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was busiest he performed his religious observances strictly, fasted, read the Koran, and prayed five times a day.

When there was a raid or a fight he was the first on the move, eyes afire and as excited as a boy going out to play.

Except for his very few hours of sleep he was never still. He wore out those round him and he fought the Rashid steadily back until at last he cornered and finished him.

The Rashid had been raiding. After a long march he came to the village of Muhanna and camped. His men were tired. He himself was growing more and more disheartened and casual as he grew older. Believing that Ibn Saud was many miles away he took no special precaution for the night.

Ibn Saud was in fact many miles away, but as soon as his scouts brought him the news he made a forced march in the dark. At dawn a thick dust storm blew up. Under cover of this he attacked, caught the enemy unprepared, and smashed them into flight.

The Rashid could have escaped, but he stood his ground, shouting his battle-cry to rally his men. Almost alone he was shot down at close quarters. His head was stuck on a pole and paraded through the villages so that the tribes should know he was dead.

At once among the Shammar and in the Hail there was confusion. The Rashid's successor was a weakling. All the males of the family fought between themselves for power, killing and murdering each other. The tribes, without a strong man to lead them, dispersed to their homes to quarrel and fight among themselves.

They would have combined against an invader, but they had no desire to go conquering. For the time being they were no more danger to Ibn Saud.

PART V

CHAPTER XXIV

Ibn Saud was twenty-seven, enormous in build, strong, lean, and hard, an accepted leader with a reputation as a fierce fighter and all the prestige of victory behind him, a tremendous virile force of a man who had defeated the Turks, overthrown the Rashid, and conquered Nejd by the strength of his own right arm.

But he was by no means established. Difficulties and dangers came crowding in on him from inside as well as from out. The desert Arabs would not accept a new master so easily. They were like sand, each tribe and individual a fiercely independent unit. Like sand they could be held together between strong hands, but they could not be moulded into one plastic piece. And if the strong hands grew slack or loosened, like sand they escaped and fell strewn out into units as fiercely independent as before.

They had joined Ibn Saud not out of loyalty but because they thought they would have more liberty to raid and loot, when the Rashid was beaten. But the hand of Ibn Saud was heavy on them. He forbade them to raid without his permission and he punished, without pity, all who disobeyed him, and the tribesmen grew restless and rebellious under the restraint.

In Riad itself the ulema looked at Ibn Saud sideways. He was devout it was true. He prayed, fasted, and gave alms as should every good Moslem. He neither drank wine nor smoked nor used unseemly oaths. His private
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Life was ordered in accordance with Islam and the conventions. As a strong, virile man he delighted in many wives, but he had no concubines, no stealthy liaisons or mistresses. No man could throw stones at him in this matter.

Nevertheless the Wahabi Elders were distrustful of him; he was too genial for their way of thinking; he was often gay and even laughed, which was indecorous behaviour to their sour minds: he was known to have allowed his fighting men to sing on the march; he had found that the people of Anaiza smoked tobacco openly, and he had not punished them; and he had been a friend of Mubarak who, as all the world knew, was very irregular in his ways: and he hobnobbed with foreigners and even encouraged them to visit him.

For help Ibn Saud turned to his father. Abdur Rahman had a great reputation for sanctity and the Wahabis trusted him. They would listen to him when they would listen to no one else.

Nevertheless Ibn Saud had to walk delicately. The Elders watched him. They considered themselves as the keepers of the conscience of every man, as did in fact every Wahabi whether elder or simple worshipper—and especially as keepers of the conscience of the ruler of Riyadh. They criticized and checked him. They would have raised the country against him if they had proved him unorthodox.

Naturally hot-blooded Ibn Saud was irritated by their interference and their acid criticisims, but he held himself in, hid his thoughts, and bore with them.

From outside came greater dangers. Ibn Saud’s success suited Mubarak no more than it suited the Turks. His policy was the same as that of the Turks. He wished always to protect Kuwait by creating a balance of power among the tribes in Central Arabia. Ibn Saud had upset that balance. He had become too strong and a threat to Kuwait itself.

Moreover, between Mubarak and Ibn Saud had arisen much ill-feeling. While Ibn Saud had been a penniless refugee Mubarak had treated him kindly. He still continued to treat him as a refugee, sent him advice and expected him to follow it without question.

