PART XI

CHAPTER LXV

WHEN Ibn Saud entered Mecca he had made up his mind to maintain the Hejaz as the Sacred Land, as the Spiritual Home of All Islam, and as the centre of the Pilgrimage; and to increase its importance as part of his great design to spread the Faith and to re-establish the Empire of the Arabs, if God so willed it.

As to its administration and future governement he was not clear. He needed the support of all Moslem countries, and he was prepared to allow them a share in its administration. He had sent out invitations to them to come to Mecca and discuss its future, and he had even said that he would leave its form of government and the nomination of its ruler in their hands.

Herein, however, he deluded himself. He was honest in his intentions, but eventually, whatever they had decided, neither his convictions nor his character would have allowed Ibn Saud to sanction anyone but the Wahabis to control the Sacred Places, nor anyone but himself to rule.

"We know ourselves", he once said to Ameen Rihani, a Syrian from the Lebanon who was cross-questioning him on this subject, "We know ourselves and we cannot accept the leadership of others".

He had, in fact, not made up his mind on any definite line of action, and as ever he acted cautiously, feeling his steps forward, for he was on new and untried ground. Away in Riad he had sensed some of the difficulties ahead of him.

There he ruled an isolated central Arab State of desert people. Here he was in control of a country with contacts that stretched across the whole world.

He moved, therefore, slowly, collecting and assessing the facts and then adjusting them into a policy rather than deciding on a fixed policy and forcing the facts, by lopping, pruning, or expanding, into that policy.

First he set up a temporary administration. The Hejaz was in a state of war, so he declared a military occupation, appointed a Commission to rule under his general direction with his second son, Feisal, as president, and notables chosen both from Mecca and the rest of the Hejaz. He put Luwai in charge of the troops and made Hafiz Wahba Civil Governor of Mecca so that the liberal outlook and worldly wisdom of Wahba should balance the narrow fanaticism of Luwai and his Ikhwan. He sent troops to deal with the tribes in the north and to ring Jedda, Yenbo, and Medina round lightly with siege. He would deal with them later.

Hardly had he done this than the difficulties he had foreseen were on him. Whoever had ruled in Mecca had always been unpopular, whether it had been the Turks or Husein. Now it was the turn of Ibn Saud.

Moslem sects in many countries, and especially the Shiahs in Persia and Iraq, set up a roar of disapproval: it was monstrous and an outrage, they said with venom, that the Wahabis should hold the Sacred City: they were heretics: they would make the Pilgrimage impossible with their rigid fanaticism: they would, and had already, committed sacrilege as their fathers had done a hundred years before: they were savages. They quoted the massacres of Taif, the destruction of Turaib, the throwing down of the

shrines and the desecration of the tombs in Mecca, and the atrocities of the ferocious Ikhwan to emphasize their remonstrance.

Ibn Saud sat quiet, listening to the uproar, handling each difficulty as it came with extraordinary skill—extraordinary because he had neither the training nor experience in handling foreign peoples. It was true that he had always taken a deep interest in international politics: that he cross-examined every traveller who came to Riad: that he had the Basra, Cairo, and Aleppo papers read to him daily: and that nothing gave him greater pleasure than to discuss foreign affairs. None the less, he was desert born and desert bred. Except for the few years as a growing youth in Kuwait, he had never been in close touch with the outside world. He had never been outside Arabia, but had lived all his life in the Inner Desert shut away, isolated, surrounded by self-centred and ignorant fanatics. Yet with instinctive knowledge and much wisdom he handled the international complications that now came to him, and so far from showing arrogance or even irritation at the criticisms made by other nations, he invited them all to send delegates to the Hejaz to see for themselves.

The Persians came to see the damage done in Mecca. They were instinctively hostile. Ibn Saud won them over, showed them how little damage had been done, and sent them away satisfied.

The Egyptians who came were even more hostile and critical. Their hatred of the Wahabis was traditional from the days of Saud the Great and the Wahabi Empire, and they were jealous, for they hoped to make Cairo into the capital of Islam and Fuad, King of Egypt, into Caliph. They complained—they had the information from Husein —that the Ikhwan under Dawish, who were besieging

Medina, had bombarded the Tomb of the Prophet and destroyed the dome: that Dawish had sworn he would loot Medina and massacre all its inhabitants. Ibn Saud treated them with fair words. He showed them that the Tomb had not been bombarded and promised that neither Dawish nor his men should be allowed inside Medina.

Next came the Indians, more friendly but more difficult to handle for they were wordy with democratic ideas and talk of western material progress, patter which they had picked up from the English. They were arrogant. They openly showed how they despised the Arabs and believed in their own superiority. Only by much tact was Ibn Saud able to side-track a dozen quarrels between them and the Wahabis, and even with the Hejazis, and send them home without open disagreement.

The Sheik of the Senussi came from Turkey. He was a devout old man with a great reputation and venerated as a saint, and he had many followers both in the Hejaz and other countries. In accordance with his usual practice he made a visit to the tombs of the wives of the Prophet, and was said to have prayed that they would intercede for him before God. At this the Wahabis were scandalized. No one, not even Mohamed himself, could intercede for another before God, they said. Each man must deal direct with God himself. The Sheik had committed a great sin, and the Sheik retaliated criticizing many of the Wahabi practices. A great quarrel began. Tempers began to rise. There would have been the final scandal of riot or murder in Mecca itself if Ibn Saud had not intervened and quieted both sides.

Thus from inside as well as from out Ibn Saud was beset with difficulties, disagreements, criticisms, jealousies, in one great hubbub, but he remained quiet and patient, and

showed no irritation. Often he was so reasonable that his enemies thought he was being apologetic and sensed some weakness, whereas he was only feinting and testing them. He was watching, learning the facts and planning his line of action.

