

LORD OF ARABIA

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

prevented Luwai from dealing with them. He had gone further, for he had himself introduced abominations, taxes on tobacco and on pilgrims, both of which were forbidden: telegraphs, telephones, wireless and such-like things that were witchcraft and of the Devil. They demanded that he enforce all the Wahabi rules in the Hejaz, and that he abolish the taxes and destroy the foreign inventions.

Further, they called on him to declare the Jihad, the Holy War, on the people of Iraq, for they were heretics: their ruler Feisal was an instrument of the English: he sent his men raiding into Nejd attacking Nejd caravans and was not punished.

Ibn Saud hurried back to Riad, for he realized his danger. If he mishandled his opponents they could raise half Arabia against him.

With Hithlain he knew he could come to no compromise: the feud between them was of too long standing and too bitter. Bijad was a stubborn, stiff-necked old man, stupid but all honest and devout, a fanatic. He would approach Bijad through the ulema.

Dawish was as stiff-necked and stubborn as Bijad, but, though he made a great show of his religion, he was not sincere. He was ambitious. He resented all restraint and control, and he wished to be independent. Moreover, he was driven by his personal hatred of Ibn Saud. Astute and wily he had far more ability than Bijad. It was Dawish who was the brains behind the opposition. Ibn Saud realized that he could not stamp on Dawish. He was too strong. He must work to isolate him and draw the tribesmen away from him, so he sent a soft answer back to the letter suggesting that all should be placed before an assembly of ulema for their decisions.

Dawish wanted no such assembly. He called Bijad and Hithlain once more to Artawiya and urged them to resist: Ibn Saud, he said, had agreed with the Iraqis: he would punish neither their heresy nor their raids: he was in agreement with the English to build a railway from Baghdad to Mecca which would destroy the freedom of the desert: and he had promised to give half Nejd to the English to be ruled over by them as they ruled in Baghdad.

Ibn Saud summoned Dawish to come to Riad and discuss before the ulema. Dawish came unwillingly, but not yet prepared to resist openly, bringing with him three hundred of his fighting-men.

Ibn Saud received him in the courtyard of the palace. Dawsh came with his fighting-men behind him, their arms ready in their hands. Ibn Saud faced them alone.

Dawish was small, wiry in build, tough as leather and sour-faced. By nature he was turbulent and aggressive, but, as the Prophet had advised all Moslems to be humble in their speech and ways, he assumed an air of humility. This gave him an unnatural manner, as if he was for ever holding himself in, and now and again he would look up under his eyes to see what effect he was making on those round him. Because of this manner many men distrusted him.

Now he shed all humility. He was afraid of Ibn Saud but he would not show it before his men, so he blustered. He was aggressive. He spoke in a loud voice and angrily. Again he accused Ibn Saud of betraying the Faith. He demanded that he should proclaim the Holy War on Iraq and that he should destroy the custom-houses and telephones, and all the foreign innovations he had set up.

Ibn Saud remained quiet, sitting with his hands on his

knees, towering above Dawish, unperturbed, watching Dawish steadily. He knew he was in actual danger. Beyond Dawish squatted the Mutair in rows murmuring together and restless. A false move and they would be out of hand.

He spoke little and only in low tones and slowly. Gradually the bluster began to die out of Dawish. His aggressiveness ebbed away. He became quiet and tame. Ibn Saud was the master.

Then Ibn Saud called the ulema and bade Dawish and all the Ikhwan put their case before them.

The ulema decided that the taxes ought to be abolished and the Wahabi rules enforced in the Hejaz. As to the wireless and the telephones they were doubtful; it would be better if they were not used, but they were without sufficient knowledge to give a final judgment: as to the declaration of a Holy War that was at the discretion of Ibn Saud himself as the Imam: he must judge for himself.

Ibn Saud obeyed their decisions. He ordered the Wahabi rules to be enforced in the Hejaz and the wireless station which he had built outside Medina to be dismantled. But to declare a Holy War he refused.

Dawish persisted. He challenged Ibn Saud's right to refuse to declare the Holy War. He worked on through the tribes, urging Hithlain and Bijad to act without Ibn Saud.

But bit by bit, with subtle suggestions and shrewd propaganda, Ibn Saud jockeyed Dawish into a false position. He worked on those who already suspected him. Dawish had many personal enemies. Ibn Saud talked with his enemies. He drew a man away from here and another from there. He set the ulema against him. He showed them how at first Dawish had refused to come before them: how even when he had been given every chance to

put his case before them he refused to obey their decisions. The ulema sent word to the preachers to warn the people against Dawish, for he was working, they said, not for the Glory of God, but for his own worldly ambitions.

Some of the tribesmen began to suspect Dawish and ceased to support him. Even the Mutair split into parties, some for Dawish and some against him.

CHAPTER LXXIV

AS IBN SAUD worked and planned, breaking the ground away from under the feet of Dawish and weaving a net round him to make him helpless, there came sudden trouble on the Iraq frontier where the Mutair lived.

By the treaty of Oqair, Ibn Saud had agreed with Cox that there should be frontier between Iraq and Nejd but that there should be a neutral zone on both sides of this frontier over which the tribes should keep all their ancient rights of grazing and drawing water; and within which no fortifications should be built.

Late in 1929 Feisal of Baghdad, with the consent of the English, sent a party of workmen with an escort of camel-police to the wells of Busaiya with orders to build a police-post as one of a line. Busaiya was the centre of a group of wells and was within the neutral zone.

The Mutair happened to be pasturing in that area, under one of the sons of Dawish. Already they were spoiling for a fight with the Iraqis. Now they saw their ancient rights threatened, and they attacked, killed some of the workmen and soldiers and drove off the rest.

