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three of the four men, who had been instructed in the use of machine guns at Basrah, were dead while the fourth, who was present, made in quite clear, by a practical demonstration, before us that he had forgotten all he had learned. @

The information gleaned at Hufuf was not a little disconcerting and seemed to indicate that Ibn Saud was economising his military resources to meet postwar developments; but I think on the whole, that this view was a little unjust to Ibn Saud regarding the internal state of whose territories we then knew next to nothing. For instance, it soon became quite clear that Hasa could not be left unprotected, while the Ajman continued to threaten its northern boundaries. Nevertheless, Ibn Saud's dispositions were justly open to the criticism that, whatever his policy might be, he had not taken full advantage of the addition to his armament, which he had received from us; it was clear that the making of such gifts to him with no guarantee of their effective utilisation constituted a waste of resources.

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I did not lose the opportunity of talking Ibn Saud with his neglect of the resources placed at his disposal for the purpose, I said of enabling him to prosecute an offensive against the common enemy. He replied that our gift of the previous year had not been accompanied by any such condition- and, so far as I have since been able to ascertain, he was right on this point- but he admitted the general ineffectiveness and accepted my suggestion that, at any rate, the machine guns would be more effective in active operations, against the enemy than in their packing cases in the fortresses of Mufuf. He accordingly agreed to send for them and they duly arrived, at Riyadh and eventually accompanied Ibn Saud as far as Buraida, but no further.

As regards his armament generally we ascertained by enquiry from Ibn Saud and others that, in addition to the machine guns already mentioned, there were 10 or 12 serviceable though, owing to lack of trained personnel not very effective guns of the

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Turkish mountain-gun type (7 pounders), of which about six were in the Hasa or at Qatif. Of rifles i.e., modern weapons, Ibn Saud admitted to having about 6,000, inclusive of those received from us, with an adequate supply of ammunition, but I assumed his figures to be below the mark, as he obviously had everything to gain and nothing to lose by minimising his own and exaggerating his enemy's resources. I accordingly fixed my estimate at 8,000 modern rifles, to say nothing of less effective weapons, which would doubtless appear in considerable numbers in case of need.

Little reliable information was forthcoming with regard to Ibn Rabhid's armament. It was known that the fortress of Hail contained a number of guns, while the information I was able to collect, supported by the intrinsic probabilities of the case, led me to reject reports- emanating, I think, from Egypt- that

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* From such information as I could collect, I estimated the total number of modern rifles in the Hasa, Qatif and Uqair at between 600 or 700.

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© We and a few others subsequently pro-
fited by Colonel Dunliffe Owen's instruction and
became more or less competent to handle the machine
guns,

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THE defenses of the town were in dilapidated
condition.* Ibn Saud himself credited Ibn Rashid
with four or five Turkish Mountain guns and no
less than 20,000 modern rifles. The latter figure
seemed to be an obvious exaggeration in view of the
fact that Ibn Saud himself estimated the total
manpower of the Hail and its tribes at only 15,000,
and I thought it safe to reduce the strength of
the enemy to 12,000 men, armed with modern rifles
and five guns.

On this basis it seemed to the Mission
that, while Ibn Saud, was, without question able
to command numbers of men far in excess of any
thing that the enemy could produce, he was consi-
derably inferior to him in rifle equipment and a
about equal in guns, if allowance be made for
the fact that he could not safely risk denuding

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the whole of his territory of its defences, while the whole strength and armament of the Shammar would be available to defend their capital to say nothing of any accretion of strength, which Ibn Rashid might subsequently be able to extract from the Turkish in face of a serious threat to his territory.

In the matter of men and armament, therefore we came to the conclusion that, for the purpose of attacking Hail with a reasonable prospect of success or at any rate without serious risk of disaster in the event of failure

Ibn Saud should take the field with not less than 15,000 men and rather more artillery than he had. Colonel Cunliffie Owen, at my request drew up an before us, he set forth what he considered to be the reasonable military requirements of Ibn Saud for the task expected of him.

The financial and other aspects of the situation had yet to be considered as Ibn Saud made it quite clear from the beginning that,

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owing to shortage of shipping and the consequent depreciation in the price of dates, which constitute one of the few exportable commodities of Najd (chiefly Hasa), and other contributory causes, his existing financial resources, including the subsidy which he was receiving from Government were not sufficient to enable him to keep anything like a large force in the field for any length of time. This point I readily appreciated, as it was known that, in wages alone, to say nothing of previous etc, the Sharif's troops were costing him £5 or £6 per man per month. At the time, I noticed with satisfaction that his financial difficulties loomed larger in his eyes than his deficiencies in armament and were indeed of a serious and pressing nature, as the regal hospitality of the court, both at the capital involving as it does the feeding of an average of probably not less than 1,000 souls twice daily was placing Ibn Saud under obligations to his creditors, about to this, tribal subsidies constituted a heavy drain on his resources - the heavier for the competition he had recently been suffering from the Shariff.