CHAPTER LXVI

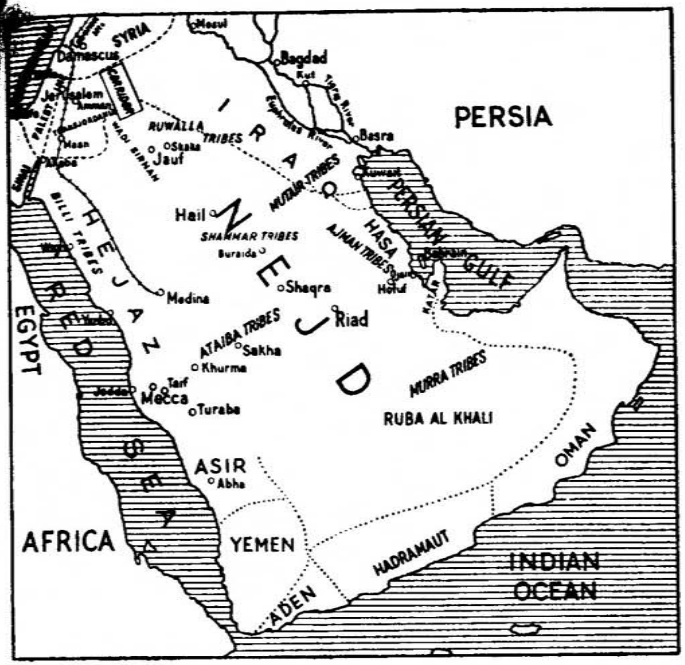
IN THE middle of all these troubles and difficulties came an English delegation headed by Sir Gilbert Clayton.

The collapse of Husein had taken the English by surprise, for they had expected a long war ending in some sort of compromise which would have left both Husein and Ibn Saud weaker and more amenable. With Husein gone, they realized that they must act quickly and come to terms with Ibn Saud before he bacame too strong and perhaps too arrogant and stiff-necked.

First they annexed a piece of territory round the town of Akaba in the extreme north of the Hejaz. This covered the road across Sinai to Suez and Egypt and protected Transjordania on that side. Then they sent Clayton to see Ibn Saud.

Ibn Saud had made his war-camp in a valley beyond the village of Bahra on the road between Mecca and Jedda. Here he received Sir Gilbert Clayton, and his mission.

They sat down to talk in the mouth of his reception tent with a crowd of sheiks and Wahabis squatted round them listening. On all sides were the tumult and bustle of the camp, the shouting and hurrying of men, the dust of horses and the roaring and grumbling of camels. Fresh bodies of men and new tribes came continuously marching in to join the army. Ibn Saud received their leaders, accepted their



loyalty and detailed them places in the camp. Men with quarrels, complaint, cases for urgent decision, messengers came before him. He listened, decided, gave quick orders which his guards hurried to carry out. The interruptions did not disturb him. He came back after each to his conversation with the Englishmen without hesitation and without breaking the trend of the argument.

Akaba was not the important matter for which Clayton had come. Ibn Saud had quietly pushed his troops farther north beyond the Wadi Sirhan so that he held a corridor of

territory which reached up between Transjordania and Iraq, separating them, and which came right up to the French frontier in Syria. That corridor nullified the whole of the English plans for the Arab countries. It cut through the ring of states they had made to shut Ibn Saud in, and it left him a way to break out to the Mediterranean. It threatened Palestine. It lay across all the routes for motor-cars and aeroplanes which they planned to connect up with Baghdad and so with India, and also the pipe-line which was to bring oil from Mosul to the English fleet which was building a new base at Haifa in Palestine.

Ibn Saud knew the value of that corridor. Pleasant always, breaking off now and again to deal with the urgent matters before him, he came back steadily to the same position: he would not give way: that territory was his.

Then Clayton played his trump-card. His orders were to persuade Ibn Saud at all costs. He suggested that the French had agreed with the English that the corridor must be evacuated by Ibn Saud and the frontier of Nejd pushed back. They had in fact signed an agreement by which they must both stand. It was an ultimatum, and a direct threat. For a second it stung Ibn Saud to indignation. He looked across to the camp teeming with men. He had only to give the word and they would one and all march against the English and march shouting with enthusiasm, but he forced down his anger. He could not fight the English, especially with the French beside them. He had not the strength. At the moment he was too weak. Jedda, Yenbo, and Medina still stood out against him. The tribes in the north were restless. Many of his men were tired and wished to go home. They had been many months away. He had much to do, to settle and to consolidate. He could not fight new enemies, and he needed the friendship and help of the Eng-

lish to restrain Feisal of Baghdad and his brother Abdullah who were preparing to attack him and Husein who was sending them money and arms.

With a smile he turned to Clayton. He gave way. He agreed to withdraw from the corridor, to allow his enemies Feisal and Abdullah to join their countries and shut him back. Akaba he left an open question. In return the English accepted him as overlord of the Wadi Sirhan and the Ruwalla tribes.

CHAPTER LXVII

OFTEN with Ibn Saud, when he had grown sluggish with cautious calculating, a burst of anger acted on him as a mental tonic and stimulated him to make decisions. So now, after months of consideration, his anger with the English goaded him to decide on a definite line of action: he would hesitate no more: he would not let them catch him again in so weak a position: he would finish off the conquest of the Hejaz, eject Ali, and himself take complete control of the whole country as its ruler and king.