The English in Baghdad took up the quarrel, sent out aeroplanes and bombed the Mutair far out over the desert, within Nejd territory.

Dawish seized the chance. He sent one party of Mutair raiding into Kuwait as retaliation and himself made half a dozen raids in quick succession into Iraq, coming back each time with much loot. Each time he was chased by English aeroplanes which bombed his villages and encampments.

Ignoring Ibn Saud he sent out a general call for help to fight the Iraqis and the English and to take revenge for his dead. All across the desert the tribes answered and began to muster their men.

Waiting his opportunity and under cover of a storm of rain, Dawish with two thousand of his best men raided right into Iraq as far as the village of Jarishana which was close outside the port of Basra. He killed all men he met without pity, destroyed the villages, cut down the palms, and left no living thing. Of the Jawasir tribe he killed three hundred men and carried off all the cattle.

After him came the English with their aeroplanes, searching for him and his men through the dust-storms and mirages which were as cloaks to hide the Mutair as they lay concealed among the vast sand-dunes of the desert. Twice they found and bombed them and then raided far into Nejd attacking villages and encampments as far as Artawiya.

Undaunted, Dawish sent a message into Kuwait that he would attack the town unless the port was opened free to him. The people of Kuwait manned their walls and called to the English for help. The English sent a cruiser to lie off the harbour. All along the Iraq border the tribes were in terror of Dawish. The Anaiza sent word that they would transfer their allegiance to Nejd unless Iraq could protect them, and the shepherd tribes refused to go south to look for grazing.

The Mutair were out. The Ajman were on the move. Bijad was ready with three thousand of his Ataiba.

IBN SAUD was in Riad when they brought him news of Busaiya and the raids. He saw that unless he acted quickly all Nejd would be up in arms and out of his control. He must hold up the tribes or he would be rushed into war, and war with the English. Nothing would suit Dawish and his friends better. Nothing would be more disastrous for Nejd.

Most of the tribes were resentful that he refused to let them raid as of old. These would take the chance of war. Every malcontent and every raider would be out. The whole country would be again back in the confusion from which he had saved it.

He dispatched a protest to the English in Baghdad and called for an immediate conference. He sent out fast camel-messengers to the tribes, ordering some, persuading others to stand fast. Bijad was just about to move off. With difficulty Ibn Saud prevailed with him to hold his hand until he had talked with the English. Bijad agreed. Other tribes followed his lead. Dawish, thinking that his friends were failing him and afraid of being isolated by Ibn Saud, did the same, and to show his good faith even ordered the Mutair to hand back some of the sheep they had looted.

The English sent Sir Gilbert Clayton to Jedda. He came full of reproaches for the raids of Dawish. Ibn Saud regretted the raids: if Dawish were left to him, he said, he would deal with him: but he protested vehemently against the frequent and unpunished raiding of the Iraqis and the Shammar from Iraq into Nejd, the building of the police-post at Busaiya, and above all the raiding of the English aeroplanes across the frontier into his country while he was

still at peace with the English. They had no right, he said, to take the law into their own hands. He warned Clayton that, though he had his people in hand for the minute, if the aeroplanes continued raiding, the tribes would rise and attack Iraq even without him. The aeroplanes had been flying over Nejd territory, dropping pamphlets ordering the Mutair to retire four days from the frontier. This was ridiculous as the tribesmen could not read the pamphlets; and it was unwise, for it weakened his authority and only infuriated his people.

All through the spring and early summer of 1928, Ibn Saud and Clayton negotiated, but could come to no agreement. The Iraqis maintained their right and their intention to build police-posts. The English backed the Iraqis. Ibn Saud would not give way. Eventually he went to Mecca to perform the Pilgrimage, but also to show that he did not consider the position serious.

But the position was serious. The conference had failed. The Iraqis were becoming more provocative and stubborn. They were full of threats. They were building more police-posts. The aeroplanes were again patrolling into Nejd. The tribes were once more becoming bellicose and unmanageable, demanding to be led to war against the heretics and the infidels who invaded Nejd. Bijad was preparing to move. Hithlain only waited the word from Dawish, and Dawish was at his old game. His messengers were going through the tribes telling them that Ibn Saud was in league with the English: he was weak-kneed and afraid of the Christians: they must act without him and fight to protect the Faith. Even the ulema began to talk of a Holy War.

Full of years Abdur Rahman had died and was buried in Riad. Very devout and respected, he had acted as a brake

on the extreme fanatics and the most unreasonable of the ulema. They would listen to him when they would listen to no one else. His restraining influence was gone.

In the Hejaz too there was trouble. The Harb tribes had resented that Ibn Saud had taken away their ancient rights over the pilgrims. Husein had given them an annual subsidy to keep them quiet. Ibn Saud had stopped it, and they had resisted. They had murdered a number of pilgrims and Ibn Saud had punished the tribe severely. Dawish had sent his messengers to them and they were again in ferment.

In the north, in Transjordan, Abdullah, fat blustering Abdullah, was breathing out fire and slaughter. He swore that he would chase Ibn Saud out of the Hejaz and restore his father Husein or be king himself. Working with Feisal from Baghdad he sent out his agents with money and promises, and roused the Ruwalla. The Billi tribes under their leader Rifada were out raiding round the town of Wejh, to the south of Akaba. Abdullah had promised them sanctuary if they should need it.