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So far as I could ascertain, the bulk of Ibn Saud's resources consists of income derived from three sources, namely,-

- (1) Customs duties at the ports of Jubail, Qatif and Uqair, amounting to about Rs. 4 Lakhs per annum;
- (2) Land revenue on dates, wheat, rice, etc., in the Hasa and Qatif cases amounting to about Rs. 6 Lakhs per annum; and
- (3) The British subsidy of £5,000 per month or Rs. 9 Lakhs per annum.

In addition to these sources of revenue, he derives an income from land taxes in the Qasim, regarding which I was unable to ascertain the full details, while his own statement that the proceeds of the annual taxes, collected by him on camels and sheep, are more than counterbalanced by tribal subsidies, I accepted as substantially correct.

Before leaving Basrah, I had taken the precaution of providing myself with a substantial sum of money, the actual presence of which, stored partly at Uqair and partly at Riyadh itself, proved to be a strong factor in the subsequent event in the event of his active co operation with us

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in military operations, I lent a sum of £10,000 on the security of future instalments of his subsidy, before I left Riyadh on my journey to Taif.

If serious military operations were to be attempted, it was clear that the task of financing them would have to fall on the British Government, which was already bearing the Sharif's expenses on a lavish scale. In order, therefore, to form an estimate of the amount of money required, I assured that a certain sum would be requisite for the initial purchase of transport animals and provisions for, at any rate, the early stages of the campaign and that a regular monthly allotment would be necessary to enable him to keep his forces in the field. The former I estimated at £20,000 to be expended half on the purchase of 1,000 transport camels at an average price of £10 a head and a half on the purchase of rice and other necessary foodstuffs; the monthly allotment I calculated on the basis of a minimum force

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My view in this matter was justified in that, when Ibn Saud did eventually arrives at Hail, the fortifications proved too formidable to allow of any assault unsupported by artillery.

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of 10,000 men, continuously in the field, at an all round rate of £5 per man per month to over:-

- (1) Family allotments, without which the Arab will not take the field;
- (2) The pay of the troops; and
- (3) The cost of provisions, etc.

I had thus arrived at a fairly clear idea of what was really requisite in the matter of armament and funds for the proposed campaign, and it only remained to extract from Ibn Saud a definite undertaking that he would undertake hostilities if provision were made on the scale indicated. This scale fell, indeed, considerably short of Ibn Saud's own

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expectations, but I assured him that it would be idle to make more ambitious proposals, in view of the hopes entertained of the Sharif's operations and our own offensive in Palestine, while I impressed upon him that vacillation on his part at that juncture might result in his getting nothing.

- (1) that Ibn Saud should be supplied with two siege guns and two field guns with a sufficient amount of ammunition and such personnel, preferably Arab prisoners of war, as might be available;
- (2) that he should be supplied with 10,000 modern rifles with corresponding ammunition; and
- (3) that he should be given an initial grant of £20,000 for the purchase of transport animals and a monthly grant of £50,000 for three months, the period which, I estimated, the actual campaign would last.

On my arrival at Jidda, I found the military situation materially altered by the break

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up the Turkish forces at Gaza and the capture of Jerusalem, while the local political situation was complicated by the jealousy of the Sharif, who anxious lest we should be the means of strengthening his rival, was doing his best to discredit Ibn Saud in the eyes of the British Government and to prevent the realization of the Mission's plans for an offensive against Hail.

Much time was spent in discussion between the various authorities concerned, while I remained at Cairo; it was indisputable that the offensive against Hail, while was in the forefront of the Mission's programme in November, had been rendered of less importance by the events in Palestine; moreover it was questioned whether the development of such an offensive would not result in an irreparable breach between Ibn Saud and the Sharif, in view of the uncompromising attitude of the latter. My view generally was that, while the elimination of Ibn Rashid by the capture of Hail was perhaps not an urgent military necessity, it would have distinct military advantages in further weak

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-ening the Turkish position of the Hijaz railway, and might develop into a big joint Arab movement against the Syrian frontier, if the situation at any time should demand an effort in that direction. Moreover, in view of the unmistakable and growing mutual incomparability of the ambitions of the Sharif and Ibn Saud, I was sensible of the urgent necessity of finding active employment to distract the latter's mind from the Shariffian situation.