But Ibn Saud refused; he was no more a youth to be instructed; he was master of Nejd and a person of importance. He resented Mubarak’s attitude of patronage and control. He was irritated at Mubarak’s tone, and Mubarak was jealous of the success and the independence of his protégé. They met and corresponded with all due politeness but Mubarak began to work against Ibn Saud and to make alliances to counter-balance him; and he came quickly to an agreement with the Turks who gave him money.

Between Kuwait and Nejd lived the Mutair tribes. They were surly and ill-natured. They resented all control, and Ibn Saud had already claimed the right to rule over them. Mubarak bought over Feisal al Dawish their sheik, an uncompromising, salt-pickled warrior. He persuaded the Rashid family to end their quarrels and to join with the Mutair. Finally he persuaded the Governor of the town of Buraida to refuse to recognize Ibn Saud. He himself stood in the background and did not appear openly, but Ibn Saud knew that he was the master-mind behind the confederacy.

As soon as Ibn Saud heard that the Governor of Buraida had shut the gates against him, he marched out. He found a force of Shammar tribesmen between him and the town
and attacked at once. During the fight his horse slipped. He was thrown and broke a collar-bone. At sunset both sides drew off without either having gained the superiority.

All that night Ibn Saud lay in agony in his tent on the sand. He twisted and turned and sweated with the pain of his shoulder, but he refused to give in. His men had lost heart when they had seen that he was hurt. Unless he lead them personally they would break and run.

At dawn he led them out and by midday he had driven the Shammar back. Then he turned on the Mutair, beat them, and chased them into their own country.

He decided to make an example of them. The Mutair had changed their allegiance so often. They had submitted to him before and then joined his enemies. They were traitors. He had shown before that he could hold his hand and be patient. Now he would show them that he could use force.

He lashed out at the Mutair without mercy. He raided them, looted and burned their villages right up to the frontier of Kuwait. He hung their headman and drove out Sheikh Dawish. Having made up his mind that it was necessary, Ibn Saud was utterly ruthless. He branded his mark on the Mutair so that all the tribes should see what he had done and be afraid. He harried them relentlessly—"I draw the sword in the face of the bedouin", he said. "It is the argument they understand"—until they crawled to him and submitted.

Finally he turned on Buraida. The Governor he had appointed himself. The gates were still closed against him and the town prepared for a siege, but there were some of his men in the town who at the hour of evening prayer, when the garrison was in the mosque, opened the gates to Ibn Saud. The Governor brought to him fell on his knees.

He expected that Ibn Saud would have him executed at once; but with a sneer Ibn Saud told him to stand up and then to take his family and be gone out of Nejd.

But he was determined that there should be no more trouble in Buraida. The town was strongly fortified. Its people were well known for their ill-natured malevolence. It was the key point of northern Nejd and the centre of all its trade. It had always been rebellious. He made his cousin Jiluwri the Governor.

Already Jiluwri was feared far and wide. From the taciturn youth who had helped Ibn Saud to raid Riad he had grown into a short thick-set man with stern features and great bodily strength, a renowned rider and judge of horses and camels, very silent, quick in decision, and ruthless in action. He was utterly loyal to Ibn Saud. He had no personal ambition, but he was rigidly conscientious. He carried out the law to the letter. His judgments were swift and terrible. He kept rigid discipline among his people. While Ibn Saud was feared, Jiluwri instilled into all he ruled such terror that his word was law even to the most distant bedouin; and from the date he became Governor of Buraida there was no more trouble in Northern Nejd.

CHAPTER XXV

HARDLY had Ibn Saud returned to Riad before the new troubles were on him. Away in Constantinople there was revolution. The leaders, who called themselves the Committee of Union and Progress, led by a young officer named Enver, deposed the Sultan, old Abdul Hamid, but they continued the Sultan's policy of reviving the Turkish Empire; and being young and enthusiastic they put more
energy and zeal into their plans, and they tightened up the control of the Central Government over the provinces of the Empire and to take a firmer grip of the Arab countries, especially Syria and those along the Red Sea Coast—the Hejaz with the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina, and the Yemen and the Asir farther to the south because they were rich. To do this they hurried forward the building of the railway which was to run from Damascus to Medina for by this they could transport soldiers as well as pilgrims; and they appointed one Husein ibn Ali as the Grand Sherif of Mecca and their Governor of the Hejaz.