He had wished all Moslems to unite and, as one body, consult with him in the administration of the Hejaz, but they had failed him. It was nearly a year since he had issued invitations to all Moslem countries to send delegates to him in Mecca. He had repeated the invitations. Some countries had refused: others had prayed to be excused for the time being. The few delegates who had come, whether to confer with him or to criticize, had soon made it clear that even on the smallest point they could not arrive at a common decision. They had spent their time criticizing, quarrelling, and splitting hairs with unending arguments over unreal differences.

Ibn Saud was neither a theologian nor even learned. All his schooling had been rough and ready, and his ideas were simple and practical. Unity in Islam was his great ideal. Disunity he looked on as one of the cardinal sins. He had been profoundly distressed by the disunity he had found. It was disunity that had ruined the Arabs and Moslems and brought them down from their proud empire to their present state of decadence.

"It is written in the Koran, 'Keep fast to the word of God and do not separate!' " he said in one public speech. "God graciously gave Islam and Unity to Moslems. When Moslems separated they were defeated and God empowered their enemies over them".

The jealousies and quarrels, the hair-splittings, the shilly-shallying had only angered him .He wished to get down to concrete realities. He would wait no more.

His own people were pressing him. The Wahabis had repeatedly objected that these foreign Moslems, many of whom were heretics and who had spent neither money nor blood to liberate the Hejaz from Husein, should have a say in its ruling. They had made it quite clear that they would not agree to hand over the control of the Sacred Places to anyone, and Ibn Saud knew that if he went against them in this they would resist him. Even he would not be able to hold them. The ulema, the Wahabis, the Ikhwan, the most loyal of his people of Nejd would resist him, rise against him, revolt rather than agree to what they would consider sacrilege—to allow the foreign and misguided Moslems to rule the Sacred Land.

The Hejazis too had remonstrated at the attitude of the foreign delegates who treated them as inferiors—the Indians in particular who had put forward a proposal to make the Hejaz into an international republic and offered

to send their men from India to keep order and to act as police and soldiers.

The suggestion had infuriated all the Arabs, whether Nejdis or Hejazis. Did the Indians, they said, consider themselves so superior that they would lord it over the Arabs.

"I would rather", said a Hejazi to one of the leaders of the Indian delegates, "I would rather that Ibn Saud's black slaves ruled over us—ay, and misruled us—than you Indians. Go to! Show us first that you can organize one cookingshop in Bombay before you come here to teach us how to run our country".

Ibn Saud realized that he must himself, without further delay of hesitation, take full control and be King. So only could he bring peace and justice to the country and protect it against outside interference, especially interference by the great Christian Powers.

"Of one thing be assured", he said to a foreign visitor, "there shall be no outside control in all my lands..... I will by the Help of God maintain this land in independence".

"I have considered", he said, "and I see that none of the Moslem peoples can guarantee the independence of the Hejaz. The Indians are under the English, the Syrians under the French, and so on. Thus if I give them control the foreign Christian nations will control the Sacred Cities through their subjects.

"I alone have conquered by God and my own right arm and the loyalty of my people. I alone can rule the Sacred Land as a free State of Islam. It is my right and duty to be King".

He issued another general message to all Moslem: "I do not desire", he said, "to make myself master of the Hejaz or to take dominion over it. The Hejaz is a trust

placed in my hands", but he added, and herein he showed his new decision, "I shall hold it until the people of the country shall elect a ruler for themselves—a ruler who shall regard himself as the servant of the Moslem World". And he knew that even the most truculent Hejazi would not dare to propose anyone else but himself.

CHAPTER LXVIII

WITH his conscience clear, his duty decided on, and his mind made up, Ibn Saud set to work. Hitherto he had not pressed the siege of Medina, Yenbo, or Jedda, but only ringed these towns round with a screen of men. Now he gave orders to concentrate on them and if necessary take them by storm.

Dawish had come to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. He volunteered to go to Yenbo. Ibn Saud, however, ordered him to collect his men and return home, saying that he needed him no more. Dawish after some remonstrance set off intending to go to Medina. On the way he attacked the open and defenceless village of Awali and killing wantonly, he sent back word to Ibn Saud boasting of his exploit, asking for more arms and offering to take Medina by storm.

Ibn Saud flew into a great rage. He sent Dawish an abrupt order, to be gone and gone at once or take the consequences: there was no need of his help at Medina: he had committed many excesses—the killing in Awali was another—and made the name of the Ikhwan a scandal in the face of all good Moslems: if he was not gone then and at once he would feel the vengeance of Ibn Saud.

Dawish went back into the Inner Desert to Artawiya, and quickly, but in a rage, muttering and defiant, inciting

his men to refuse but afraid to disobey, and Ibn Saud sent his son Mohamed to Medina. The inhabitants who had sworn they would fight to the end against Dawish surrendered forthwith; and Yenbo did the same shortly afterwards.

In Jedda was Ali. He still called himself King of the Hejaz, and he had with him the remnants of Husein's army, the police of Mecca, and all who had refused to submit to Ibn Saud. Some Syrian and Turkish officers had joined him and under their supervision his men had dug trenches, repaired the walls and put out barbed-wire entanglements round the town. He had also bought two aeroplanes.

But he was neither a leader nor an organizer, and his subordinates were incompetent. The town and all its arrangements were in confusion. It was at all times crowded, and now it was packed with pilgrims who had not been able to get away and with refugees from all parts of the country who had fled before the advance of the Ikhwan. There was no water supply except for a few wells and what could be distilled from the sea. The country round was barren without a garden or tree or even a blade of grass, so that even if the garrison sallied out there was nothing for them to get, and as there was no money, nothing could be bought from overseas.