The people of the Hejaz too were regretting the lax days of Husein. Then they could make money by cheating the pilgrims, but Ibn Saud would not allow them to despoil the pilgrims. They hated the rigid unbending Wahabis, and being afraid they worked underground, scheming and making plots and conspiracies. Ibn Saud stamped on the conspiracies. He issued orders forbidding political meetings and punishing any speech against the Wahabis and he chased sixteen of the ringleaders out of the country.

The Imam Yahya of the Yemen was threatening to advance again into the Asir. He had newly made a treaty with the Italians who had come searching down the Red Sea looking for an empire and who hoped that the Yemen

might be useful to them. This seemed his opportunity to force Ibn Saud to give up his protectorate.

But Ibn Saud's real danger was from the people of Nejd, from his own people. If they turned against him he was lost. He determined to meet the danger half-way, and he dispatched a summons throughout the whole country to send him representatives to a great assembly in Riad.

CHAPTER LXXVI

IN THE late autumn of 1928 the Great Assembly gathered in the courtyard of the palace in Riad. There came the ulema and the preachers, the amirs, the governors, the Princes of the House of Saud and the notables, the sheiks, the headmen, the leaders of the Ikhwan and the captains of the soldiers and with them many of the important tribesmen, townsmen and villagers. They came in their thousands, and Ibn Saud faced them sitting on the steps of the palace while they squatted below him in row upon row, filling the immense courtyard from wall to wall and overflowing through the gateways into the public square beyond.

He knew that he must handle them with care. They had come with many complaints and criticisms against him. They had heard much against him. Many of them were hostile to him. This would be a test of his personal power and influence. Bijad, Hithlain, and Dawish had not come, which was an act of half-hearted defiance against him. Every man present knew that and was watching to see how he would deal with them, for he would have to meet that defiance eventually. He had before him the representatives of all Nejd, of his own people. He must win them over to stand with him against his enemies.

It was an axiom of his "On one point I ask the advice of no man, for I know more than any man—and that is on the handling of the bedouin".

So now he showed his skill and his instinctive knowledge how to handle these men before him, both in the mass and as individuals. He greeted them as his subjects and as his brothers. He played shrewdly on their pride and their religious enthusiasms. He treated them as the massed parliament of his people with the right to criticize him. He placed himself in their hands and asked for their opinions and their decisions. As long as they were allowed to criticize and argue with him they would afterwards obey him without hesitation.

"Might belongs to God alone", he said in his opening speech. "You will remember that when I came to you I found you divided amongst yourselves, killing and plundering each other. All those who handled your affairs, whether they were Arabs or foreigners, intrigued against you. They sowed dissensions amongst you so that you might become disunited and have no power or importance. When I came to you I was weak. I had no strength save in God, for I had no more than forty men with me, as you all know. Yet I have made you into one people and a great people.

"I did not call you here out of fear of any man. In time past I stood alone, and had no help save in God. I feared not for the armies of my enemies, for God gave me victory. It was in the fear of the Lord that I summoned you here to-day. It was the fear of the Lord and my fear lest I should fall into the sin of arrogance or vanity.

"I have heard that some of you harbour grievances against me and my viceroys and amirs.... I wish to know these grievances so that I may discharge my duty towards you and stand absolved in the sight of God.

"But first if there be any among you who have good cause against me, decide now amongst yourselves, whether you desire me to lead you or whether you will place another in my stead..... I will not surrender my authority to anyone who would challenge me or who would wrest it from me by force, but I will surrender it into your hands of my own free will, for I have no wish to rule over a people who do not desire me to lead them.

"Behold, here in front of you are the members of my family. Choose one from amongst them. Whosoever you choose I will loyally support, and I will give you the pledge of God that whoever shall speak against me in this matter I will not punish him neither now nor in the future".

As he waited for some reply one and all the Assembly called back: "We are all agreed. We desire none other but thee to lead us".

"Then", said Ibn Saud, "if there be any who has complaint against me personally, anyone who has a claim to make or a criticism to voice concerning me, whether it be on matters of this world or the next, let him speak out and I give him the pledge of God, His bond and His security that he is free to make any criticism that he wishes and that I will hold no blame against him; but that if his criticism is well founded I shall accept it and at once submit myself to the Law.

"Therefore, speak, O my people, and say that which is in your hearts. Relate what you have heard in criticism of your ruler or of his officials, for whom he is responsible.

"And you, O Ulema, speak, as you shall on the Day of Judgment in the Presence of God be called upon to give an account of your stewardship. Speak and fear no person small or great".

And the representatives spoke out of their hearts with candour and without restraint.

Every problem and grievance old and new was brought up and discussed; their mistrust of Ibn Saud's dealings with unbelievers; his friendship with the English; his innovations, motor-cars, and wireless; his lax handling of backsliders, especially in Mecca; his failure to stop the English aeroplanes from raiding into Nejd; and the raiding along the frontiers.

Ibn Saud kept them rigidly on these lines. He refused to let them discuss quarrels between one tribe and another or between individuals. These he would himself, as their ruler, judge at some more convenient time. They were there to discuss all difficulties between them and himself, and when that was done either to refuse him their allegiance or to give it to him whole-heartedly.

The discussions lasted for many days. Each problem was discussed backwards and forwards. Day by day Ibn Saud was present answering questions with steady patience, explaining, reasoning and when there was a point in doubt calling in the ulema to search the scriptures and give their opinions.

Outside the conference he entertained lavishly and gave many presents, as was his custom, to all his guests. He never rested. Every spare moment he spent in receiving the representatives either singly or in groups, talking with them, and making friends with them. Gradually he broke down the prejudice against his ideas and the suspicion against himself, which had been growing up in their minds during the last few years; so that when the Assembly came to an end, he had satisfied the vast majority of them, who went home converted into his enthusiastic supporters.

