise to power of the small dynasty of ancient lineage, the Saud family of Daraya, in Central Arabia. He relates how one Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab, born about 1696 and educated at Basra and Damascus, had returned to Arabia full of zeal for his religion and distress at the return towards paganism of his

people, and how he had made a convert of the Emir of Daraya; and gives an account of their early exploits together, of the purity of their code and its potential power. Their rapidly increasing adherents were named by their enemies the "Wahhabis," after the zealous missionary, and soon they spread fear far and wide in Arabia. Whipped to a remorseful frenzy for their long relapse, they sought brushes with the less orthodox, who, formerly regarding the Bedouin as less godly than themselves, now found their situation violently reversed. Decade by decade their power grew, and in spite of their almost impossibly high standard of austerity and occasional military reverses Muhammad Ibn Saud, the Emir of Daraya, and his son Abdu'l-Aziz had become masters of all inner Arabia by the time of the death of the son in 1803.

Just after the turn of the century the Wahhabis were strong enough to attack and sack Kerbela, in Iraq, where the wealth, and to them heretical form, of the shrine made a worthy objective. In 1803 they were in Mecca, and a little later Oman, Bahrein, and the Northern Hejaz fell to them. In April 1806 they attacked Nejef, the shrine of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, and by 1808 they were outside and threatening Damascus. They even took to the seas, capturing islands in the Persian Gulf and sending a missionary expedition to Socotra, in the Indian Ocean, where there still lingered traces of the Nestorian Christianity imported from Iraq through the Yemen thirteen centuries earlier.

The Turkish Sultan, who ruled the countries on the borders and sometimes alleged that he ruled Arabia itself, was thrown into shameful confusion and hastily ordered his Viceroy in Egypt—the Albanian soldier Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, ancestor of the present King of Egypt—to restore order and destroy the Wahhabi capital. It is said that at the council of war he placed a pomegranate on the floor to represent the Saudi capital and asked the assembled generals and members of his family how they would suggest coming at it. The elderly generals spoke learnedly of their favourite

tactics, none of which overcame the main difficulty that the capital lay, as did the pomegranate on the carpet, far away in the middle of a hostile country. The young adopted son of the Pasha then advocated suborning the tribes one by one; bending down, he slowly rolled up the carpet until it reached the fruit, which he picked up. He was selected for the command of the invasion, and landed with an advance guard of five hundred Moroccans and supported by a French artillery lieutenant, Vaissière, and four Italian physicians, to begin his tedious task of gathering an army and allies. It was not until April 1818 that the Frenchman was at last able to train his guns on the walls of Daraya, or until September 9 that the Wahhabi capital surrendered. Even then, when the army retreated, the Governors they left were not firmly established in the centre, but the presence of the Egyptians had enabled a number of Europeans to come to the coasts. The Swiss traveller, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, one of the most distinguished of the visitors to Arabia, landed at Jedda in 1819. Giovanni Finati, an Italian deserter from the French Army, took part in the Egyptian siege of Qunfidha, on the Red Sea, in 1814 and stayed on in Mecca afterwards. Ali Bey al Abbassi, a Jew from Cadiz but claiming to be one of the last descendants of the Caliphial house of the Abbasides and travelling in princely style, though actually a spy reporting to Napoleon, landed in 1807 and returned safely to Europe, disappearing once more into the obscurity whence he had come. In 1815 the Agha of the Mamelukes was appointed to be Governor of the second holiest city of Islam, Medina. He had been Private Keith, of the 72nd Highlanders, but, being very young and having been captured by the Muslims, he was made a slave and turned Muhammadan. A few years later, during the Egyptian campaign in Asir, the southern province on the shores of the Red Sea, an Englishman called Atkins was reported as being in command of the rocket battery; and there may have been others from Europe in the mixed Egyptian armies sent to the perilous Arabian front, where, in the absence of knowledge of tropical medicine, the

conditions of service must have been as frightening as the fire of the enemy.

It was a protracted series of punitive expeditions rather than an invasion and conquest which the Turkish-Egyptian forces undertook, and if the tide of their army came slowly in over the Arabian deserts, like a tide it ran out, to leave here and there pools, or garrisons, near the coast: thirty years later the only reminder of an ambitious march into the heart of the country in 1818.

The Central Arabians had once more, thanks to the belts of sand, poorly watered deserts, and the barren and intricate mountains which surrounded their capital in the Wadi Hanifa, been left to themselves, although the weakened Saudi dynasty was forced to allow greater independence to the princelings who had formerly come under their influence or rule. In the north the Rashid clan, Sheikhs of a section of the Shammar, gradually increased their strength and reputation. Such travellers as Wilfrid and Lady Anne Blunt or Charles Doughty were glad to visit the court of a prince whose renown was reaching Europe. They found that two things particularly distinguished them: the bloody murders which marked and were to continue to mark the succession of the Rashid rulers, and the purity and numbers of their horses. As the Shammar dynasty achieved, generation by generation, greater strength, so the Saudi dynasty at its new capital Riyadh, a few miles from the ruined Daraya, gradually lost its influence. At last, at the end of the century, the Emir Abdu'l-Rahman, through the defeat of one of his allies, found himself isolated, with no alternative but to fly the country while there was still time. With his small sons, Muhammad and Abdul Aziz, one in either side of his camel-bags, he made for Koweit, on the Persian Gulf; but, at first refused sanctuary by the Sheikh, he returned to Al Hasa and sought Turkish permission to reside there or on the coast, which at last was given him. The family fortunes and the family purse were at their lowest for three hundred years, and the Wahhabi fanaticism had died away in favour of a less austere way of life. Except for

rigid observance of the fasting month of Ramadhan, when none may eat or drink during the daylight hours—an almost impossible forbearance in the summer—Muhammadanism sat loosely upon the Bedouin. “Three Bedouin three Muslims, two Bedouin two half-hearted Muslims, one Bedouin no Muslim at all,” it was said of them at this time.

But the new order was not far off.

The boy Abdul Aziz pondered on his family's fate, and when the new Sheikh of Koweit determined upon an expedition against the Rashid Prince he begged for a small independent command to make a diversion at his father's old capital, Riyadh. The main Koweiti force was defeated by the enemy, but the smaller force stayed out in the field, too small to attract the Rashid force but gaining useful information and secret allies. When his force was some sixty strong the Saudi youth struck; leaving forty men at Jubaila, near Riyadh, he went on by night to the capital and with six men scaled the wall. Making for the house of the Rashid Governor, they broke in, stifling the cries of the serving-women who opened to them. Ensconced for the night, they waited the Governor's return from the fort opposite, where they had learnt he now habitually slept. As King Ibn Saud has often told, that vigil, broken only by prayer and coffee, seemed unbearably long. When at last dawn came the Governor stayed to look at his horses paraded for his inspection in the square. Beyond further patience, the small Saudi party rushed out to the attack. The Governor's men fought about him and tried to save him by dragging him back towards the great gateway of the fort, but just in time he was mortally wounded. The Saudis, rushing into the fort and on to the rampart, loudly proclaimed its capture; and the wondering townsmen, happy in the return of their old ruling family, came hurrying to their support. To this day the scars of spearheads are on the gateway from that fight. The story of the rise of Ibn Saud from that day until he had completed the reshaping of his ancestors' kingdom and its restoration on a firmer foundation than theirs is well known. It was a task which

only a quite singular man would have accomplished, and had the fight gone against him that day it is unlikely that any other member of his family would have succeeded. Arabia would have remained a setting for tribal wars and foreign intrigues, becoming more and more dangerous to the stability of the Middle East.

If the bursting of the Marib dam, and the discovery by Rome of the secret of the monsoon storm and of the Cape route by the Portuguese, were reasons for the long Arabian night of decline, the blood which flowed in the gateway of the Masmak Fort in Riyadh in January 1901, at the beginning of the reign of Ibn Saud, may be a token of its end. Some four centuries after the disaster at Marib there came a great revival; and now, four centuries after the Portuguese brought disorders upon Arabia, order came again.

Gradually, with unfailing perception of when to strike and when to be patient, of when to be ruthless and when to be forgiving, of when to drive and when to draw, the King had gained back province after province and moulded them into one kingdom, firm in its renewed adherence to the early traditions of their Arab religion. If at times there were setbacks, if at times the newly converted tribesmen threatened to become uncontrollable fanatics, he had by 1935 finally gained undisputed power. He ruled, from Aridh, in Central Arabia, over the eastern province of Al Hasa, where his Emir was Abdulla bin Jaluwi, one of his trusty companions on the night of the fateful skirmish at the Masmak Fort; over the western principedom of the Hejaz, on the Red Sea, where his son Feisal rules for him from Mecca; over the northern principality of Jabal Shammar under another warrior, Abdul Aziz ibn Musa'ad; and over the territory of Asir, in the south, where he placed Ibn Turki, a kinsman.

Arabia, from the northern end of the Persian Gulf on one side, across to the northern end of the Red Sea on the other, and down both coastlines, to the Yemen on the west and Oman on the east, is entirely in his hands.

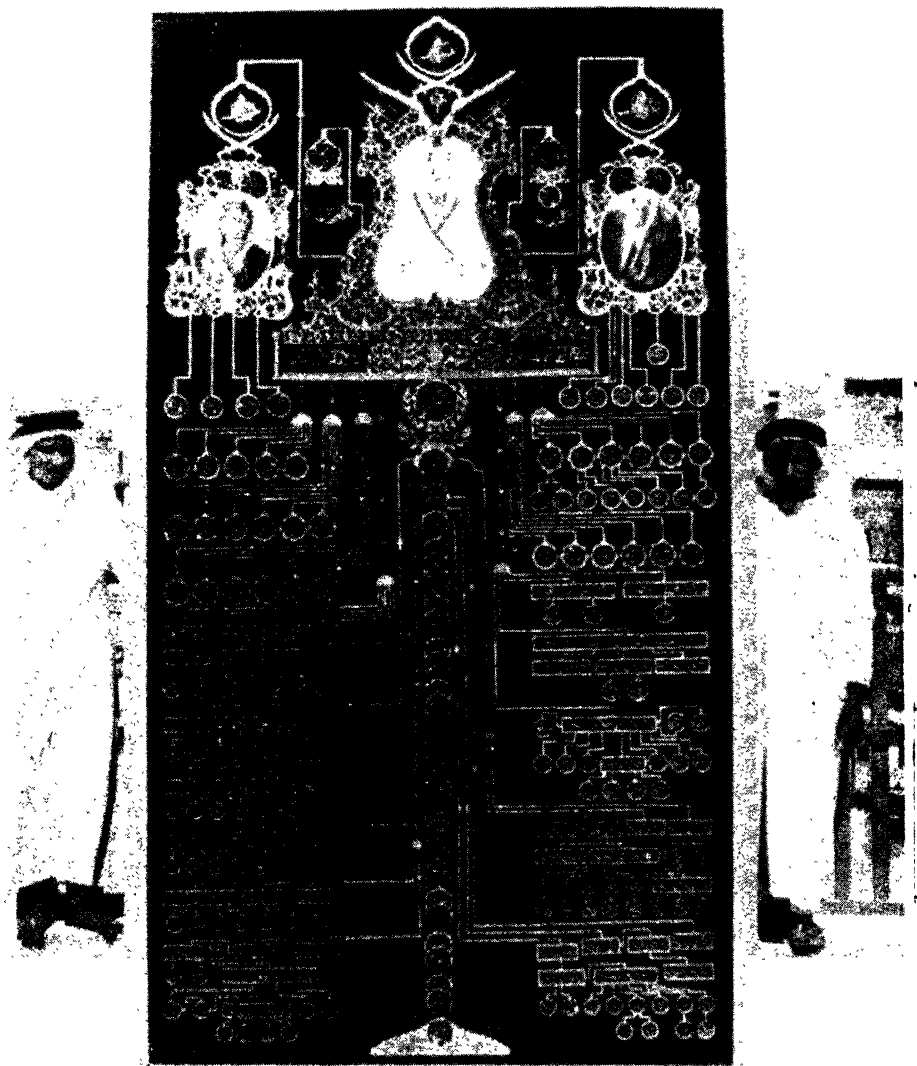
From one shore of Arabia, facing the Persian Gulf, to the

other on the Red Sea is a journey of a thousand kilometres. A traveller to the capital from the Persian Gulf has to cross 250 miles of almost waterless desert, of barren limestone ridges overlaid and parted by belts of sand, slowly rising all the way to the plateau of the Tuwaiq Mountains, the backbone of Arabia. But between the ribs of the range are deeply hidden villages and towns, flanked north and south by fertile groups of oases, Al Qasim and Jabal Shammar on the one hand and the Wadi Dawasir on the other. Beyond them, as large as France, are rich highlands, the country of Nejd, grazing-ground of the great Bedouin tribes. As they rise they become more and more fertile until they end suddenly in a great declivity, an obstacle of narrow and twisting valleys going down to the Red Sea: the Hejaz, or "barrier."

The journey undertaken by the British Minister, Sir Andrew Ryan, in 1935 meant traversing the whole of this vast country. It meant staying for a time in the capital, Riyadh, the city of gardens deep in the fastness of the Jebel Tuwaiq, and seeing there the hitherto hidden and long unaltered life in the Arabian oases. While we were there we might be able to see and hear enough to know whether the new state would endure or fall.



Ibn Saud and the Crown Prince, the Emir Saud



The King's Pedigree



Younger Sons of Ibn Saud



Ibn Saud and Two of his Sons



*H.R.H. the Emir Mansur, Comptroller of the Royal Camps and Caravan,
Minister of Defence*



"The Little Palestinian Chef de Cabinet"—Rushdi bin Malhas



The Sheikh Yusuf Yassin, Head of the Political Diwan



Royal Falconers



An Apprentice to the Sea



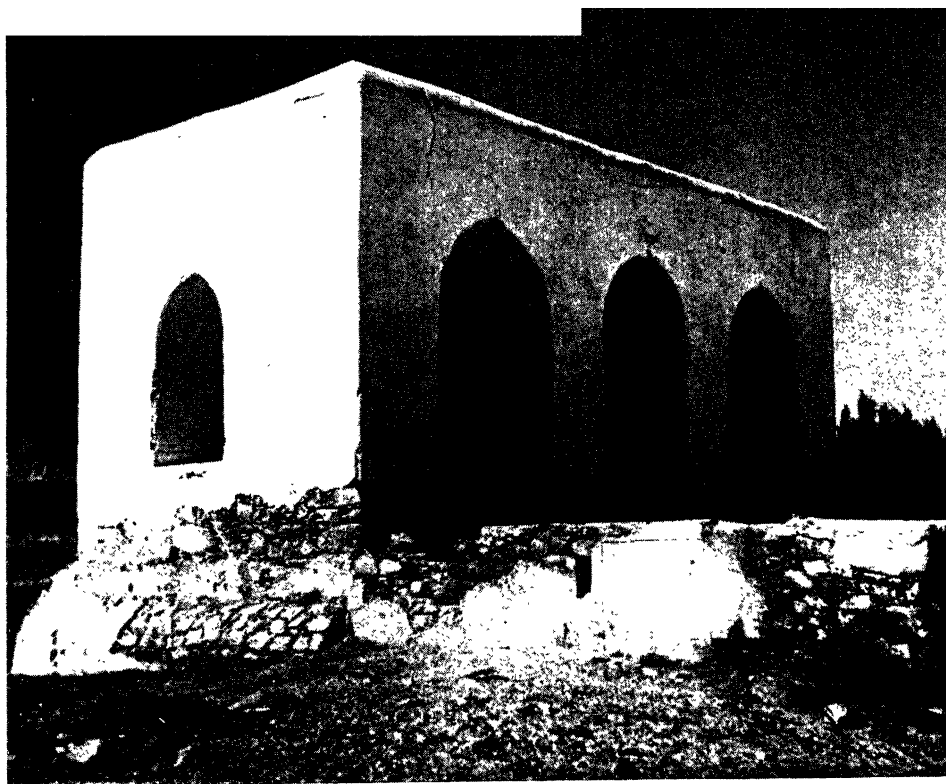
Caravan



An Elder of the Hejaz



A Good-humoured Caravaneer



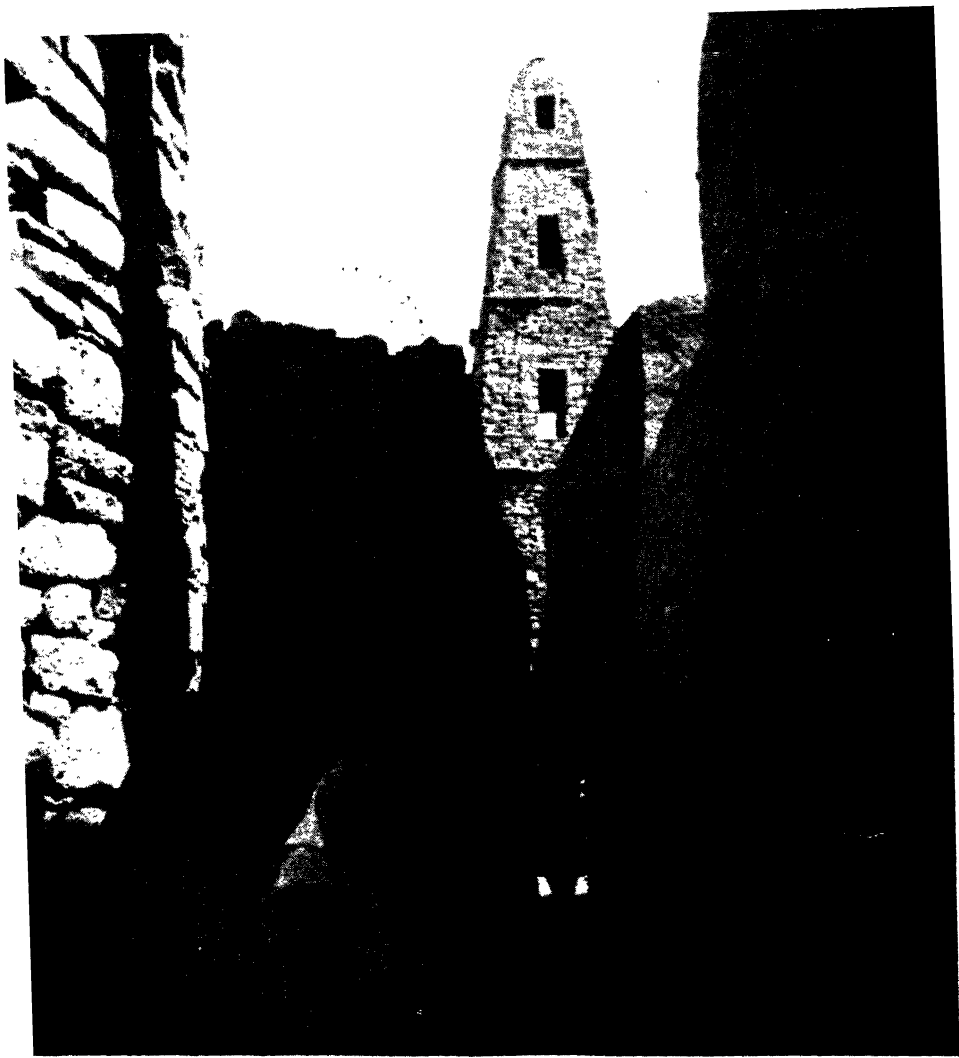
The Mosque of Jaraana



A Boy of the Ataiba, Tribe Central Arabia



Arabian Travellers



Duma, a town mentioned in Genesis

CHAPTER TWO

Bahrein to Al Hasa

O Zephyr hailing from Nejd,
You fan my love for her . . .

Bedouin ballad

IBN SAUD HAD ORDERED A ship to be waiting for the Minister at the island of Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf, and we flew there, in a Royal Air Force aircraft from Cairo, early in November. As the aeroplane came near the island, a dun-brown patch in an azure sea, we saw far away on the right the bare coast of the Arabian mainland. Here and there long, twisting peninsulas spread out into the sea towards us. Beyond them were low ridges and rising, shadowed hills, over which no aircraft had flown—the beginning of the forbidden land. Among the hills was the Jebel Dhahran, soon to be the busy centre of an oilfield, but now only one among several hummocks in the distant haze of unknown country.

As we bent towards the earth the heat came up to meet us with a sudden threat of what life means here in the Persian Gulf for Europeans. This low and steamy shore is one of the hottest places on the earth's surface. When we landed and the door was opened it was like stepping into a stoke-hole.

Our fellow-passengers, going to such comparatively humdrum places as India and Java, said especially careful words of farewell, knowing that we were bound for another world.

We embarked for the Arabian mainland on the 19th of November, 1935, on a ship which belonged to a rich pearl-merchant, Abdul Aziz al Qusaibi, agent to Ibn Saud. Abdul Aziz is very well known in the Persian Gulf and at Bombay and Karachi. The Gulf merchants have partners,

usually their brothers or cousins, in India, Aden, and even Zanzibar. Their trade is in the bringing of tea, coffee, cotton materials, saplings from Zanzibar for roof-beams, teak for shipbuilding, and shark-oil from the Hadhramaut for the dhows. In return they take down dates from Basra to India and pearls to be sent thence to the whole world. The voyages are long ones, taking from October to May, when the ships must come out of the Ocean to avoid the monsoon, and so that the sailors may go with the smaller boats to the pearling-banks in the summer months. The masters of the sailing-boats are efficient navigators, and their crews, mostly Negroes, live their summer days in the water, diving for pearls and swimming with the grace and speed of young sea-lions. Some of the merchant houses are very rich and have connexions in China and the Far East, for the Chinese like to have shark-fins as a tonic food and Malaya sends sandalwood for incense.

Abdul Aziz, from his small counting-house, open to the street in the bazaar at Bahrein, is in touch with most of the great Eastern markets, and Ibn Saud uses him for obtaining many of the goods he requires. He is a diminutive man, dark, lively, and extremely well-mannered. He dresses in the Nejdi Arab style, for his family, like most of the Gulf merchants, came originally from Arabia. As he stood with us watching the preparations for departure he twisted in his fingers a rosary of amber beads. His vessel was small and stood high out of the water, its poop built up to make a place more suitable to the leisure of passengers than to the control of a ship at sea. Silk cushions and Persian carpets were laid out upon it now, and we took our seats on this elevated position and surveyed from it the little crowd of officials and Arabs who had come to see us off, and the waist and prow of the ship, now being filled with our baggage and provisions. On the small deck there was tethered a sheep, one of the fat-tailed Nejdi kind, which baa-ed from time to time in a subdued complaining way. The cook was busy in the galley, as we could see, but the remainder of the crew came to salute us one by one. The

only other passengers were a nephew of Abdul Aziz—a youth going to sea for the first time—and an elderly merchant from Arabia. We made some pretence at offering to the sailors the price of a sheep, in compensation for having committed the fault of stepping upon a dhow in shoes. This is expected by them, and is an old custom of unknown origin. On so small a vessel it became an adventurous voyage on which we were embarking, and every one on board seemed to take the same view, and to be exhilarated by anticipation. It was a brilliant day, the first of winter in the Persian Gulf, and the sunlight glittered on a sea no longer steamy, only a little in movement and very green. It was delightful to feel the ship moving slowly off, and watch the low island of Bahrein slipping by us on the left, its white edge fringed with dark green palms.

Abdul Aziz entertained us with his conversation and sustained us with sugared plums from Damascus. Sir Andrew, unmistakably British, sparely built, tall, white-haired, wearing a dark suit and an old-fashioned white sun-helmet which was beginning to show signs of having suffered in its long journey from London, accepted the plums with diplomatic calm. The punctilious little bow he gave to our host would have equally suited the reception of a *note verbale* from a Foreign Minister. The old merchant discussed with him the profits to be had from trading in his youth, before the days of steam had removed much of their trade from the owners of sailing-ships. Pearls, too, had lost their former price, he told us. Abdul Aziz interrupted him to explain to us that he had dealt in black pearls—"two-legged" ones—a discreet reference to early ventures in the slave trade, at which he chuckled, and then, sighing, lapsed into an old man's reverie. Later he stirred himself, and, going to his sea-chest, busied himself with its contents, reviewing and checking his valuables and papers. One of the apprentices peeped with shy curiosity over his shoulder.

Soon the wind freshened, as we left Bahrein behind, and a sailing-boat in full sail came towards us at what seemed a high speed, heeled over as she was. Her shark-oiled teak-

wood was almost golden, the colour of ripe dates. Her great sail threw a shadow across us as she passed within a few feet, and the Arab sailors on her gave the usual hail and salute of the Arab seamen—a long-drawn-out “S-a-l-a-a-m.” Her captain shouted that there was rough weather ahead of us, and the sea was already dark with the wind.

Away on our right was pointed out to us the old fort of Dammam, once bombarded by the British. Only a very sharp eye could detect it, but soon the low-lying mainland of Arabia was nearing us, and to celebrate its approach luncheon was served. The sheep now appeared again, this time as mutton on a hill of rice. The Nejdi mutton is very sweet, and the Arabs cook rice in a way which seems unattainable in Europe. This was the first Arabian meal of the journey—the first which we ate in their customary way, seated upon the ground and using only our fingers to eat with. When we had at last done all we could to obey our host, who pressed us again and again to eat more, the apprentice came to us with a ewer and basin, soap, and an embroidered towel. It was easier to stand without swaying now, for the sea as we neared the shelter of the coast was already smoother. The little ship rode well, and it was only when we came to the rougher water above a reef that she gave a stagger, followed by little bumpings, making the low line of the shore seem to jerk up and down sharply like the insecure scenery of a music-hall. Now that it was calmer and the end of our voyage was approaching, the crew stripped off their spray-soaked shirts and hung them up to dry. Behind this cover I saw two of them surreptitiously smoking. In the strict code of Central Arabia smoking and drinking alcohol are both forbidden. It seems that Arab sailors, like other sailors, are inclined to permit themselves a certain laxness here and there as an offset against a life which at other points touches a hardness unknown to most of their landsmen compatriots. They came smiling to us and, kneeling down by the wooden rail, pointed out to us the landmarks, headlands and sand-banks, explaining to us how they found their way through the

intricate channels of the shallow sea and marked the harbour entrance by long sticks.

Abdul Aziz now advised us to dress in our Arab clothes, which were then obligatory for all foreigners entering Wahhabi Arabia. My diminutive little Meccan servant, Sa'id, or Sa'adan as he was also called, who had crossed the Empty Quarter with the explorer St John Philby, began to help the Minister, and by the time we had reached the quayside Sir Andrew was fully dressed as an Arabian notable. For travelling he had a grey-stuff gown from Damascus, and brown camel-hair cloak with gold-wire tassels and edging. He wore a black wool head-fillet and a cream Kashmiri wool headkerchief. For the evening and occasions of ceremony he had a more sombre gown, a black facecloth cloak with gold wire-work and tassels from Baghdad, a fillet with gold wire, and a white cambric headkerchief, on which was some embroidery in white. These cambric headkerchiefs are embroidered in Mecca, and the favourite design used to be a flowered one. In recent years it is considered gayer by young Arabian bloods to have motor-cars or aeroplanes embroidered on them.

Waiting on the quayside was a small party: the notables of Uqair, headed by the Emir, or Governor, a distinguished-looking white-bearded Bedouin, his camel-stick in his hand. He was accompanied by a representative of the King, a young official of the Foreign Office, Tawfiq, brother to Fuad Hamza, who was a senior member of the King's entourage, and later became Minister in Paris.

Uqair, often pronounced "Ujair," is said by some archaeologists to be the ancient Gerrha, a port at which caravans from Southern Arabia used to transfer their loads of incense and other merchandise to ships bound for Mesopotamia or to camels for Petra. Now the population is only five hundred, but there are some mounds which may cover the ruins of an ancient city. Yakout, writing in the thirteenth century, says that Sheikh Ibrahim bin Arabi, Governor of Central Arabia, of Yamama, under the Ommayad Caliphs of Damascus, was buried here, and speaks of his tomb; but

it is no longer to be seen. The only large buildings now are the long new customs-shed and the old Turkish fort. As we left the quayside the Governor told us that the customs receipts, at 8 per cent. of the value of the goods, had brought some sixty thousand pounds to the Government in the past year.

Small as Uqair may be, it is the principal port for merchandise on the east coast of Arabia, and we had to pick our way between hundreds of waiting camels couched for loading by their Bedouin caravan masters. The caravaneers were fine, wild-looking men, their shirts girded up, a ragged kerchief only half concealing their mops of hair, a dagger at the waist and a camel-stick—the long thin cane with which they tap their beast's neck to guide him—always twirling in their hand. Wildest of all are the Al Murra and the Manasir tribesmen from the South; more demure, better-dressed, with their hair plaited, are the men of the more northerly tribes—the Ajman, Awazim, Bani Hajir, and Bani Khalid. Arabs can usually tell to which of them a man belongs, and it is useless for a stranger to ask, for tradition forbids the answering of such a question truthfully. Who knows, so they reason, what evil may not follow, and silence is best. The Emir entertained us with sherbet, coffee, and little cups of tea while our baggage was being disembarked, and we sat in his diwan, an upper room of the fort overlooking the harbour and the headland of Ras al Hadd.