Soon food and water ran out and famine came on the town, and with it disease of every sort. Shut in within the walls the people died by the hundred and there was nowhere to bury them: a multitude of beggars covered with sores, too weak even to crawl, died where they lay, and their bodies rotted in the streets: men and women, mad with thirst and skeletons from hunger, killed the scavenger dogs for food, and fought for offal to eat. Under the fierce sun the town stank as with the pestilence.

When the Ikhwan closed in and prepared to assault there was no fight left in Ali or his men. To save the town from looting, and on condition that the Ikhwan were not allowed inside the gates, Ali agreed to abdicate and go. Early in December of 1925 he went aboard an English ship which took him to Aden and then to his brother Feisal in Baghdad. The last of the family of Husein was gone out of the Hejaz.

Two weeks later, when all had been prepared for him, Ibn Saud drove down in state from Mecca. At the Medina Gate he was met by the foreign consuls. With his ministers, his guards, and the consuls behind him, the people and his fighting men shouting applause, and his standard unfurled before him, he rode through the town to the Great House of Mohamed Nasim by the customs-square.

There he stayed awhile, appointed Damludji as his Governor, accepted the surrender of the townspeople and issued a proclamation that the whole Hejaz had submitted to him; and then he returned to Mecca. As he neared the town the notables came out to meet him and to tell him that the people of the Hejaz had elected him as their King.

Ibn Saud had entered Jedda in full state as a conqueror, not only to impress the European consuls, but also as a symbol of his victory over the heretic and usurper, Husein, and of the liberation of the Hejaz, but he accepted the Kingship of the Hejaz however, without ceremony. He would allow only the simplest formalities. No one should be able to accuse him of pride of power or love of ostentation. These were displeasing in the sight of God. They were contrary to the practices of Mohamed and the first Caliphs of Islam who, though they had conquered vast

empires, lived humbly as simple men without pomp or magnificence.

By the gateway of the Bab-es-Safa in the Great Mosque there was a raised place. There, early in the morning of January 8, 1926, he went without announcement and in his everyday clothes. For a while he sat, his brown Arab cloak drawn round him, listening to a preacher. After which he sent for the notables. They came and one by one touched his hand in sign of submission and fealty, and when they had all finished, he went into the Inner Court of the Great Mosque and prayed.

By now great crowds had collected. With his guards round him he walked through the streets to the House of the Governor. There he appointed his son Feisal and a Commission to act on his behalf and held a reception open to all. Only he allowed the gunners in the fort called Jiyad, which stood on a hill outside the city, to fire a salute of a hundred and one guns in his honour; and for even this many of the strict Wahabis criticized him for wordly pride.

CHAPTER LXIX

IBN SAUD was the ruler of all the Hejaz and of Nejd; but he realized more and more that, though in Nejd he needed no outside help, in the Hejaz on the other hand, if it were to remain the centre of Islam, he must have the friendship and support of all Moslems. Once again he sent out invitations for a Congress in Mecca and this time, now that there was no doubt that he was master of the country, delegates came eagerly.

On June 6th, 1926, they assembled in the main hall of the Turkish artillery barracks which stood on a hill of grey

stone outside the west entrance of the city. There were some seventy delegates from most of the principal countries though none came from Persia or Iraq and those from Turkey, the Yemen, Egypt and Afghanistan, arrived several days late.

Everything had been carefully arranged. The hall had been redecorated, with the shutters, curtains, and fittings in green, the colour of Nejd. At one end was a dais. Below it were two tables horse-shoe shaped so that the delegates could not cavil at the order of seniority in which they sat. The sides of the road from the city to the barracks and the top of the bare hill had been covered with a layer of earth, sown with barley and kept watered so that the young shoots should make a pleasant relief to the eye from the dusty, burnt-up country round; for the fierce summer sun had parched up all the land.

As soon as the delegates had taken their places Ibn Saud, without ceremony, with Hafiz Wahba behind him, strode in and walked swiftly up the hall to the dais. He welcomed the delegates and then sat down while Hafiz Wahba read a speech which he had prepared and which ended: "I invite you to this assembly to discuss and explore every avenue for the moral and religious betterment of the Hejaz, which may be satisfactory to God and man alike". After that he went out quickly as he had come, bowing to the delegates and leaving them to debate without the restraint of his presence.

That speech left no doubt as to Ibn Saud's intentions. Had they come earlier when he had first invited them and before he became king it might have been different, but now he had made up his mind on his own position and duty and on the functions of the delegates. He needed their support, but, even to gain that he would not allow them to

interfere in the administration of the country. He was king and he would rule. He would listen to advice and suggestions, but he would decide. All questions of his own position, of politics, or the ruling of the Hejaz were for him alone.

At a later meeting a delegate asked him why he had taken it on himself to be king.

"Can any of you", he asked, facing the assembled delegates with his chin thrust forward and his face set, "Can any of you guarantee the neutrality and integrity of this Sacred Land against foreign aggression?" and when no one replied: "Then it is my duty to be king. I alone can rule and maintain the Sacred Land as a free state of Islam".

"We invite you", he said, "to examine all means whereby the Sacred Places may become the truest centres of Islamic culture, models of cleanliness and hygiene and so exemplary a land as shall ever make Islam rightly known and famed". It was for this that he had called them together. Beyond this he would not let them go.

The delegates were there to discuss the Pilgrimage and the religious administration. All civil administration was for him and him alone.

Even in religious matters he would allow little interference. The delegates proposed the building of a railway from Jedda to Mecca. Ibn Saud accepted the suggestion gratefully, but replied that he would himself arrange it. They offered to collect large sums of money from their own countries and, on condition that all the funds of the Pilgrimage and the dues paid by pilgrims were handed over to them, they would spend all they collected in improving the Hejaz. Ibn Saud, who realized that most of this was mere talk, expressed his readiness to agree, but first let them produce the large sums of which they spoke and

then he would discuss the finances of the Pilgrimage with them.