CHAPTER LXXVII

BUT AS soon as Dawish learnt from his friends what had happened in the Assembly he realized that he must act quickly; very soon Ibn Saud would have him isolated and then he would strike him down. He warned Bijad and Hithlain of what was coming. Early in 1929 they too agreed the time had come. Ibn Mashur of the Ruwalla joined them.

Hithlain with his Ajman raided into Iraq attacking both Nejd and Iraqi villages on the way. Dawish with Bijad and Mashur called out their men to the number of five thousand, made to the north, demanded that the Nejd villagers pay taxes to them, summoned the other tribes to join them, and eventually attacked and looted a caravan of Nejdî townsmen who were coming by the main trade route from Hail to the Persian Gulf.

This was a direct challenge to Ibn Saud. Raiding over the frontier was disobedience to his orders which he would have dealt with gradually as the opportunity served. But this struck at the basis of all his authority—at his ability to maintain security and to protect his people. It was open rebellion and could not be ignored.

At once Ibn Saud sent out urgent messages calling up his levies. He must be quick and strike hard. If he hesitated or showed any sign of weakness every malcontent would be out raiding. He deposed Bijad, Dawish, and Hithlain and proclaimed them rebels. He sent Hafiz Wahba to come to terms with the English. They were ready to help him. They realized that, if he lost control, all the desert tribes would be up and raiding along the frontiers. They loaned him arms and promised to see that Kuwait, Iraq, and

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Transjordan gave no help to the rebels. He ordered Jiluwi to muster every man he could and attack the Ajman from the rear.

Men came in to him eagerly. The townsmen and villagers were solidly for him. They had long and bitterly complained that for years he had been lenient with Dawish and his Ikhwan; and they were ready to teach them a lesson.

The tribes, even the Ajman, the Mutair, and the Ataiba, were divided in their loyalty; some were for Dawish and the rebels; the majority were for Ibn Saud. Often even two brothers of one family joined opposite sides and fought fiercely against each other. Of the Ikhwan the most fanatical joined Dawish but the rest waited or were with Ibn Saud.

As soon as he had collected fifteen thousand men Ibn Saud divided his army into two and, putting his brother in command of one and his son Saud in command of the other, he marched out of Riad and made his camp in front of Buraida.

For weeks the two sides manœvred with raids and counter-raids up and down the country. Gradually Ibn Saud drove Dawish in. He cut him off from his wells and his villages so that he was short of food and water, and his men began to leave him, until at last in March he surrounded him at the village of Sibila near Artawiya. Here Dawish had made his base camp and dug himself in.

Ibn Saud sent in a messenger with a demand that he surrender, and offering to leave all quarrels for the ulema to decide, but stipulated that Dawish himself with Bijad and Hithlain must stand their trial for treason.

Dawish refused. Ibn Saud repeated his offer and again Dawish refused.

Before dawn the next day Ibn Saud ordered his men to close in and assault. Without firing, using only their swords, they rushed the camp and burst their way through the defence. Dawish's men fought back fiercely but they were outnumbered and within two hours the fight was over. Dawish was wounded and his eldest son was killed.

Ibn Saud had pitched his camp in a grove of palm-trees some two hours to the west of Sibila, and ordered that Dawish be brought to him there. When they told him that Dawish was come he strode swiftly out of his tent.

Dawish was laid out on a rough litter of planks and branches too weak to move from his wounds and loss of blood. Round him stood the principal men of Artawiya and his wives and children weeping, and a great circle of villagers and bedouin watching. He expected that Ibn Saud would order his immediate execution, but he looked up at him unafraid; for all his treachery Dawish was no coward. His wives begged Ibn Saud for mercy.

For a while Ibn Saud, his face stern and angry, stood looking down at the old rebel. Then suddenly his anger died out of him. He bent down over the wounded man and forgave him. He ordered his men to carry him back to his house in Artawiya, and he sent Midhat Sheik al Ard, his private doctor, to tend him; and turning abruptly he strode back to his tent.

But it was not all generosity that made Ibn Saud forgive Dawish. Before God, the law and his people he had little justification for forgiving such open black rebellion. He had calculated shrewdly before he acted. He had first satisfied himself that Dawish was dying, and he had staged the scene of forgiveness dramatically so that word of it should go through all the tribes. He had also proclaimed

that any rebel who surrendered would be tried by the ulama. Bijad had not been in Sibila. He was away to the north with his men. Bijad was the real danger, for he was honest and he fought from conviction and not ambition, so that the tribesmen trusted him and would follow him without question. Until Bijad was in his hands Ibn Saud could not be sure that he had broken the rebellion. If Bijad heard that he had been lenient with Dawish he might surrender.

His calculations were correct. Bijad came into the net prepared for him, surrendered, was tried and sentenced to imprisonment for life.

With the rest of the rebels Ibn Saud had no pity. He sent a force which chased Rifada out of Wejh across the frontier and slaughtered all who had helped him in the Hejaz. He sent Saud to deal with the Ajman, and to subdue the Mutair and the Ataiba. They burnt the villages and executed all the rebels they caught, and levelled many of the Ikhwan settlements with the ground and killed the men as a warning. Mashur hid. Hithlain took refuge across the Kuwait border, where, Ahmed the Sheik of Kuwait, gave him sanctuary.