Husein was a typical Arab-Turkish official, of which there were many in Constantinople. He had spent many years in the city, where his sons were brought up. He had held many official posts and was a Councillor of the Empire. In looks and manner he might have been a Turkish Pasha of the Sultan's court, a dignified old man already over fifty with a short well-kept beard, slow and pompous in speech using long and antiquated words in preference, conservative and religious, subtle in all the guiles of Turkish procrastination, very courteous yet obstinate, autocratic and suspicious. He had been chosen because he was of the Hashimite family of Mecca, which was descended from the Prophet Mohamed; and because the Turks trusted him to act as their faithful agent.

Almost at once Husein and Ibn Saud quarrelled. Between Nejd and the Hejaz lay a broad steppe of highlands where the tribes of the Ataiba grazed their flocks of sheep and camels. Through this country ran the caravan routes from Nejd into the Hejaz and to Mecca, and it was the key to the Hejaz and to the Red Sea Coast.

Over the Ataiba Ibn Saud claimed suzerainty with the right to call on them for fighting men and to levy his taxes. Husein refused to allow such a claim. He maintained that they were his subjects. Ibn Saud marched on to the Ataiba from the east and received their submission. Husein sent his son Abdullah, a fat weak-kneed youth with a mouth full of boastings, to raid from the west. Ibn Saud marched farther and sent out his brother Sad to raid even wider. Husein himself was in the south, in the Yemen, helping the Turks to crush a revolt. As soon as the revolt was crushed he made a march to demonstrate his victory, back through the Ataiba, and forced them to submit. By chance his men surrounded and captured Sad.

Ibn Saud prepared to attack Husein, when from behind came a new danger. His cousins, the sons of his uncle Saud who had chased him out of the Hasa when he was a refugee and who still claimed that they were the heirs to Riad and Nejd, had raised the Ajman and marched into southern Nejd and threatened Riad. The Hazazina headmen of the town of Laila and all the disgruntled tribes had joined them.

Ibn Saud faced the facts. For him facts were far more important than pride. He was never foolhardy. He never battered his head against the wall of the impossible. He realized that, with this revolt behind him, he could not stand up to Husein, and he wanted to get his brother back. As quickly as possible he came to terms with Husein; he made a “little peace” as he called it to tide over the crisis. In return for Sad he paid an indemnity and withdrew.

Then he acted like lightning. The revolt was close to Riad. It was a blow to the heart. It threatened his personal prestige. If he was defeated, even if he hesitated, compromised, or delayed he was done. He hit hard at
once. He found his cousins at the village of Hariq, dashed
at them, caught them unprepared, and smashed them.

The Ajman bolted back across the border into the Hasa.
His cousins fled, some to the Hasa and some to take refuge
with Husein of Mecca. The Hazazina and their local sup-
sporters made for Laila where Ibn Saud surrounded them.

He made up his mind that here in the south he must, as
he had in the north, make an example. They, like the
Mutair, were his subjects and now traitors. Systematically
and without pity he harried their land. He sent his men
to kill and loot in the villages round Qutain and Haua
and then to raze them to the ground. He turned on Laila,
forced it to surrender without terms and condemned to
death nineteen of the headmen and the Hazazina leaders.

Giving the condemned men twenty-four hours’ grace,
he sent messengers out through the country-side to sum-
mon the people. Before the main gate of the town he or-
dered a platform to be built. On this at dawn he took his
seat with his sheiks and his bodyguard round him. Before
the towns-men, villagers, and bedouin from far and near
were formed into three sides of a huge square, where his
Wahabi fighting men kept order. Above them sat Ibn Saud,
fierce in his anger, dominating and terrifying. The fate of
every man there was in his hands.

He gave all the orders himself personally. From the
town the nineteen condemned were marched out. In pairs
they were led up and made to kneel at the foot of the
platform. “There is no Might nor Power save in God”,
said Ibn Saud and made a sign at which a huge negro slave
without his cloak and with a drawn sword in his hand
stepped forward with his assistants behind him.

They carried out all the formalities of the state execution
deliberately and with dignity, no savage pleasure in killing,
but cold justice. The executioner with the point of his
sword pricked each man as he came to him in the neck,
and as the wretch stretched his neck stiff at the terror of
the steel, with a backhand blow he sliced through the neck.
When eighteen were dead and the nineteenth knelt ready
Ibn Saud pardoned him and bade him go free to tell what
he had seen of the just vengeance of Ibn Saud.