He had learned to expect jealousies and lack of unity among them. As the Congress debated he lost all belief in their capacity for action or sound judgment. Their meetings were often difficult and noisy. They wrangled about every sort of question, and though they passed resolutions they were mostly of little value, and they quarrelled and snarled at each other on every occasion.

The Indian delegates were at the bottom of most of the trouble. One proposed the Turkish delegate, who had come late, as president when there was already a Hejazi in the Chair. Another persisted in talking in Urdu or English when the Congress had decided that Arabic should be the only language, and refused to be shouted down. Both criticized the Wahabi practices, the handling of the finances of the Pilgrimage, the organization of the Congress, and the suggestion to hold annual meetings. They demanded more votes than the delegates from Nejd because there were more Moslems in India than in Nejd, and they created a general spirit of ill-will.

While the Congress was still sitting there was a serious quarrel that showed the spirit among the various Moslem communities and the need for Ibn Saud to retain full control.

The Pilgrimage that year was in mid-June. The pilgrims had already begun to arrive and among them was the caravan of the Egyptians bringing the *mahmal* from Cairo.

The *mahmal* was a box-like erection with a tent-shaped top, and carried on a camel and which was escorted each year to Mecca by a company of Egyptian soldiers armed with rifles and with a field-gun. Originally six hundred

years before, the *mahmal* had been the riding-litter of Queen Shajarat-al-Dor of Egypt. In time it had become the banner and token of the Egyptian pilgrims.

For the Day of the Sermon it was customary to take the *mahmal* along the road through the valley of Abtah to the mountain of Arafat, passing through the village of Mina on the way. The Egyptians, on this occasion, had reached Mina and halted as some of the party had straggled or fallen behind. The buglers sounded their bugles to call the attention of the stragglers as the crowds were very great.

The hills all round Mina were covered with tens of thousands of pilgrims. Among them were many Wahabis to whom all music was accursed. Some of them crowded down to where the Egyptians had halted. One pointed to the *mahmal* saying that it was an idol and that the Egyptians were praying before their idol with music. Another saw an Egyptian smoking tobacco. Some began to throw stones at the *mahmal*. More joined them and became threatening. The officer in charge of the company ordered them away. They took no notice but continued to throw stones. He fired in the air. That had no effect. Whereupon he ordered his men to fire straight into the masses of men and women opposite them, both with their rifles and the field-gun, killing twenty-five of the crowd and forty horses and wounding a great number.

At once the cry went up and from every side came running and riding Nejdis and Ikhwan to the help of their brethren. The whole hill-side, the valley, the village of Mina were full of angry men with rifles in their hands, calling to each other and massing to attack the Egyptians.

Ibn Saud was in his tent which was pitched on some sloping ground outside Mina, when he heard the firing. He sent his son Feisal hotfoot for news. Feisal could do

nothing with the angry tribesmen nor with the Egyptians, and he sent a message back begging Ibn Saud to come himself and at once.

Ibn Saud came at once. Running quickly out of his tent, he leapt on to his horse which stood ready picketed, and shouting for his guards he came straight at full gallop into Mina. Already night was falling and the valley was full of shadow and of clouds of dust. Laying about him with his riding cane, shouting to the Nejdis, he rode in between them and the Egyptians. The Nejdis recognized him even in the half-light as he towered above all those round him, and they drew off up the hill-sides and waited.

Ibn Saud turned on the Egyptian officer.

"By what right", he asked, "did you take it on yourself to kill. There is in this land a law and a government. I am the ruler. Had you sent word to me I would have handled this".

"Out of respect of Your Majesty alone", replied the Egyptian swaggering, "did I desist, otherwise I should have wiped out all this rabble".

With a great effort Ibn Saud restrained himself. His anger began to rise. This swaggering Egyptian was in his hand. He waited awhile gripping himself.

"This is no place for boasting", he said quietly at last. "This is Sacred Ground on which, as it is written, 'no man may be killed'. You are our guests. You have our protection, else you should have paid the penalty".

Setting guards between the Ikhwan and the Egyptians so that there should be no more quarrel, and leaving his son Feisal and Hafiz Wahba in charge he rode slowly back to his tent.

When Ibn Saud demanded satisfaction, the Egyptian

Government refused to give it. Ibn Saud stood firm. He was the Ruler. The maintenance of order was his prerogative. He would allow no man to usurp his authority or to encroach on his sovereign power, and he told the Egyptian Government so in blunt terse language.

The Congress, with little of value done and as full of jealousies and disagreements as when it started, came to an end. The delegates went home empty-handed, but they had learnt that Ibn Saud was, and meant to remain, ruler and master in his own land.

CHAPTER LXX

To the south of the Hejaz on the Red Sea Coast was the country of the Asir, and, beyond that, the Yemen. Over the Yemen ruled the Imam Yahya.