Satisfied that the revolt was over, in the late spring, Ibn Saud went to Mecca to perform the Pilgrimage.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

BUT THE revolt was not finished. It simmered on underground. The Ikhwan were not intimidated. Dawish did not die. Tough in body and obstinate in will he recovered slowly from his wounds, and he was not repentant but more bitter, and all that summer while Ibn Saud was in

Mecca he worked rousing the tribes. He found the Mutair and the Ajman as ever ready for trouble. He sent word to the Ataiba to rise and release Bijad who was in the prison in Riad. He called to Mashur to bring in his Ruwala, and spread the report that Feisal of Baghdad with the English were about to invade Nejd and had arranged that Abdullah should do the same from Transjordan, and that the people of the Hejaz would revolt. Ibn Saud, he said, was in league with the enemy: the people of Nejd must rise and defend themselves.

Jiluwi, hearing that Hithlain had come back and that the Ajman were preparing, sent his son Fahad to watch them. Fahad was a high-strung and unreliable young man. He invited Hithlain to visit him and gave him a safe conduct. Hithlain came with only five men. Fahad suspecting treachery killed Hithlain and his men when they were guests in his tents. At the news the Ajman exploded. An Ajman shot Fahad in revenge. Even those of the Ajman who had not taken part in the last rebellion joined in. Jiluwi, when they told him of the death of his son, was so stricken with grief that for a time he was dangerously ill, and the tribes of the Hasa without his strong hand over them became turbulent. Dawish with his Mutair and Ikhwan joined the Ajman.

Ibn Saud was in Mecca when he heard the news. He collected every motor-car available and hurried back to Riad. As he went the Ataiba rose behind him cutting off the Hejaz from Nejd.

At once he sent his son Saud to replace Jiluwi and to hold the Ajman. He must play for time, for he had been caught unprepared, and he must collect men and get ready. Again he sent Hafiz Wahba to arrange with the English to prevent any help or supplies going to the rebels from Iraq or Kuwait.

The revolt was difficult to handle, for it was not organized as a whole under definite leaders, but scattered districts, far apart, would rise without warning, and in all directions.

Once again the stout-hearted solid townsmen and villagers of Nejd came out at his call together with many of the loyal Ikhwan and tribesmen, but this time Ibn Saud fought on new lines. He used his infantry, horsemen and camelmen in the traditional way of desert warfare, but he packed his best fighting men on to his motor-cars and moved them rapidly wherever they were wanted.

As usual the fighting consisted of raids mainly for wells and villages, but now Ibn Saud had greater mobility and quicker means of getting news than his enemies. Again and again he cut off Dawish's men when they thought they were safe, and caught detachments unprepared when they believed he was still fifty miles away. Hardly had a village declared against him before he was on it, and he swept across the desert and arrested every stray bedouin so that Dawish could make use of no scouts and could get no information.

Dawish's men began to lose heart, for they were not used to such warfare with machines. They began to desert. The Iraq frontier tribes took the chance to revenge themselves and attacked Dawish in the rear and looted his camps, and the Ajman gave up and went home. Concentrating on the Ataiba, Ibn Saud smashed them section by section.

Still Dawish fought on doggedly. He knew that there would be no mercy for him. Twice he was wounded. Another of his sons was killed with seven hundred of his best men in one fight. As his men grew fewer he was chased up and down the country, and with Mashur and his remaining force he made for the Iraq frontier so as to have

a way of escape open. In the Batin valley, where the frontier of Nejd, Iraq, and Kuwait joined, they halted, believing themselves safe for the time being, but a detachment of Ibn Saud's men hearing where they were made a forced march with the use of cars, dashed into the camp, caught them unprepared and smashed them before they could resist. Mashur escaped into Iraq, and got away to Syria where the French gave him protection. Dawish escaped into Kuwait, and surrendered to an English patrol which handed him back to Ibn Saud, who locked him into the prison in Riad with Bijad.

This time Ibn Saud saw to it himself that the rebels felt his anger, and without mercy, methodically and steadily he weeded out all the disloyal, burned their villagers, harried their lands, and executed their leaders. On the disloyal Ikhwan he set his heel.

"Think not", he said in a general proclamation to them, "that we consider you of much value. Think not that you have rendered us much service and that we need you. Your real value, O Ikhwan, is in obedience to God and then to us..... And do not forget that there is not one amongst you whose father or brother or cousin we have not slain. It was by the sword that we conquered you. That same sword is even now over your heads. Beware, encroach not upon the rights of others. If you do, your value and the value of the dust shall be the same. We took you by the sword and we shall keep you in bounds by the sword".

The revolt was over. The leaders had all been dealt with. Hithlain was dead. Dawish and Bijad were safely locked in prison. Mashur was of little importance. Without leaders the tribesmen were like sheep. Both the tribesmen and the Ikhwan had learned their lesson. Ibn Saud was once more supreme.

IBN SAUD was supreme. As the years had passed he had grown heavier in build, a little slacker in muscle and nerve, and his digestion caused him more trouble—mainly because, instead of riding camels and horses when he travelled, he was driven in his motor-car, but his mental vigour, his power of decision, his ability to enforce his will and to inspire men with his leadership was as great as ever; and behind him was the prestige of much success. Though for thirty years he had been an autocrat with the powers of Life and Death and mutilation, and his word had been law to which there was no appeal, he had not, as have many dictators in history, become convinced of his own infallibility; but with even greater patience, he listened to the criticisms of his people, to the garrulous and peevish objections of the ulema and to the advice of his councillors, and he guided himself by the wording of the Koran. The years had made him more far-sighted, more cautious in preparation and decision, more shrewd and wise in his judgment, but they had not destroyed his power of quick and ruthless action. He could strike as hard and fiercely as ever.