After that he rose and spoke to the people, his voice
rising in a great roar, telling them of the sin of rebellion
and its punishment. Then he called to them to come
nearer, dropped his voice and spoke to them as his well-
beloved subjects. He bade them go and choose one who
should act as their Governor, and be faithful to him; and
he promised them that if they remained loyal they should
rule themselves in peace.

Only, all that day the eighteen dead men lay strewn out
on the sand, a massed horror in the clean sunlight, a feast
for the flies and the vultures, and a warning to rebels.
After the sunset prayer they were taken away by their rel-
atives and buried with the due ceremonies.

The story of Laila was told from village to village and
from camp-fire to camp-fire and grew in the telling. The
fierce punishment, ruthless, just, and without malice, and
the unreasoning generosity caught the imagination of the
Arabs. This was a man, they said, a man to rule them, a
fierce fighting man, a just judge who knew his own mind
and acted without hesitation or doubt, a man to be feared
and obeyed.

The most distant tribesmen heard it and were afraid.
They understood strength and justice. Ibn Saud gave
them both. He was fit to be master and to rule them.
CHAPTER XXVI

At last Ibn Saud had a breathing space in which he might organize and consolidate his position. He had ejected and killed the Rashid; the family split by quarrels could do nothing against him, and the Shammar tribes had no leader. He had crushed all internal revolts, and he had driven out the Turks. In the spring of 1913 he went into the south country. All administration and all justice was in his hands, and there were many disputes and cases to be settled. Also he had determined to teach the bedouin that he was master and that without his permission he would allow no raiding.

The bedouin looked on raiding as their right from time immemorial. It was, after their women, their one great pleasure. Like some game it was regulated by codes and conventions evolved through the centuries so that in a raid there was much dust and noise, some good galloping and sword-play, some loot for the winners, but few wounds or hurts.

It meant, however, general insecurity. All the roads were unsafe. The caravans were looted. The merchants were forced to pay tribute to the tribal sheikhs and even then they were plundered. The villagers lived in constant fear of attack.

Ibn Saud decided that he would break down the ancient customs. Tribute was his prerogative alone. The road should be safe, and the villagers live in peace under him. He had already forbidden all raiding, but his orders had been ignored. News had come in that a clan of the Murra had attacked a caravan that was travelling under his special protection.

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He decided to teach the bedouin a lesson, and he swooped down on this Murra clan without warning, wiped them out, leaving only a black smear of tents and bodies on the sand as a warning that the word of Ibn Saud was law throughout the desert and must be obeyed.

CHAPTER XXVII

It was the custom of Ibn Saud to do all work in public. When he was in Riad he sat on the steps of the palace facing the great courtyard. On the march he sat in the mouth of his tent and in villages when it was most convenient in the open square, usually on the steps of the mosque. Round him were the local sheikhs and headmen and his bodyguard, huge men specially picked from the Wahabis fighting men, and his negro slaves, dressed in long cloaks, all armed, a few with heavy sticks in their hands, and with them the executioners.

All manner of cases came before him, quarrels over wells or rights of pasturage, disputes over land boundaries, irrigation channels, ownership of camels; claims for looting, theft, damage or injury done in a fight or brawl, complaints of every description. Every man had the right to come direct before him, without interference or application to a subordinate, either with a complaint or an appeal. Sometimes he would be lenient and generous. At other times he was stern and easily angered by a chance word or by opposition; and within the Law of the Koran, which lays down the penalties for crimes, he held the power of life and death, of immediate mutilation, flogging and fine.

Each case he dealt with himself, face to face with accuser and the accused. There were no lawyers or advocates to
complicate the issue or to prove black to be white. He heard the evidence quickly and gave his decision from which there was no appeal.

A bedouin was accused of theft; the accusers stood forward and swore; the man had found a saddle-bag beside a dead camel and taken the saddle-bag. The evidence was good. Ibn Saud pronounced his verdict. The executioner led the man to the centre of the square and struck off his right hand, dipped it in hot oil to stop the bleeding and holding the arm aloft paraded him so that all might see the freshly hacked stump.

A woman and a man were accused of loose living. The woman was no more than a harlot. The man had brought in strong drink from Kuwait. Ibn Saud ordered her to be whipped out of the town by his guards and the man to be flogged before him at once, and, if he lived after that, to be expelled into the Hasa.

There had been a quarrel; a man had been killed; the murderer stood condemned to death. The dead man's relations compromised for a fine and Ibn Saud assessed the blood-money and let the man go.