The low coast of Arabia meeting the shallow sea has a most irregular shoreline. Peninsulas of fantastic shape go twisting out far into the sea, like distorted fingers reaching for the not-distant pearl reefs. Between the headlands there idly floated strings of magenta-coloured weed. From the brown and white mass of camels below on the shore came an impatient groaning. The full light of the westering sun upon the white walls of the houses in the foreground was almost hypnotizing in its intensity. The Bedouin Emir's small reserve of conversation suitable to Europeans was already exhausted. Some sailors came to show us the re-

mainder from their last season's harvest at the pearling-banks. The pearls were mostly small black ones or baroque, for the best are quickly sold and sent to India for the outer world. The smallest pearls are sometimes ground to powder for use in medicines and traditional remedies of the Arabs. None of them doubt their efficacy, and they say that they have proved their case by long trial. As the sun sank lower the golden-coloured sand-dunes behind Uqair stood out boldly, in contrast to their own lapis-lazuli shadows. They looked formidable dunes for cars to cross, and we were anxious to begin our journey to Al Hofuf, the capital of Al Hasa, but there was a long wait before at last we had our caravan in order. Once started in these dunes the only safe procedure is to keep going as hard as the car will go. Our driver, like most Arabian chauffeurs, was adept in this kind of driving, and enjoyed his tussles with the untracked country and with the car, which he encouraged with shouts as if it were a camel.

The ridges of the dunes were athwart our track, so that crossing them would be difficult. Not far west of Uqair are palm-gardens already half buried in the sand for want of proper defences. The heads of the trees, bent to the prevailing wind, project pathetically, longing to be freed from the yellow peril of Arabia, the sand. As we ploughed over the top of one large dune we passed a lorry with our baggage, deeply embedded in the sand, with all its soldier escort kneeling at its side, like devotees, scraping sand away from under its wheels. We encouraged them with a gesture as we sped by, unable to stop without ourselves sticking to the sand. As dusk came we passed the walled and fortified village of Jishsha, on the outskirts of the oasis of Al Hasa, and thirteen kilometres from the fort at Al Hofuf.

The gates of the fort were closed when we arrived, but soon lantern-bearing soldiers came to let us in, with a chamberlain to conduct us to upper rooms in the fort for the night. The Arabs give a very cordial welcome to visitors, whom they take by the hand and lead to the guests' quarters, inquiring the while if they have escaped fatigue

and the troubles of travel. The quarters at Hofuf were built in the traditional Nejdi style, with deep arches and decorated with heavily cut plaster-work, like lace in mortar. The coffee-fire was alight, and the shout of "Qahwa" brought the coffee-maker quickly to his hearth, where his shining brass coffee-pots awaited him, graded in size like soldiers in a row. With a sweep of the left arm the coffee-man, slightly bowing, handed the little handleless cups of strong bitter coffee, the strength of which lightens the fatigue of travellers. A gigantic Negro, in a flowered gown, with a gold sword slung from his forearm by a sling of black silk and silver wire, came from the young Emir Saud Ibn Abdulla al Jaluwi, to inquire after our health and felicitate us upon safe arrival.

The minaret of the Citadel Mosque gleamed a deathly white against the blue of night in the open doorway. After dinner we lay fatigued upon our beds, until sleep overcame minds busy with the strangeness of an old-new world.

CHAPTER THREE

Al Hasa to Ar Riyadh the Capital

And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

Numbers xiii, 33

GUESTS IN ARABIA ARE GIVEN the best available rooms in the reception quarters of the house, which are of course cut off from the harem where the host sleeps. It thus usually occurs that the guest sleeps in a room which in the daytime is in use as a hall for visitors, with the coffee-hearth close at hand. As soon as one is used to this there is no inconvenience in what seems to a European, at first, a disconcerting lack of privacy. Every one is awake long before dawn for the prayers which precede the sunrise, and soon after they gather about the coffee-maker for their first morning sips of coffee. "May thy day be bright"—"May thy day bring forth good," they say, and inquire after the health of those newly arrived. The breakfast in Arabian palaces could not be better. There are—besides the coffee from the Yemen, the best in the world—warm milk slightly coloured with tea, dates, apricots, cheese, fruits in syrup, buttered eggs, olives, and warm new bread, fresh from the housewife's baking. The morning desert air, still cold from the night wind, gives new energy.

But, lively as we felt, there was no hope of leaving Al Hofuf. Our baggage had not arrived, and there was no news from the men left with the lorries, although every one was sure that we might expect them soon. We had meanwhile received a radiogram from Ibn Saud welcoming the Minister to Arabia, inquiring after our comfort and expressing his anxiety to see us soon. Sa'id had now appeared in his travelling dress. Short as he was, he had somehow contrived to have his shirt far too short. It reached only half-way down his shins and was more like a hobble skirt

than the voluminous and gracefully falling shirts which might have added dignity to the party. He was on the best of terms with all the men we met on the way, and was nearly always giggling. However oddly he permitted himself to dress, there was no question of his overlooking any shortcomings in our clothes. The slightest awryness in headkerchiefs or *hotta* was immediately made known to me by a titter from Sa'id, who made a distress signal, or came up to put it straight. Although he had, he said, three wives in Mecca and hoped to have another soon, no one could be less like the gross master of a large harem in European fiction than this twinkling-eyed little Meccan who had crossed Arabia several times and whom Philby had taught to skin animals and preserve insects.

The Emir Saud Ibn Jaluwi announced to us, through a captain of his guards, his readiness to receive us; and we immediately followed the escort, through corridors open to the sky on one side, to his reception-room. The entrance was through a darkened archway at which several of his soldiers stood on guard. These swordsmen stand in the manner of waiting courtiers, sometimes whispering a word or two to each other but always attentive to what their master may wish or do, and not like the rigid sentries of Europe. As they parted to make way for us we saw beyond them in a cushioned recess the young Emir rising to greet the Minister. He was a handsome young man, swarthy without being dark, having the slight and fine beard which is all that most Arabs, less hirsute than Europeans, can ever grow. His father, the famous and fearsome Abdulla, cousin of the King, had died less than a month before our visit, so he had had no experience in dealing with foreigners. His solicitous inquiries lacked warmth, and our conversation soon deteriorated into desultory and dignified remarks, all that his care for correctitude would permit him to risk and from which our ignorance of topics then current in the oasis prevented us turning it.

Abdulla, his father, had been a strong character, and right-hand man of the King in the east of Arabia. His courage

in battle and his stern justice were proverbial, and fear of going in front of him was often enough to end a trial before it had begun, for a guilty man, at the threat of it, would confess. Even innocent witnesses were frightened of him. "Turn your eyes away from me so that I may speak," we were told one had said to him. He was hawk-like in appearance and hawk-like in his swift descent upon the enemies of justice or of his family and the State. Ibn Saud and he had swept away the Turkish soldiers before the First World War, and the descendants of the former rulers, Sheikhs of the Bani Khalid tribe, had vanished again into the deserts roamed by their ancestors. It is thought by some scholars that the tribe is descended from the Chaldeans of the Bible. Sometimes the Bani Khalid clan is asked to give a girl in marriage to the Saud family or to the Sheikhs of Bahrein, but otherwise they are now little heard about except in tales of long ago. Abdulla held the province with uncompromising firmness for his cousin the King, and in his long life of rulership had turned all rivals into legend.

The long, tunnel-like hall of the Emir's reception-room was dimly lit, and down all its length, on both sides, were squatting armed men, their rifles upright between their knees. Between the Emir's remarks there was dead silence. The soldiers silently eyed us, their bright desert-trained eyes made doubly so by being ringed by black powdered anti-mony, or kohl. Theirs was the unwinking look of their own falcons. The sudden shout for coffee in this silent hall was disconcerting, and the tinkling of the coffee-cups came as a comforting sound. After the proper interval we sought leave to withdraw, but the Emir called for the incense and the rose-water without which no visit and ceremony is complete, and for this we waited. The censer is passed under the chin of the visitor and of the notables who may be present, and they waft it under their beards and into the folds of their head-dresses. When it has been taken backward and forward several times between them the rose-water is then sprinkled out of a long-necked bottle with a

rose top, on to the palms of the hands. Alternatively a handkerchief may be offered for a drenching. The dour correctitude of the Emir had left us in no doubt about our relative positions in his mind. It was we who came on sufferance to his Court; he who forbore with us.

In the afternoon we were taken to see part of the great oasis. There is something sinister, as well as attractive, about palm-trees in large numbers. They seem to make cool and inviting gardens, but once under them one finds they are often hot and humid, with green water standing in slimy ditches. The trees give shadow but not shade. The upper fronds rubbing gently against each other in a breeze not felt below make a little creaking rustling sound, as if the trees were whispering to one another about the intruders. The largest of the springs which feed the oasis is Ain al Saba, from which go off seven conduits. The branches of the palms hang down longingly towards the gently bubbling spring, clear, deep, and very green in its ivory-coloured limestone cup. Some gardeners came clambering over low mud walls to talk to us while two women made off shyly through the trees, fluttering their veils as they went. "A moon hidden by passing clouds" is the Arab poet's way of describing this technique, but they were duskier than a moon. Returning to Al Hofuf, past the Muhairis watch-tower and the battlefield upon which the rebellious Ajman tribe had been defeated, we dismounted by the Mubarriz Fort and walked towards the town gates. The great citadel, the Kut, which is also the Governor's Palace, dominates the oasis, standing like a king among his pawns, in the middle of squares of cultivation and protecting forts. Market-day in Al Hofuf is Thursday, and the lanes of the city were crowded with people from the garden villages and with Bedouin. We strolled among them unremarked because we were wearing Arab dress. This gave us a pleasure and a sense of freedom rarely achieved in the East, where the European, in his strange clothes, is always an object of curiosity, sometimes of ridicule, and often of cupidity. The people of the villages are lighter in colour and more stolid

than the Eastern Bedouin, who are sharp, bright-eyed, deep brown with sunburn, and usually small and often as dried up as a snipe.

Between us and the capital there were two hundred and fifty miles of inhospitable desert almost unknown to Europeans and not much frequented by Arabs. Across our path would lie the great sand-belts of the Dahana, and before we could enter Riyadh we should have to negotiate the jagged stony range of Arma, the beginning of the plateau, or "Nejd," itself. Our baggage having at last arrived in the evening, a start was planned for early the following morning. Tawfiq Hamza, the young official attached to us, had arranged our camping outfit and seen to our provisioning, on the King's account, and so there was no more preparation to be made by us. He assembled our party of cars at the hot sulphur spring and bath-house of Ain Umm Najim, a few miles west of the town. While the final arrangements were being made Tawfiq took us down into the baths by a twisting staircase. In the dim light a number of naked Arabs were splashing about in the pools or sitting on the sides. There can hardly be anything more enjoyable for the traveller or more conveniently placed than these hot springs outside the town. Tired and travel-stained, he can throw himself into the warm, softly sulphurous water. His camel-bags contain a clean or new skirt and a head-dress, and perhaps a carefully folded spare cloak. An hour or two later he can ride into Al Hofuf, a desert dandy with no sign of travel or fatigue upon him. Our soldier escort, now ready for the start, was mounted on lorries, which carried our baggage, tentage, some sheep, and other provisions. Many water-bags were strung round the lorries. Sir Andrew and I with a guide occupied a saloon car which was to lead the party.

The King's guides and bodyguards are selected from the most intelligent, trustworthy, and physically fit young men of Nejd. Salim bin Aqshan, our guide, like all his corps, was handsome, very well armed, and gaily dressed in a red kerchief and a flowered gown. The Nejdīs wear a very small

beard, merely a wisp upon the point of the chin, the underlip, and the angle of the jaw, and they part the hair of their heads in the middle and braid it into plaits which fall down past either cheek at least to their shoulders. The moustache is kept short, but in any case they have little growth of hair on the face, and both their moustache and beard are sparse and light.

Salim guided us out of the green Hasa valley by a rise called Taluat Juda, and thence onward the ground was bare and sandy. For mile after mile there was only an alternation of rocky ridge and sandy depression. At about midday, near our track, we saw a stone standing on end in a mound of smaller stones on the top of a rocky knoll. It was the simple grave of a Bedouin. They bury quickly after death, on the nearest hill-top, with no ceremony except pious expressions of submission to the divine will. In this empty valley it seemed to me the loneliest grave imaginable. In the hollow beyond was the carcase of a camel over which a vulture was circling slowly. Our cars bumped their way on and on, slowly, over the rocky ridges in the sand.

In the mid-afternoon, at some signal from Salim, we came to a halt. One of the older men went aside a little into the desert. The others shook their clothes out and pulled their head-dresses straight. Then, placing his hand to the side of his mouth, his elbow raised, the old man gave the call to prayer. One by one they took up their station behind him, their prayer-leader, or Imam. To this halting for prayers without warning—for, rightly, true Muslimin have not to ask infidels whether they may or may not pray—we became used. The other prayers were at a time when we were already stopped, in the evening, at nightfall, at dawn or at midday; but the time of the afternoon prayers would find us on the move. There is a cunning naturalness about this falling into line and these prostrations in rhythmic unison which even to the most devoted Christian begins to seem right; for the infinite and the unknown obtrude and the acts of God cannot be overlooked in these barren lands of Eastern Nejd. Like airmen and sailors, the desert-dwellers

live with the clouds, the wind, and the stars, and for them the workings of man fall into another and more distant perspective

In the sterile valley of Umm al Siqyan there were so many hillocks to slow up the car that it was just as quick and far more comfortable to walk. We let the driver pick a way as well as he could. At one moment the car would be perched on a mound, three wheels turning in the air, and at the next it would lurch drunkenly down into a hollow, nearly turning over. At last the surface seemed to improve and we sat in the car, but it was not long before the rocking began again. It made us ill and angry. One violent jerk cast Sir Andrew hard up against the roof of the car. His head was cut, blood running down his white hair, and as I helped him out he fainted. We laid him on a sheepskin coat, and the men made a pillow for him with their coats laid over a bush.

Forbidden as alcohol might be in Arabia, I had a bottle of brandy among our medicines, and with this we tried to revive him. I wondered what more there was that I could do for him, quite out of reach of any help, alone in that wild valley. We waited and waited.

There was nothing to do except hope that he would recover enough to go on. Gradually he did so, and slowly we once more made our way on over the desolate country to the hamlet of Al Ara'ira. It was almost dark when we reached it, but we could see that it was very small and falling into ruin. Owned by one of the rebel Ikhwan, Mana' ibn Jimma of the Ajman, it had been abandoned by him after the revolt. There were only seven houses, a few tamarisk-trees, and three wells of sweet water about ten feet deep. We did what we could for Sir Andrew, collecting all our sheepskin coats to make a couch for him. The cook promised strengthening broth, and the soldier escort hurried to make the camp-fire in front of him. As I sat near him, writing my diary and talking to him, a tiny child of the Ajman came to me and said, as one man in need of a trifle to another, "Give me a new shirt."

I could only say gravely that I had none with me of a size small enough for him. He nodded comprehendingly and went away slowly, his head hanging in disappointment.

Salim the guide, who belonged to the Ajman, the Al 'Arjan section, knew all the stories of the fights near here during the revolt, and in the intervals of our attention to the Minister told me about the battles of the past. I asked him to describe how they fought. They used, he said, to fight in the Arab way; and he described the chivalrous preliminaries of war among the tribes. When war began, he said, they still had the custom of taking into the midst of the fighting men the virgin of their sheikhly clan most celebrated for her beauty. Mounted on a white camel, in a howdah decorated with scarlet and blue tassels and surmounted with waving plumes of ostrich feathers, she surveys the army from the side of the standard-bearer and the commander. The scouts or eyes of the army—the *aiyun*—mounted on mares, having found the enemy position and reported upon it, the Sheikh gives the order for the camelry to advance to the attack. It is then that the girl begins to chant a tribal battle-song. Suddenly, as the Sheikh begins to urge his camel to the front, she rails at them. "Are there men in the tribe who will let it be said that on the day of victory they held back?" She scorches these imaginary cowards. To be thought a laggard by the most beautiful girl in his world is more than any man could stand. The churning mass of riders begins to advance, each man striving to be so far forward as to be seen by his followers and the girl. They fling back their replies to her taunts. Shots begin to go off. The Sheikh, or the chosen Aqid, his faithful Negroes round him, gives the battle-cry of the tribe, and the whole line advances to the collision with the enemy. When an army marches at night, said Salim, they like to have a chanter in their midst. For security they carry no lighted lanterns, but the cold and mystery of the night is dispelled and their blood warmed for the next day's fighting by the words of the poets and the chanting of the "Traditions" of Muhammad, their Prophet. For half a night, for seven

hours with hardly a pause, Al Ajairi of Al Hauta, chanter to the King, used so to hearten them. When he ceased to speak and only the padding of the camels' feet and the chinking of arms was heard, then soon the King's deep voice would be heard again by his men: "O Ajairi, speak out the Traditions to our army."

It was tales of these battles between camelry which Salim told me. They were perhaps the last of their kind which would take place.

After dark the barefooted Bedouin, padding silently about the ruined hamlet in their white shirts glimmering in the moonlight, were like ghosts, and reminded me of the jinns, in which they firmly believe; and so they should, for the story of their creation from fire is told in the Koran. They—the jinns—are almost as variable in character and incalculable in their ways as human beings: some good and some naughty, some harmful and some playful, teasing or mischievous but, unlike human beings, never boring. They come from the other world, but haunt ours, taking advantage of their ability to disappear into the ether, to put human affairs right or wrong, disturbing pedestrian earthly plans, from notions more spritely than divine, more benevolent than satisfactory, but with the authority of Heaven. Often what they have done sounds more like a spree by the very young, but their rank, like that of the eighteenth-century *jeunesse dorée*, brings them forgiveness unasked.

Far in the deserts or down on the coasts, in the gardens and among the houses, at any moment when you least expect it you may find yourself victim of their strange decisions, seemingly whimsical, enjoyably unusual, so that if they rob you of your peace it is well worth while. They may aid you when no one else can, when no human beings could come in time, so he does well who bears their persecution with loving uncomplaint. They are God's chosen sprites, not therefore to be crossed; strange spell-binding enchanters, flying hither and thither, entranced and entrancing. There are even Moslem jinns, and I have met Arabs who have seen jinns and were able to describe them; for it seems that they

do not leave footmarks, and thus their jinn quality is easily known if one goes to where they were seen and finds no tracks. One Arab, to whom it was recounted that English castles are at night sometimes frequented by headless ladies, carrying their heads under their arms, evidently thought more highly of such a country; and clearly to be quite "jinnless" would not be right.

The next morning we started very early, having made Sir Andrew as comfortable as we could with pillows and sheepskin coats in the back of the saloon car. Soon after starting we came to the little settlement of Umm ar Rabaia, where lived Ibn Qadhan of the Ajman Ikhwan, three miles to the north of our course. Afterwards we came upon sandy tracks, where the cars were soon embedded, and the soldiers once more had to drag them out. This enforced halting became quite frequent, and the Shaib, or valley, at Juda gave us particular difficulty. Pulling out cars and puncture-mending made every one ready for an early luncheon at the water-holes of Mishash al Hadi.

Towards evening we saw two palms alone in the desert, which the Arabs said were a male and a female. None could explain their growth or survival so strangely isolated in mid-desert.

We camped in the Summan plain, on a tract called Barbakh Wabdan, scantily covered with bushes which we pulled up for the fire, to which we were drawn by the growing cold as soon as it was lit. Sir Andrew could only walk with difficulty, and complained that his spine was hurting him. Hardly were the tents up and Sir Andrew installed beneath our sheepskin coats than there was a sudden wind-storm. It blew powerfully, gustily, and then stopped. When I went out to see the men re-making the camp-fires the stars were going out one by one, for a raven darkness was slowly covering over the heavens. As the fires had been out the evening meal was long in coming. When at last, late in the night, it was ready we were too sleepy to eat much of it. As it was taken away slow, heavy spots of rain began to fall. The men, warned by instinct, hurriedly began

to knock in more firmly the tent-pegs and pack brushwood behind the tents on the windward side, to keep out rain-water and the cold. No sooner were they finished with ours than the wind began to rise again. Their voices, as they ran to the other tents to do the same, died out before the rushing noise of it. The canvas of the tents bellied and strained beneath its increasing force. The lanterns guttered and went out. The cook's boy, a child of ten or so, woken by the storm, came slipping into the door of the tent for shelter, and crouched there, shivering but putting a brave face on his fears. We bade him come farther in, for he seemed small and light enough to be carried off by the gale. He said, in a whisper, as he settled down again at our feet, "God is merciful."

It seemed impossible for the tent to withstand the force of the wind much longer when, suddenly, as it had risen, the storm died away. There was a moment's pause, and then it rained—a straight, heavy rain, of oppressive continuity, but a relief after what had gone before. When at last it stopped the men dragged out some brushwood from where they had kept it dry and lit a fire. It was nearly the new morning, and we went to the fire after a time, to warm ourselves, stepping over the men as they—half asleep—sat down-wind by the blaze for its warmth, or lay curled up with their sheepskins over their heads.

At dawn there came again a chilling wind-driven rain from the north-west. One by one, silly with sleep and cold, the men went aside in the desert and, returning, huddled by the brewing coffee. Too cold to linger, we soon started off across the water-logged desert, on which there gleamed only a pale winter sun. All Nature seemed to have changed overnight. Creatures we had not seen ran before us on the desert, driven from their holes by the rain-water—foxes, lizards, and little desert mice. As the sun warmed them, and the thought of reaching their journey's end heartened them, the men began to sing—songs of war and songs of love—in the long rising shout which is the Bedouin's way of chanting.

There was one about a long trail of a girl across Arabia which ended—or was it only the first instalment, as one hoped?—at some port where she had been embarked on a steamer, just before the pursuing lover reached it. “I don’t want to ride in the *vapoura*,” lamented the belated swain, “I want a comfortable camel.”

Their ballads are hard to translate, not only for the difficulty of the language, but also for the variety of their similes. There was one which began by likening the hill-tops of a well-known ridge swimming in the midday mirage to “lumps of bread in broth,” and another extract given to a town-bred translator compared, according to him, “whiteness” with the “home entrance of rabbit.” A beautiful girl can be seriously described as rivalling a “Lux” lamp, the kerosene vapour lamp with an intensely bright light which they habitually use; and a young gallant as being “ardent as an eight-cylinder Ford.” The cult of the beauty of machinery would find many adherents in Arabia.

Soon after leaving our camping-place we were in the Dahana sand-veins, which at an early hour, when the sands are cold and hold together, are easier to cross than later in the day. The sands run north and south through the middle of Arabia and merge at both ends into two vast sand-seas, the northern called the Nafud and the southern the Rub’ al Khali—“The Empty Quarter.” Beyond the capital there is another double ribbon joining the two main sand areas, so Riyadh is unapproachable except through sand. Besides these dunes the desert seems open and hospitable. Their hollows are depressing, for there is a half-felt fear that the sand-slopes will begin to move, that the wind, if it rises, will bring down a wall of sand to bury one. From the crests the sight of so many other crests of sand, ridge after ridge, to the horizon, produces a feeling that there will be no escape. In point of fact, there is advantage other than good grazing to be had by camping in the dunes. In winter there is shelter in the hollows from the cold wind, and in summer the sand, burning hot at midday, loses its heat and becomes deliciously cool an hour or so after sunset. There is hardly

any sensation to please the traveller in Arabia more than that extreme contrast, after the fiery heat of the daylight hours, when beneath the stars he lies down to sleep on the cold sands and as he does so turns over to take a handful of the grains, letting them fall slowly through his fingers.

In the great sands of the south drumming can be heard as the wind plays over the particles on the ridges of the horse-shoes. In the Nafud Qunafidha there is sometimes a faint humming noise, and the same thing has been noticed in the main Nafud of the north of Arabia, at Wadi Safra near Yenbo', and elsewhere. Close to Jauf, Bedouin tell that there is a hill from which a loud rumbling comes. Others deny it, and I did not hear it myself; but that may be because it is intermittent.

In the middle of the sands we came upon a single wayfarer on his camel. I had met him on a former journey, and we stayed to exchange news of our mutual friends. The great distance over which the Arabs expect to receive, and from which they do receive, accurate information about each other is astounding. The prominence with which individuals, even if obscure, stand out in such a thinly populated country as Arabia is a perpetual surprise to Europeans. The loneliest parts of the Arabian steppe seem more friendly than the crowded capitals of Europe because the proportion of human beings known is higher in the desert.

We were only stopped by sand once—in the second from the east of the seven veins of sands, the Arq al Daghaïm—and congratulated ourselves on the ease with which we passed through them. The ground between the dunes, where the sand spills out on to the earth at the dune edge, is called *jandaliya*. East to west the veins are Dahoul, Daghaïm, Sirru, Jaham, Amr, Himrani, and Thamam, and of these the Jaham and the Himrani, throughout their whole length, persist in their identity. The rest in different areas change their names or disappear into one another.

'Dahoul' are the limestone caves which are frequent in the desert north of the sands. They often hold water after

the winter rains, and some are very deep and long, twisting about underground and so giving rise to strange stories of men lost in them, of treasure buried in them, of girls imprisoned in them, and of *afarit*, of *shaitans* and jinns who live in them. This hard plain dotted with caves is the foreground to the strategic sands in which aeroplanes cannot land and cars can only with difficulty pass, but in which camels and horses find good grazing and can move easily.

Just after the sand-dunes, near the wells of Ramah, we saw a car speeding towards us. It pulled up in front of us, and out of it leapt a black chamberlain with a message of welcome from the King. This delivered, the chamberlain darted off ahead of us to take news of our whereabouts to Riyadh.

We stopped at Ramah for a short time to look at the deep wells from which men of the Subaih tribe were drawing water for their camels. These wells, together with the wells of Ramahiya near by, are, or were, strategically important. Here is the only water north-east of Riyadh and its neighbouring oases, and there is none beyond them in an easterly direction for over two hundred miles. He who would attack Riyadh from the north or east with ground forces, therefore, must capture first the 'bridgehead' of Ramah.

The ground west of Ramah is rough and stony. Near the watercourses of Thamani we were met by members of the Minister's staff from Jedda. They were shivering in the thin white shirts worn in the Hejaz. Here in the centre of Arabia they gave us mail from the outside world.

Several dust-devils came by us. On a windy day there often come across the wide Arabian landscape tall towers of sand; twisting and twirling, like a dancer, dipping before darting onward or pausing as if for admiration, always with more life and power than is held in our word "dust-devil." These the Arabs call *muasar*. One such narcissus in the wind came hurrying towards us now, and, try as we could, we did not escape the sand-veil passing a warm caress over us. Higher and thinner it went, deftly threading a way between some grazing camels and their master's tent before at last

it tired of the game and with an unmistakable bow vanished for ever.

We were now nearing Riyadh, but the capital is guarded by a circle of hills, and we had first to negotiate our way down the steep cliff-face of the Arma plateau into the Riyadh valley.

The road has now been improved, but at that time the descent was perilous, and there was an overturned lorry at the bottom to remind us of this. The drop is about 250 feet in 300 yards, and this was the easiest descent of the cliff-face to be found. Drivers called it Al Bowaib, "the little gate," and so it has remained in name. Now for the first time since Al Hasa we saw some birds, a covey of *sisi*—the small mountain partridge. They glided away down a ravine in the Arma face; the sun shone on their wings and then silhouetted them against the dark and gloomy valley. Onward the track across the open desert is an easy one to Riyadh. Mushroom-coloured ridges and isolated hills dot the plain and hide the city until the traveller is very near it.

Pleased at being now so near their oasis capital, the escort took it in turn to sing. One song which they repeated for me I took down.

From the milch camel's udder, Marjan,
Make haste to draw for my Kohaila mare.
With the milk of the great grey camel
Feed her: even before the children.
Saddle her with the best of saddles,
Cover her back e'en to the head with the finest cloth.
Her legs are fine and smooth her quarters,
Straight as the barrels of a gun are her forelegs;
Great is my pride to ride her in battle,
When honoured pledges, by treachery, have been forsaken.
By God, she hurtles like a hawk through the wind
That rushes to tear its prey ere nightfall,
Swifter than a midsummer rainstorm carried on the north
wind.