Supreme though he was with no open signs of revolt against him and with all power centralized in him, yet he realized that there was much trouble brewing in the vast empire which he controlled, and he prepared to deal with it. The people of the Hejaz, both the flabby internationalized inhabitants of Mecca and the tribesmen of the Billi in the north and of the Harb in the south, hated him and his Wahabis and the harsh honesty of the Ikhwan. They looked back with regret to the days of the Turks and of the Sherif Husein when all rule was corrupt and inefficient,

and they could bleed and loot the pilgrims as they willed. The family of Hithlain was in exile but the Ajman were as bitter as ever against him. The Mutair, the Ataiba and the Ruwalla were quiet but waiting for their chance, and, had they not been afraid of Jiluwi, the tribes in the Hasa would long since have been out in revolt.

Ibn Saud knew that his strength rested on the people of Riad and of Nejd, on the Wahabis and the Ikhwan. As long as they remained loyal he would be strong, but they were not easy to handle. They were as they had been through all their history, rigid fanatics, working for the purification of Islam. They wished to kill all heretics and the worst heretics were the Moslems who did not agree with them. They mistrusted Ibn Saud's dealings with unbelievers, with Frenchmen and Americans, and especially with Englishmen. They criticized his slack handling of the people of the Hejaz who broke the Law by drinking wine and smoking tobacco. They suspected all his innovations. Nonetheless he knew that in a crisis he could count on them against all outsiders.

There was, too, always the danger of raiding. For the Desert Arab raiding was life. They did not want peace and security. The labour and the patience needed for agriculture was for them a weariness of the flesh and Arabia was a harsh land with little fertile soil, so that every square yard had to be toiled over with the sweat of their brows before it would produce. But the raid, that was Life. The raiding-fever would sweep through the tribes whirling them up into prodigious energy of sudden effort and to sustain long drawn-out endurance. It was in the blood of the Desert Arabs. It set their blood on fire—the secret massing of men and animals, night marching under the open sky, the rolling movement of the camels, a creeping between sand-

dunes, an eager concentrated watching, and then shouts, hoarse cries, the galloping of horses, firing of rifles, clouds of dust, loot, a man or two killed, a few men honourably injured and the smell of raw blood.

Against these dangers Ibn Saud prepared. He determined to have in his hands the best weapons with which to strike hard and quickly in every direction and to the most distant districts so that none should escape him.

For six years he had deferred to the prejudices of the ulema and of the strict Wahabis, and he had tried to persuade them that modern inventions were not accursed. Now he had made up his mind that these inventions were necessary for the safety of the State and he would have them without further delay.

Outside Mecca and at Riad he built a high-powered wireless station, and connected up the district with his palaces by wireless telegraph and telephone so that he could talk direct with his provincial governors and keep in personal touch with all that happened, and he had four lorries fitted with Marconi sets which he used when he was travelling.

He bought motor-cars himself and he encouraged others to do the same. In 1926 there had been no more than a dozen cars in the whole country, but by 1930 there were 1,500 running between Jedda and Mecca, and all these could be commandeered when needed. In specially difficult country he built roads.

He reorganized his military forces. The Ikhwan, who could muster fifty thousand strong, together with the levies from the tribes, towns, villages were his main fighting force, but they took time to collect and were never reliable. He needed a small force which he could use to strike quickly, so he formed a small regular army which he equipped with

the latest rifles and machine-guns and gave them motor vehicles and armoured cars so that they could travel with great speed to any point where he needed them.

Hardly had he finished before the troubles he had foreseen were on him. The Harb tribes south of Mecca revolted. He crushed them at once, overwhelming them before they knew that he was on the move.

Ibn Rifada, the sheik of the Billi who had raided round Wejh during the Ikhwan revolt and then fled to Egypt, came back. Ibn Saud's enemies in Egypt, mainly exiles from the Hejaz, and Abdullah of Transjordan had given him arms and money, and with these, raiding across the border from Transjordan, he came southwards calling on the Billi to rise.

Ibn Saud had the news by telephone from his patrols almost at once. Within a few days he had ten thousand men concentrated in Taif and another six thousand at a point on the Hejaz railway. Controlling the whole force by wireless from Taif he used them to cut across Rifada's line of retreat, caught him in a valley near the town of Dabka, killed him and his two sons and, with the exception of five men who escaped, wiped out the whole force. Rifada's head he cut off and gave to the boys of Dabka who played football with it one afternoon up and down the main street of the town. Then he marched northwards and methodically cleared all the north of the Hejaz of malcontents right up to the frontier of Transjordan.

Hasan Idrissi of the Asir had decided to throw off Ibn Saud's protectorate and to make himself independent, and Ibn Saud promptly annexed the Asir. Hasan Idrissi revolted, but before he was well on the move Ibn Saud had the news, was up in the Asir, and had driven Hasan Idrissi back into the mountains, and across the border into the Yemen.

About these actions there was nothing of the casual, desultory desert warfare of the past—news brought in weeks late by a runner or camel-rider, skirmishes with much dust and noise but few casualties, and often no definite result. They were swift, efficient, and as impersonal as the armoured car and the machine-gun which Ibn Saud used. They taught all the desert tribes what to expect, and they squatted down cowed by these new methods of the King.

In his foreign relations Ibn Saud showed his wisdom and self-restraint. He had every incentive to be aggressive. Arabia was very poor except in fighting men. Round it were richer countries, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq—each with long vague frontiers easy to cross. These states were new and they ringed him in, but many a time he might have broken through the ring. His Desert Arabs were eager to attack, for he had revived in them their old spirit and the memory that once they had formed a great empire and century after century invaded these lands and possessed them. He himself was convinced that he had a mission from God to knit all Arabs into one and to renew their ancient glories by conquest and so make Islam supreme.