A woman came crying that her neighbour's cow had broken into her garden that morning and eaten all her clover. Her neighbours denied it on oath. Ibn Saud bade the butcher kill and spit open the cow; its stomach was full of clover. The carcass stayed with its owner, but he paid an indemnity for the clover and a heavy fine for his false oath.

A woman demanded the death sentence on the killer of her husband.

"What is the evidence?" asked Ibn Saud.

"This man was in a date-palm picking the fruit. My husband was sitting peacefully below until this man, this murderer, fell on him from above and broke his neck so that I am left a widow and my children are fatherless".

"Did he fall on your husband by design so as to kill him?" asked the King.

"I know not", she replied, "only that my husband is dead and I am alone".

"Will you take the compensation that I adjudge", he asked, "or do you still demand the life of the accused?"

"By the Holy Law his life is forfeit to me".

"So be it", said Ibn Saud, after a short pause. "His life is forfeit to you. Only the manner of his death is in my hand.

"The palm is forty feet high. I direct that the accused be bound to the trunk and that you, woman, shall climb up to the top of the tree and from there fall upon the accused and so take his life. It is your right. Go, take your right —or perchance you will still accept if I judge for compensation".

And the widow quickly took the compensation and was gone.

And all the time Ibn Saud was himself on trial. Round him whether it was in the square of a town or out in the desert, squatted many men listening and watching him, sizing him up, judging his value. He must be quick, just, and severe. He could not hide himself behind some Government machine or a privileged position and so create an illusion of wisdom. He was himself the government and the judge. If he hesitated, showed ignorance of the law or the customs, weakness, or lacked in judgment, the watching crowds squatting round him in the sunlight noted it. The word went out; the ruler was no ruler. Soon there would be trouble in distant villages, refusal to pay his taxes, and
to send him fighting men. If he hesitated again the trouble would grow into revolt. He was autocrat, absolute, but by the will of the people. He must rule by his own mother wit, courage and wisdom openly before his people. If he failed they would reject him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

As he travelled in the south country his spies brought Ibn Saud news—the desert was a great whispering gallery in which nothing could be kept secret long—that his enemies were again combining against him. Darwish was back among the Mutair and spoiling for revenge. The Ajman were waiting for any chance to raid into Nejd. Husein of Mecca was growing more ambitious. Blown up with his success, puffed up with big ideas—the notables in Syria had suggested that he should call himself King of the Arabs—encouraged by the cousins of Ibn Saud who had taken refuge with him, he claimed all the Ataiba, even those within the boundaries of Nejd itself, and he incited them to raid. Mubarak was at his old crafty ways, weaving his enemies into a rope to bind Ibn Saud and yet not showing his own hand.

Behind them all were the Turks sending money and men to the Shammar, the Mutair, and to Mubarak, spurring on Husein with promises, collecting troops in Baghdad, and sending soldiers to the Governor of Hofuf, the capital of the Hasa, with orders to help the Ajman against Ibn Saud.

Suddenly there came news that the Constantinople Government was calling back all available troops from Baghdad, Basra, and Hofuf. The Turks had been beaten by the Italians in Tripoli. The Bulgarians had declared

war and were advancing on Constantinople. The Turkish Empire was in urgent danger at its centre.

Ibn Saud saw his chance. The Turks as ever were his real danger. The Mutair, the Ajman, the Shammar, and the Rashid, even Husein he could deal with. They were the ordinary problems of Arabia, but the Turks were a Power, and behind them were the Germans; that was another proposition altogether. They would in time eat him up. He would chase them out of the Hasa now while they were weak.

Still he moved with his habitual caution, kept his intention to himself, and made his plans carefully. The first thing was to verify his information, so he sent his spies into the Hasa and to Hofuf, and they confirmed what he had heard; that the garrisons of Hofuf and of the coast towns had been reduced; and that most of the troops had marched northwards in a hurry. They reported that the settled population of the Hasa and especially of Hofuf were tired of the Turks, for under them there was no security of property, and no man’s life, whether he lived in a village or in a walled town, was safe. The country was full of brigands. All the tribes were turbulent and out of hand. The bedouin raided at will and went unpunished. They would walk into the villages unafraid and take what they wanted. They stole cattle under the walls of Hofuf and even came into the towns and sneered at the Turks. They infested every road and took toll of all the caravans. No one dared be out after dark. No one could travel without an escort, and the escort eat up the traveller with their demand for bribes. Even the short road from Hofuf to the sea was unsafe. Only a few weeks before brigands had raided a convoy on that road, killed the Turkish guard and looted five hundred camels and their loads. Further
the Munasir pearl fishers had turned pirates so that no ship dared to come into the harbour at Ojaib. The Turks were helpless. If they sent out soldiers, the bedouins ambushed them and either cut their throats or stripped them naked and drove them home with jeers.