The needle's eye in the top of a hill, called Al Makhrouq, warned us of arrival, and a few seconds later the masts of the wireless station, the dark line of palms, and the fortified

walls of Riyadh came into view. There is a delicate texture in the Central Arabian landscape, perhaps owing to its remoteness from the sea and the clarity of the dry air. Palgrave, a traveller in the last century, compared the scene to the Italian landscape, and on winter evenings particularly there is a close resemblance.

The deep palm-filled valley of the Wadi Hanifa twists out of the Jebel Tuwaiq, passing the city by its southern wall. The gentle valley of the Shaib Batha leads towards its eastern gate, coming from where the ridges and hillocks on the northern side protect the capital. The long line of the Arma plateau and the Jebel Tuwaiq are on the eastern and western horizons. The city is thus defended on all sides by ranges of hills, while farther out it is surrounded by belts of sand, so that there is no way of entry to Riyadh except across the dunes, and then by one of the difficult ravines of the Jebel Tuwaiq, or a descent from the Arma plateau. One can see what Palgrave meant. The successive bare-topped hills and green, dark valleys, painted with delicate care, the glancing light across them, and the deep blue shadows in the failing golden light of evening, go to make up a scene like the background of an early Italian picture, entrancing the traveller.

In front of this, stretched out across the plain, is a dark undulating line: the tops of palm-trees in the gardens which give the oasis its name, an inverted fringe above the walls of the city. Here and there among the palms peep out rooftops of the houses of the Royal Family and the watch-towers of the citadel-palace; patches of yellow ochre in the sombre green of the trees. Now, in the evening, long slanting shadows from the gatehouses and the intermediate fighting towers were thrown along the high, sloping mud walls of the city.

We passed the palace of the King's sister Noura, then the only house outside the walls, and drove on towards the Badia Palace in the Wadi Hanifa, seven kilometres from Riyadh. Crossing our track there was a busy camel-path from the north, and immediately we had some idea of the

activity of the capital. Single riders and small caravans were hurrying towards the gates before they closed for the evening prayers; for the gates of the Arabian cities are, or were then, all closed at times of prayer.

We now passed beneath the high defensive wall of Riyadh, from behind which were rising thin columns of smoke, marking where a hundred great houses had in early preparation their evening meal on the lavish Arabian scale. As we turned away on to higher ground to take the road for the Summer Palace the roof-tops of the Palace and the bigger houses again came into view. We leant out of the car to see all we could of the almost unknown capital.

It lay half hidden in the valley of the Wadi Hanifa and seemed smaller than we had expected, but with more palm-gardens than we had thought or been told. "Riyadh" means "the gardens," and perhaps we should have known that they might be very green and rich-looking after the rain. At night and in the summer there had been no such impression of a great oasis as I now was given. As the track rose over the hill between the city and the Summer Palace more and more gardens came into view on our left, in the bottom of the valley. From the summit we saw our destination, a long, low range of castellated buildings, on the far side of the shingly-bottomed river-bed. Facing us as we climbed up on to the bank was an open gateway and guard-house. On either side were walled lanes leading into the Royal orchards in the middle of which the Summer Palace is set. A welcoming and smiling chamberlain took us through the great courtyard open to the sky, to the staircase which led to the quarters prepared for us on the upper floor.

The Palaces of Riyadh are in the old Arabian style—with plaster-work wall decoration, painted doorways and window-shutters, coloured roof-beams and ceilings, many cloisters, and the three-pointed "broken column" feature which is used to ornament the walls of courtyards and roof-edges. There are crenels like those at Persepolis and on the top of the Gate of the Column at Jerusalem—dividing slits in the wall, through which soldiers could aim their bows, while

confusing the enemy as to which were heads and what was wall. Similar features in the form of eagles are on the ruins at Medain Salih, in the Northern Hejaz, and they are now usual in the domestic architecture of Central Arabia. The curtains in our quarters in the Badia were lemon yellow and a faded pink, and the divans and cushions were covered in blue-and-white striped material; the floors were laid with Persian carpets two deep, one upon the other. As night fell we sniffed with pleasure the cool air from the orchards, leaning out of the open windows and listening to the long-drawn-out note, like that of a discordant violin, made by the wooden water-wheels.

Unmartial music is forbidden to the Wahhabis, and the chamberlains, as they saw us listening to the wheels which draw from deep down the water giving life to their capital, said, faintly smiling as they did so, "This is our music in Riyadh."

To this note, sustained and lingering on through the thin dry air, incense of music, the tired traveller falls asleep.

CHAPTER FOUR

Riyadh (1)

High and gleaming are the summits of Yamama,
Like the swords of our braves in battle.

AMRU BIN KALTHOUM AL TAGHLABI

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING THE presents from the British Government, which we had brought with us in several packing-cases, were unpacked and handed over to Abdurahman al Tabaishi, the King's Chamberlain. Visitors to distinguished Arabs always offer presents as soon as they arrive, through a chamberlain or secretary. Nothing more is said about them, and neither the visitor nor host even mentions them to each other. When the visitors leave, at the end of their stay, the chamberlain or secretary will bring presents from the host, to which no reference is made when speaking to the host. The host will sometimes immediately give the present away to a relation, and this is to be taken as a compliment rather than the reverse. Presents to officials, unless they are of sheikhly descent and rank, are unusual, and gratitude should not be expressed to them, for in the Arab mind they are servants of their master, to whom alone gratitude can be appropriately expressed. Inscriptions on presents are avoided.

Royal business was still transacted in the old Palace inside the walls, known as Qasr Feisal, after the King's grandfather, and thither, in one of the King's cars, we were taken for a first 'informal' audience. We crossed the plain outside the city walls which is the couching-place for the camels of visitors from all over Arabia. The greatest number of Sheikhs come at the annual gathering of the clans in the beginning of the summer. They come then to see the King, to make any requests and complaints, and pay homage. Each is given presents suited to his position. It may be a

mare and bags of rice, arms if needed, and always the *kiswa*, or robe of honour, and sometimes gold. The King's counting-house is then busy from morning to night.

Now in November there were few visitors, but there was a crowd at the city gate and in the sandy lane leading to the Qasr Feisal.

For the Arabians, Feisal's old Palace, in the heart of their capital, is full of historical interest, like St James's Palace in England for the English.

A little way up a narrow street, not far from Feisal's Palace, is the Masmak Fort, which Ibn Saud attacked with a handful of men and wrested from the Turkish Rashidi Governor in 1901. Ibn Saud had waited concealed with his followers until dawn, when the Governor used to inspect his horses at the gate of the Masmak. On that morning the brave little band surprised him and his men, and after a fierce struggle in the doorway, where a spear still remains embedded in the wood, the Rashidi Governor was killed and his escort overcome. This story one of the Arabs with us told as we passed near the scene.

Their own history is very well known to the Nejdis. In a land where there are no mass-produced entertainments for the public, and few Government secrets, the recital of stories of the past is still welcome. The Bedouin whom we now saw thronging the markets of Riyadh could, any one of them, have given an outline of the history of Nejd for the last half-century, with a very near approach to accuracy. Brought up to these stories of the past, and ever on the watch that no enemy, or Nature herself, is not about to fling them over the narrow edge which alone in the harsh life of the desert separates them from disaster for their family and tribe, they develop a good memory and a surprising perspicacity. Detailed news that seems to have arrived with impossible speed is often proved to have been correct. The premises being known, the pondering Bedouin has worked out the probable courses following upon them and successfully prophesied. When the rains fall early in a certain district, and not at all in another, he knows what will follow.

The grazing will support a certain section of a certain tribe, who will therefore be there in so many months' time. Their customary water-holes and the rain-pools on the way there, and which are likely to be full, and which dry, are known to him. He can therefore often tell months ahead where, within a few miles, a certain Bedouin section will be. He knows by repute or otherwise the character of the Sheikhs of the most distant tribes. A Bedouin from North-eastern Arabia will go as far as 'Asir in search of a man who owes him an animal, or with whom he has some business which seems trivial to us in comparison with so long a journey. For example, they often own half-shares in a mare, and such cases give rise to lengthy negotiations when sale is later considered. Undeterred they set off across their world with what to us would seem foolhardy lack of provision and a careless reliance upon chance, but months later return with their business successfully done. Men used to life in the deserts, coming of many generations who have had hardiness beyond European belief in order to survive, are strong and wiry, sharp-eyed and hard-faced. They have not a spare ounce of flesh upon them. It is these men—nobles of the earth, even if a poor camel-herd in a ragged shift, or a penniless youth off to earn camels and a bride in the pearling-fields—who seek their way through the crowded lanes and markets of their capital, Riyadh.

We drove slowly through the crowds and along the guards of honour up to the main gate, where the Sheikhs of the Royal entourage were waiting for us in the darkened archways of the entrance.

To have done so was to have made a small but interesting footnote to the history of British relations with the rulers of the Middle East. The first British Minister to Saudi Arabia had made his first visit to the Saudi capital. It was the 24th of November, 1935.

Better still in the eyes of the Nejdīs, we had come with the rain. "Qudoumkum Akhdhar" ("Your coming is green"), they had said to us, smiling radiantly with the hope of fat cattle and no loss of life, which early rain portends. God

had favoured them, and we too were favoured by humble association with the Divine bounty this year vouchsafed to man and his beasts. "Welcome and again welcome."

"Qudoumkum Akhdhar," the waiting courtiers said, and taking us by the hand led us farther into the broad, dark, and sanded corridor going towards shafts of light where begins the stairway to the King's quarters.

There are many charming scenes in the corridors of the Palace. A knot of Bedouin consulting a cousin in the Bodyguards, or turbaned "Ulema"—that is, prelates—debating some knotty and, to us, madly irrelevant point of the law.

The Nejdis have a good sense of colour, and their dress, as Doughty says of their language, is of "conspicuous propriety." Although direct contact with the European world, through the Syrians of Damascus who now make the best cloth, is tending yearly to a greater sobriety, the simpler people and the Negroes still wear bright and harmoniously coloured dresses. The livery of the Royal servants is either scarlet or a pale lemon yellow, with heavy gold embroidery on the collar, cuffs, and fringes. Their dresses come from Bombay. The Bedouin Bodyguard, on the other hand, wear flowered gowns from Damascus, with scarlet and white kerchiefs. White shirts with sleeve-ends to the ground are the habitual wear of the Bedouin. In winter they use either sheepskin coats or a coarse brown or white cloak, made of camel- or sheep-hair. Shadowed arches or sunlit walls, mushroom-coloured, or a warm khaki, are the background for figures in whose dress browns and reds are dominant.

There is close observance of etiquette in the Palace, but without any rigid formality. Only the guilty and the weak, they say, erect barriers. "The surrounded surrender" is a well-known Nejdi phrase, which they sometimes vary by changing one letter, thus making it "the enwalled surrender," since the two words are almost the same in Arabic.

They call their chiefs, and any Europeans, by their names, without title, but they have a far deeper respect for proved leaders than is common in the outside world. They like

being in the personal service of a great man, and they often speak of him by the name of his clan. "The Sha'alan makes the Pilgrimage this year," and "The Nouri is gone to Riyadh," they will say.

The Royal business quarter—for the Palace is large enough to be called that, having the Government offices centred there as was customary in the days of the Arab Caliphs—has an atmosphere which cannot easily be described, for it is something not quite within our knowledge. The figure of Ibn Saud pervades the Palace, the Quarter, and the city. The people call him among themselves "Ash-Shuyukh," which is the plural of Sheikh. The "Shuyukh" are come, are gone, are dining, praying, hunting. All this news is given out hourly in the busy hive-like capital. On the stairways and upper floors near the Royal reception-rooms are always many visitors, officials and "servants," messengers and bodyguardsmen. The servants, "Khudam," are usually men proved as loyal and brave in past campaigns and of good appearance, now employed as tax-gatherers, messengers, or in other positions of trust. Visitors include Arabs from all the Middle East countries, and as we mounted the stairs we met descending a young Sheikh of the Ruwala Bedouin from Syria, in a cerulean blue *damiri*, or surcoat: an elegant young man who had evidently taken pains in order that he and his followers, who were behind him, should look well at their first visit to the Saudi Court.

The chamberlain took us directly to the antechamber to Ibn Saud's reception-room, and through it, without pause, along the soldier-lined white corridors to the low arched entrance to the Royal Diwan itself. One side, and the end of the Royal Diwan, had windows looking out on to a court. The other side was open to a sunlit cloister, so that those approaching along it can be seen without themselves seeing into the shadowed room. The light is rather strong from the outer side, rather soft from the inner side, and the end is in shadow. The floor, covered with dark and ruby-coloured Persian carpets, contrasted with a line of white

columns supporting the centre of the room. A beam of light struck across the middle of the chamber, and spattered the columns with its sequins. Alone, very upright, at the far end, stood the King.

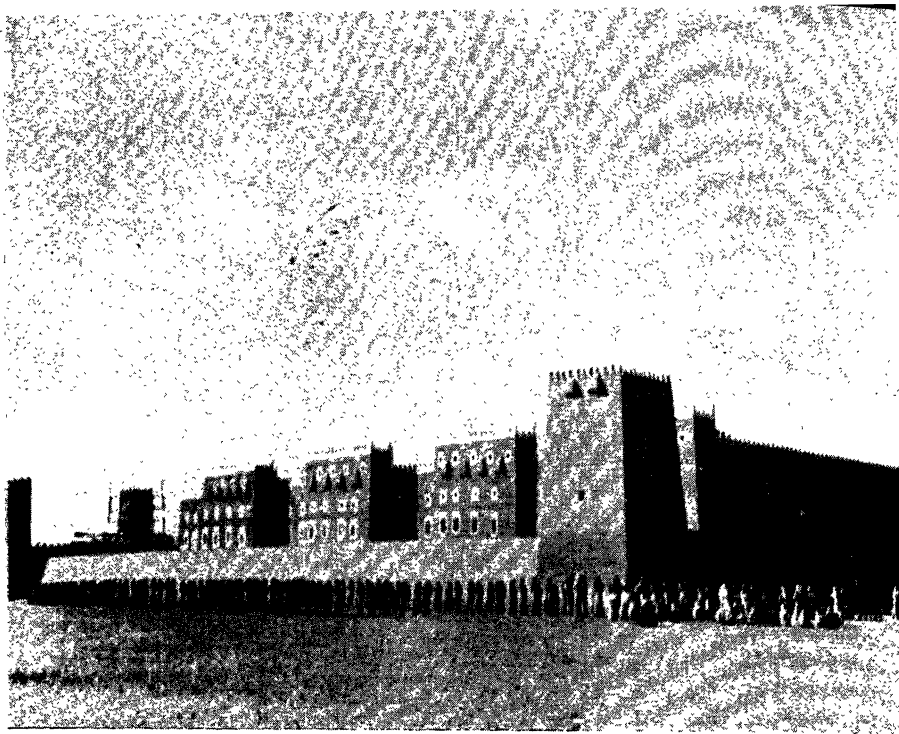
His whole immense height was drawn up to its full, for this standing with soldier-like precision to receive their guests is the custom of Arab princes. He was very still, and his cloak dropped from his shoulders to the ground in a graceful cascade of continuous line. His dress, simple but well made and carefully arranged, was a stuff gown of fine grey material from Damascus, known as "the breast of a dove," a brown camel-hair cloak, and a scarlet-and-white checkered handkerchief. His head-fillet was of black wool and gold wire, of the kind which in Nejd is the prerogative of Royalty and of those honoured by the presentation of one from the King. He had a white underkerchief, as it were for warmth. His sandals were especially made in the Nejd style. His signet ring was of silver and cornelian. His name, without a crest or emblem, was alone engraved on the seal.

In summer he wears a thinner cloak, and a long white shirt instead of the stuff gown. He is well over six foot high, and robust in proportion. His left eyelid droops somewhat over an eye now sightless. His nose is fine, but prominent. His beard is pointed on the chin, and small and close-clipped at the side. He sometimes has the fine hair of his beard-point projecting almost horizontally, like those of the Assyrian kings. His smile is very sweet and reveals well-made teeth. His hands and feet are fine and small for so large a man. His skin is white, much sunburned in the past. His right hand is scarred from an old wound, received at the battle against the Turks and his Rashidi rivals at Al Baik-airiya. On the field of Qanzan, in battle with the Ajman tribe, he was wounded over the right thigh. When the weather changes suddenly, when the winter winds come sweeping down from the Taurus after the summer heat, he sometimes has from this the aches old wounded soldiers know.

The King rises before dawn—to pray—and his day is



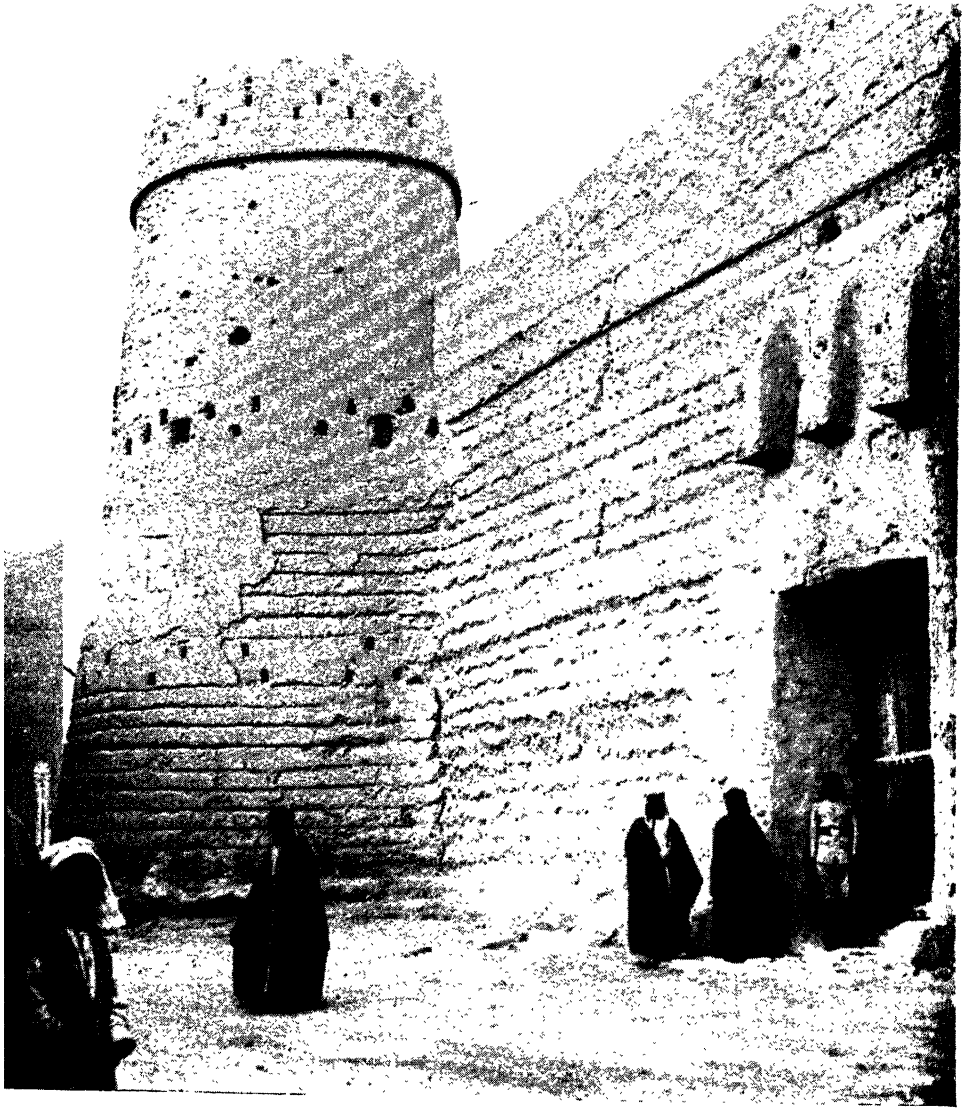
"There was a crowd at the city gate"



The Royal Palace, Riyadh
"An avenue of men"



The Covered Way to the Treasury, Riyadh



The Old Citadel of Riyadh, recaptured by Ibn Saud in 1901



*A Spearhead in the Door of the Citadel, Scene of Ibn Saud's
Fight for Riyadh*



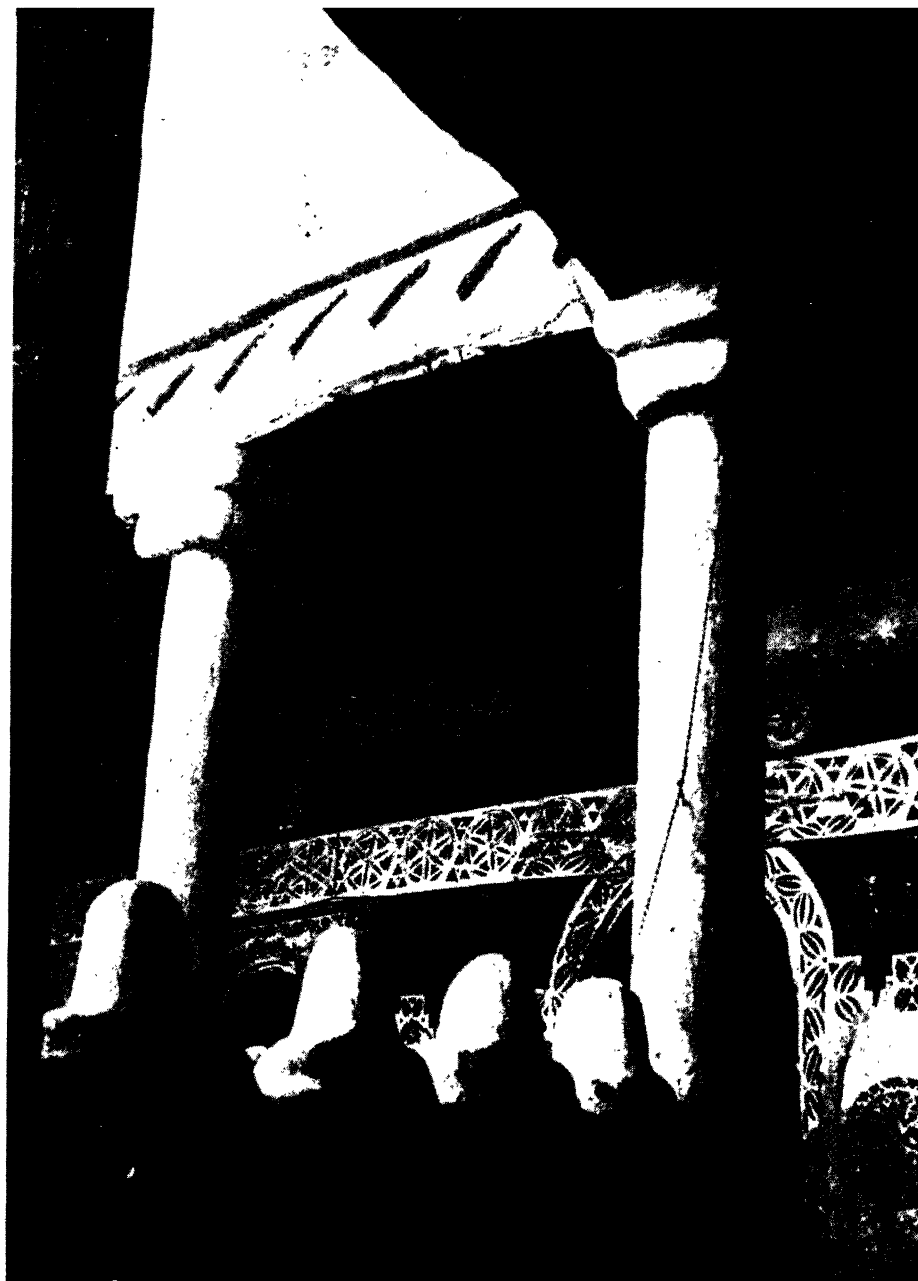
The King's Pool in the Gardens of the Summer Palace



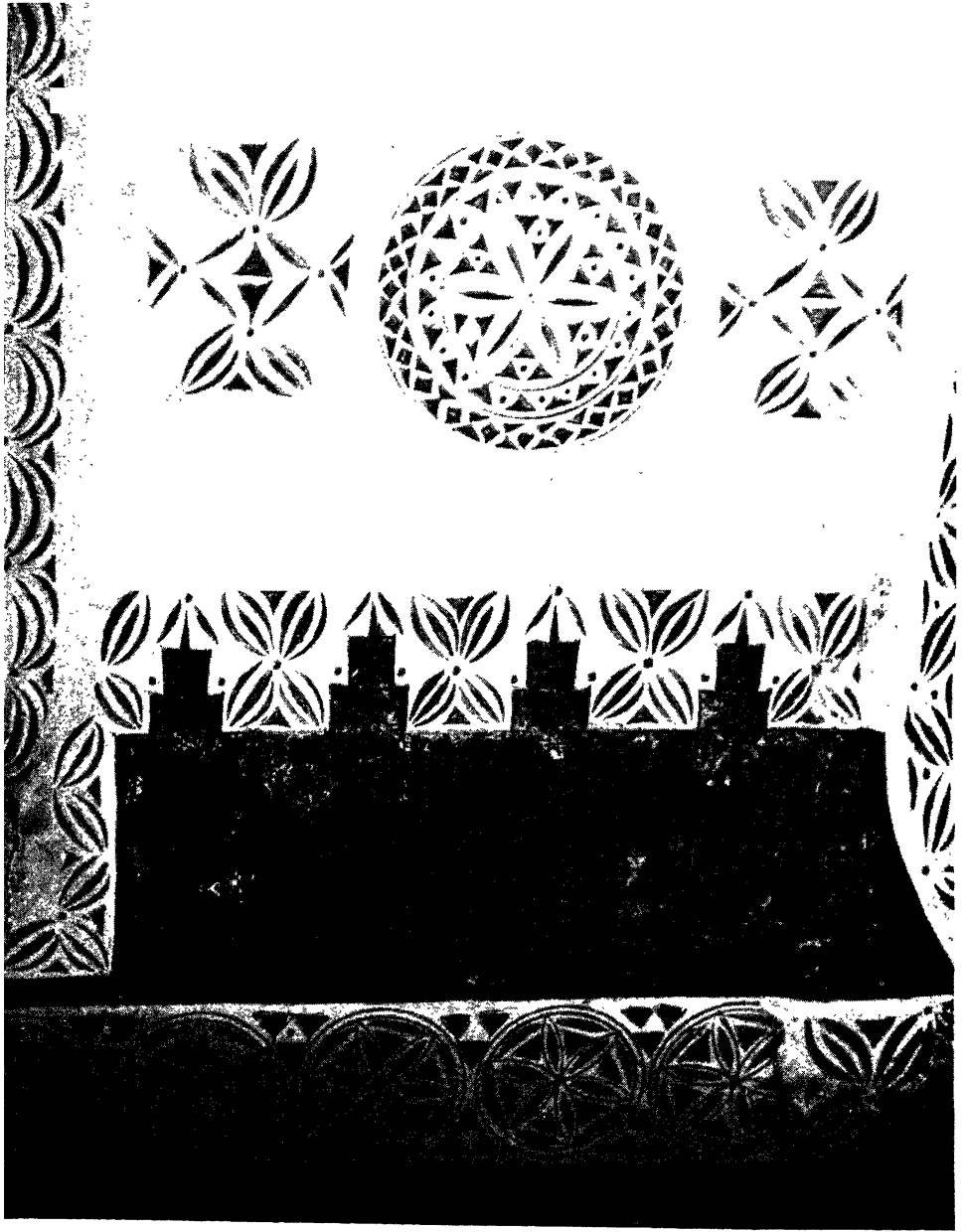
A Courtyard of the Palace, Riyadh



The Guest-house, Riyadh



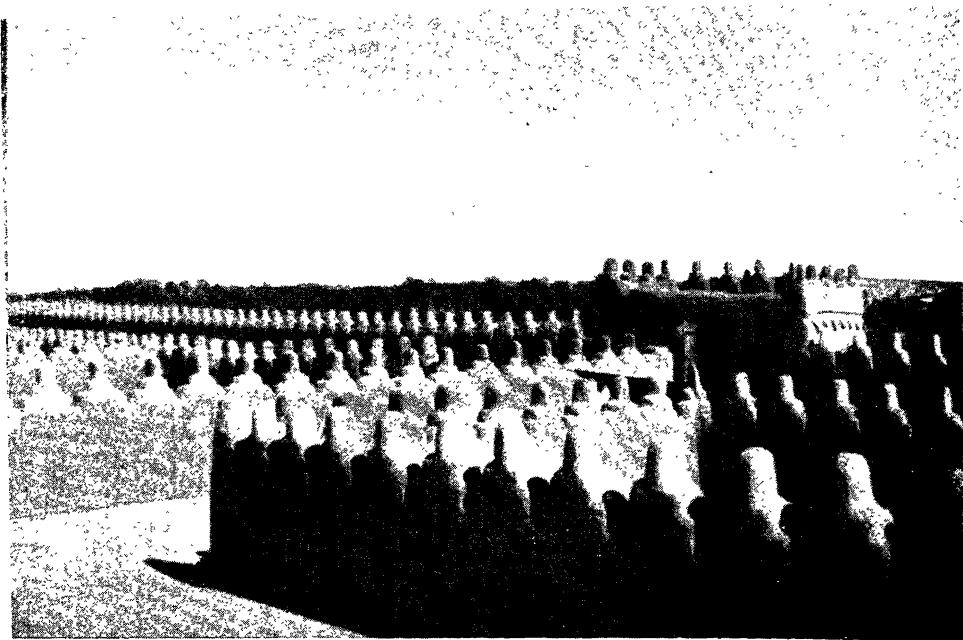
Interior Decoration of the Palace, Riyadh