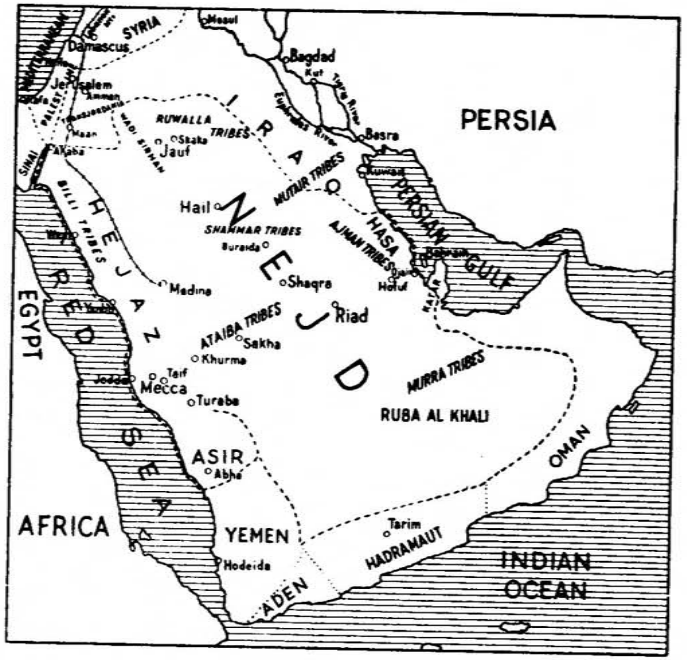
The Imam Yahya was a strong-willed, despotic old man and he hated the Wahabis. The Yemen was a land of mountains but fertile, for each year it was watered by the monsoon rains driven up from the Indian Ocean and caught in the mountains. The people were sturdy and brave hill-men.

The Asir on the other hand was poor. It was torn with internal feuds. Up to 1918 the Turks had kept a garrison in the Asir. At the Armistice they had evacuated, and Ibn Saud had promptly annexed the eastern half of the country down to the town of Abba. The rest had for a time been ruled by one Mohamed Idrisi, but when he died and his heir Hasan Idrissi, who was both weak and unpopular, took his place, the Imam Yahya began to advance into Asir from the south and Ibn Saud from the north.

Late in 1926 the people of Asir had to decide between

the Imam Yahya and Ibn Saud and they placed themselves under the protection of Ibn Saud.

Neither the Imam Yahya nor Ibn Saud wanted, at that moment, to fight, so they came to an agreement that the



Arabia in 1928 *and* 1934

(Heavily dotted line represents frontier of King Ibn Saud).

Imam Yahya should keep what he held, but the rest of Asir should remain under the protection of Ibn Saud.

In reality Ibn Saud was in no position to fight, for he had not completed the settlement of the Hejaz, and in Nejd

there was trouble. His father and his advisers had sent him messages to come back to Riad as soon as possible: he had been away two years: too long they said: there was a general restlessness throughout the tribes: a feeling that he was neglecting Nejd for the Hejaz: Dawish was working against him: Hithlain was in touch with Dawish and rousing the Ajman: Feisal of Baghdad, with Ali his brother, was at work among the border tribes: there were many stories out among the Ikhwan of Ibn Saud's dealings with heretics and infidels: without his hand over them the tribesmen were getting turbulent: it would be wise if he returned and gave an account of his stewardship.

As soon as he had agreed with the Imam Yahya, Ibn Saud set out across the desert to Riad. His father and his son Saud had called a meeting of all the tribes and clans to greet him.

In the Audience Chamber in the Palace, the leaders of the people waited for Ibn Saud. They were prepared to cross-question and criticize him, for they suspected that he had "allowed himself to be tempted by worldly interests into neglecting the interests of God", and they were disgruntled and a little hostile. While they waited, they murmured and muttered churlishly together, but when Ibn Saud strode in they were silent and rose. He went first to his father and paid him all respect. Then he turned and greeted the assembly.

At once, as he threw out a hand and spoke to them, commanding and welcoming them in one, the personality of the man asserted itself. They forgot their doubts and their criticisms of him. They listened eagerly to his account of the conquest of the Hejaz, of the expulsion of Husein and Ali, and of the Pilgrimage, and they grew enthusiastic, and at last they begged him to become also King of Nejd.

Ibn Saud accepted the honour, and he was proclaimed King without ceremony—as when he became King of the Hejaz. He knew his people. He had won them over, but any show of worldly pomp and they would doubt him again.

Then making a tour of the country, receiving the tribesmen and the villagers and once more establishing his ascendancy by personal contact with his people—for the Desert Arabs had no respect for titles or ranks, for position or ceremony: the man and his personality alone counted with them—he returned to Mecca to complete his work there.

CHAPTER LXXI

THERE was much to do in the Hejaz. After years of misrule and fighting the country was without organization and overrun with brigands and thieves. No road was safe for travellers and the people dared not venture alone out of their towns or villages. Pilgrims were robbed and killed by the hundred and without any action being taken to protect them. Murder was common, committed often for a few pence or a bag of bread.

Ibn Saud made security his first object. In Mecca he set up a police force of his bodyguard, for Ali had taken all the police of Mecca with him when he ran for Jedda. Into all the towns and villages he sent posts of Ikhwan and throughout the whole country camel patrols who moved rapidly, appearing suddenly in an encampment or village, usually moving by night and without warning.

The Ikhwan carried out the law in its extreme rigour, beheading for murder and violence, cutting off a hand or a foot for theft, and flogging for immorality or irreligious

actions. Within the law they were merciless. They were tireless in their pursuit of criminals, never resting till they caught them. No appeals to mercy and no brides of money moved them. They were without bowels of compassion, and they had no respect for persons. There were no exceptions among them: all were equally relentless. They neither relaxed nor forgave, and in a very short time they had struck such terror in all ill-doers and enforced such security as had not been known in the land within the memory of man.

Serious crime disappeared, and the caravan routes became safe even for single travellers. The police-forts that Husein had built were evacuated as unnecessary. A man might leave his goods by the open roadside and return in a week and find them safe: passers-by would have made a detour round so as not to touch them even by accident. Two Ikhwan were sufficient to overawe a whole town or district; and the hand of Ibn Saud was felt from end to end of the Hejaz.