The people, said the spies, would welcome Ibn Saud. There were many Wahabis among them. Furthermore the garrison in Hofuf were very slack, and could easily be overpowered; they kept no regular guards; most of them were in the big fort but many were scattered through the town.

At once Ibn Saud sent out a call to all his tribes for their contingents of fighting men, saying that he would march against the Murra. As they came in he allotted them to their camping grounds, arranged for their feeding and water, and distributed the camels out amongst the fighting men. When he had some seven thousand he acted.

Choosing a moonless night and turning north and then east he marched at full speed, so as to outpace any messenger who might try to give the alarm. Racing across the Dahna desert he made into the Hasa and straight at Hofuf.

Taking seven hundred picked men, he went ahead through the oasis which lay thick round the town and halted in the darkness of the palms by the gate of Ibrahim Pasha. A few men with ropes and palm-trunks for ladders crept forward. The moat was newly dug and the town walls were massive, built of blocks of cut sandstone, but in some places they were in bad repair. At intervals there were towers with sentries in them. Choosing a place where the wall was lower than the rest they waited in the dry moat listening, waiting their opportunity. A sentry from the ramparts above, hearing them, challenged, and getting no reply went on his beat humming to himself.

At once they were up swarming over the wall. Silent on their bare feet some ran to knife the sentries, others to the gate to kill the guard and let in the rest of the men. As yet no alarm had been given, and the town slept quietly.

They made down the market street, the Suq al Khamis, to the fort, a great square building which dominated the town. The gate was open; the drawbridge was down; the sentries and the guard were asleep. Using their knives in silence they rushed the fort. In the darkness and the confusion the unprepared Turks panicked and put up no fight. In a short time the Wahabis had captured the fort and wiped out the scattered detachments.

As soon as daylight came Ibn Saud rode in by the main gate with his standard-bearer in front of him and the main body of his men behind him, and the town rose for him to a man. The Governor and the remnants of the garrison had run for the Mosque of Abraham and barricaded the doors.

Ibn Saud sent in a messenger with an ultimatum. If they continued to resist he would run a mine under the mosque and blow them all sky-high. They had no chance of resisting or escaping. If they surrendered at once he would let them march away and would guarantee their safety. The Governor accepted, and the next day the Turks marched out with the full honours of war, down to the coast and took ship for Basra.

After that Ibn Saud went through the Hasa receiving the submission of the tribes. He took the ports of Ojaib and Qatif and all the coast as far as the boundary of Kuwait and made Jiluw Governor of the province. The people received him gladly. “The rod of the Saud”, they said, “is long. It reaches over the desert and the bedouin are afraid”, and they hoped for peace and security.
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The Turkish Government accepted the position. They could do nothing else, so they came to terms with Ibn Saud and made a treaty with him. They recognized the Hasa as part of Nejd and Ibn Saud as the ruler of the whole, and they gave him a decoration, together with money, and arms, and promised that in the future they would not interfere with him. In return Ibn Saud accepted the nominal suzerainty of the Turks.

CHAPTER XXIX

The conquest of the Hasa greatly increased the importance of Ibn Saud, for it gave him a coast-line with two ports, and the English had to consider him when they made their plans in the Persian Gulf.

With success his ambitions had expanded. He did not conceal them. He spoke of them with a flourish of big words. He claimed the south country to the Indian Ocean and that of the Ataiba, away to the Red Sea. He would control Kuwait. He would conquer the Shammar and take all as far as Hail and beyond.

Hitherto all his efforts had been concentrated on fighting, but with material success there began to grow up in him the conviction that what his father had always taught him was true. He had been entrusted by God with a mission. The Arabs had been a great people ruling a vast Empire founded four square on the religion of Islam. He saw them round him split up with jealousies into sects and races, become of little account and some even ruled over by foreigners and by Christians. It was his mission to unite them once more in the True Faith of Islam and to lead them back to greatness.