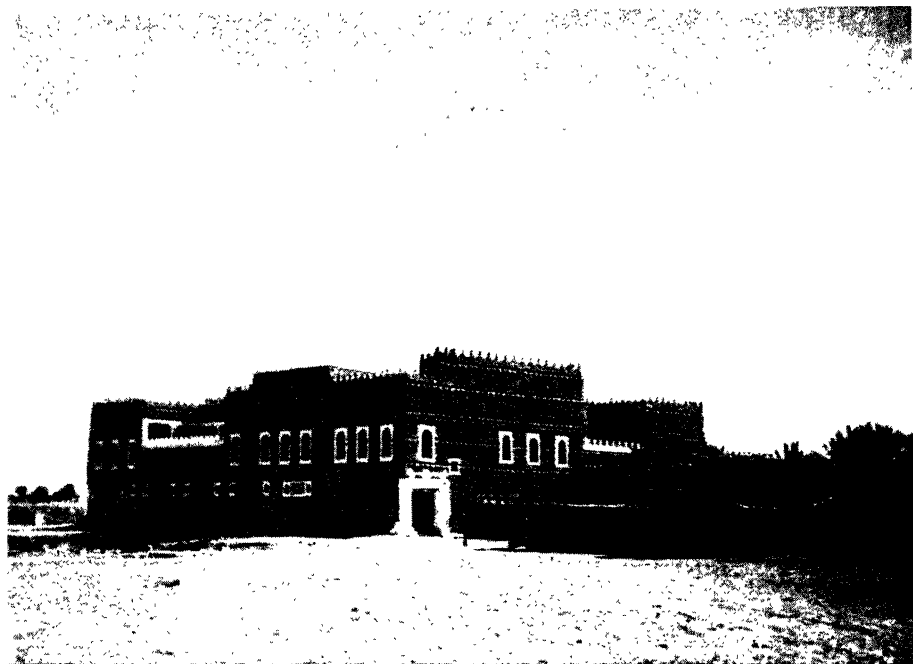
"Like lace in mortar"



Side-door of the Old Palace, Riyadh



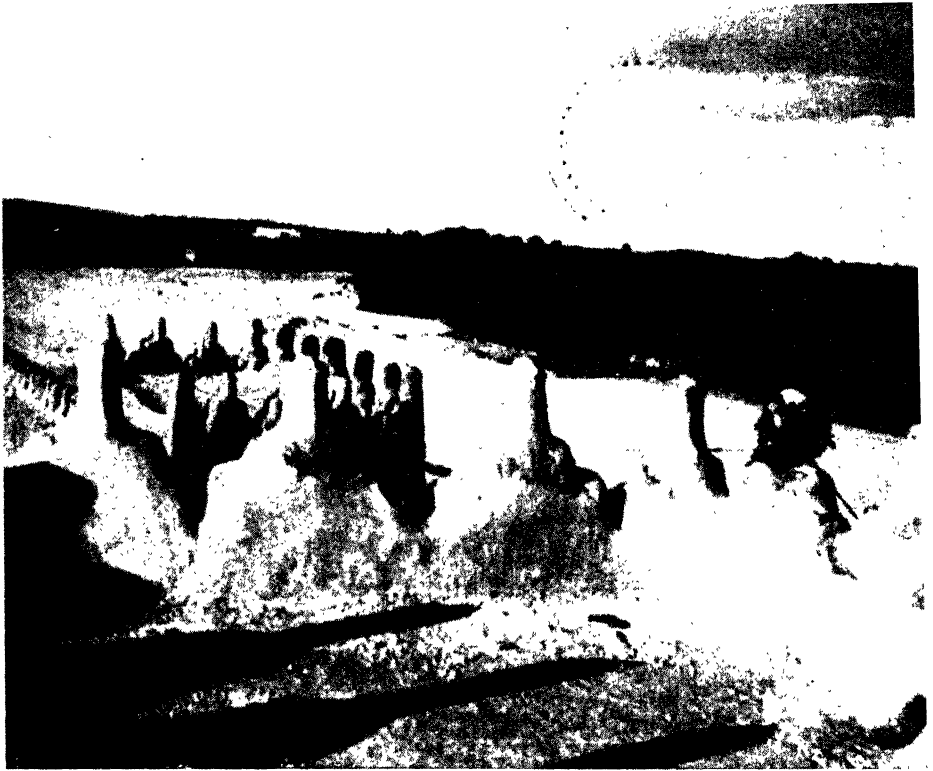
Roof-tops, Riyadh



A New House in Riyadh



"The gardens and orchards which line the banks of the Wadi"



The Wadi Hanifa, Riyadh



The Needle's Eye, Riyadh

divided by his religious duties: the midday prayer, the evening, the dusk, and the late prayers. He fasts punctiliously in Ramadhan, the fasting month, and nearly every year he makes a pilgrimage to Mecca. Readers of the Koran chant in the corridors of the Palace between the dusk prayers and dinner. They sit concealed in the shadows of archways, a little distant from the King's own sitting-place, so that their voices come softly to him like sustained notes on a distant organ.

His Majesty is a descendant, through Adnan, of Ishmael the son of Abraham, and he has thirty-one sons and about the same number of daughters. He is an ardent conversationalist and an indefatigable inquirer. Visitors of low and high degree are brought to the King for his interrogation. His advisers must seek out the answer to questions to which no answer is immediately found. Gazetteers and encyclopædias are in constant use in the Palace offices. There is no newspaper in Riyadh, but the wireless news from many quarters is read out to the King twice daily. As for his judgment and perspicacity, his men say of him that he is the "sleuth of all the sleuths on earth, swifter than the lightning in the sky."

While we talked the coffee-servers were at work. In the presence of the King coffee is always offered to him first, but elsewhere, unless the guest is in the employ of the host, the coffee is given to the guest first. If he is of about equal standing or below the host in age or in position it is polite to refuse to take it and to wave the server to the host. For this display of modesty the guest will receive nothing but approval from the bystanders. The Arabs like to see such politeness, and it is considered particularly admirable in a foreigner with an assured position.

The Persians in former days had a rigid etiquette, and departure from the perquisite of rank was considered tantamount to admission of inferiority or of diplomatic defeat. In this regard for modesty the Arabs are very different from the old Persians. If they appear to be immodest in their claims it will be found to be owing to lack of knowledge and

not of manners. A Wahhabi chaplain at an outlying fort, when I questioned him about his reading—having judged from his classical pronunciation that he was well read—replied with a glance of modesty at the listening soldiers, “Yes, I have read everything.” He had read all the old books known to them and which he could obtain—all the books in his world.

The King speaks forcibly and well, decorating his conversation with old Arab proverbs, Bedouin sayings, and quotations from the Koran. When he is speaking on diplomatic and political business he generally speaks at considerable length, arranging his facts to be noted by the listener in the clearest way, point by point to the climax, whereupon he leans back, shifts his position somewhat, and smiles with appealing charm. His freshness and clearness of view would be remarkable anywhere, but come with double hitting-power in the heart of Arabia. We were to have many instances of this during our stay. He himself says that he is like the Prophet Muhammad in that “three things in the world he loved: women, scent, and prayer.”

This first audience was an informal one on arrival, and Ibn Saud’s inquiries were only about our journey, Sir Andrew’s health, and our comfort in the Guest Palace, and so on. Sir Andrew therefore soon asked His Majesty’s leave to withdraw, and then—I suppose for the first time in Arabia, where respect is combined with less ceremony than in Europe—we removed ourselves backwards, three times bowing.

The swordsmen crowded at the door parted their ranks for us. Those in the corridors rose and squatted again in succession as we passed through them. It was like a parterre of tulips rustled by a breeze. In the sun outside it was warm. The air of Nejd made us feel happy and well, and Sir Andrew, although he limped a little, was now better in health. We were the guests of the most hospitable people in the world, whose surroundings were of the East almost untouched by the West. The temperature was a perfect

mean—neither hot nor cold, the winter Mediterranean temperature on a sunlit day at noon.

We returned to our quarters in the Wadi Hanifa to spend the afternoon in preparing for the presentation of the Grand Cross of the Bath next day, and for the other diplomatic business with which Sir Andrew was charged. From this occupation we found time to stroll in the gardens and orchards which lined the banks of the Wadi. Under the tall palms were apricot- and pomegranate-trees, divided by squares of emerald lucerne. Doves flitted up and down the sunbeams and wheeled between the dropping yellow palm-fronds. The wooden water-wheels made their long-drawn-out and quavering note, pausing as the donkeys reached the end of their inclined descent and commencing again as they moved up the slope towards the lip of the wells. The gardeners told us with pride about the capacity of their great stone-lined square well, as we hung over the side and peered down into the darkened depth.

The outfall of water from the Jebel Tuwaiq mountains sustains these gardens throughout the year, and all the length of the range—the backbone of Arabia—there are oases in the hollows below it, of which Riyadh is only one. Sulayil and Maqran; Salma and Laila; Daghara, Dilam, and Manfuha; Sadus, Hauta, and Majma'a—these, with Jalajil and Zilfi, are garden towns upon the mountain's flank; among them old fortified places, recaptured by the King in the early days of his climb to power and his ancestral right.

The sub-surface water caught in the limestone of Eastern Nejd, and used for their gardens by the Arabs, may be only a little part of the whole which goes down towards the sea in the depth of the earth. New methods of lifting may tap water now wasted and change the economy of Arabia. The Arabs think that their wells and springs are connected beneath the surface by subterranean ways, and have tales to tell of a wooden bowl dropped in one spring and later found in another a hundred miles away. They say too that they know when it is raining in a far-off district by the rise

in the water-level of their own district. In the Persian Gulf the pearl-fishers dive for fresh water in the midst of the salt sea, and rising from the under-water spring bring to the surface some wool from a sheep or camel, as proof that the water comes from inland springs. Water, in the waterless land of Arabia, has a new significance for the traveller, and he thinks of it, as do the inhabitants, as a precious divine gift. Like them, he learns to smell it at a distance, but unlike them, he cannot acquire easily that almost sixth sense which tells them where water, if dug for, may be found. An old Bedouin will often know where water may be struck when the expert from Europe or America has failed. Where the European can help the Arab is in the striking of water at great depth, with the aid of machinery, from his knowledge of geological structure beyond the Bedouin comprehension. With this assistance many new settlements may come into being and the life of the country be altered for a new richness. The protection of trees and bushes from improvident use is the subject of laws and customs of the Arabs. Whoever cuts down a desert tree at its roots is liable to severe punishment, and year by year certain grazing areas in each district are placed in reserve. The ruling families and the Sheikhs each have their own preserves and use them in rotation at different times for their camel-herds. These are age-old customs which the King will not allow to be abandoned. In Central Arabia, west of Riyadh, there are in consequence groves of trees and bigger bushes than in the northern deserts, which are bare of everything except low bushes. The Central Arabian oases are luxuriant and fertile.

Several of those survivals of the Middle Ages, Bedouin of the Royal Bodyguard, joined us in the meadows of lucerne behind the Badia Palace, trailing the ends of their gold swords through the grass as they came. They prefer the feel of a sword-hilt to that of the haft of a hoe, but they look wistfully at such greenery. They are great remembrancers of desert wars, and you cannot be at ease among them without knowing something of tribal descent and the strains of their horses and camels. Leaving them to their devices,

we returned to the Palace for tea, and then devoted ourselves to the plan for the following day. With the Insignia of the Bath the Foreign Office had sent the robes and velvet hat with ostrich feathers of a Knight Grand Cross.

The instructions about the wearing of the collar and robes were very precise, in accordance with the practice of courts, and it became difficult to follow them without a living model. As I was tall and nearly of the King's height, Sir Andrew employed me. One by one the pieces were added. In the failing light it was difficult to read the instructions, and a call was given to a servant to bring a lantern. Appearing at the door, he stood momentarily aghast at the figure before him, and hastily set down the lantern, flying back to discuss with his fellows this new eccentricity of the English.

What had surprised the servants of the Palace in Riyadh was to-morrow to be news all over Arabia. His Majesty the King of England had sent a robe of honour and jewelled insignia to the King of Saudi Arabia. Every man who could find a sword with which to go to Court was next day at the Palace for the ceremonious presentation to Ibn Saud by His Majesty's Minister on behalf of King George. As we left the Badia Summer Palace, escorted by the chamberlains and the guard which had come with us from the coast, we saw a number of late-comers, riders and footmen, hurrying along the tracks into Riyadh from the neighbouring oases. At the city gate and in the main doors of the Palace, in the corridors and ante-rooms the Royal Bodyguard was drawn up, an endless avenue of men in scarlet and gold, over whom the sunbeams fought the shadows.

In one of the doorways was the King's guide, probably the greatest tracker and guide ever known in Arabia: Mashalha ibn Hadhba, of magnificent appearance, his beard dyed deeply with henna and his eyes ringed with kohl. His corps of guides, and the cadets in training, stood grouped behind him. These are the famous trackers, men taken nearly always from the Al Murra tribe of the great waterless sandy deserts of the south, the wildest men of all Arabia, who roam confidently where even the Bedouin of the northern tribes

would hesitate to go. They can tell the spoor of a white camel from a black one, the footprint of a virgin from that of a wife, and a warrior's from that of a youth. All the other Arabs accept it to be true, although none of them is able to explain it.

Waiting for us, at the end of the King's Room, by the entrance, stood five of the King's sons. The King himself stood near them while one by one they greeted the Minister. Ranged in the openings from the room on to the corridor were crowded, rank by rank, the Sheikhs, soldiers, and servants of the Court, the Negro guards behind them.

His Majesty took his station at the end of the room.

The sword Rahaiyan, "the grinder," was close at hand, half concealed, at the end of his couch. In the cities the Princes and notables do not carry their swords. Only their bodyguardsmen do so, and it would be a social error approaching an insult for a visitor or Prince to carry one. But the King has one of his swords always near him. There is Al Ajrab, "the rusty from blood," and Raqban, "the severer of necks," or Al Khafiq, "the cleaver," with which he killed his rival Obaid bin Rachid, splitting his head in two in the battle of Al Baikairiya. There is Khatâf, "the snatcher," or Suwailah, the sword of his great ancestor Turki bin Saud's Negro favourite, and several others. These old swords seem to the Arabs to have character of their own, and they recount their histories with zest. There is a saying about Al Ajrab, the rusty one: "In the day when companions desert me there is ever Al Ajrab I press to my heart, a trustier friend than they."

The King indicated by a smile and by a slight motion of his head that the Minister should deliver his message from King George.

Sir Andrew's voice rose and fell—a very English voice and a very English accent—speaking slowly and distinctly.

"King of Great Britain . . . Emperor . . . greeting . . . friend . . ."

The King and the Court stood very still, listening to the message in strange language brought from a King beyond

the seas. Through the open arches of the windows distant palm-trees in the gardens nodded their heads to the midday zephyr, as if in agreement.

The rustle of his paper in the Minister's hand, as he turned it down at the end, seemed almost loud in that silence.

I read out a translation in Arabic. As it came to an end His Majesty moved forward to where, on his left side, lay the robe, insignia, and the plumed hat of a Knight of the Bath. Robes of honour are still given in Arabia, and nothing could have been better understood to the Arabian Court than the significance of this presentation. Ostrich plumes are used on the ark of the Ruwala Bedouin, of the King's tribe, the Anaza; they are used in the litters of brides to signify honour and pride.

The King in turn began to speak in deep tones clearly and well—his message of thanks to King George. His voice rose a little, in emphasis, as he ended. Silently, on the thick carpet, he moved back a little to his station at the end of the hall. As silently, moving backwards, we withdrew, bowing to the King.

As the King's sons smilingly bade us farewell at the entrance and the chamberlains came forward to escort us, there rang out from the Palace mosque the voice of the *muedhdhin*—the priest—calling to the midday prayers: "Haya li solla—haya li solla" ("Come ye to your prayers")—repeated and repeating, the verses of the call to the Muslimin. We passed through the narrow lanes of the soldiers lining the corridors, the edges of our cloaks brushing their arms, down to the great Gate of the Palace.

Near it, down a side-corridor, I caught a glimpse of a tiny wide-eyed child, wearing one of the Royal head-fillets of gold, peeping from behind a pillar, his hand confidently in the hand of a giant Negro. It was one of the King's grandchildren come to see and remember the first embassy here from the King of England to his grandfather.

CHAPTER FIVE

Riyadh (2)

And tall, and strong, and swift of foot were they,
Beyond the dwarfing city's pale abortions, . . .
Simple they were, not savage; and their rifles,
Though very true, were not yet used for trifles.

LORD BYRON, *Don Juan*, VIII, 66

OUR LIFE IN RIYADH ENABLED us to observe some of the customs of the King and his people.

His Majesty always has a number of men waiting at the door of his Diwan ready for his orders. When a waiting man is called the King summons him with the words, "Amsh, Yawald." They reply as they step forward by saying, "Sum," which may be a contraction from "Sama'an wa ta'atan" ("Hearing and obeying"). When papers are brought to him for sealing he reads, seals, and casts them aside in an exactly repeated movement, so that one of his writers, stationing himself in front of him and a little to his right, catches the papers as they dive towards the ground.

When the swordsman brings the coffee, made from husks and spiced with cardamom, in little handleless cups, he offers it only once, not three times as elsewhere. During an audience he is called twice again. The order is repeated loudly at the door and is echoed by men in the corridors until the shout of "Qahwa" reaches the coffee-hearth. The coffee-man, raising his pestle, says loudly, "Eh Wallah, Qahwa." The rhythm of the pestle in the mortar as the coffee is pounded pleases the Arabs, and the coffee-man taps the side of the mortar, between the downward strokes, with increasing momentum as he nears the end of his work. A cupful of the coffee is put in the boiling water in a pot which is then placed aside to simmer for three or four minutes. Meanwhile some cardamom is pounded up and half a cupful

is put in another coffee-pot. A piece of palm fibre is inserted in the spout of both pots, and the coffee is then poured through the fibre into the pot with the cardamom, and is ready for serving. In Nejd coffee is always poured out with the right hand, and they think it a strange ignorance when, in other Arab countries, it is poured out with the left. The cups are only filled a quarter full, and the pourer waits for the drinker to empty his cup before going on to the next guest. The religious sometimes prefer coffee made from the husks instead of the beans, for strong coffee is a stimulant and as such forbidden in the Koran.

In the Palace at Riyadh dinner is now usually served at a table, but in most other houses and in camps food is always served in the traditional way, the guests kneeling round a circular stand on which is a mound of steaming rice, surmounted by the sweet Nejd mutton. Below and around the stand are often placed little dishes of sweetmeats, balls of spiced stuffing, and desert salads of various kinds; if a caravan has arrived from the north there may be Damascus sweets, and there are sometimes Nejd fruits—dates, apricots, and mulberries. The apricot ripens in the spring, and in the northern valleys there is at this season a migration of small yellow-throated birds which eat the fruit if the Arabs do not save it from them by posting boys to scare them away. The birds at this time taste of the fruit they have eaten, like the *becfigues* of Syria which taste of figs in September.

Before a meal a servant pours water from a ewer over the fingers of the guest's right hand, which alone is used for eating. The host invites his guests to begin their meal and they say softly, "In the name of God," as they raise the first mouthful. Talking is not obligatory during a meal, but among Sheikhs there is usually some light conversation at least towards the end of the meal. The host—if he has joined his guests, which he cannot always be persuaded to do—remains seated until the last guest has satisfied himself and, if he himself is replete, to encourage the eaters to continue. As they rise, one by one, in the order of their repletion, they say, "God blesses a host," or one of the

similar customary phrases. The servants, or the host's people, or his children, again bring the ewer and basin to the guests for washing their hands.

Coffee, and sometimes tea and sugar in small glasses, is served after dinner. Conversation takes place before dinner rather than after it, and once the coffee has been served and the incense and rose-water brought the guests soon take their leave, preceded by a servant of the host bearing a lantern, who accompanies them to their tent or house.

Every spring the King and his Court move out to the deserts and stay there for some weeks' hunting. When the King's order is given for the long-awaited move there is at once a happy bustle in the Palace. The master of the tentage has to prepare some two hundred tents. First there are the great white marquees, joined to one another by tented corridors, carpeted, cushioned, and hung with samite, for the King's own use. Then there are many smaller ones lined with silks from Damascus or printed linens from India, and round-walled tents with scalloped edges to their conical tops, which have red or blue designs. Lastly, there are black goat-hair tents for the Bedouin retainers. The Royal kitchens contribute their vast copper cooking-pots and many sacks of rice and spices. The chief of the falconers and the gunsmiths have their own work to do, and the Office of the Signals has a mobile wireless station to make ready. At last the Prince who is a marshal of the Royal caravan gives the order for moving to the place selected by the King.

After rain, pools of water remain in the wadis and grass, and flowers spring up, so that the camp can be pitched in distant hollows of the desert downs, far from the summer wells.

The spring grazing depends upon the autumn rains: the *wasm*, or light rains, which come with the rise of the Pleiades, heralded by Canopus, or *suhail*. The Pleiades are therefore welcome to the Bedouin, and if the *wasm* is plentiful the spates rush wildly through the wadis, in which no wise man will camp in autumn. In such years there are truffles in the spring which follows, and sheets of blue irises decorate the hollows. As soon as they are settled in their camp each tent

household takes care to gather sufficient firewood to form a rampart against the wind at night, and as a reserve from which to draw for the camp-fire and the coffee-hearth. They are busy for several days bringing in the *hamdh* and *sidr* bushes, which have a sweet smell, unlike the *arfaj*, which is acrid. In the spring the *hamdh* scent is strong, and a desert in which it is growing is sweet-smelling. Xenophon says in the *Anabasis* how he remarked the sweet smell of desert bushes as the army descended the Euphrates, and Yacout quotes from a thirteenth-century Arab poem "after rain the earth smells of sandalwood, musk, and amber."

The air in the desert in spring-time is unbelievably stimulating. Lady Anne Blunt, travelling to Hail, in Northern Nejd, noticed it and first compared its effect with that of champagne. Instead of a yearning for the greener lands of Europe which might be expected to overcome the traveller, he is filled with a strange elation, and as the deserts beckon him on he forgets all that he has left behind him in favour of this new addiction. It is with pride in his isolation, not longing for them, that he remembers the nearest Europeans are some five hundred miles away. As his falconers loose their hawks into the sky after a distant bustard, so his thoughts go soaring in philosophical flights by which he resolves the perfection of life in the desert. His only fear is that he will be forced to return to the crowded Western world. He sees that world now in its true light. He thinks with unsocial horror of its squalid propinquities, and remembers that when there he used to be too hurried to reflect and too busy to hope. He pictures the close-set houses and streets of Western cities, the chain shops, the chain restaurants, the strings of trains. He recalls blocks of flats in which, it now seems to him, the inhabitants live less like human beings than insects, preserved in a hospital for experiments, admirably heated, their regularized food vitaminously correct, even their droppings carried away by machinery.

On the cerulean backcloth of the Arabian plain these pictures come to mind, in a Disney-like fantasy but in most

sombre colours; as a waking nightmare, a ghastly daylight dream. The traveller's elation subsides into a sad sympathy for tortured mankind in Europe and dread, a deep pervading fear for it, with a conviction that municipal amenities are only a palliative for a deadly cancer in the human hive; that the flower of the world wants most, not State-provided homes or social safety, but danger in good company, love, laughter, contrast, and conquest; that comfort without these is nothing, and that there is no comfort worth while between the Palace and the open places. Then he begins to see, as do the Arabs, the protracted history of the rising and falling states of Europe as a short and unimportant phase of infidel doings, best ignored by sensible Bedouin; so he returns to a happier mood in which to enjoy his desert days.

When the summer is approaching and the warmth at noon is increasing day by day the European at last thinks of the softer climate of Europe. Lingerin in Arabia, he is overtaken by the blazing heat of midsummer from which, in the open desert, there is no respite except in the black Bedouin tents whose woven goat-hair a little resists the scorching heat.

When the heat reaches its height the Arabs retreat on to the permanent wells, and soon their tents are crowded about them in hundreds.

In August even a camel can only last six days without water, and by the end of the summer the dried grazing is often eaten up within a range of three days. In this heat a mare is a useless luxury, for she cannot last beyond the first midday heat without watering, and as there are few areas with wells within the distance of a morning's ride from each other, the mare cannot be moved—except with camels carrying water-bags for her—until the winter comes again. Even the sheep need water every thirty-six hours, so daily, in rotation of the clans, the young Bedouin and their Negroes work at the wells, slinging the glistening skins of water from the derrick to the trough of skins and palm wicker, into which the camels quickly thrust their heads. For work at the well the Arabs tuck up their shirts into the plaited gazelle-skin girdles worn by every Bedouin next to

his skin beneath his shirt. The girdles of the men are made with three plaited thongs and those of the women with five, and they are also considered useful for restraining the pangs of hunger. The hoist is raised from the bottom of the well by a camel drawing it away, and it is allowed to fall by the camel's return to the well-mouth. The depth of wells, often two hundred feet, is easily seen by the length of the path made by the camel. The day's work over, the Bedouin gather at a Sheikh's coffee-hearth; and the *majlis*, or "sitting-place," of the chief Sheikh rings frequently with the noise of the coffee-pounding. His tent is usually distinguishable by having at least one pole more than other men's.

This is the time of their simple courting and marrying, of a more sociable life for them than in the winter or spring, and there is flirting at the well-head. Many are the ballads about the Bedouin beauties repeated by the young men, who, like Italian youths, long remain lovesick, before in the end more likely than not marrying some one else put forward by their family. First cousins are often taken as the first wife, for it is understood among them that a man may take his first cousin if he desires. This preserves the purity of blood and characteristic of the clan, while ensuring that the dowry of camels remains with it.

The Arab is much fonder of his women than some foreigners believe who have only heard of the harsher aspects of the "harem" system in other Moslem countries in days gone past. In Mecca lovers through the generations have brought into being a whole secret organization with a cypher for their language. By custom they may not meet, and letters would be regarded as blameworthy as a meeting. Having seen for a moment some one who seems desirable, they must somehow make their feelings known to the object of their love, and so the secret language is employed. It would be unkind to reveal the age-old secret of Meccan flirts, but the reader may guess the import of some of the signs which they employ. They send, for example, a leaf, a clove, some pepper, cardamom, salt, or a coffee-bean. A girl may send as a present a piece of embroidery, usually in

gold thread, as a tie for part of the man's dress. The messengers of love are little black serving-boys or girls, some of whom are so discreet and helpful that they make a fortune from rich lovers. Through the Meccan night there flit these dusky go-betweens, agents of an urge as old as the world, eluding with puckish dexterity the vigilance of the committees of virtue set up by the turbaned guardians of Wahhabi morality and by the austere elders of the city's nobility.

The summer over, and having restocked with dates and flour at the nearest market-town, the tribesmen seek news about the autumn showers from their Sheikh and one another. Depending on this news, they make plans for their migration. At first the tribes move together, in large numbers, but as the grazing springs up they become bolder and, dividing, go farther and farther afield, until in the spring only two or three tents are together. They usually place their tents on the side of a hollow sheltered from the prevailing north-west wind which, blowing down from the Taurus, across the open Syrian steppe, is bitterly cold. They wear sheepskin coats if they can, and at night close the open side of the tent with the camels and bring the sheep up behind this rampart. The embers from the coffee-hearth cast a flickering light upon the mass of animals, which is a comforting sight to the Bedouin owner, unless the wind changes or wolves come. A changing wind means that the women, whose task it is, must change the face of the tent away from the direction of the wind, and a wolf means that the young men must rise up and take care that no lambs are killed.