Next he improved the conditions for the Pilgrimage. Many of the tribes, especially the Harb, had the rights to levy dues on the pilgrims. These rights he annulled together with the rest of the exactions which Husein had introduced. He organized a system of transport from the ports to Mecca and Medina, fixing reasonable prices for the camel fares and also employing motor-cars, and arranged for the water-supply, and for doctors and hospitals; so that the Pilgrimage of 1927 was crowded and more than a hundred thousand pilgrims attended in safety.

In Medina and Mecca he set up Committees of Good Morals whose duty it was to see that the people kept the streets clean, paved the broken roadways, repaired the drainage and lived decently and strictly by the rules of

the Koran. Immorality of all kinds was severely punished, and luxury was discouraged: no man might wear silk or gold on his person, nor smoke tobacco. If any man failed to be present regularly in the mosque for prayer, the Committees punished him.

Ibn Saud had already appointed his second son Feisal, with an Executive Council, to rule the Hejaz under him. Now he appointed councils in the five principal towns, Mecca,Medina,Jedda,Yenbo, and Taif, and in the districts, consisting partly of notables and partly of headmen chosen by the people, to advise him and to carry out his orders.

All government was as before concentrated in his own hands. His rule was a personal rule. It was his personality, and not any machinery of government which he might create, that counted, and he kept all within his own hands and worked as hard as ever, some eighteen hours each day, with little sleep or relaxation.

Mecca lay in a depression among volcanic mountains. Into it the sun beat down without relief until it became as fiery hot as a newly opened brick-kiln. After rain its air was heavy and languid, making all movement a burden. Its climate was unhealthy and did not agree with Ibn Saud. He travelled less, and worked more indoors. He had bought a motor-car and used it far more than he used his horses and camels so that he got little of the exercise to which he was accustomed, and he continued to overdose himself with pills and emetics, so that he became more liverish and irascible. Yet though he was forty-seven, an age at which many Arabs have become old men, he was as vigorous and energetic as ever, and very little escaped him.

He hated red-tape formalities or aimless talk. Once he had made up his mind he gave precise orders and expected

them to be carried out quickly, and yet in the greatest heat when all the world round gasped for breath he would spend hours persuading his men that he was right rather than give them orders when they were not convinced.

Nevertheless, he would stand no insubordination. On one occasion a number of Ikhwan had been detailed to go to Yenbo to take part in the siege. They appealed to Ibn Saud to be allowed to stay in Mecca as the Pilgrimage was about to begin. Ibn Saud heard their case and ordered them to go. They began to murmur and complain and became truculent.

Suddenly Ibn Saud seized a sword from one of his guards, drew it and swung the blade aloft.

"By God", he said, "you shall go to Yenbo, and if I see any one of you here at the Pilgrimage I will slay him with this sword, as I slayed your fathers. Be gone!" — and the Ikhwan went quickly without waiting or turning back, for they knew that he would do what he had said.

On another occasion when he was discussing with Clayton at Bahra, a party of the English delegates walked across ground where a number of desert Arabs were praying. The Arabs showed their resentment. Their sheik threatened the Englishmen saying that they had fouled holy ground by walking on a praying-place.

Ibn Saud sent for the sheik. "By what right", he said, "do you dare to speak in this manner to those whom I have chosen as my guests? And by what right have you holy ground reserved to you? O dog! all ground is of God and all is for prayer", and then and there, though the man was a sheik, he had him flogged for an example.

All rule was in his hands, and yet so vast had his kingdom grown that Ibn Saud needed ministers and officials capable

of taking some of the burden of ruling off his shoulders, and in Arabia there were few to be found.

He took them wherever he found them, so long as they were Arabs and good Moslems. Abdullah al Fadl, the President of the Mecca Executive Council was a merchant of Jedda, and Abdullah al Suleiman, the Minister of Finance was a native of Anaiza in Nejd; but Hafiz Wahba, who had been many years with Ibn Saud as his Chief Counsellor, was an Egyptian. Usuf Yasin, the Head of his Divan and his Personal Secretary was of Lattakia in North Syria and Fuad Hamza, who organized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was a Druse from the Lebanon in Southern Syria. Many of his junior officials were traders, merchants and schoolmasters from many countries, including Iraq and Turkey.

He relied also on his sons, especially on Saud who, since the death of Turki, had been his heir and on Feisal his second son. Saud had already shown himself to be a fighter and a ruler. He was much like Ibn Saud in build and character, very tall and strong, bold and direct in manner but more silent and reserved. He had commanded one wing of the army under his father in the capture of Hail, and he had led the tribes in a dozen fights since then. In his father's absence he had ruled in Riad with skill. The tribesmen respected and liked him, for he was generous and a typical man of Nejd in all his ways, and he understood how to handle them; and he was a strict and devout Wahabi.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE TWO countries which Ibn Saud now ruled, the Hejaz and Nejd, had little in common. For centuries the people had been enemies, and they hated each other with ever-

increasing hatred, for the Nejdis looked on the Hejazis as evil-living heretics, and the Hejazis looked on the Nejdis as wild, intolerant savages. The Nejdis, shut away behind the desert, were rigid and fanatical puritans. The Hejazis with their outside contacts were more lax and more sophisticated.

Ibn Saud shrewdly used these differences. He established his Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mecca and dealt with foreign countries from there, through the town of Jedda where the foreign consuls lived.

Geographically Mecca and Jedda were more convenient than Riad, but also he knew that the Nejdis resented all contacts with foreigners, and he foresaw that if foreign and western ideas worked their way uncontrolled into Nejd they would not improve but rather destroy the hardiness and fibre of his desert people.