Many a time the circumstances might have invited him to make a bid to burst his way out. In 1922 the English were hard pressed by a revolt in Iraq and he might have raided into Iraq and helped their enemies. Early in the Armistice he might have marched across Transjordan. When he had won the corridor northwards from the Wadi Sirhan he might have obstinately have refused to give it up and so remained on the Syrian frontier. He knew the advice of a great Turkish Vizier, "to keep the Treasury full and the fighting men on the march"; and to have let his men go

raiding and looting across the frontiers would have eased his internal troubles and quieted their discontent.

But he did not attempt to burst out. He summed up, considered and faced the facts. His successes would have been only temporary. The English did him much honour. They formally recognized him as an independent king, and instead of keeping only a consul to represent them at Jedda, they had sent a Minister Plenipotentiary. Yet it was the English who had made the ring of states which shut him in. At times the thought of that drove him to a fury of denunciation of the English, but he knew his limitations. The power of the English and their Empire was tremendous. They would move slowly against him, but they would destroy him. And if it came to a crisis the French would support the English, whatever they said to him in secret. The Europeans with their mechanized warfare, their wealth, their organization and their trained armies were as yet too strong for him. He must wait. Kuwait he desired. Akaba he claimed. His claims to these he would not give up. Transjordan, Syria, the Yemen and Iraq he considered to be parts of Arabia; but he must wait his chance. So he held his hand, kept his men on leash, withdrew, made peaces and agreements and gave way many times when all his desire was to strike and strike hard.

With Feisal of Baghdad he came quickly to an agreement to respect the frontier between them. With Abdullah of Transjordan it was more difficult, for Abdullah had taken up the family quarrel and swore he would not rest until he had chased Ibn Saud out of the Hejaz; and he had much of the obstinacy of his father Husein. Abdullah had been the mainspring behind Rifada, but eventually he too agreed to a treaty of friendship.

By friendship with the English, by contact with the French and by agreements with King Feisal of Iraq and Amir Abdullah of Transjordan, Ibn Saud had made peace secure on his north and west. Only in the south was there danger in the independent principality of the Yemen ruled by the Imam Yahya. When Ibn Saud had annexed the Asir, the Imam had taken the side of Hassan Idrissi, and given him refuge. Now he threatened to advance into the Asir. Ibn Saud tried to come to some terms with him but the negotiations continued month after month, the Imam growing more and more unreasonable, and using the delay to collect men on the Asir frontier until Ibn Saud realized that war was inevitable; and he prepared with his usual thorough caution and foresight. He made sure that the English would not interfere, prepared a plan of campaign and massed his troops. Throughout the Yemen he sent Wahabi missionaries who stirred up the people against the Imam, and being fanatics had no fear but went openly to preach and when caught and executed by the Imam died gladly for their Faith.

Ibn Saud made one final attempt at agreement. In February 1934 he invited the Imam to meet him in conference at Abha in the north of the Asir, but the conference quickly broke down and he struck without further delay. He sent one army under his son Feisal along the sea coast, and another under his eldest son, the Crown Prince Saud, from inland.

Feisal advanced rapidly down the seashore on to Hodeida the principal port of the Yemen on the Red Sea. The governor of the town, the Imam's favourite son, collected any money in the town treasury and sailed off to safety to the Kamaran Islands, and without opposition Feisal took the town, and so cut off the Imam from the sea. The

Crown Prince had a more difficult route, up through the mountains where the roads were no more than broken paths, and often he was forced to heave his cars, stores and guns across swollen streams and up precipices with rope and tackle, work to which the Desert Arabs were not accustomed; but he drove the enemy steadily back and so got to the rear of the Imam's troops in the Asir and Najran and cut them off from their base, whereupon they broke and made for home.

Ibn Saud's two armies then converged on San'a, the capital of the Yemen. It was all over in seven weeks, and the Imam beaten to his knees. He made peace without further argument, afraid of the anger of Ibn Saud; but Ibn Saud, against the advice of his councillors, decided that he had enough trouble already on his hands and refused to annex the Yemen. He left the Imam to rule but made it sure that he could do no more mischief, and went home contented.

CHAPTER LXXX

HAVING at last secured his frontiers Ibn Saud had some leisure to improve the condition of his own people: but he was handicapped by lack of money. For centuries much gold had poured into Arabia as subsidies or to keep the tribal sheiks from raiding. This had stopped. In Central Arabia there was little to export except horses and camels; and motor-cars had destroyed this trade. The income of the Hejaz depended on the pilgrims. The whole world was suffering from an intense trade depression; the pilgrims even from Egypt were short of money: few came, and those that did spent very little.

Ibn Saud himself believed only in slow development, and his people were ignorant and suspicious of even the smallest changes, so that he did not attempt any dramatic or fundamental reforms, but contented himself with improving a few essentials.

In many villages he founded schools and he engaged a number of schoolmasters from Syria and Egypt, who taught Islam and the practical application of its teaching to life, adding a little secular and technical training. Ibn Saud had no trust in purely secular education, for all his ideas and thoughts were based on religion. "I have no other rule", he said, "nor way to follow save the True Religion, and the Sacred Book between my hands".

He founded a number of hospitals and sent out travelling dispensaries and clinics among the tribes and villages with doctors to instruct the people in simple remedies, and he endeavoured to increase the wealth of the country. He gave a concession to an Indian company to build a railway from Mecca to Jedda, and agreed with the Standard Oil Company of America to look for oil and others to look for gold or any minerals.