Before, though he had himself lived strictly by the rules

of the Wahabis, he had been indulgent with others. The Murra had not disgusted him. He had not resented but rather been interested in the laxness and the irregularities of Mubarak and the people of Kuwait. He had himself bought a gramophone and taken a great delight in it. Now he began to change. He became stricter. Religion became more than ever the basis of all his actions. It was behind his mind in all that he did. He broke the gramophone and forbade any music near him. He would not tolerate laxness in others any more.

A lesser man buoyed up with his success might have become vainglorious and gone conquering at once, but Ibn Saud considered calmly. It was true that the Shammar was weak and that Husein had no great force; nevertheless he must consolidate what he had taken before he could expand. He held down his natural instinct to fight and his desire for action, and he treated Husein with fair words, though in private he showed how he despised him—Husein the old dodderer, the agent of the Turks and his Constantinople-bred sons, and especially Abdullah, who was a pestilential fellow.

With Mubarak he kept friendly, called him “Father”: asked his advice and appeared to listen to it, though he knew that the old fox was working against him. The Shammar he left in peace.

From Syria came messengers asking him for help. The new Turkish Government had already begun to centralize. It had taken over control of the local governments and was forcing the local people to become Turks. It had extended the Turkish conscription laws to Syria, was calling up the men to serve in the Turkish Army, and had imposed new taxes.
The Syrian Arabs were angry and ready to rebel. Under Sultan Abdul Hamid and the lax rule of the old Empire they had left much to themselves to run their affairs in their own way, and now they refused to become Turks: they were proud of being Arabs: they had never served in the Turkish Army and they refused to do so or to pay the new taxes.

All through Syria committees were at work organizing resistance and revolution. Their centre was the city of Damascus. They were working to eject the Turks and make an independent Syria, and beyond that a combination of all Arabs into one Empire or Confederacy. They had already been negotiating with Husein and with Mubarak and had obtained their support.

Ibn Saud listened to them. He was as proud as they were of being an Arab. He would allow no Turk to rule over him, but he quickly found that the Syrians were full of empty words. They were dreamers, and their schemes were vague. He wanted facts, something concrete and workable, not a mere blather of words; and he turned back to his own affairs.

His own problem was stability. He held Nejd and the Hasa by the strength of his own right arm and his prestige as a fighter and a ruler, but his people were fickle and unstable. If he weakened or failed, they would turn on him. A small proportion were town and village-dwellers, and on these he could rely; but the majority were bedouin and the bedouin gave no steady allegiance to any ruler. They lived as much by raiding and plunder as by their sheep and cattle. Always on the move, they had no ties to bind them. They were feckless and irrational. They could be turned from tears to laughter and from murder to fantastic gener-
osity with a few words or a twist of fancy. They concentrated on nothing. They were as restless and perverse as the carrion flies.

From his experience Ibn Saud knew that they were useless as subjects and utterly untrustworthy as soldiers. They produced little and destroyed much. They would change side in a battle without warning and loot the defeated. He had punished them savagely, but he knew that though punishment might hold them in check for a time it would not change their characters nor the customs of the desert.

He evolved a plan simple yet so novel that if it succeeded it would revolutionize the whole life of the desert people. He would plant the wandering bedouin in colonies round water and turn them into villagers and cultivators.

His object was to destroy the nomad and tribal organization. This would break the conventions of the raid and the blood-feud, and so make obedience to God and loyalty to himself greater than loyalty to blood and the tribe. At the same time he would increase the land under cultivation, the man-power of Nejd, and turn the fighting instincts of the bedouin away from killing each other into fighting for him. Success meant stability and power.

He set to work with caution—for there were many difficulties ahead—but with a shrewd knowledge of the character of his people. Religion was the basis of his scheme. By an appeal to religion the bedouin could be roused to great enthusiasm, but only for a short time, for their zeal was like a meteor which flared up white hot for a moment and was turned to dust. Once, however, he had roused their enthusiasm he would tie them to the land with material advantages. First he must get the support of the religious leaders.
LORD OF ARABIA

Throughout Nejd there already existed a complete religious organization. In Riad the descendants of the original Abdul Wahab, the preacher who had worked with Saud the Great, formed a hierarchy. Ibn Saud was their Imam, their Leader, and to strengthen his position with them he had married a woman of the Abdul Wahab family who had borne him a son whom he had named Feisal.