New and foreign ideas he was prepared to adopt so long as they did not contravene the Koran, but many of such ideas were loaded with poison and he would himself be the filter through which any new ideas should reach to his people.

"There are", he said, "certain basic and hereditary characteristics which are the strength of my people. When new ideas appear I will test them—by the Koran. If they are not forbidden by Holy Writ, I will consider them; and I, by the help of God, will judge if they be harmful for my people".

He would keep the people of Nejd from close contact with foreigners. This would be both to their best interests and in accordance with their wishes.

At the same time he was determined to utilize modern inventions, as long as he had satisfied his own conscience that they were not forbidden.

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At the same time he was determined to utilize modern inventions, as long as he had satisfied his own conscience that they were not forbidden.

"All my rule", he said to an enquirer, "is based on the Koran, and the Traditions of Mohamed. These do not forbid progress. They do not oppose machinery, wireless, or any normal developments".

He knew that if the great Arab Empire, which he visualized, was to stand four square on its own feet and resist its enemies it must adopt modern inventions.

"Moslems", he said in one speech, "are to-day awaking from sleep. They must take hold of the weapons which are at their hand and which are of two kinds—firstly, piety and obedience in humility to the commands of God; and secondly, such material weapons as aeroplanes and motor-cars".

But again he knew that his people of Nejd would resist the introduction of these foreign novelties, while the people of the Hejaz would accept them. Cautiously, referring often to the ulema in Riad for their advice and sanction, one by one he tried them out in the Hejaz—telegraphs, telephones, wireless, motor-cars, aeroplanes. But he had to work slowly. Often it took him months, cajoling and persuading, before he won over the suspicious Wahabis of Nejd.

Nevertheless, he never forgot that Nejd and Riad were the basis and source of all his strength. The Hejazis looked on him as a foreign conqueror, and they were not loyal. The people of Nejd were his people, and Nejd was always his first thought. He separated Nejd and the Hejaz and appointed Saud, his heir, as his Viceroy in Nejd.

In both countries all law and justice, all ideas, manners of life, even economics and taxes, were based on the Koran. When there were matters in doubt Ibn Saud referred them to the ulema of Riad, the Wahabi Doctors of the Law.

The ulema had much to say in the government. Ibn Saud needed them, for he knew that it was impossible to drive the desert Arabs against their wishes, but once convinced by a text from the Koran or a ruling of the ulema they would obey him willingly. In all religious questions he deferred to the ulema. They decided both for the Hejaz and Nejd—the sanctity of certain shrines in Mecca, the legality of domed tops to tombs in Mecca, the quarrel over the Egyptian *mahmal*, prayer formalities, even things that touched Ibn Saud personally. On one occasion one of the ulema criticized Ibn Saud in a public audience because his moustaches were too long: the Prophet had worn his close trimmed. Ibn Saud accepted the criticism and sent for a hair-cutter and there and then in open audiance before the people had his moustaches cut to the regulation length.

In state affairs and in politics he asked the advice of the ulema. Every Thursday, when he was in Riad, he met them in conference to discuss any question they might raise. Before he introduced the wireless, the telegraph and the telephone he asked for their opinion. Whenever there was any important difference of opinion between him and the tribesmen he obtained their support, but in state affairs he laid down limits for their interference and in all things the final word was his.

Thus with Feisal and a commission handling the Hejaz and Saud as his Viceroy in Nejd, Ibn Saud remained in supreme authority in both.

Meanwhile as he organized and strengthened his position the Russians sent an envoy to recognize him as "King of the Hejaz". The English followed, sending Sir Gilbert Clayton to treat with him as "King of the Hejaz and of Nejd and its Dependencies".

After them came the French,the Germans,and the Dutch and many other countries; only the Egyptians hesitated, for they were still angry over the quarrel of the *mahmal*, and Ibn Saud's demand for satisfaction for the killing of men within his kingdom.

With the exception of the Yemen and the territory far to the south beyond the Great Waste on the coast of the Indian Ocean, Ibn Saud, holding a protectorate over Asir, ruled All Arabia from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf and from the Great Waste to the edges of Syria. He was Guardian of the Sacred Cities of Islam and Imam of the Wahabis.

He was Lord of Arabia.

PART XII

CHAPTER LXXIII

AT THE moment of his success new and urgent dangers threatened Ibn Saud. In all Central Arabia and especially in Nejd there was discontent among the tribes and this, while he was away in the Hejaz, had increased unchecked.

Dawish had returned home from Medina to Artawiya with his Ikhwan and his Mutair tribesmen; but angry and determined to be revenged for the insult Ibn Saud had put upon him. He found many sympathisers. His Mutair were indignant that they had not been allowed to chastise and loot the heretics of Medina. Hithlain of the Ajman was an unrelenting enemy of Ibn Saud: he waited only to take revenge for his past defeats. Bijad, the sheik of the Ataiba tribes, was disgruntled. He disapproved of Ibn Saud's soft handling of the Hejazis, for he would have treated them all as he had treated the people of Taif.

Dawish approached each in turn, and he was related to both. His mother was an Ajman woman and he had married into the Ataiba. He invited Hithlain and Bijad to discuss with him in Artawiya, and there he worked up their indignation.

From Artawiya they sent Ibn Saud, who was then in Mecca, a letter of protest without mincing their words. He had become puffed up, they said, working for his own ambition: he was betraying the Faith. They had not ejected Husein to set up Ibn Saud for his own glory, but they had fought for the Glory of God alone. Yet Ibn Saud had allowed the Meccans to go on in their old scandalous ways. He had protected them in their abominations. He had