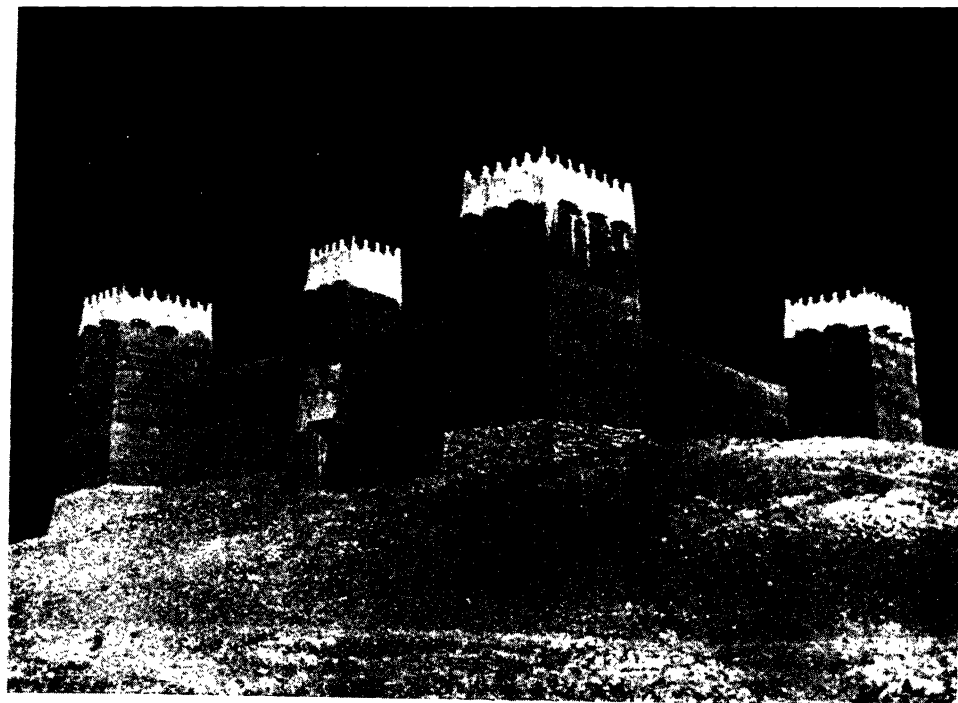
The Bedouin eat no meat for many days together. Flour messes and sheep- or camel-milk, with dates, date juice, and curds, are their staple fare. In the winter, if there has been little rain in the autumn, so that the grazing is poor when the cold winds come, the loss in animals is very high and as many as eighty sheep out of a hundred may die. The outside world is the poorer for the carcasses which now, winter after winter, litter the deserts and make only food for wolves. Sometimes, usually during the colder half of the

year, there is a plague of locusts. When the first arrivals come they are welcome as a delicacy, and the little boys run about gathering them up in a kerchief. A passing traveller will be offered a bowlful of them as a courtesy. They taste not unlike fish-roe, but have a more vegetable flavour. With their wings, legs, and head removed, and cooked in butter, they are not unpalatable. If they begin to come in great numbers they not only do great damage in the oases to the gardens but are most disagreeable to see—and to feel, for there is no escaping them. They fly in one's face. They come into rooms however closely you may try to secure doors and windows. If those of them which come behind cannot find something on which to feed they eat those in front. If they are of the kind which flutter short distances and they come to an obstacle their ranks pile up one on another, making a heap of dead and dying from which there comes a loathsome smell. The Arabs go out to try to set fire to them or stop them by whatever means they can devise. A few are a tasty rarity, but when they come in uncontrollable hordes they are a most disgusting disaster. Wild honey and locusts are still eaten in Arabia.

The education of the Nejdi Arab is a practical one. Almost as soon as the children are weaned they are looked after by a man, for the Arabs say, "How can a woman teach a boy to be a man?" Each boy of a Sheikh's family is given a black boy of the same age as a companion. They usually remain together all their lives, and the Negro often becomes the most trusted confidant. The boys go together to learn the Koran by heart from the turbaned *alim* or *mutawwa*, as it were canon or chaplain. They are taught to read the old Arabic authors, and nowadays the geography of the world and other subjects useful to them. English is the favourite foreign language, but only the most advanced attempt this in Nejd. In the Hejaz the city of Mecca is an intellectual centre where the standard in theoretical knowledge is higher. In Nejd they devote more time to practical subjects, and the small Princes now learn to drive a motor-car when only ten or twelve years old. Sometimes they are

sent in the traditional way to live with the Bedouin for hardening and learning the Bedouin arts. The small Bedouin boys often range about naked in the summer, and early learn to climb on to the back of a camel. Later it is their ambition, as soon as big enough, to mount a mare from the spring and ride bare-back or go out with the herdsman to look after the camels. They learn about the stars and how to find their way by them: "Keep the North Star behind the left shoulder as far as such and such a place," or "Behind the right shoulder from there to such and such a well," or "Between the two eyes." The youths are allowed to sit with the men in the evening, behind them, in a dark corner or the mouth of the tent from where they listen to the counsels of their elders. They go everywhere with them and are never segregated for three-quarters of the year like children in the Western world. Were not the language a difficulty, healthy Western children might do worse than spend one winter holiday with the hardy Bedouin.

Falconry is much practised in Nejd, and every tent household likes to have its hawk to catch the desert game—the gazelle, bustard, and hare. The hawks are usually brought by caravans coming from Basra, for the birds are caught young in Southern Iraq and South-western Persia. Even when freshly caught they are expensive—two English pounds being about the price asked. They are of two kinds, the *wichri* or *wikri*, and the *hurr*—the "covert" and the "free"—both of them Saker hawks, called by the Arabs "Saqr," from which presumably Saker comes. The *wichri* is generally a little whiter in breast plumage than the *hurr*. Between the male and female no one can distinguish, as they never breed in captivity and there is no apparent difference. The Bedouin are not very well informed about the training of hawks, and often lose their birds fairly soon, but certain among them and the servants of the King know all there is to know, keeping a falcon all its life. Such men, falconers before all else, carry their bird with them and sleep with it beside them on its stool.



Fort near Riyadh



Bedouin Tents outside the Capital



Bedouin Women



A Hooded Bedouin



A Bedouin Beauty of the Ataiba Tribe





Indians arriving at Mecca



Arabian Travellers



Pilgrims



Pilgrims arriving at Jeddah



Water-boat at Jeddah



"Jidda, where are Frankish consuls"

—Charles Doughty



Men of the Wabbabi Brotherhood, White-turbaned



"Like a woodcut to illustrate Chaucer"



Men of Asir, the Southern Province, with Myrtle in their Hair



Firewood from the Decort

They give them names which are resonant and easily known to the bird—"Sattah," "Hattab," "Shellal," and so on. They stroke its breast feathers, call it by its name frequently, give it titbits of red meat, shoot a mouthful of water over its back in the midday heat, and accustom the bird to human beings as far as they can. Later they give the bird its first lesson. They tie a long string to its leg. They then pinion a dove or tie it with string to a small peg in the ground and, unhooding the hawk, loose it on this prey. The hawk, unhooded in the open desert, turns its head sharply about. It blinks its eye once or twice and then with fierce attention studies the ground. Perceiving a prey, it stretches up its neck and raises its feathers. The falconer unleashes it and holds it high up in his gloved right hand. At the moment when he feels it about to fly, first slightly lowering his hand, he gives an encouraging upward movement to launch it. The bird circles high up and then is away at great speed to dive twice upon its prey, nearer each time, the third time striking to kill, at the back of the neck. If it has not missed it immediately lands to finish off the prey. There is a flutter of wings, a spouting of blood upon the sand as the hawk tears out the heart of its victim. The falconer arrives at full speed and, leaping to the ground from his camel or mare, flings a corner of his cloak over the prey with the left hand while he gradually eases the legs of the hawk from the prey. The hawk clings with all its strength to the meat it has won. At last brought off it and hooded, the beak and throat still work longingly and convulsively. The hawker rewards it and allays its disappointment with morsels from the entrails; otherwise it will lose interest and fly to no more game that day. Some falcons will take as many as thirteen bustards in one day, but this is very rare. The average is about six.

To catch gazelle another hawk must be used, for the training is different and the hawk must become used to working with the *saluqi*, the Arabian greyhound. The dogs, once loosed, race up on a flank of the gazelle and turn it in a circle, closing in as they race alongside it, while the

hawker looses his falcon, which flies close to the ground at great speed, not rising until near the gazelle. When very near it suddenly rises and as suddenly dives upon the gazelle, clutching with one leg each horn and pecking fiercely at the animal's eyes. At the same moment, if not before, from a lunge by the *saluqi*, the gazelle goes head over heels and falls never to rise again, its legs drumming upon the desert, its great liquid eyes, now sightless, streaming blood. The hawker, easing off his bird, quickly pulls out his hunter's dagger to cut the throat of the gazelle before life leaves it, and disembowels it with rapid dexterity. The smell of the pale green cud and the animal's entrails is revolting to the European. The sight of its blood, a pool of Bokhara red upon the virgin desert, is sickening, but the Arabs are happy, for meat meals are rare and the gazelle is very sweet to eat. The climax of the chase is usually passed before the sun reaches its zenith, for then the ground is shimmering and shadowless, the bustard creeps into the heart of the camel-thorn bushes, and the falcon no longer likes to hunt. Then the falconers return to their camp, singing, as they come near it, a hunters' song.

The nights are cold, and there are soon great camp-fires between the tents. They flare up as the men rise to put on more wood and bushes when the visitor from another tent comes to them. They make room round the fire with simple courtesy and late into the night they detain him with coffee and story-telling. There is a wide difference between the manners and customs of the Arabian and Persian shores of the Arab Gulf or Persian Gulf. In the Gulf, on the island of Bahrein, and in the villages on its shores customs are mixed, usually rather more Persian than Arab in character. Once away from the coast the traveller into Arabia feels a pleasing freedom and notes a directness in human relations bred by the desert which is far nearer to the customs of the British and Americans than to those of Persia and India. It has often been said that Arabs are the most easterly of the European races, and it is true that the Mediterranean climate spreads down into Central Arabia.

CHAPTER SIX

Riyadh (3)

I should therefore like the courtier to have, apart from his nobility, not only a quick wit, a well-formed person and face, but a certain grace and so to speak an air or gentle expression [*sangue*] which makes him at once pleasing and attractive to all who behold him.

BALDESAR CASTIGLIONE (1487-1529), *Il Cortegiano*

HUNTING DAYS COMING TO AN end with the approach of summer, the King returns to his capital to take up again the daily work of a ruler. His people expect direct access to him and that he should know them personally. In this his sons help him, each of age having some task. The Governance of Riyadh is always in the hands of one of the King's sons. All complainants with cases under customary law, disputes over trading and tribal custom, and petitioners come to him, while cases under the law of the Koran are ordinarily dealt with by the *Qadhi*, the City Magistrate. When there is no escape from a death penalty the execution takes place after the midday prayers and sermon on Friday. A lithe black swordsman, as efficient as any guillotine or electric chair, is the instrument of death.

The crowd silently assembles when the soldiers file on to the main square below the Palace. Then the Governor comes and the man is brought forth. The words "In the name of God the Merciful" ring out. Standing behind the condemned man, the black executioner pricks him in the side with his sword-point. The man tautens himself, and his head falls off with one slicing blow of the sabre.

The Public Diwan of the Emir Saud, the King's eldest son, is always much frequented by his brothers and Bedouin visitors. From it there is a private door into the office of Sheikh Yusif Yassin, who is Head of the King's Political Secretariat. This office the Princes' and the King's advisers use as an ante-room while waiting for audience. Brocaded

seats are ranged along the walls, which are hung with schoolroom maps of Arabia and the world. The news of the day from home and abroad is here exchanged. In a corner, on a window-shelf, I was shown and given the use of the files containing the *Times* newspapers. The better Arabic newspapers were all there, and the bulletins, issued twice daily from the official radio listeners, were in use.

Sheikh Yusif sat here behind his desk attending to his papers, but always attentive to the Princes and the waiting courtiers. His very white skin looked more so for being contrasted against his blackest of black beards, black head-rope, and black cloak. His kerchief was spotless and of transparent white cambric. His robe was a deep leaden-grey. He is a man of about forty, and his eyes and his skin glisten with good health and good living. While he had taken to the life in Riyadh, its religious rigours and its abstentions, more naturally than would many of his Syrian compatriots, I noticed that he harked back—and more and more often, as I came to know him—to his friends and his land in Tripoli, the Tripoli of Syria, where he has a brother and most of his family.

Beside the Princes of the Royal Blood there came sometimes Abdulla bin Mita'ab, one of the dispossessed Princes of Hail in the north; a diminutive small-boned man, of perhaps thirty years old, who would sit silently, twirling restlessly his long, thin camel-stick.

Among the courtiers in attendance was Khalid al Houd or Qaragani, elderly rebel against Italy hailing from Tripoli, whence he fled to Asia. He had lost all in the cause of Arab independence, and seemed incorrigibly embittered. If he hated the Italians he seemed nevertheless to admire the Germans. It was even a joke at the Court. Later on as the war approached, and when it had broken out, if we wanted to know what would be the German attitude in a certain event we used to ask Khalid. He accepted in good-humour and even appreciated this strange rôle of backer of the Germans and comic foil to the B.B.C. which we imposed upon him, not unencouraged thereto by the King himself.

"How now, O Khalid, a German cruiser and three torpedo-boats are sunk. What say you? Is it of no importance?" He used to take it in good part, and there must have been times when he thought that his outsider would win. It was on these same schoolroom maps that I was to see only too clearly and largely marked the name SINGAPORE on the day on which it fell. In these days the war was still far off, and Khalid's leaning to the Germans was just an amiable idiosyncrasy.

The little Palestinian *Chef de Cabinet* to Sheikh Yusif came in and out of the Diwan with files. He was slender and always smiling, and most remarkable for being over forty and unmarried. Elderly bachelors are considered freaks in Arabia, and he was an everlasting butt for the Court. When they were feeling rather low they would stimulate their humour by pretending that the authority of the King himself had been given to his marriage with a very young and vigorous girl, the marriage "to take place this very night by the Royal Command." The victim, it seemed, never failed to be deluded. Almost fainting with anxiety, he would make his way towards the Royal Quarters, the humorists lurking along behind him. Even the men-at-arms would play their part. "His Majesty is not to be disturbed for any reason. He has said that all his orders given to-day are to be obeyed without fail." The poor Secretary would return with dragging steps, looking as unhappy as it is possible for human being to look. His slender form, his long thin nose, reminded me of Pinocchio. At last they would relent and tell him that he need not marry yet; then poor Pinocchio smiled once more—a shy, attractive smile—and betook himself again to his beloved histories, his files and muster-rolls.

It is not considered ill-mannered in Arabian courts to whisper before a guest. Indeed, it is considered good manners, and servants and officials would consider it improper to speak their business with their master, and his business, before the general company. Every now and then a soldier or servitor would come in and, going to one of the

Princes, would lean down and whisper in his ear. It was the custom of the Court and of all Arabs, but to us it gave them a delicious air of intrigue. Most of these whispered inquiries are about the time of audience for newly arrived visitors, the number and kind of presents for departing ones, or the number of sheep to be killed for the dinner of those still staying; but to the European, trained against whispering in front of others, there always seemed the possibility that it was poison and not sheep to which the low reply "Approved" was applicable. When the same man came back to whisper a few more words he was of course reporting that the victims were already writhing in their last agony and not merely that the sheep were already on the fire. In point of fact, I must hasten to say, poison is no more common in Arabia than in Europe.

When the King arrives in his own Diwan a swordsman, coming silently because barefoot or sandalled, appears in the outer doorway and announces with Nejdi conciseness: "They come." There is a flutter among the Princes and courtiers, and the first of them for audience hastens off along the corridor. The remainder begin again their debating of world or local events.

Near Sheikh Yusif's office is his own Secretariat whence telegrams are dispatched to the foreign diplomats at Jedda, seven hundred miles away, through the Foreign Minister—the Emir Feisal—at Mecca.

The Palace is busy until midday, when prayers bring the morning session to an end. The King's grown sons who take upon themselves some duty in the State are the Crown Prince, the Emir Saud, ruler of Nejd in the absence of the King; the Emir Feisal, the second surviving son, Viceroy of the Hejaz; and Muhammad, Khalid, Mansour, and Nasr.

Saud strongly resembles his father. He is almost equally tall, being well over six foot, and his features have the same cast. His smile, like his father's, is attractive. Arabian sons are very modest before their father, and always take a seat some way removed and even below the more dis-

tinguished of his guests. They will always appear reluctant to speak, and seldom do so in their father's presence unless he deliberately draws them into the conversation by a direct remark. It is a teasing question for guests exactly when and how far it is correct to speak to a son in his father's Diwan. Among Sheikhs not of Royal standing a son will refuse to sit down in his father's tent unless told to do so by him. Sons will act as servants, running hither and thither with dishes, soap and water, and so on. Ibn Saud, it is said, once having refused to go into an upper room and asked why he would not, replied that it was impossible as long as his father continued to sit in the room below. Such is the degree of respect for their father which they would have it known they hold for him.

Nasr is the son most fond of hunting. He is nearly always away in the deserts with his falcons and his hounds, and he it is who has the latest desert news in the winter and the spring: where rain has fallen, who among the Bedouin is watering where, and the whereabouts of game. There are ibex, oryx, panther, and mountain deer to be had in the recesses of the mountains and deserts, but the ordinary game is bustard and gazelle.

Mansour, son of a Caucasian woman, until her death recently the King's favourite, is the son most fond of the Army. All that he can see of armies and learn about them he likes.

Khalid too is a soldier of experience who followed his brother Feisal in the Hejaz campaign.

Most experienced of them all in war is Feisal, who as a boy was Commander-in-Chief of many thousands of men, taking Medina and Jedda. The other twenty-five sons are still under age. The Arabs love to have many children—sons in particular; and they take them about with them even when very small, wherever they can. To have sons in number is a great comfort in a land where early death among children is heavy, if not so heavy as in the Arab towns. A fine boy honours his father, who is known by his name. Ibn Saud himself was long known as Abu Turki "Father of

Turki," until Turki died of the influenza which wasted the manhood of Arabia, as it did elsewhere, in 1918 and 1919. A posthumous son is always named after his father, and so a boy may for example be called Muhammad ibn Muhammad.

Undutiful children are seldom heard of in Arabia, although in many ways respect greatly beyond that in fashion in Europe is expected. Not only do sons seldom sit in the presence of their father, but even if smoking were permitted in Nejd they would not smoke before him.

The King's own harem, or women's quarter, is very large. Each of the four wives has her own extensive quarters, and there are sitting-rooms as large as those in the public part of the Palace. The rooms in the new Shamsiya or Murabba Palace are built round a vast oblong courtyard in the middle of which I was astonished to see what looked remarkably like a London lamp-post. The upper floor was colonnaded, the whole structure supported by quite innumerable columns all washed in lime to the whiteness of sugar icing, dazzling even in moonlight. At the side of the Palace was a separate house for the famous "Umm Mansour," the Caucasian favourite wife, where since her death her son lives. On the lower floor are vast kitchens with cooking-pots of every size up to one large enough to take a baby camel. As about eight hundred people sleep in the Palace every night the Queens and their chamberlains have much to organize and consider. It is said that a man's weight of almond-paste is eaten every night by the women and their Negresses.

I need not dilate upon the advantages and disadvantages of the Arab system, for it must be obvious that with four wives one has four more chances of finding the attributes required in a wife, and at least variety, although more expense. The wives divide their duties, and there is remarkably little trouble in the harem, probably owing to the facility with which divorce is arranged. On the other hand, a divorced wife is well arranged for and, except that she has lost her husband, has nothing much of which to complain. Whatever may have been the case in old Turkey, there seems little to disturb the humane conscience in the

matter of Arabian family life. The young women are gay, laughing creatures. The elder women are often particularly wise, and old Arabia had numerous ruling queens; the famous Balkis and Zenobia are two of many. The present King almost daily visits his sister—the Emira Noura, wife of his cousin Saud—to take from her counsel which it is said is always wise.

The Arabs, it is true, regard women as in a lower category than men, but they do not despise them. They say that the female is even superior in many ways and in animals is in every way better. Bedouin girls in their tents in far Arabia are kind and often much more devoted to their men than are many women of Europe to theirs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Riyadh (4)

The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear.

Nahum iii, 3

THE KING INVITED US TO attend a fantasia to be held the following afternoon on the race-track east of the city.

Most of Sir Andrew's diplomatic business had already been completed at audiences; and the visit nearing its end, the fantasia and a banquet were to mark its close. When we started next day for the course we found crowds leaving the city on their way towards the small pavilion on a mound which was the Royal stand. Little clouds of dust rising from beyond the crowd near the stand marked where the horsemen were mounting for the first race and careering about to show off their animals' paces. As soon as we were seated by the King's side the signal was given for the first race to begin. It was a twenty-kilometres one, or four times round the course. The eyesight of the Arabs is very good, and every one except ourselves was able to follow the progress of the race and its details, even at the far end of the course, without glasses. The 'jockeys' were mostly members of the Royal family—riding with a saddle, but in most cases without stirrups or with only the small single-bar Arab stirrup. The small cloud of dust followed the riders towards us like an approaching dust-devil. One missed any cheering by the crowd. The Arabs of Nejd have not the habit of cheering, and there was no loud acclamation at the end of the race, after which the sweating horses were brought in front of the stand while the King congratulated the winner with a word or two of praise.

After three races the Crown Prince himself mounted and came in front of the stand, followed by a horseman carrying

a spear. All those who had horses now mounted and formed themselves into groups round the Prince to whose household they belonged. The riders had taken off their kerchiefs and slung their head-fillets over their shoulders, and each had a weapon: the Princes swords, their followers rifles or spears.

The Crown Prince having asked the King's leave to begin, the parties rode away and took station opposite to each other, two or three groups on either side. They began to canter slowly round each other, while in front individual riders came out to play the spear game known as "Jarid," in which one horseman chases the other and, when near enough, hurls a blunted wooden spear at the quarry. Gradually the groups began to gyrate more quickly. Once or twice a shot went off, the rifleman holding his weapon aloft by its "small," and firing with the fingers of the same hand.

The Princes now gave their men orders, and rapid manœuvres succeeded the slow. Every moment it became more like a real skirmish. Suddenly one party developed a charge—riding straight at the other. Somehow the 'enemy' opened their ranks or avoided the crash of animals and accidents which seemed certain. This was the signal for a counter-attack and the development into full momentum of the fantasia. Rifle-bullets were now being fired every few seconds. The Princes were leading their men in a kind of wild, high-speed musical ride with magnificent judgment—all the more impressive because there was no carefully planned order. The dust of battle and smoke from home-made cartridges drifted across the field. Suddenly in front of us there passed, at full gallop, a long sword held aloft before him, his hair and curls flying, and eyes alight with the pride which only young soldiers know, the Emir Feisal, the Viceroy of Mecca. His men came racing after him, their long curls streaming behind them, some of them half naked—for the Arab strips for battle—and all of them in the greatest excitement. The Crown Prince's party, equally soldierly but keeping closer order, came galloping in to the attack. Wheeling at full speed in front of us, they

charged down upon their 'foe' and then, at the last moment, with admirable precision, were brought up all standing, the horses on their haunches close in front of the stand. The Princes saluted the King, and the fantasia was ended.

With the sudden movement of crowds in one mind, the concourse of people, taking its signal from the King, began hurrying back to Riyadh in the wake of the Royal procession. By the ditch outside the walls there was a halt, unexplained until one of the younger Princes rode up and, leaning low over his horse's neck, asked us, with graceful charm, to be forbearing. "My brother Feisal rides here," he said. Down the hollow of the Shaib Batha came cantering Feisal, the crowd murmuring applause as he and his followers passed before them and into the gate of the capital.

Once more the press of people went forward. At Badia the light shining out of the darkening Palace welcomed us. The servants brought us braziers burning bright with charcoal and drew the damask curtains, for the nights were already cold.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Wahhabis

La religion d'un peuple, étant l'expression la plus complète de son individualité, est, en un sens, plus instructive que son histoire.

E. RENAN, *Études de l'histoire religieuse*

FROM TIME TO TIME IN RIYADH we would come across one of the Wahhabi prelates, or see men of the Ikhwan—the brotherhood—of Wahhabis. The prelates were conspicuous for their large white turbans and air of righteousness. They never stayed to talk with us, and used to remove themselves just as quickly as they could with dignity from the presence of the infidel visitors.

The men of the brotherhood were easily distinguished by the white bands round their headkerchiefs, which they wear instead of the ordinary head-rope or woollen fillet which other Arabs employ. They too were usually grave in demeanour, although as there was no particular reason why we should speak to them, their attitude to us was less defined. The *alims*, and the lesser clergy—the *mutawwain*—would, if we had not been 'kaffirs,' have moved in the same social circles as ourselves. We became used to their disappearance, and a 'cut' will now never have the same effect upon us after this practice at being cut in Riyadh by Wahhabis. In the end we came to know each other's movements and it was only by an accident—passing in a corridor—that we saw them. A few years earlier their attitude would have been still less compromising, for the peak of Wahhabi fanaticism had been passed in 1930 and there was already some lessening of their extremism.

The former outburst had been well over a hundred years earlier. The life of the Bedouin naturally inclines them to asceticism, and to relief from it when the opportunity may occur; thus a rather violent oscillation is understandable.

After the first conversion of Arabia to Muhammadanism in the seventh century the Bedouin gradually returned to paganism; and whatever they might be in name, their religion still sat extremely lightly on them at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the reforming zealot Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab was born at 'Ayaina, in the Wadi Hanifa, near Riyadh. It must have been obvious that he was an unusual child, for at the age of ten he had learnt the whole of the Koran by heart. He followed this up by marrying at twelve and going on the pilgrimage to Mecca at fourteen. If a Muslim performs his pilgrimage and subsequently does not diverge from the straight path of his religion it is accepted as certain that he will go when he dies to their paradise. For this reason, or sometimes because they cannot afford it earlier, ordinary people incline to go to Mecca late in life.

Even as a youth Ibn Abdul Wahhab seems to have had no fear of straying morally, and he soon began to do his best to ensure that none else did so. He preached what an earlier reformer, who had lived mostly in prison for stirring up dissension, had preached: the return to the purity of Islam as revealed by the Prophet Muhammad. The extreme penalties which had been introduced by Muhammad and subsequently abandoned should, he held, be enforced, and to the surprise of Arabia he successfully persuaded the Ruler of 'Ayaina to approve the stoning to death of a woman who had confessed to adultery. This caused such consternation in Arabia that the Prince of Al Hasa, overlord of 'Ayaina, ordered the removal of the over-zealous judge, who then sought refuge at Daraya, where ruled one Muhammad Ibn Saud, ancestor of the present Ibn Saud. Muhammad Ibn Saud and some of his leading citizens were converted to the new austerity and used it as a driving force in a series of campaigns. By the new century the code had been so widely accepted that the Al Saud were able to find an army with which to attack and sack Kerbela, in Iraq, in 1801, removing all its treasures to Central Arabia, where to this day some of them remain, including books and arms,

In 1803 Saud Ibn Abdu'l-Aziz Ibn Muhammad Ibn Saud entered Mecca, and in 1806 finally subdued the city. By 1808 he was at the gates of Damascus, and Baghdad was threatened, while in the south the Wahhabis had reached the Indian Ocean and even taken to the sea. The Sultan of Turkey was sufficiently alarmed by 1811 to authorize an expedition into Arabia by his viceroy Muhammad Ali in Egypt. The army set out under the viceroy's son, through Yenbo', the port of Medina, and through Akaba, near the head of the Red Sea. The total force when it joined was ten thousand strong. Even so, they were defeated in their first battle, and there was a pause for reinforcements and a new commander to arrive. At last, with the help of suborned Bedouin tribes, the Egyptian army was able to advance; but it was not until 1818 that they reached the capital, Daraya, and the French officers could batter down its walls with their guns. In this way there came to an end the first Wahhabi campaign of conquest, during which they had given rein to their tenets, destroying domes, insisting upon the punishments laid down in the Koran, forswearing silk, tobacco, and music, and returning as nearly as might be to the code and life of the time of the Prophet, to the life of the seventh century. Nowhere else in the Muslim world would this have been possible except in Arabia, and only in a country given to laxness could there have been such a sweeping and violent change-over in so short a period.

Near to the heart of Arabia, Islam—or Muhammadanism—can be and is practised as it was revealed, but farther afield, among Muhammadans of other races and less pure Arab stock, it has been changed to suit their different minds and other conditions of life.