His main object was, however, still to increase the land under cultivation and so to make his people independent for their food and essentials. This meant water in this thirsty land and he sent out experts to search out subsoil water and underground streams, and wherever these were found he constructed artesian wells. Then he encouraged the bedouins to settle, and this they did reluctantly for they preferred their wandering life and their tents to settling down in villages to work on the land.

But above all he gave the people peace and security. His rule was just and strong. He was quick to punish and he punished with severity. His prestige was supreme so that

from end to end of Arabia his name was feared. A traveller, provided he had the King's protection, might travel from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf and away northwards across the Syrian Deserts, in safety. A merchant with gold in his pouch and desirable goods in his caravan or a pilgrim with his handful of coins might pass through the fiercest of the tribes and halt by the most lonely road and be safe, for Ibn Saud held the whole land firmly between his hands and gave it such stability as it had never before known in the history of man. The King's Peace and the King's Writ ran supreme from the frontiers of Palestine and Syria far to the south and east to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

But a storm was rising which took all Ibn Saud's wit and wisdom to navigate. Before the World War all Arabia from Iraq to the Red Sea and Egypt and from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean was part of the Turkish Empire and without frontiers so that a traveller needed no passport within this vast area. For their own interests England and France taught the Arabs that they were one people and the Arabs looked on the English and the French as their defenders against the oppression of the Turks even though the Turks also were Moslems.

After the World War this area was split up into independent countries of Egypt, Sinai, Transjordan, Palestine, Syria, the Yemen and Central Arabia as established by King Ibn Saud. Each had its own frontiers and government, but except for Central Arabia and the Yemen they were controlled by either the English or the French, and the Arabs now looked on the English and the French not as their saviours but as their oppressors who had replaced the Turks, and they hated them the more because they were

Europeans and infidel Christians. There had grown up a feeling of kinship amongst all the Arab peoples and with that feeling an intense dislike of Europeans, a desire for their material successes such as cars, wireless, wealth with the power and luxury it could give, but an equally intense dislike of their control. And with this dislike had grown up a contempt which bred hatred. Before the World War the Europeans had a great moral superiority. This they had lost. The Arabs had seen them too closely to respect them any more. It despised their women and the men who allowed their women to run loose and seemed to have no virility or jealousy. The Arabs understood strength and force and vigour, but the Europeans had shown since the War only weakness, and a lack of vigour. And above all the Arabs believed that before long their chance would come to seize their freedom, for Europe would destroy itself in the folly of another great war.

The storm broke in Palestine. The Allies by the Treaty of Versailles had decided that in Palestine there should be made a National Home for the Jews. The Jews interpreted this to mean that all Palestine and even Transjordan should be theirs and they set out to possess it by economic penetration and by filling it with Jewish colonists mainly from Central Europe, Poles, Russian and Czecho-Slovak Jews. But Palestine was already possessed by a few Jews and by many Arabs, so the new Jews with much money behind them began to buy up the land, the vineyards and the orange groves and the villages.

For a while the Arabs did little for they had lived for centuries on good terms with the Jews of the country, but suddenly they realized that they were to be completely dispossessed, wiped away, and overwhelmed by the tide of Jews who were being brought in. Already 400,000 had

arrived, and if the present rate continued, by 1943 they would be in a numerical and political minority and without property.

The English held a mandate under the League of Nations on the terms that they should create a National Home for the Jews, but safeguard the rights of the existing population. To the English the Arabs complained, but the English could do little. More Jews came swarming in eating up the land and the trade of the Arabs, who decided that they must resist by force before it was too late.

Bands took to the hills and attacked travellers until every road became unsafe. Jews were murdered, and they murdered Arabs in return. There were riots in Jerusalem, street fighting and looting in all the principal towns. The English tried to hold the balance between the parties, called conferences, sent out commissions, endeavoured to keep the peace, and failed.

"The Arab Kings" were invited to help in a solution. The English accepted their help which consisted of good advice, but the "Arab Kings" was a misnomer. They consisted of the King of Iraq who was valueless, Abdullah of Transjordan who was useless, the Imam of the Yemen who was negligible, and King Ibn Saud who was the only personality of any importance. It was in fact, King Ibn Saud whose help was sought.

Already there had gone out a call for a leader. With all their difference and quarrels the Arabs had common blood, common speech, a common religion and now a common interest in freeing themselves from the dominion of the Europeans and the aggression of the Jews whom they hated. Three men stood out. Riza Pehlevi the Shah of Persia was too far away and too unsympathetic; Mustafa Kemal of Turkey had chased the Europeans out of Turkey, but

he quickly showed that he hated all Arabs and had no sympathy with Moslems. And King Ibn Saud who without outside help, and in fact in opposition to the English and the French, had made himself master of Arabia.

Ibn Saud was in a strong position. From the Inner Desert he could attack out in many directions and he could not be attacked in retaliation. He was Guardian of the Sacred Cities of Mecca and Medina and as such recognized by Moslems from Central Arabia to India and the Malay and across to Africa. The Jews tried to involve him. The English wanted his aid. The Arabs called to him for help. His own people, his Wahabis and Ikhwans, demanded that he lead them over frontiers to the deliverance of their brother Moslems from the hands of the European infidels and the hated Jews.

But as ever Ibn Saud would not be hurried. To all he replied: "How can I speak for those Arabs who are not under my rule? Will they not repudiate me if they do not like my decisions? I will mind my own affairs".

Whether this was a mission from God or no he could not tell. He would watch and see what transpired, but on his decision depended the future of the Arab lands and perhaps that of all the Middle and Near East as well.