From this hierarchy were chosen the ulema, the Doctors of the Law, to whom all religious questions in doubt were put and who were responsible for the carrying out of the religious law and the religious instruction of the people. Under them were all the religious officials, the keepers of the mosques, the muezzins who called to prayer and the mutawwats or preachers, who were distributed through the villages and the tribes in the rough proportion of one preacher to every fifty men. Round each preacher was a school of students.

Ibn Saud set this machinery to work. He talked with his father and obtained his support. The old man had become a recluse. He was pleased to receive guests but, except for public prayer at the mosque on Fridays, he rarely went out of the palace. Though he did not neglect his wives—and even though he was old he was yet virile and his family increased rapidly—he spent all his spare time reading the sacred books and in meditation; so that he had acquired a reputation of sanctity and was greatly respected.

Then Ibn Saud called together the Doctors of the Law in the presence of his father and placed his scheme before them. They listened to him, discussed learnedly and searched the Koran for authority. They were still distrustful of him, thinking him to be too worldly, too ambitious for material success rather than for the service of God, so that he had to deal with them with tact and restraint. He needed their support. Their perverse reasoning, their crabbed outlook, their ponderous discussions, their everlasting hair-splitting arguments worked on his irritability, but he knew their influence with the people and he listened patiently, persuaded and cajoled them until they turned from distrust to enthusiastic support. His plan became their plan; they would create a fighting brotherhood for the service of God: the bedouin should become the Ihwcan, the Brethren united in God.

To the mutawwats, the preachers, and to the students they sent out orders to go through the tribes preaching against the raid and the blood-feud, teaching that it was grievous sin for Moslem to kill Moslem, that loyalty to God was greater than loyalty to the tribe, and that the Prophet laid down that it was a good deed worthy of Paradise for Moslems to cultivate the land, and calling for volunteers to form a colony.

At first they got little response. The tribal customs were as old as man and ingrained deep into the character of every bedouin. The desert Arabs were conservative and disliked change. Among the Harb alone there was some response, and Sad ibn Mutib, their sheik, collected some volunteers for the venture, and settled at Artawiya.

Artawiya was a desolate place where there were some wells of good water near the surface which were used by the tribes and by travellers, and when not in use were covered with brushwood against the sand. Beside the wells were some neglected land and a few uncultivated palm-trees.

Ibn Saud helped Mutib and his volunteers. He came to them personally, encouraged them, brought them a little money and some villagers to show them how to till and to
irrigate. He portioned out the land and the water rights, assisted them to build a mosque and some huts of mud and finally watched them take the great step and give up their black goat-hair tents for the huts of the new village.

The experiment started well, and before their enthusiasm could cool off Ibn Saud sent them an Elder with a number of preachers to start a school and to encourage them. Then he sent them a little more money, some seed-corn, and finally he issued a rifle and some ammunition to each man whose name was shown on the register of worshippers in the mosque.

The colony grew. At first there were checks. The colonists were used to the lazy life of shepherds and did not take easily to manual labour. They expected the fields to bear without effort and trusted in God to provide for them, until the preachers spurred them on to work. At another time they became convinced that it was a sin to amass money until again the preachers had convinced them that the Prophet had enjoined on Moslems the virtue of laying up wealth.

Artawiya prospered. It grew quickly from a village into a town. Its inhabitants became the most religious and the most fanatical of all the people of Nejd; they were the fiercest of the Wahabis, so that no strangers dared to visit them. They foreswore all their tribal rules and customs, and they would be held by nothing except by the wording of the Koran. They discarded the head-dress of the Arabs and wore a white turban as an emblem, and gloried in the name of Ikhwan, the Brethren, and all the bedouin became to them ignorant men living in darkness and sin. They were always ready to fight, and their battle-cry was “We are the Knights of Unity, Brothers in obedience to God”.

More volunteers came in. The Mutair tribesmen caught the enthusiasm. Darwish became one of the Ikhwan and made his peace with Ibn Saud, who appointed him Governor of Artawiya. At first close round Artawiya itself and then in other places Ibn Saud formed the volunteers into new colonies.

He was careful to mix the tribes and inspired them with the fanatic zeal of the first settlers. He connected each colony with the next by ties so that they looked on themselves as all one community, separate from and superior to the tribes of the open desert. As the colonies grew he began to choose his fighting men from among them rather than from the older towns and villages as he had done before.