The Persians are mostly of the Shiah sect, a more colourful version of Islam, spiced with self-inflicted cruelties at the annual Moharram passion play. The Afghans, the Kurds, and the Algerians prefer the more secretive rites of the Derwish orders. Egyptian and Indian Muslims, the Turks and the Bokharans, the Muhammadans of the Far East, and West and Central Africa all have found or devised a

sect to suit themselves. Thousands therefore look to shrines not often heard of in the West—to Abdul Qadir al Qilani, in Baghdad; to those at Nejef and Kerbela, in Iraq; Meshed, in Persia; and the holy cities of North Africa—but ultimately Mecca is the holiest city of all, and the Wahhabis follow the creed nearest to that revealed by the Prophet.

It was descendants of these men, leaders of the second Wahhabi revival, whom we had been seeing. This second time the wave of religion had come up against the barriers of states defended by Great Britain, and this time there was a wise ruler to stem and steer and not aid the floods of fanaticism.

When religious fervour became stronger than tribal ties Ibn Saud did his best to make the bands settle in colonies, to found new villages and new estates. Sometimes these experiments failed, but in many cases were brilliantly successful; and, as if to point a moral, the rebellious tribes—the Ajman, some of the Ataiba, some of the Harb and the Mutair who again and again attacked Iraq and Trans-jordan—were in the end heavily defeated. The rebel leaders have gone this way and that, some dead by the sword in battle, some in prison, while others at first exiled have at last been taken back by Ibn Saud. The high words of the fierce Wahhabi chaplains have become the more reasonable pronouncements of men chastened by failure and war. The quicksilver is steady at last, and religion has this time become the binding force of the State, and fanaticism has not become the cause of its ruin as in 1818.

Even so, the theory is still maintained that whatever is not mentioned in the Koran is not permissible. There are, however, some generalities in it which leave room for debate.

When wireless sets were first brought to Arabia in 1930 the prelates fiercely resisted their use. Later their employ for hearing the news—an advantage to the Muslims and pleasure almost irresistible to the most dour—was sanctioned. Unfortunately music—and not only martial music, which they hold permissible—often came before the news.

One could seldom have the beginning of one without the end of the other. Who, it was asked, could be blamed for hearing the music? In that case, so it is said, a synod decided that the knobs on the machine and not the Muslimin must be held at fault. Thus, step by step, fanaticism retreated before reason: the twentieth century moved into the seventh: the Roundheads have given way, if only inch by inch, before the Cavaliers.

Nevertheless, if reason had had to admit that our coming to Riyadh was not against the Koranic law, pride and prejudice would still dictate a proud aloofness as correct behaviour for the conservative minority. They sailed past us, these elders, their henna-dyed beards projecting, their fierce glances removed from the tainting Christians, and chastened us in so doing.

CHAPTER NINE

Departure from Riyadh

Arabia, like the Arab, has a rough, frowning exterior but a warm, hospitable heart.

S. M. ZWEMER, *Arabia*

The desert has bred fanaticism and frenzy and fears: but it also bred heroic gentleness.

HELEN WADDELL, *preface to "The Desert Fathers"*

BY NOW WE WERE WELL ACCUSTOMED to our Arab clothes and no longer tripped over the ends of our gowns when climbing stairs; we had learnt, when doing so, to raise their ends a little with both hands in front of us, our arms held straight down, like old ladies.

The head-dresses were now no inconvenience, and we were already beginning to feel embarrassed and cold when we took them off.

We had had no alcohol since leaving Bahrein, for it is strictly forbidden to the Wahhabis and even the smell of it would have gravely offended them. We only smoked surreptitiously, like the guests at Windsor in Queen Victoria's day—and were at a loss to conceal the ash, for smoking too is forbidden to the austere Nejdis.

The coffee-pots, on the other hand, were seldom at rest. Whenever we came back to the Palace, and every half-hour or so afterwards, the coffee-server would appear from his little room beside the guardhouse at the gate of the Palace, where the mortar seemed to ring all day.

Upstairs the Arab bath, a simple kind of Turkish bath, was always hot, and there was a Negro attendant to massage us, cracking the joints of the limbs and the neck with frightening force but comforting success. The sleeping-quarters were furnished with silk sheets and baldachins, and there were red Bohemian glass carafes, Persian carpets, and an unlimited supply of Evian water.

On the last evening of our stay the King gave a banquet

in the Arab style, to which all his elder sons and some fifty notables were invited. When the procession of guests moved up the stairs the King, who led it, was preceded by incense- and lantern-bearers walking in pairs. The smoke from the censers billowed up in the light of the lanterns. The King, walking with slow dignity, every now and then slightly turning, spoke to the Minister and to the Princes following him. His two eldest sons held aside for him the curtains into the dining-room, which was bright with many lamps and warm with the steam from mounds of rice and meat. The floor of the long room was almost entirely filled by the dishes and stands, laden with food, which covered and nearly hid the cloth from end to end of it. Down the middle were low circular stands, each with two whole roast sheep on a mound of rice. Between them and set side by side to cover the whole cloth were plates and bowls containing titbits in soup, various kinds of spiced meat-balls, vine-leaves stuffed with rice and raisins, curds and whey, camel-milk, creamy sweets, dates, orange-blossom jam, chickens cooked in several different ways, stuffed bustard and venison *patés*, apricots and oranges and other fruits, apples in their syrup, and Persian delight.

One of the Royal Family broke the ice—if such an expression may be used about the party assembled round this mass of food and sizzling meat—by throwing a napkin at the head of his Lebanese secretary farther down the table. “What new-fangled Syrian nonsense is this?” he said, as he smiled and hurled it at him, as if he were responsible for this departure from Arab custom, the laying of napkins beside the guests. The Palace has the means for setting a meal at a table in the European style, but this was a meal in the traditional Arab fashion, and he pretended prejudice against innovations of such a kind. The King sat at the head, the Minister on his right. There was hardly room for the brisk Royal attendants and serving-men to move up and down behind us. Every now and then one would lean over and tear up the whole roast sheep or chickens into convenient morsels for eating. Young cup-bearers offered us water over

our left shoulders. Behind the King stood two Negro servants in scarlet, gold-embroidered gowns—one small and very, very dark brown, his teeth glistening like piano-keys, the other an elephant-skinned giant with red eyes. The conversation at the head of the cloth was light and amusing, while the young Princes and courtiers at the other end, in accordance with custom, were silent or only whispered to one another with sometimes a smothered giggle, being in the presence of the King and many elders.

The long and lavish Arab dinner over, we retired for coffee to a corridor, and a few minutes later, following the Arab convention, asked leave to withdraw. But the coffee-servers came again with their coffee-cups. As they left us the King took from an inner pocket of his gown a phial of scent and drew its long, tapered glass stopper, on which glistened essence of sandal-wood, across the palms of our hands. Then the incense bearers came to waft the smoke from censers under our beards and beneath the folds of our head-dresses, going backward and forward between us, returning to each of us three times, and boys came to sprinkle us with rose water from long-necked silver flasks. Only then were we meet to depart. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness of the King or the hospitality he had given us.

Sometimes in England one hears it asked in which other age one would have liked to have lived: whether the Golden Age of the Greeks was the best time, or the Age of Elizabeth, or perhaps the Regency? None of us had ever thought it possible to combine two worlds as Ibn Saud had done—to follow the law and life of the seventh century while using the amenities of the twentieth. We had now seen this—behind the looking-glass of Arabia, whither from time to time, for long afterwards, we should find coming over us a hankering to go again.

CHAPTER TEN

The Road to the Hejaz

For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

Isaiah xxxv, 6

SOON AFTER THE DAWN MY servant Sa'id came to me and began, "Excellency, the Tabaishi is coming." Abdurahman al Tabaishi is the King's good-looking Chamberlain, and Sa'id inclined to the use of titles whenever we were being particularly honoured by others. He pointed out of the window to where on the other side of the water-course of the Wadi Hanifa a small party coming from Riyadh was making its way down the steep side into the shingly bottom. As the Chamberlain came into the Palace, followed by some men carrying bundles tied up in silken shawls, he was bulging strangely.

After a few minutes' conversation about the arrangements for our journey he took a gold sword from under his robe, and with the most admirably correct mixture in his manner of friendliness, diffidence, and the air suited to a chamberlain carrying out Royal commands, he turned the sword horizontally and, holding it in both hands, offered it to me for Sir Andrew. Next, from beneath his dress, he drew out a gold dagger of the old Arab workmanship, fastened to a belt brocaded in gold on pale green velvet, mounted on soft leather. In accordance with custom there were also the dresses of honour—the *kiswa*—cloaks and complete Arab dresses of the finest kind, the collars and tassels of gold thread and wire, and there were gold watches for the Minister's secretaries.

Bundle after bundle was brought in by Sa'id.

The Tabaishi remained with us to go to the King for our leave-taking audience, and when we withdrew from the Palace he and Fuad Bey Hamza accompanied us some way

out of the city on the road to Jedda and the Red Sea. As we left the gates of Riyadh there stretched before us an open road across the plain towards the village of Jubaila. Between Jubaila and Riyadh, in the wadi west of the road, is Daraya, the ancient capital of the Al Saud, destroyed in September 1818 by the Egyptian army with the help of French Artillery officers. The extensive ruins are partly inhabited and the gardens, though much reduced in size, are still cultivated. The citadel-palace of the Saud—the Turaif—and the great Friday Mosque beside it are both imposingly large. Just before Jubaila is the scene of a battle in the early days of Islam between the companions of the Prophet and the heathen. Here the party which had come out from Riyadh with us took leave of the Minister.

There are many ruins in the valley of the Wadi Hanifa west of Jubaila, at 'Ayaina: the remains of a capital of the Mu'ammarr princelings, a dynasty which has now disappeared. The sand here tumbles over the side of the valley on to the old cultivated enclosures. There are tales of giant ants having come to destroy the village, but it seems just as likely, looking at it now, to have been the sand which drove the inhabitants away. The hills gradually close in until they become a gorge, the face of which is some six hundred feet high from the valley floor. The northern and higher side of the gorge, at its end, is called "Khashm al Hisan"—"the Stallion's Muzzle."

Here the plain of Marrat stretches away endlessly in front of the traveller; and we were nearing the country of the great Bedouin tribe, the Ataiba, whom Doughty called a nation. The Anaza, the Harb, and the Shammar tribes were north of us, while the Mutair, the Sahoul, and the Sabaih we were leaving behind us. The Al Murra—people who enter the great southern sands—and the Dawasir and the Qahtan, who are the Joktan of Genesis, were far southward.

The Bedouin tribes, before the rule of Ibn Saud, had had liberty to raid each other and had resisted authority, which irked them. Now they are well under control—much, in the

end, to their own satisfaction. Ibn Saud's chain of wireless stations, his mobile striking forces, and his understanding of the Bedouin and their traditions have enabled him to maintain complete security. It is said that a bag of coffee dropped by a caravan in Saudi Arabia is now to be found in the same place six months later. In any case, there could hardly be a more striking change from disorder to order in so short a period. Security in Central Arabia is now perhaps better than anywhere in Europe in peace-time. The four things essential for control of Arab nomads are quick intelligence, complete identity of the governor with his force, greater mobility than the tribes, and a complete understanding of tribal traditions and habits. Without these—in particular the second and fourth—there will soon be troubles, and this is not debatable, for Ibn Saud and neighbouring governments have bought their experience in this and proved it true.

Soon after leaving the gorge we passed on our right the long orange-red sand-bank of *Habl al Taraif*, which continues for some miles to block the way to the north, so that the tracks to the northern province of *Al Qasim* branch off from the main track just before it. South of the track were some isolated granges.

Looking back, we saw the great barrier of the *Jebel Tuwaiq* standing up impressively, its sides nearly vertical, a veritable wall of defence to inner Arabia, and in front of us was the isolated, flat-topped hill of *Al Kumait*. "Show me *Kumait* and I will show you *Marrat*," say the Bedouin, for the village of *Marrat* lies concealed by a ridge on one side and by the hill itself on the other, but immediately at its foot. The village is fortified with walls, and there are many palm-gardens. In it the pre-Islamic poet *Imru al Qais* was born.

Men and boys from the village came out to inquire for our news and bring us bowls of camel-milk and curds.

The shadows falling over the hollow from the hill threw up the landscape in a way which is noticeably unusual in a country where so much of the scene is made up from two

simple components—sky and flat earth. The sky becomes the dominant one of the two, and in winter when there are clouds it is the traveller's pastime to watch the shifting picture, forgetting the dull earth. The colours are more delicate than might be expected, and the violence in the sky's colouring, seen in India and some other Eastern countries, does not appear often in Arabia. It is Mozart, not Wagner.

I walked among the short palm-trees east of the village and came upon a small party of camel-riders, their camels already couched and their fire alight. "Come hither, man," said one of them, "we come from your host and have coffee in plenty." They told me the gossip of the capital and were as friendly as could be.

A man, shouting to a boy who was helping to put up the tents, called him "Ya bezr." I do not know if this is a corruption of the Persian for "boy" or whether it comes from the Arabic, which elsewhere is confined to the meaning of "seed." They did not know themselves, and could say only that they used it for "boy," whatever its origin might be.

They brought Hasa dates, the fruit crushed together in the way usual in Arabia, having been carried far and kept since the last harvest. The liquid called *dibbis* is much in use by the nomads. *Araq*, or *raqi*, is not made in Arabia and they hardly ever employ the *laghbi*: the drink which is made not from the dates but from the sap itself. The *laghbi* is refreshing when new, and only becomes intoxicating when it has been kept for two or three days. It is damaging to the trees to cut them in this way, and is only excusable when there are very many palms and sufficient males.

We camped for the night outside the walls of Marrat. Nothing had been forgotten, and the lighted tents welcomed us, while the hill of Kumait was to shelter us from the cold north wind.

Near here was a trickle of water coming out of a rock. As we passed it two young wolves cantered away. I had seen two wolves here earlier in the year, and this is no doubt the water-supply for all the wolves of this area.

The next morning we were confronted from the start with the sands of Nafud Qunaifidha and Nafud al Sirr. We ploughed our way through them with great difficulty. The sand itself is soft, and there are long rises and descents which are more difficult to surmount than the steeper but shorter crests of other dunes. These sands stretch from the Empty Quarter in the south to the Great Nafud in the north, as do the Dahana sand-veins east of Riyadh.

The wells of Khaff mark the end of the sand-crossing; from there an easier track leads to the next wells, at Qaiya.

In such wastes as these the traveller feels in full the desert's strange appeal. His pride in being human becomes stronger, for it is only in the desert that man can taste to the full the pleasure of being man; of escape from the entangling jungles. In the desert every rival is left behind at last. No animal can come upon him unaware; and even those feeble, beautiful failures in the race for life—the trees—are unseen. In the silent wilderness his nerves are calmed, and all property, except an animal or machine on which to move, and the barest means for life, becomes useless and undesired. He is alone, alone with his brother men, upon the earth from which he came, with the greatest tools of his Maker: the sun, the moon, and the stars. The unveiled beauty of the dawns, the glory of the sunsets, and the brilliance of the stars tell him again daily of the triumph of his creation. Love of the desert seems at first to be against all reason; but the instinct of healthy man must be for it, and once known it draws him back again for ever.

Migrating Bedouin were passing us in quite large numbers now, and we had met, the previous day, a string of horses being brought to the King by men of the Shammar tribe from Iraq. In some hundreds of miles, these were our only fellow-travellers on the track westward, in the centre of Arabia. The whole equipment of the Arabs is carried on their camels: cauldrons, tents, ropes, water-bags and buckets, sacks of rice, and litters for their women, which rock slowly from side to side with the camel's paces.

Following behind are other camels carrying huge loads

of thorn for firewood, which is lashed down in the centre to their pack-saddles. As they pace slowly along, their heads held high and turning this way and that, these enormous loads above them, they look stately yet absurd, like a flock of peacocks with their tails raised in pride.

Marching with the Bedouin were their small boys, almost naked, undeterred by the long waterless stages. Murray, in his book on the Egyptian Arab tribes, quotes a case of two Bedouin boys under eight years old, walking thirty-six miles without water on a hot day in the month of June. Desert Arabs are hardy beyond belief, despising much covering and in some tribes holding it effeminate, even in winter, to wear anything but a shirt. A handful of dates is a meal to Bedouin youths, and they can live for many days on the milk of their camels.

The comradeship of the Arabs is famous, and Lawrence has quoted the case of a Bedouin never recovering from the death of his chosen companion. They have a custom of formally marking agreement to a common effort in life by the sacrifice of a victim—usually a sheep before witnesses. In shedding its blood they say, "By this sacrifice we are become one," and after that all is in common—tent, food, work, profit or loss. They hold most strictly to the rules protecting companions and governing the conduct of a guide, or *rafiq*. A *rafiq*, or *khowi*, who abuses his trust is held in abhorrence by every Arab. They use the word "Akhaiwi," a diminutive, by which they mean their particular companion or mate.

They have great pride in their knowledge of the country and in the ownership of camels. A Bedouin, being told by my guide that I was coming from the King, said, not in scorn for a ruler whom they all fear and admire, but with democratic confidence, "King? I, too, am a king with my camels before me in the desert." In hardiness, in companionship, and pride in their tussle with life, they do not lag behind the West.

We pitched our camp in mid-desert, on a stony plain dotted with granite outcrops of strange form, to some of

which the Arabs have given names according to their shape, such as "The Pomegranate," "The Breasts," "The Old Man." As they told us these the light was failing, and the land seemed to take on a strange hobgoblin atmosphere. Sometimes the desert, forsaking its awe-inspiring grandeur, irreverently looks as if it were designed by a painter of pantomime backcloths who has never left the neighbourhood of Drury Lane.

Late in the same night I was awakened by the sound of a marching army. After living with troops I was not to be deceived. There could not, I supposed, be a column marching, but the sound was quite unmistakable. I felt for a torch and picked my way over to where Said was sleeping. The light shone down on the little stones of the hard desert on which we had pitched our tents, and there I saw the marching army—hundreds of dung-beetles, scarabs, rolling before them, with maladroit pains, balls of dung rather larger than themselves. These large beetles, black, high-set on long legs, seem to live always near the old camp sites in the desert. Very many of them on a particularly dry desert surface, made up of little stones, contrived to make this rhythmic crackling which, half sleeping as I had been, sounded like distant marching men.

In the forenoon of the following day we arrived at the fort and village of Duwadami—a curious name which seems to be Persian in origin. Outside the walls was a group of pilgrims from India resting here on their way to Mecca.

Among them was an old man overcome by the fatigue of travelling. He lay half unconscious on the ground by the gate of the fort, attended by a handsome young woman, probably his daughter. Her young body was palpitating with her agitation as she knelt beside him and appealingly looked up at us as we passed. Since they were British subjects from the frontiers of India, we wanted to help them; but there was little we could do or suggest. They were pilgrims on their way to the Muslim House of God, to assure themselves of entry to the Muhammadan paradise, where

for them are delights and ineffable rewards compared with which our inquiries and any assistance by us would seem of very little moment. I offered a little bottle of smelling-salts to the girl for her father although he was past such simple aid, and Sir Andrew gave their leader some money; there was nothing else we could do.

In Arabia, to give money in such cases is useless. The old Muslim customs still prevail there, and whoever seeks aid or hospitality receives it. The stranger guest is at home in any house or tent for three days. No one asks whence he comes or whither he goes, unless he himself shows a wish to tell. Who seeks sanctuary may receive it and be guarded by the host's life, if the guest say only the customary formula: "Dakhilek" ("I take refuge with you"), touching the host's headkerchief as he does so.

A poor man may journey from one end of Arabia to the other without a coin of any kind. He must wait on the host's convenience to be given food, but may command water. A guest at dinner will say over his shoulder to the waiting cup-bearer, firmly and without a glance at his host, "Bring water, boy." No man denies water and every man may command it, the rare gift of God. A passing stranger coming to tents where the householder is away with the camels is met by his women. They invite him to come in, make the coffee and serve him until the men return, when they disappear behind the division of tent walling which cuts off the men's coffee-hearth from the women's half of the tent, and he will not see them again. One of the strictest customs of the Muhammadans—the seclusion of his women—is thus broken for a custom even older: the open hospitality of the Arabs.

In the houses of town merchants of tribal descent or in relation with the Bedouin there are always many rolls of quilts ready for Bedouin who come to the town, so that they may sleep as his guests. In a town on the marches of the desert, of many thousands of inhabitants, a hotel of any kind is unknown. To take payment for hospitality would be considered a disgraceful way to make money—if any thought

of such an unheard-of thing. In this the Arabs of Arabia are more Christian than the Christians and more civilized than the Europeans.

No one all his life, if other men be near him, lacks food, water, and bedding, and the poorer the man the more quickly he is invited, for the Arab takes great pride in having stranger guests and in the brotherhood of Islam, which gives him the right to ask and to receive.

Only Nature and not man is cruel to the Arab.

The Governor of Duwadami had opened for us the Royal reception-room in the Great Fort and prepared an excellent luncheon. We found that a radiogram from the King, with gracious inquiry for our welfare, had just come in.

While the luncheon was being brought we went up on to the walls and surveyed the interior of this huge castle and its palm-hidden village a mile away.

The people of Duwadami dispute about their origin, but the most general opinion seems to be that they are from the Bani Zaid, only a few being descended from the Qahtan and Ataiba tribes and from the Sudair.

The Emir controls a district formerly most lawless, and the size of the fort and the thickness of its baked-mud walls is an index of the former insecurity.

After luncheon I went down to the small coffee-hearth in the guardhouse by the arched entrance. There was a hole in the roof to let out the smoke from the fire, but the smoke hung in the room. My eyes quickly watered, at which the Arabs seemed surprised, as they can sit in a roomful of smoke without discomfort. The Kurds and other Eastern mountain people who have their rooms closed up against winter cold also seem quite unaffected by smoke. Pure-bred Bedouin have wonderful eyes—large, limpid, and able to see great distances. Men with bad eyes are nearly always those who have lived in towns or settled areas.

In the wastes of the middle deserts, near the wells of Afif, we dismounted near some grazing camels and called over to their herdsmen that we might have his news of the tribes. These Bedouin must so rarely speak to people from the

oases and towns that one might expect them to be shy. This man, if he were abashed, did not show it, but came towards us with slow dignity, answered our "Peace be upon you" and the usual compliments with quiet confidence, and leant gracefully upon his long camel-stick. He was about twenty. His single garment was an old shirt which was held at his waist by a twisted leather thong. It reached just below his knees and was ragged and torn open down to his waist. It had been white, but was dimmed with usage to the colour of horn. Over his head, half hiding his straight hair and the braided locks which fell upon his neck, was a twisted kerchief of the same material as his shirt. His feet were bare. He looked like a woodcut to illustrate Chaucer. It was as well we stopped here to have news of the road, for he said that there were robbers at large. This in the new security of Arabia brought about by Ibn Saud is something most rare, and we should have taken little precaution if we had not asked. We sat upon the ground and made maps in the sand, debating the present whereabouts of the robbers. The King's men were after them, and they would soon be caught; but until then they would be all the more desperate to have food and mounts. No detail was left undiscussed, and even their ancestry was gone into. We felt that we had met the desperadoes, so accurately and vividly given was the young man's story. As we were preparing to mount I said to him, prompted by I know not what unless it were consideration of his quick intelligence and knowledge of his desert, "Have you heard that there may come war in the West?" With their usual conciseness he asked, "Between Christians?" and when I agreed he replied only, "God be praised. Let them go to it among themselves." He was a polite young man and had no inkling that I was a Christian, having taken me for a Syrian courtier. This was the natural outcome of the proud teaching of Islam far from any Christian community.

In the evening we thought we had heard shots, and turned off the track towards them in the hope that we might bring a reinforcement to some one being attacked by the robbers;

but the light was already failing, and the country full of hollows, and we found no one.

After the meal Sa'id came to me for information about Europe. When I turned out an atlas he was interested beyond my expectation. I wrote the names of some of the capital cities in Arabic for him. The red, I explained, showed the extent of the British Empire. "It is, as you see," I said, "very large." He looked over the map from end to end and remarked that the red made it appear that the world had a disease. Before I had recovered from this he added that he had never known until now that the world was a square with Khartoum in the middle.

I made a note in my pocket-book to write for a globe with the British Empire shown in green, the colour for peace and Islam, and did my best to enlighten him as to the true shape of the world before turning to bed.

When I awoke the next morning I heard our Bedouin guide saying to his companion, who was making the fire with camel-dung, "Ya Rashid ma lak sina' al Jalla" ("Rashid, you have not the technique of the camel-dung"). The dried camel-dung makes an excellent fire for the coffee-hearth.

In the mid-morning halting-place a Bedouin tending a sick camel offered to sell it to us for meat. When we refused he drew his knife and sat to wait for its death. As soon as he was certain that it was dying he killed it. Meat which is not "sacrificed" is forbidden, so the animal had to be alive and then killed, not merely having died of old age, before he could eat it. On the other hand, it would have been foolishly wasteful to have killed unless he were quite certain that it was going to die. The smell of the camel's blood came down the wind to us.

The grazing in the westerly deserts is luxuriant, and there were small copses and acacia-trees. We stopped at Dafina, in a gentle wooded dip, for the siesta hour. Some gazelle galloped away as we arrived. It was not a hot day, but all at once we found ourselves overcome with sleepiness.

It was so sudden that we felt alarmed and decided to go

on after a few minutes. I have never heard of this happening to travellers in Arabia before, but it was unmistakable. Perhaps it may have been owing to the change from the dry air of Nejd to the more humid air borne by the wind from the Hejaz, or to some exhalation from the trees. In either case it would only be at this time of year, and with a certain combination of meteorological conditions, that the effect would be so marked. In this country is the meeting-place of the winds. To the north the prevailing wind is from the north-west, and to the south the prevailing wind is from the south.

It was for that reason that when I questioned an old Bedouin about the prevailing wind he looked at me pityingly for one so ill-informed, and said, "Every one knows that the more you go northward from here, the more you will meet northerly winds, and if you go southward you will meet southerly winds." Near the track there were some *ashurr*-bushes, from whose thick and milky leaves the Arabs make gunpowder, and the desert was greener and fairer to look at every mile.

As it had rained there was water on the desert and there were clouds in the sky—an annual wonder after the long summer months, with their ever empty blue-white sky. Across our front there lay a lake of standing rain-water, as far as the eye could see, north and south. Little rivers were running towards it. When we came up to its edge the Arabs shouted for glee and told each other of other valleys which like this one would also have been filled. The scene was painted in dull greys and blues and tricked out with the lights seen on old armour. As we went into the lake the water spouted up on either side of the car, as it does beside the bows of a motor-boat, and made a seething sound. Half-way across the mile-wide flood the car began to slow up. We leant forward with anxiety, and the Arabs encouraged it with shouts. Slower and slower it went, but somehow just managed to make its landfall. We waited then for the other cars and watched them arrive one by one, exhausted, on the shore. Black rocks were now a dark



"Water, in the waterless land of Arabia"



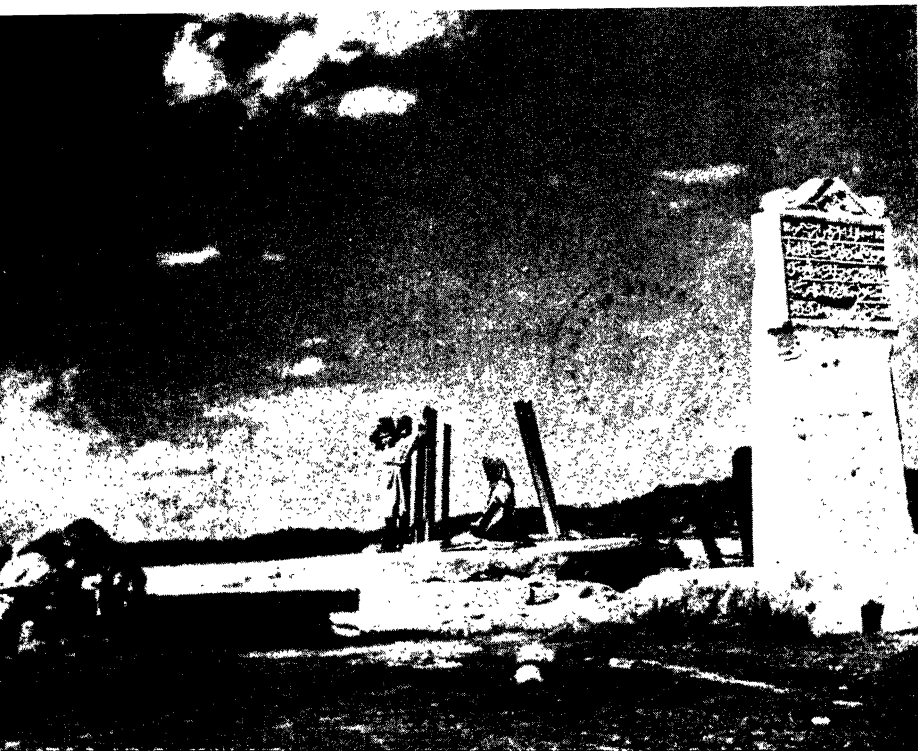
At a Well made by the "Ancients"



At a Well made by the "Ancients"



Camel-thorn



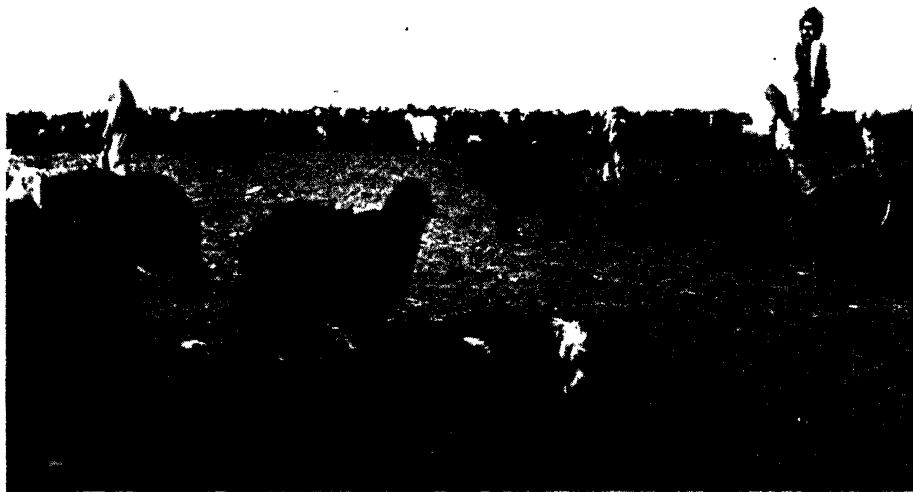
The Well at Asbaira, repaired by Ibn Saud's Orders



Watering at Gaaiya



"There is flirting at the well-head"



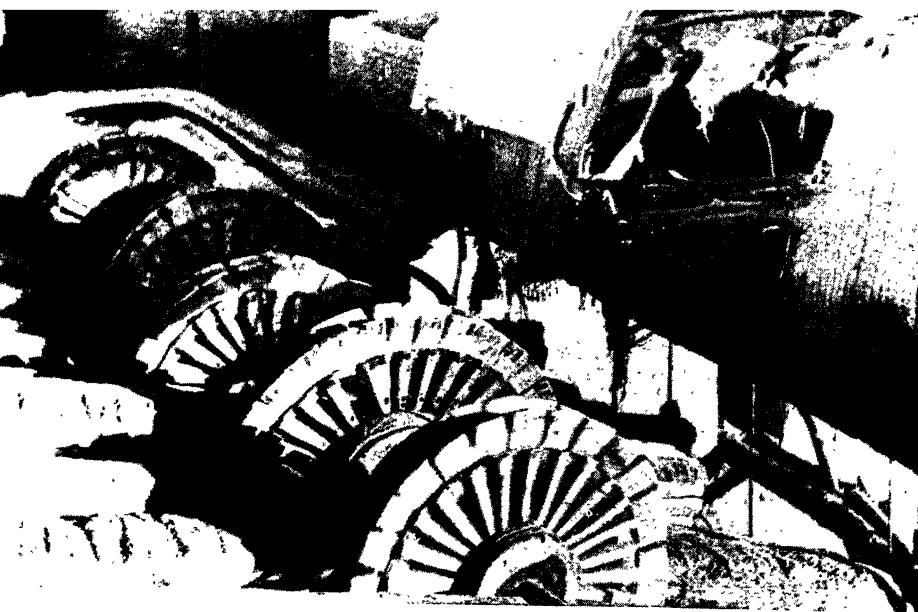
Shepherds waiting their Turn at the Well



The Wells at Afj, in Mid-Arabia



Raising Water from the Well



The Wooden Waterwheels



After Rain



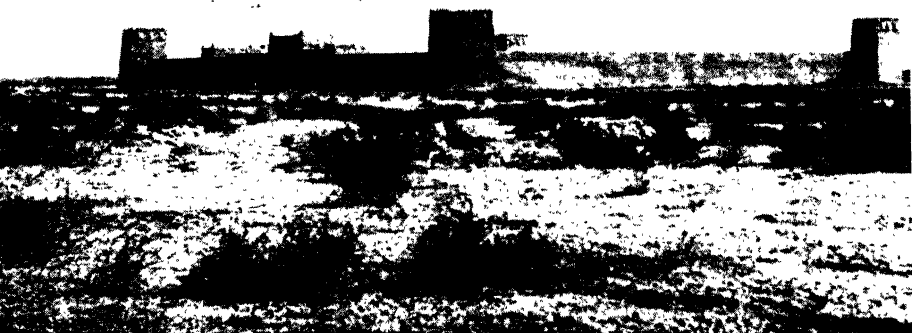
The Camels thrust their Heads into the Trough



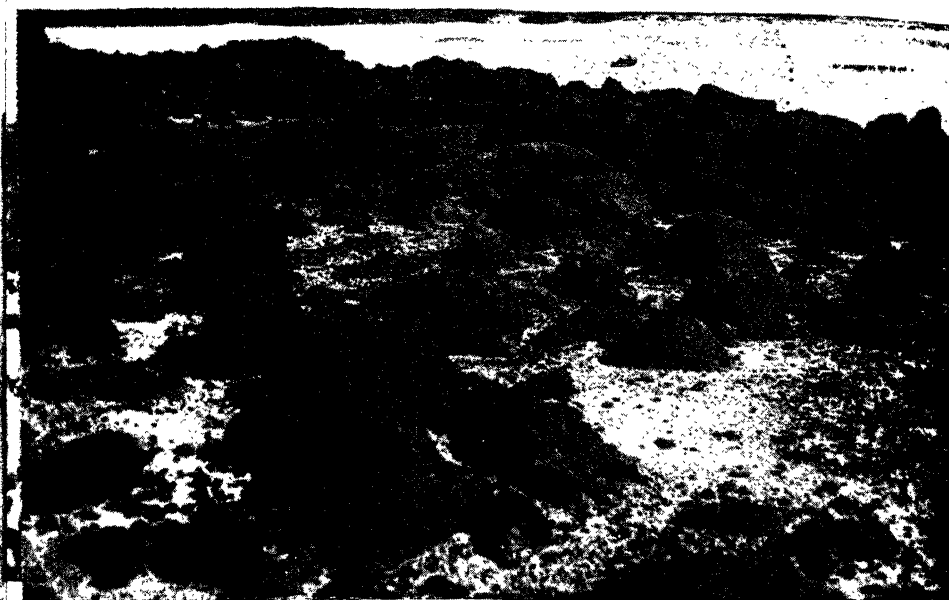
An Aqueduct with Air-vents



Sheep going to the Sacrifice on Mount Arafat



The Fort, Duwadami



'Harrat'

line on our horizon. This was the "Harrat" of Al Muwaih, once the resort of outlaws. Even camels have difficulty in moving over these great basalt blocks tumbled out on the desert—lakes of lava—at intervals all the way from Syria to the Yemen.

The track gradually approached the "Harrat," and at last twined in under the shelter of the cliff-face, to the Fort of Muwaih, forbiddingly built of the black stone, which protects the wells at its foot. There was still some little daylight left when we arrived at the fort, so Sir Andrew and I walked over to the tower surmounting the lava. We clambered up its great boulders with some difficulty and then up to the top of the tower. From there we saw far away in the midst of the boulders the extinct volcano of Al Qishab. This extraordinary landscape might have been drawn by Dürer to illustrate Dante's *Inferno*. Near at hand a single figure was making its painstaking way over the rocks, disappearing and reappearing like a swimmer between waves at sea. Sir Andrew leant against the stone side of a window in the tower, in reflective mood. The sinking sun caught his profile, half hidden by the transparent cambric head-shawl, and shone upon the gold tassels of his black Arab cloak. We were nearing the end of our journey and of Sir Andrew's mission. He had long been the diplomatic dragoman at our Embassy in Istanbul, in the days of the Turkish Empire, and had memories of the old diplomacy at the Sultan's Court—memories of intrigues, of gambles in the lives of thousands by the few, of strange stories from the Grand Seigneur's Seraglio, of the Sublime Porte, Wezirs, and oubliettes. Fate and the Royal commands had brought him at last for a moment to this strange tower in Arabia.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Hejaz

These are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.
As You Like It, ii, 1

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING WE were on our way to Ashaira, the well at the crest of the Hejaz, four thousand feet above sea-level. As we neared it the trees were bigger, until near the well many of them were forty feet high, and close set together, forming, if not a forest, at least a grove—an unusual sight in Arabia.

“Hejaz” means “the barrier,” and is, strictly speaking, a topographical feature, the barrier of tortuous rising valleys between the Tihama, or coastal plain, and the plateau, or Nejd.

The descent from the crest is at first rapid, and there are wide views over dark, twisting ravines, across hills of copper-green and mountain ranges, and into valleys thick with vegetation. Down the valleys were riding camel-men of the Juhadila tribe, dressed in faded red loincloths and plaid, the ancient Arab dress, in its simplicity like the *ahram* dress worn for the pilgrimage to Mecca. They were bringing saplings and honey to the people of the valleys. On a hill-top above our track there suddenly appeared a troop of monkeys, Abyssinian baboons. They were led by a large male, the hair on his shoulders thick and fluffed out like a grey cloak. He looked us over for a minute or two before taking off his party—mostly children, judging by their size—at a gallop. We heard their groaning bark in the distance. According to the early Arab writer Al Masudi, there is another kind of monkey-like creature, half ape, half satyr, which lives, or lived, in the sandy wastes—the Akhaf country. He says that they are called Al Nasas.

In a clearing among scattered bushes we saw an aged Indian pilgrim, resting by the wayside. He was very thin, with spindly legs. Beside him was set a lidless kettle, his means of carrying water; and he held a long stave to help support his weight, light as it must have been.

Why he had come here, out of his way, or how become separated from his companions, eluding the arrangements made for pilgrims by the Saudi Governors of Jedda and of Mecca, we could not tell. He gazed at us with strange, unwistful surprise. The only covering to his feeble old body was the *ahram* dress of the pilgrims—two pieces of cloth, to be worn without pins, one round his thighs and the other over his shoulders. His matted beard was grey and scanty, his head shaven. The sun beat down on him, and, unlike some of the Eastern pilgrims, he had no umbrella or parasol to protect him. All pilgrims must wear this ancient dress, and wherever they pass the bounds where it is prescribed they should discard their ordinary clothes and must do so from then onward until the rites are completed. The midday heat and the cold of night are felt by them in their full force, and as the time of the pilgrimage moves with the lunar month, eleven days earlier every year, it can fall either in the “days deadly drowned in the sun of the summer wilderness” or in the chill time of the winter winds. Pilgrims coming by ship have to change at sea, and a spick-and-span passenger, if he intends the pilgrimage, will suddenly appear in this simplest of dresses, in which all of whatever rank approach the House of God on earth at Mecca. A dashing air-pilot, a prince, a beggar, appear alike in these two simple unworked, unpinned pieces of material. The King of Arabia himself has no other dress in which to perform, with a hundred thousand others, the pilgrimage at Mecca, to which this Indian was bound in good time. We left him there, the old man, a fragile symbol of the strength of the spirit of man.

We stopped at Sail, a tiny hamlet where the previous summer the local headman had been outraged by my making no effort to answer his midday call to prayer and

with a proper sense of discipline had come, rod in hand, to hasten me, with blows if necessary. This time he was aware of our identity, and made no reference to his former puritanical outburst.

In the valley of Zaima, green with banana-trees, maize, and lucerne, the Emir came to entertain us when we stopped by the fountains of clear water which gush out of the rocks to water his valley. He was a charming old man, with a Koran, in a bag to fit it, slung by a cord over his shoulder. It was at Zaima that Charles Doughty, the explorer poet, had been nearly murdered on his way out of the country after a two-year sojourn with the Bedouin. He was saved by a black servant of the Emir of Mecca, who turned him back to Taif to be seen by his master.

A ruined medieval castle, at one time used by the Turks, towers above the entrance to the valley. From here there were palms and vegetation to lighten our way and compensate us for the increasing heat.

Near Sharaya, where are palm-groves and a street of shops, we found a camp pitched for us. It was already late, and the sun went down behind the hills of this narrow valley earlier than in Nejd. The mountain-top of the Jebel Nur, above and close to Mecca, was just in view. It was not marked on the map we carried, but a magnetic bearing taken from Sharaya showed it to be 275 degrees from there. The valley was thick with *harmal*- and *salam*-bushes.

As soon as we had halted messengers were hurried off to Mecca, only seven miles away, to tell the Government officials there about our arrival. While we waited the flames of the camp-fire sprang up high in the dark valley. There was another party—Royal ladies, we were told—camped not far off, desirous of entering Mecca in the morning and so delayed here. Chief among them was the Emira Noura, sister and confidante of the King, wife of his cousin Saud, nicknamed Al Arafa, or "recovered" booty. He had been recaptured in battle.

An hour or two after dark the noise of a large party approaching from Mecca echoed through the valley. Our

attendants ran hither and thither with lanterns. Carpets and cushions were laid out and all made ready for us to receive some guests. Out of the night, followed by a number of armed men and by servants from the city carrying various objects for our comfort, came the trim figure of Sheikh Abdulla al Sulaiman, the Minister of Finance.

We sat talking with Abdulla until very late, lured to stay up by his sympathetic intelligence and by the time and the place. In the dark sky, now heavy with the middle night, the stars glittered brilliantly, as if infinity were insisting upon recognition. It was the month of Ramadhan, when the daylight-fasting Arabs spend much of the nights waking, and we were very near to Mecca, home once of pagan gods, now the heart of Islam. Every now and then there was a sound of faint thunder, and summer lightning darted among the mountain-tops.

The next morning we made our way through the deep-cut valleys to the ancient well of Jara-ana, on whose inner side, too far down to be read, is an inscription in Kufic. Beside it is a tiny three-arched mosque and a single tree. It was near here—by the Jabal al Noura, whence they take lime for whitening their houses in Mecca from pits in the hillside—that travelling by night to avoid the heat, I had once lost my way, and been woken by a startled guide to whom dawn had revealed our extreme nearness to Mecca.

We rested by the well for a time, oppressed by the ever-increasing dampness and heat. Some men of the Lahoiyan tribe, now counted a section of the Qoreish, the Prophet's tribe, came to the well with their flocks. The Lahoiyan are possibly the descendants of the Leanites, the Lechieni, the Loeni, and the Lexiani, all variations of the same name, mentioned by Pliny (vi, 31) as a ruling people in Arabia, who were still strong enough to be troublesomely rebellious at the time of Muhammad. Twelve hundred years ago the scene would have been much the same. Not far from here, in the middle of a sandy valley, we came upon the little domed tomb of Maimuna, the three-times married daughter of Al Harith of the Hawazim tribe, twelfth and last wife of

the Prophet. Their marriage was here, at Sarif, outside Mecca, because the Meccans had objected to his delaying in Mecca; and when she died she asked to be buried here, where they had been married. The domed tomb stands alone now in the middle of the frowning hills.

We stopped near Ain Jamoun to look at one of the old irrigation systems which have been working here in the Hejaz for some two thousand years or more. The fall in height of the slope is slight, so a great channel is dug out down to the level of the spring below ground, and a stone-lined drain is then made the whole distance at that level until the natural surface is reached. This drain having been roofed with flat stones, the earth is thrown back and the cut filled in to the ground once more. Irrigation channels or stone-lined conduits then take the water on to the land or into cisterns for storage; alternatively, in order to shorten the length of the underground conduit a whole hillside is cut away to make a field near to the spring. Arabia has many of these old systems, and the terracing for wheat and barley, along the flanks of the Dog-leg—the mountain chain which runs from the Hejaz to the Yemen and thence inland—is extensive and dates from equally remote times. In the Northern Hejaz there are also ancient irrigation works, some abandoned, some still in use. At Khaibar there are dams, three hundred feet long and thirty feet high, with hollowed stone conduit pipes called *barbakh*—made, it is said, by the old Jews. “Yahoud Khaibar” is still a phrase in the current usage of the Arabs: “Jews from Khaibar,” by which they mean a lost people or a man of unknown origin. The castle there, perched up above the town, looking out over the black rocks of the “Harrat,” was at one time, the Arabs say, the citadel of a Jewish king, who made that valley rich by building five of these great dams.

Arabia is not the entirely desiccated country which many people suppose it to be. In ‘Asir the peasants work all the year round at their maize, millet, and other crops, and with all the industry and most of the characteristics of peasants in Europe. Sweltering in the heat, they work stripped of

everything except a loincloth of yellow and red stripes and a wreath of myrtle or flowers in their hair. At the midday heat they wear a huge gardening hat of straw to keep off the heat of the sun from their head and shoulders. Like peasants elsewhere, they stop to lean on their hoe to watch the passer-by and greet him. They are smaller-made than the people of the plateau, of Nejd, and their skin is darker. Their language is rather different, their manner less proud, and they smile more readily than the dour Wahhabi highlanders, the sons of Ishmael. Little is known yet about the early history of these peoples, but the traveller can observe enough to bear out the division which the traditions of the Arabs maintain between the Ishmaelite and the Qahtanite stocks. In the valleys of 'Asir, the Yemen, and the Hejaz, there are ruins which may one day yield to historians and to the world more about the old states of the Sabeans, Minæans, Himyarites, and Nabatæans and of earlier kingdoms of Arabia, and show up in clearer fashion meanings in the early books of the Bible and of historical allusions in the Koran.

Who knows what treasures of history lay buried in the tangled ruins of 'Asir? There is a carved lion now in the King's possession. The inscribed stone of Taima was used as a door-post until not so long ago. Jaussen and Savignac's journey to Midian revealed much, but more lies awaiting an erudite professor who can brave the heat of 'Asir.

Again and again we passed by the old irrigation works in and near the Wadi Fatima, the thick and shady vegetation inviting us to linger. Bestirring ourselves to enter more deeply the torrid valleys of the Hejaz and travelling with slow care through thick undergrowth, we came upon a garden through whose depths meandered a small stream. We stayed for a little time beside it, where it trickled over a small dam, tinkling as it did so. The sound of water was doubly pleasant after the wilderness. Here, overcome by the heat, we were forced to change into lighter clothes before going on.

Late in the afternoon we came into a clearing beyond

which, half hidden by palms, were two tents and a small party of people in white suits and sun-helmets. They rose as we came to them, and we saw that they were Europeans and Indians. It was the foreign community of Jedda, which had come out in a body to welcome the Minister. Three hours later we passed into Jedda by the Bab al Jadaid, or Medina Gate, and were received with the open hospitality of the British Legation.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Jedda

Jidda, where are Frankish consuls.

CHARLES DOUGHTY, *Arabia Deserta*, vol. ii, chap. vii

JEDDA, WHERE, AS CHARLES Doughty says, "the Frankish Consuls live in the pallid solitude of their Palaces," is hot and damp almost beyond belief for some three hundred or more days of the year. Its life depends largely upon the pilgrims who come to Mecca at the season and upon the importation of goods from India, by long-intermittent steamers; and so commerce, with stagnant intervals, is its life. Its military importance was long ago—at the time of the Portuguese threat to Egypt. Then the Egyptians under Sultan Ghouri sent a Governor who built its walls in 1511, and kept forces there, and when the Mamelukes fell the Turks were obliged to continue the occupation and so gained a footing at Mecca, and on all the Red Sea coast, until our victory drove them forth from Arabia in the First World War.

The heat of Jedda is such that, at its worst, newspapers flop into rag, matches refuse to strike, and keys rust in the pocket. Heat and insects keep one awake at night. Escape and the only connexion with Europe at this time was by the small weekly steamer which took five days to reach Suez, and for this I had to wait.

The town's five- and six-storey buildings, Legations, and merchants' houses—white-plastered and wooden-shuttered, many with heavily carved doors—lodging-houses, and warehouses, have an imposing appearance from a distance, but they are not sound, quickly falling into ruins over whose mounds browse herds of goats. Goats' milk is most valuable in a city where the water-supply is insufficient, and so their dugs are protected by improvised brassières, usually made

from cigarette-tins. The only cows, mewed up in ruined courtyards, are given a stuffed calf to induce in them a sentimental mood and increase their milk. Water from a condenser is carried round the town in skins on donkeys, the seller shouting, from dawn to night, the mournful cry of "Mai Codessa."

The population of the town is very mixed, and there are few pure-bred Arabs in some thirty thousand inhabitants. Indians, Javanese, Africans, Chinese, and even Bokharans and Russians, pilgrims or residents, mingle in its streets, and the variety of dress worn in Jedda is probably wider than in any other town in the world. A Russian Muhammadan clad in furs in spite of the heat, and wearing top-boots, may be seen standing next to a Nigerian in nothing but a cotton rag. The pilgrims go to Mecca at any time, to perform their "Omra," or intermediate pilgrimage, and wait for the Great Annual Pilgrimage, in the Arabic month of "Dhi-al-Qada," just before which most of them arrive at Jedda.

Until they have completed the rites they must all wear the *ahram*, which dress replaced under Muhammadanism the pagan custom of performing a pilgrimage to the gods at Mina and Mecca entirely naked. Stoning of what appears to have been originally three pagan gods near Mina is part of the present ceremony, which in addition to the special and ordinary prayers and supplications includes also seven circuits of God's house in the sacred 'precinct' itself; the running past the "Maylayn al Akhdharatain"—two green-painted pillars—the attendance at the sermon on the mount at Jabal Rahma, which should be preceded by total ablution; a pause to praise God in the valley of Muzdalfa; and the sacrifice of a sheep at the conclusion of the whole.

God's House, in the centre of the Mosque at Mecca, is covered with the black cloth made annually in Egypt and sent with ceremony each year. Embroidered upon it in gold are words from the Koran, and among them this: "Who so ever worships the God of this House he shall receive food to preserve him from hunger and be given

security that he may not be afraid." Thirteen centuries have passed since an Arab inspired by his God spoke these words. They are kept alive for all men to read in the Koran, the Holy Book of the Muhammadans, containing the sayings of the Prophet as recorded after his death by order of his successor, the Caliph Othman.

In a lower corner of the great structure—the Ka'aba—is embedded, fastened in by a silver rim, the sacred meteorite itself. This the pilgrims must kiss, or, if the press of people is too great, may make with their hands the gesture of kissing it. Three hundred million Muhammadans hope to come here once or more, to become a pilgrim, a "Hajji." Century after century since the Prophet's day, year by year, they come, and there in the sanctuary, packed row by row, they prostrate themselves in prayer and go through the rites prescribed for men of their creed, whatever be their breed.

Of every nation, of every race, all meet here dressed in the same way, meeting on the same day, equal before their God. Those ceremonies have often been fully described, and are explained to the pilgrims by especially appointed guides who look after them throughout their visit. Noticeable among the pilgrims who have stayed on in Jedda are many Nigerians known as Takharana, who have a quarter of their own, an African hut-village, outside the Yemen, or Southern Gate of Jedda. Their bright-coloured dress contrasts with the Arab shirts, and with the white clothes of foreigners. Outside another gate, the Bab al Jadaid, or Medina Gate, is the grave of Eve, some two hundred yards long and ten feet high. The small building once on it has been removed, and visits to the grave are deprecated by the Wahhabis.

For dining with ladies in Jedda, the European men of the colony, in accordance with tradition, change their clothes, but a 'smoking' being altogether too warm, they wear white trousers and short-sleeved shirts and only wear round their waists, as a sign, a black band. Like those who wear a black band round the arm for mourning, so they wear a black band round the stomach.

With sorrow I saw Sa'id depart for Mecca and our Bedouin guides leave us to return to their plateau, but in relief I clambered aboard the small steamer to escape from such a climate, for which even the abounding hospitality and kindness of the Saudi Government and of the Europeans in Jedda could not entirely compensate.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Jedda to the Twentieth Century

But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth.
For a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures,
and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.

FRANCIS BACON, *Of Friendship*

THE SHIP'S ANCHOR WAS BEING pulled up, making an angry rattle as it came. A black sailor, stripped down to a red rag round his loins, was level with the deck of the steamer, near the head of the mast of his sailing-ship, unhitching some lines before hoisting sail to go to the shore. Arab visitors were hastening over the side, and the ship's officers were suddenly purposeful once more, losing that unhappy expression they have in port, when they must deal with landsmen and fill up forms.

Then all at once we spied a launch coming out towards us with speed, twisting its way along the zigzag shallow boat-channel leading to our anchorage. We waited, and it turned out to be a messenger from the Governor of Jedda, with a request for some supplies to be brought from Egypt and best wishes for the journey to me. At the head of the companion as he turned to leave, the messenger stayed to say to me, with his hand on his heart, in their customary manner, "Into the hands of God." Hardly had he leapt into his boat again than there began the rhythmic chugging of the ship's old engines, soporific by day and sleep-riding at night, which was to be the inevitable accompaniment of our four-days' progress along the main to Suez.

Everything about these ships is on a small scale: the tiny and short wooden bunks in the small cabins, the narrow corridor and narrow deck, the slender lascars, the low saloon, in which even the coffee they served seemed very weak and uninteresting after the coffee of Nejd. After travelling on the ordinary steamers of the Mediterranean and Atlantic it was

like getting into a child's wooden motor-car. After the great open deserts the sensation was accentuated to the strange feeling of being a Gulliver whose world had become pygmy.

Writing letters, tidying up a diary, playing backgammon with a Syrian passenger, and listening to the master's anecdotes of his life at sea passed the time. The master had not landed at Jedda yet, as he had nearly always been too busy to land at the ports at which his ships touched. His world was the world at sea. As we neared the Gulf of Suez on the third day, in the evening, the weather changed suddenly and a cold wind began to come ripping over a choppy sea at us. The light went out of the sky, and the sea turned from green to grey. The mountains of Midian, on our starboard stern, were disappearing behind wreaths of mist and cloud, and Arabia, half hidden, mysterious to the last, was lost to view in a few moments.

Nine hundred miles away behind those mountains, the King would now be going to his prayers, followed by his Court, his soldiers behind him. In the deserts the milch camels, making their way slowly towards the tents, would be lowing, and the camp-fire springing up again, as the men put on more wood for the evening coffee brew. Those ragged noblemen, the Bedouin householders, would soon be offering with exquisite manners the simple messes being prepared now behind the tent's dividing curtain by their bare-footed ladies. In the shadow of the rocks the wolves would be stirring themselves to go about their nightly prowling. The poor herdsmen, their day's work over, would go now to the Sheikh's coffee-hearth to list to the news from travellers and the old men's tales. If there came to them one of their well-armed upstanding servants of the King they would have the news of the tribes and oases as it might be known at the capital, in the heart of Arabia. There, as we had seen, is that well-spring of manhood from which have come the intermittent but unceasing outpourings, which have populated anew, every so often, the countries of the Middle East.

Spain, Sicily and Sardinia, Kano and Gibraltar, Khorassan and Istanbul, with Malabar and Zanzibar and all the

coasts of North and East Africa, have seen these men. In Bokhara and Samarkand they have left their mark; the tribes of Afghanistan date their history from their coming. In India stately Nawabs and Princes are proud to trace their descent from them. In Tripoli and Tunisia men still follow in their daily politics the dictates of the Sheikhs of the Beni Sulaim and the Beni Hilal, invaders from Arabia in the tenth century, though they may not know the reason. In Cyrenaica sallow men, unlike any Arab, boast of their Arab ancestry, and far down in Africa there are black Sultans counting themselves of the Prophet's stock. In the Dutch East Indies they hold that the Arabs have something of the divine, and the Muslims of China nearly worship them. The Western world, carried ever faster on the tide of its own industrial strength, moves on, unaware of this survival of something, spiritual yet so strangely strong, that even if it be submerged by the flood of materialism now come upon us cannot die, but will go on about the world. It is the spirit born of an ineffable human understanding and sympathy, emerging from suffering, able to come to life only among men united by a common purpose, and only able to flourish on the sea, in the air, the prairies, or in the deserts. The Arabs, parochial yet, have called it the spirit of Islam, but it is the brotherhood of the world in travail, wider and greater than Arabia knows, but given by her to the world.

In that country we had seen the King giving audience to an ambassador, the walls and fortifications of the cities, harbours, ruins, exercises of horsemanship, and all that Francis Bacon said should be observed. There remained to us nothing now but that strange, invaluable memory of another world. Next day as we arrived at Suez in the early morning it was raining hard and steadily, and the officials and people waiting for the ship on the quay were wearing their mackintoshes. A still sleepy customs man said to me, "Have you anything of value to declare?" I murmured in reply, "Memories worth half the world," and he answered, "Put down 'Nil' here," placing a grubby finger on a column in the dun-coloured Government form.

L'ENVOI

Arabia

Far are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon ;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams ;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night.

They haunt me—her lutes and her forests ;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
Her loveliness to me :
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say—
“He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away.”

WALTER DE LA MARE

Postscript

The vasty wilds
Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now.
The Merchant of Venice, ii, 7

OLD ARABIA IS CHANGING AT last. Where we landed from a sailing-boat on the edge of the virgin dunes of the east coast is now an American industrial town, the centre of the oilfield of the Arabian-American Oil Company. There are quays, derricks, rigs, sheds, pipe-lines, telegraph-lines, power-plants, rushing motors, and hurrying gangs of workmen, with everything which goes to make up a modern oil-working. So sudden, complete, and limited is the contrast that it is as if gods playing jigsaw had in error fitted into the Arab set a piece from quite a different game: the American one. A hooded Bedouin, from his distant camp in the bare hills, rides on his camel through the blazing heat past a camp where drillers from Texas and California have ice-cooled drinks in air-conditioned rooms. To his "Peace upon you" they reply "O.K., boy." He has his pride, pride in his ancient lineage, in his religion and political independence, and they have theirs in industrial achievement and practical success in life.

Again, on the other side of Arabia, seven hundred miles away, is a gold-mine abandoned from the tenth century until reopened by the American-directed Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate eight years ago. It is the gold-mine of Bouhran, given by the Prophet Muhammad in fief as a reward to his faithful companion Bilal ibn Harith al Mouzani and later called the Bani Sulaim mine, after the tribe roaming near it: thus a mine which worked for King Solomon is now working again, for King Ibn Saud, thanks to North American enterprise.

Four services of the British Overseas airline call weekly

at Jedda. Aircraft have landed at Al Bowaib, an hour by car from Riyadh.¹ Mechanized columns carrying locust-extminating missions have been at large in the most distant parts of the kingdom for three winters past.

There are over fifteen thousand miles of regularly used car-tracks in Arabia; and where we painfully made our way through the Hejaz valleys are well-metalled roads. Huge six-wheeled lorries rumble along them—the noise of their motors echoing through the wadis—to Mecca, driven by strapping Nigerians who, formerly earning a precariously low wage at the pilgrim port of Jedda, are now competent regular chauffeurs.

Every month new ways are being opened up through the great plateau of Nejd, which ten years ago less than a dozen Westerners had ever crossed. Drivers who return from long expeditions upon it often have a tale to tell of some new track they have made, of waterless sands crossed, of a well or village reached for the first time. They debate with their fellow-drivers the shortest and the best routes and which way is least tiresome; and as they argue, in the coffee-halls of the princes and merchants, something is felt of what must have been the atmosphere in the ports of England in Elizabethan days. The thousand-kilometre route across the peninsula through Riyadh they now regard as humdrum, and they set off over its long, waterless desert with less demur than a taxi-driver in London will start for a suburb.

All the more fertile valleys and the great oases are now reached by cars, and it would to-day be possible to motor from Aden to Baghdad, three thousand four hundred kilometres, along existing tracks. With the King's encouragement American missionary doctors have penetrated into the far-away towns of Al Qasim and Al Aridh. The latest ideas on child welfare have been carried to the harems of Hail and Al Hasa, where injections have become the mode and medicine the fashion. X-ray equipment has reached the capital, and doctors from the Levant have organized a health and quarantine service. Irrigation and agricultural

¹ There is now a landing-ground even nearer to Riyadh.

experts, much experienced in the deserts of the United States of America, have spent six months investigating the possibilities of improvements, and have already submitted an optimistic report to Ibn Saud. Twenty-six thousand acres under cultivation in the oasis of Al Hasa can, they hold, be doubled. The harvest of fruit can everywhere be increased by better spacing and introduction of bees. Water can be found in this place or that, and dams can be advantageously built here or there. Cattle and grain can be improved and new trees usefully imported. There are a hundred pages of optimism in their report. The towns of Arabia are linked by wireless telegraph stations, and the King can speak by wireless telephone to his provincial governors. Morning and evening every day the news from the great capitals of the world is taken down, read out to the King, and circulated in the Court. The Royal camp of hundreds of tents is now mechanized, and when His Majesty travels among his tribes in the spring there goes with him his motor caravan, completed by vans for wireless, for archives, office, kitchen, wardrobe, and bath.

English is being taught in the schools, and bearded young men from Central Arabia have studied in the University at Cairo. An American military mission has visited Riyadh, and British and American Army instructors are training young Saudi soldiers at Taif.

The King has completed two-thirds of his task—the restoration of his dynasty, the revival of Islamic teaching, and a renewal of internal security; but he has hardly begun the latter part of his work: the planning of economic prosperity.

His slender Finance Ministry and administrative service lately received a weighty burden. First money and then supplies, since money could not purchase them, were provided by Britain and America to replace the shortages which war-time restriction had brought about. By Ibn Saud's orders the Ministry had already, before the war, undertaken the responsibility of two industrial concessions and of agricultural ventures, had built aqueducts and canals, repaired

and re-lined hundreds of wells, and shown its vigour and imagination in other ways, under its chief, Sheikh Abdulla al Sulaiman, but this new war-time task almost overwhelmed it. To do what it had done, before that work fell to it, in so short a time since the peak of Wahhabi fervour in 1930, was alone remarkable.

It is too early to say what will be the full effect on the people of industrial life, but it is clear that the introduction of regular food and muscular exercise to a strain that is already one of the most virile in the world will have a most remarkable physical effect upon them. Men who have worked for six months at the rigs on the oilfield are changed almost beyond recognition. The lean, desert-bred boy soon becomes a bronzed and eager athlete. After a generation the effect upon the race may be very great.

The order in which the Saudi Arabian Government will undertake improvements with the surplus that will come to it from industrial developments is uncertain, but it seems likely that irrigation and medicine will come high up on the list, and that consequently a quick rise in the population of Arabia may be seen before the end of this century.

But the moral effect upon her is another matter, to which the answer is less certain. How fast and how far industrialism is to go is a matter for her rulers. Old Religion in the nature of things is conservative, and whatever is harmful to religion will be avoided, while anything advantageous to the kingdom and to the Muslims will be taken into use. But to steer the middle course, between conservatism and progress, between pride and advantage, between left and right, is not easy. The *Talweg* of politics is as tortuous as that of a river in a plain. If nations are like rivers Arabia, first falling in a torrent from the mountain, then long penned against the range of circumstances, is now finding a way onward; tumbling over rocks, she is again gathering her flood to seek a way across the plain. Other rivers, gleaming in the distance, are mightier, but she may run vigorously towards the sea in their company.

Since the days of the Prophet Muhammad there has

been no more important moment in Arabian history than now.

How sturdily will she face her dilemma?

There is little to guide us, for the Levant countries have long had intercourse with the West, and Egypt is almost international; only Arabia has until this decade remained in a cavern of seclusion, from which she is now emerging.

Her secrets from the past and civilization of two thousand years ago are not forgotten, but must she abandon them in order to receive advantages of another kind from the West? To increase her harvest must she forgo its joy? A country which conceals and protects the heart of Islam, the shrine of Mecca, is unlikely to swerve willingly from following the code of Muhammad and the traditions of his race. But Islam has a rigid code, and it may not be easy for its devotees to adhere to it closely and to pursue the fully industrialized life offered by the West. There go with industrialized life new ambitions and new taboos, a new philosophy of living, a new way of living, and a conception of security on fixed wages; and with the change there may go boredom or disgust, for many men in neighbouring countries already sigh for the olden days, when men might achieve wealth, power, and his neighbour's envy, in a night; when the highest might suddenly fall and the lowliest as suddenly rise, when there was adventure, of the soul, the body, or the mind. Those who were successful in the old life can hardly be successful in the new life; inevitably men of another stamp will rise to set example to the race. The process has not yet gone very far. It is but a few years since a European first sniffed the Arabian air for oil, and we stood wondering beside the dark seepages or the green-blue sulphurous pools and sought to gauge the anticlinal ridges of an unknown land. But already they have new ambitions and to some extent a new character.

The princelings are intolerant of camel-riding and crave the latest model of motor-car or aeroplane.

"We Arabs," said one to me not long ago, "like the millions"—he meant as preferable to thousands or hundreds

of pounds or dollars. Their form of speech is changing, and they take clichés from the press of neighbouring countries and anglicisms from workers in the oil-fields. In the Palace the protocol conforms to ours, and strangers say, "Your Majesty" instead of "Long o' days," "O Protector," or "Ibn Saud." Even change in dress is beginning, and they already wear shoes and socks, instead of going sandalled or barefoot; and dark material from Europe. Instead of grouping themselves silently about a mat to eat they sit at wooden tables, using cutlery and conversing. When the King returned recently from abroad to his Arabs the Meccan *Gazette* reported that their reception of him included triumphal arches and that there were "rows of luxurious chairs for distinguished spectators." They now begin to abandon the old remedies and medicines, although the ingredients may still be bought in their markets. In place of such efficacious unguents as turtle-fat for smoothing away wrinkles and quicksilver pounded up with olive oil or butter for the hair they purchase bottled medicines from the West. Instead of sending out to the desert for the little scarlet root which pretty Bedouin girls use for heightening their colour, they buy chemical products from Europe.

These are examples of the many ways in which their customs are changing. Sometimes officials from the West, newly arrived and not content with what they see to be different from their own land, say fervently, "We must raise the standard of living of these people." In altering the way of life how far will the national character be altered, and what will be the effect upon Islam, through Mecca? The strength of Islam and of the Arabs is their simplicity and realism. Pride in racial, bodily, and spiritual strength may guard them against the impetuous adoption of foreign habits which would be harmful to them. Outwardly changed, Arabia may nevertheless preserve her essential character and yet give us a new draught of that spiritual wine from the Orient of which the West drank deeply in the past.

Some years ago, when the news of war was worst, I was

in an orchard one evening talking to an old Afghan gardener who had long lived in Arabia. "Every growth is different—like the nations," he said. There were some that spread like weeds, without watering, seeking to strangle those about them. Some, after flowering in strength for years, become diseased although you tend and prune them. Another, quite small, gives off a scent which perfumes the whole garden; while others give shade and strength to those about them. Only old gardeners, he explained, knew which were delicate and die and which were hardy and live for ever. He turned to leave. "And to which of these do you liken Arabia?" I called. He stopped where he stood, his body half concealed by branches of the alley of pomegranate-trees. "Even we are suffering now," I added. "God willing, we shall recover, but how can you tell what will be Arabia's fate?"

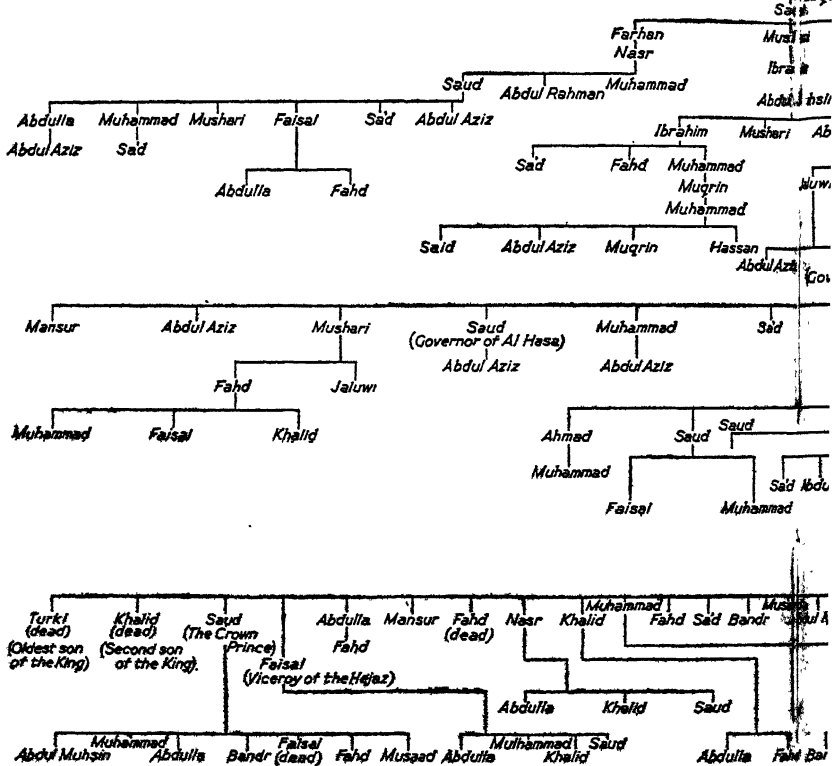
He leant upon his hoe and, looking me between the eyes, said, "If a great tree be cut down 'tis the twigs which die first. But God will grant you the victory—and so to us a new flowering."

Holding back some boughs, he stepped into the orchard and was immediately gone from my sight.

Arabia and the Arabs are now astir. He who visits the Arabian lands may yet see again that wondrous rare Arabian bird—a Phoenix.

Taken from a photograph, by Mr Garry C. [redacted]
and translated by [redacted]

Maad	Maad
Rabla	Rabla
Jadhla	Jadhla
Hafab	Hafab
Wail	Wail
Sab	Sab
Thalab	Thalab
Thul	Thul
Hamman	Hamman
Al Harth	Al Harth
Rabla	Rabla
Malik	Malik
Malik	Malik
Al Mughallad	Al Mughallad
Mana	Mana
Musa	Musa
Murkhan	Murkhan



The Government of Saudi Arabia

The traveller will find representatives of the Saudi Arabian Government in London, Cairo, Baghdad, Jerusalem, and Damascus, and agents in India, Bahrein, and Transjordan.

The capital of Saudi Arabia is Riyadh, in Nejd, where the King spends most of the year. He usually leaves it to camp in Nejd in the spring and to go to the pilgrimage in Mecca, but otherwise is constantly in residence.

H.R.H. the Emir Saud, the Crown Prince, remains in Nejd and rules it from Riyadh in the event of the King's absence in the Hejaz.

At Mecca is the Viceroy of the Hejaz, H.R.H. the Emir Feisal, second surviving son of the King, who is also Foreign Minister. There is a branch of the Saudi Arab Foreign Office at Jedda.

The Viceroy has a Council to assist him when required, consisting of the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, and the President of the Advisory Legislative Assembly.

Among other officials there is a Director-General of Mines, who is the channel to the Government for the Oil and Gold Company, and concessionaires. He is usually at Jedda, where are the headquarters of the companies.

At each important provincial centre is an Emir or Governor. Matters in doubt, requiring a professional knowledge of the law, are referred to the Ulama, or religious doctors, or to the *qadhis* appointed by them.

The provincial administrative divisions of Saudi Arabia are as follows:

(A) NEJD AND ITS DEPENDENCIES, administered from the capital, Riyadh

(i) Province (or Amirate) of Nejd or Aridh; headquarters at Riyadh

Divisions (or lesser Amirates) within province of Nejd:

- (a) Hauta
- (b) Al Hariq
- (c) Wadi Dawasir
- (d) Washm

- (e) As Sudair
- (f) Muhamm
- (g) Khurma, including Turbah and the neighbouring oases
- (h) Bisha

Bedouin divisions attached direct to headquarters of the Aridh province:

- (i) Subaih and Suhul
- (j) The Ataiba
- (k) Duwadmi, including Sha'ara and numerous Ikhwan settlements
- (l) Qahtan
- (m) The Mutair, with headquarters at Artwiya

(ii) Province of Qasim; headquarters at Anaiza

Divisions:

- (a) Anaiza
- (b) Buraida, including villages along the Wadi ar Rumma
- (c) Ar Russ (Rass), including Qasr ibn 'Ugail, Subaih, and Naibaniya
- (d) Mudhnib

(B) PROVINCE OF JABAL SHAMMAR; headquarters at Hail
(Governor: Abdul Aziz bin Musa'ad)

Divisions:

- (a) Hail
- (b) Taima (which enjoys a great measure of independence under its hereditary ruler Ibn Rumman)
- (c) Khaibar
- (d) The Mutair division (see (i) (m) above, when not attached to Riyadh)

(C) PROVINCE OF HASA; headquarters at al Hofuf
(Governor: Saad bin Abdulla Jaluwi)

Divisions:

- (a) al Hofuf, which includes Jisha and Mubarraz
- (b) Qatif, including Safwa, Awamia, Ad Damman, Sinabis, Darin Island, Tawrut, Ruffiya, and islands off the Hasa coast near Qatif
- (c) Jubail, including Ainain
- (d) Bedouin divisions of Al Murra, Manasir, Ajman, Mutair, Beni Khalid, Rashaida, Beni Hajir, Awazim.

(D) PROVINCE OF ASIR; headquarters at Abha
(Governor: Turki bin Sudairi)

(i) Province of Upper Asia

Divisions:

- (a) Abha
- (b) Shahran, including Suq Ibn Mushait or Khamis Mushait
- (c) Qahtan
- (d) Rijal Al Ma'
- (e) Najran

(ii) Province of Asir Tihama

Divisions:

- (a) Sabya, including Darb
- (b) Jizan
- (c) Abi Arish

(E) THE HEJAZ, administered by the Viceroy, H.R.H. the Emir Feisal

Divisions (or Amirates) of the Hejaz:

- (a) Qaraiyat al Milh, including Qaf and Minwa
- (b) Jauf (formerly under the Jabal Shammar province of Nejd and its dependencies), including Sakaba
- (c) Tebuk, with jurisdiction over the Bani Atiya and Huwaitat
- (d) Al 'Ula, with jurisdiction over the Hutaim and Wuld Ali
- (e) Dhaba, with jurisdiction over Tuqaiqat and Huwaitat (Tihama)
- (f) Wejh, with jurisdiction over the Billi
- (g) Umm Lajj
- (h) Yenbo'
- (i) Medina, with jurisdiction over most of the Harb
- (j) Rabigh
- (k) Qadhim
- (l) Jedda
- (m) Mecca
- (n) Taif
- (o) Ghamid and Zahran
- (p) Beni Shehr (headquarters at An Numas)
- (q) Lith
- (r) Qunfidha
- (s) Birk, with jurisdiction over the Beni Hasan

The following towns have municipalities: Mecca, Medina, Jedda, Yenbo', Rabigh.

The Currency of Saudi Arabia

The currency of Saudi Arabia is the Saudi silver riyal and piastre. The English gold sovereign is also in use.

The sovereigns with a King's head and St George are worth more than those with the Queen's head or with the coat of arms on the obverse. In some places the latter are even refused.

The riyal has approximately the same value as the Indian rupee and is worth about one shilling and sixpence or less.

Until comparatively recently the tawil, a copper nail or hook, was currency in Eastern Arabia, and the Maria Theresa dollar was in use in Southern Saudi Arabia. Both are out of ordinary use now.

The Turkish gold pound is still sometimes seen, but is worth considerably less than the English "King's" sovereigns.

Notes on the Anaza Tribe

(1) *Maaz*. The Maaz are cousins to the Anaza. Their habitat is in the Sinai Peninsula, east of Akaba, and a few are in Egypt. To them are allied the Bani Atiya tribe of the Northern Hejaz and Western Nejd. The Maaz are no longer very numerous compared with the Anaza.

The total number in Egypt who were driven out of the Hejaz by the Huwaitat some hundred years ago are calculated by their present Sheikhs at 20,000, but they may be far fewer. The nomad sections inhabit the Eastern Egyptian desert from Halwan up to the Qana-Qosair road, while others are settled as small farmers in the Nile Valley.

There is connexion between the Sinai Hejaz Maaz and the Egyptian Maaz, the former often going to join their Egyptian cousins, particularly in bad years. The Anaza of Irak, however, have no connexion now with their Maaz cousins, although the tradition of kinship remains strong.

(2) *Ibn Murshid*. Ghadwhan, uncle of the present Rakan Ibn Murshid, received the favour of the Comtesse de Clermont Tonnerre, whose influence secured the release of the father from a Turkish prison and confirmed the family in Francophile tendencies.

(3) *Al Musrab*. Mijwil al Musrab, brother of the grandfather of the present chief, Salih Ibn Sugur al Musrab, married Lady Digby, formerly the wife of Lord Ellenborough who later became Governor-General of India, and he is remembered with pride by the tribesmen of this section.

(4) *Musalikh*. Ibn Saud's ancestors were from this section.

(5) *Shamlan*. The ancestors of Ibn Sabah, the Sheikh of Kuwait, were from the Shamlan section. Lorimer, in the *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, says that the ruling family of Kuwait is from the Bani Utba, and all other accounts have copied this. In fact, the family say they are not descended from the Bani Utba, which is in any case only a nickname, and not a tribal section. They relate that many years ago a party of their family, and their followers, determined on vengeance for a favourite slave killed by the Bani Khalid, and that some of the slaves of the Anaza party tied their knees, like camels, so that none could say they had run away.

However this may be, the Sabah deny the existence now or then of a "Bani Utba" section.

The tying of the knee, by binding the thigh to the calf, is not singular in this case. It is related that the Songhai Army, when their country was invaded by the Moorish Army of the Sultan Al Mansour in 1591, did so, and remained thus, loosing their arrows until mown down by the Moors.

(6) *Al Husuni*. The ancestors of Ibn Khalifa, of Bahrein, were from this section.

(7) *Sulailat*. The Sulailat section, with the exception of half a dozen tent households, are all in Nejd. Ibn Ghafil, grandfather of the present Chief, married a gipsy woman (a Sulubiyah), and therefore no Anaza man will allow intermarriage with them and will often deny their right to be Anaza. They usually unite with the 'Z-Bina against the Muhalaf.

(8) *Dahamsha*. Dahamsha is the plural of Dahamsh the father of Ali, Sowailim Sultan, and Hodhairi (the father of the Jala'aid), from whom the Dahamsha divisions take their names (the Salatin, taking their name from Sultan, now follow the Ali but are descended direct from Dahamsha).

(9) *Mahawra*. The Mahawra are frequently called by their nickname "Wisamat Al Mighzal"—i.e. the people of the spindle camel-brands—and sometimes simply "Al-Mighzal," the camel-brand in use by this section representing a spindle.

(10) *Suqur*. There is no paramount chief of this subdivision, each subsection referring direct to Ibn Hadhal. In the prolonged absence afar of Ibn Hadhal the subsections sometimes, however, refer to the Ibn Mujif of the Ijlal.

(11) *Weld Sulaiman*. The Weld Sulaiman follow in practice Ibn Q'aishish, but are not descended through the Dhana Majid. They are non-Anaza in origin, being from the Jaafara tribe.

(12) *Dhana Kuhail*. The Dhana Kuhail follow in practice Ibn Q'aishish, but are not descended through the Dhana Majid, being from the Dad'an direct.

(13) *Ashaj'ah*. A tribal unit connected with the Ruwalla, who hitherto were independent and more powerful and are still showing a tendency to separate themselves from the Ruwalla.

(14) *Ibn Mujaid*. Ibn Mujaid's Sheikship is more theoretical than actual. At the moment his section follows Ibn Sha'alan of the Ruwalla, but is by origin the remains of a once independent and powerful tribal unit.

(15) *Suwalma*. A satellite tribal unit of the Ruwalla, once

more powerful and independent and still at times showing a tendency to independence.

(16) *The Aida and the Fajir*. They inhabit Hejaz and have as their area respectively the country between Taima and Khaibar and the country between Madain Salih and Dar Ul Hamra to Al Ula. The Fajir (or Faqir) division are known also collectively as Al'Fuqara.

(17) Lady Hester Stanhope has related, in her letter to General Oakes of March 19, 1813, that she was enrolled "as an Anisy Arab in the tribe of Melhem."

How to Make and Serve Coffee in Nejd Style

Take two full handfuls of *bunn*—that is, coffee-beans from the Yemen—and roast them in the *mihmas* over an open fire until they are black, which is four to five minutes. (The usual and best firing is dry camel-dung.)

Meanwhile the water should be getting hot at the side of the fire in a *della* (coffee-pot).

The *bunn* is next placed in the mortar, or *nigr*, and pounded to powder. The Arabs love to hear the rhythmic pounding of coffee.

One cupful, *finjal*, is put into boiling water in the *della*, and the whole is left to simmer for three minutes.

While this is being done some cardamom, or *hayl*, is pounded up in the *mihmas* and half a cupful is put in another *della* or coffee-pot.

A piece of *leef*, or fibre from the date-palm, is placed in the spout of the first *della* to act as a filter, and the coffee is poured on to the cardamom in another *della*. Some more *leef* is placed in the spout of this other *della*, and the coffee is now ready for serving.

In Nejd, coffee must always be poured out with the right hand.

The coffee-cups are only filled about a quarter full. The pourer waits for the drinker to empty his cup before going on to the next drinker. He goes round the assembled persons three times.

There is another way of making coffee, using the husks only, which is rarer. This is preferred by the very religious, for strong coffee is only doubtfully acceptable to them as within the sanction of the Koran, having been unknown to the Prophet and being a stimulant if strong.

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The stories of the European travellers whom fate or inclination brought to Central Arabia in the wave of armies, as pilgrims, or in pursuit of some other aim than exploration for its own sake or in the interests of their Governments, have been outlined by Dr Hogarth and Auriant. Strangest among these perhaps is that of Thomas Keith, the young private soldier in the Highlanders who, captured and enslaved, rose to become Governor of the second holiest city in Islam, Medina. Domingo Badia y Leiblich, a Jew from Cadiz, who travelled in Arabia for Napoleon in the guise of one of the last of the Abbasids, has written his own tale under his alias Ali Bey al Abbassi. Much to be admired among those who travelled for their Governments is Niebuhr, the only survivor of the first scientific expedition to Arabia, one sent by the King of Denmark.

The life of the tribesmen has been incomparably described by Charles Doughty. Lawrence's account of the war in the deserts of the north-west will not be forgotten. The paraphernalia of the Bedouin has been described and illustrated by de Boucheman, and that of the oasis-dwellers by Euting in his account of his journey to Hail, the northern provincial capital. Wuestenfeld and Robertson Smith have contributed to the history of the tribes, and the Admiralty handbook has much information about them.

Little has been written about the tribe from which Ibn Saud is descended, but Count Carlo de Landberg has written a book on the dialect of the northern Anaza. The blood grouping of the tribe has been described by W. R. Shanklin.

Routes in Arabia and the oases and villages are the subject of many details in the Admiralty handbook. Birds, flowers, plants, insects, and animals found in Central Arabia have been recorded by H. St John Philby in his books on his travels in Arabia, and by Cheesman. The luxuriant vegetation of Asir, the south-west province of Saudi Arabia, was noted by Varthema in his book of travel, and he gives a list of fruits and vegetables.

The only well-known English travellers who have entered the

Hejaz or Central Arabia and have written books which have survived are: Captain G. F. Sadleir (who crossed Arabia in 1819), Sir Richard Burton, William Gifford Palgrave, Charles Doughty, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and Lady Anne Blunt, Captain A. J. B. Wavell, A. D. Mitchell Carruthers, St John Philby, T. E. Lawrence, and R. E. Cheesman. Bertram Thomas crossed the south-east Empty Quarter of Arabia and so went along the fringe of Saudi Arabia.

Archæological inquiry has so far been little. Jaussen and Savignac made an expedition to Medain Salih, in the northern Hejaz; Halévy visited Nejran, in the extreme south; Euting and Wallin travelled to Hail, and Huber to Taima, in the Hejaz. Cuneiform tablets found in Mesopotamia referring to Arabia were the subject of a tentative work by Dougherty. Kammerer has contributed much to the summary of our knowledge of the history of the Red Sea provinces.

Geological survey has been limited in extent and carried out by employees of companies which have not yet published the result. Sir Richard Burton, Loth, and Lamare have contributed material.

Except in Schoff's notes to his edition of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, hardly anything has been published upon the trade and caravan routes of Saudi Arabia in days gone by.

Works on the Sabea, Himyaritic, and Minæan languages are few and scarce. There is no work on the spoken language of Central Arabia to-day. There are no meteorological stations in Central Arabia. The Red Sea, and Persian Gulf Pilots, published by the Admiralty, gave many particulars about the Saudi Arabian coastline.

ABBREVIATIONS

- D.M.G.* Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft.
G.J. Geographical Journal—*i.e.*, journal of the Royal Geographical Society from 1893 onward.
J.R.A.S. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
J.R.G.S. Journal of the Royal Geographical Society—*i.e.*, journal between 1830 and 1880.
R.C.A.J. Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society.

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¹ The Rwala, or Ruwala, are a division of the Anaza, to which tribe Ibn Sa'ud belongs by descent, to which many of his subjects belong by descent, and which has Bedouin divisions in Saudi Arabia.

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