The High Commissioner was actuated by the fear of a possible Wahhabi rising to deprecate any action likely to strengthen Ibn Saud and H. M. 's Government were inclined towards the same view. Accordingly, after full discussion, it was decided that, it being neither necessary nor desirable to give Ibn Saud military assistance on the scale proposed by the Mission, Sir Percy Cox should be allowed full discretion to sanction the grant of doles, such as might serve to keep Ibn Saud in play, pending further developments of the military situation, and it was added that Sir Percy Cox would realise the importance of not allowing Ibn Saud or others to suspect that H. M. 's Government had grown

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lukewarm in its hostility to Ibn Rashid.

Representations made by Sir. P. Cox, for the reconsideration of this decision in the light of further information were met by a re-affirmation of the orders already passed. His Majesty's Government expressing the view that it should not be difficult to make clear to Ibn Saud that, while desirous of supporting him in undertaking military operations of an extensive nature.

I confess that I viewed with some distaste and not little apprehension the task thus laid upon me of explaining matters to Ibn Saud in the above sense. Through there was not no real military necessity of eliminating Ibn Rashid. There was at the same time no military objection to the capture of Hail by Ibn Rashid and it was difficult to resist the conclusion that the scale had been turned against the latter by considerations connected with the Sharifian situation- the fear, to my mind - imaginary, of a militant Wahhabi revival and

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the anxiety of Government to avoid giving or ground of complaint to the Sharif. This, at any rate, was, to my mind, the view that Ibn Saud could take of the decision arrived at - on this point I was not mistaken - and I viewed with great anxiety the possible outcome of his discontent in the event of my being unable to keep him actively employed with the slender means placed at my disposal.

However the orders of Government were final and, knowing what I did of Ibn Saud's financial straits, I hoped for the best from a judicious manipulation of the financial discretion allowed me. I accordingly, set out on my return to Ibn Saud to Communicate the orders of Government which were as follows, namely:-

- (1) that H. M.'s Government were pleased to sanction the conversion into a gift of the sum of £10,000 advanced to Ibn Saud by myself as a loan before leaving Riyadh;
- (2) that, while unable to provide artillery, small arms and personnel on the

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of the original programme. He attributed Government's change of views to the machinations of the Sharif, regarding whose attitude to himself my escort, returning from Jidda to Riyadh without me, had brought back lurid and extravagant tales. His main point, however was that the state of his finances did not admit of his maintaining anything like active operations in the field against Ibn Rashid and that consequently, the decision of Government was tantamount to the abandonment of its original plans for active co-operation with him against the enemy. The promise of handsome treatment in the event of his accomplishing a task, which he could not attempt, was a little practical advantage to him, and he made it clear that, if the communication I had made to him represented to the final considered orders of Government, he could not but bow to their decision and regret his inability to be of further active assistance.

Ibn Saud's attitude did not surprise me, nevertheless, I was faced with the prospect of the termination of my Mission, conscious that to leave Ibn Saud to his own device

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in a temper of dejection and dissatisfaction might involve serious consequences, in the event of his relations with the Sharif becoming acute. I determined, therefore, at all costs, to maintain my position, where I was, and, with this object in view, took the responsibility of offering Ibn Saud a loan of the money lying idle at Uqair- amounting to about £20,000- on the condition of his making preparations for mobilisation for a campaign against Ibn Rashid.

These arrangements tided over the first few months of the summer and placed me in a strong position, in that, while my right to remain with Ibn Saud could not be questioned so long as he was unable to repay the loan, I was able to oppose to his querulousness under provocation from the Sharif, the Ajman, etc, the objection that the remedy for his ills lay in the vigorous prosecution of the offensive against Hail, which I had placed in a position to undertake. The political situation grew steadily worse during the summer and the people of Najd grew restive under two attacks on their co. religionists at Khurma by the Sharif, constant Ajman raids, blockade

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difficulties, etc., but being at the end of my resources, I could only preach the Hail offensive as a general panacea, and Ibn Saud realised that he must take action, if he wished to deserve further assistance. Meanwhile preparations for the offensive into which he threw himself with such zeal and energy served to divert his attention from the Sharif.

Turki, the eldest son of Ibn Saud, opened the offensive against the Shammar in July from the Aibba but was disappointed of his prey, the Shammar tribesmen withdrawing before his advance until they were beyond his reach. The defection of Dhari ibn Tawala had materially assisted the Shammar in their escape.

It was not till the 5th August that Ibn Saud was ready to start off with his main forces and the first blow was struck at Hail towards the end of September, when Ibn Saud, the first of his line to reach the walls of Hail as an enemy, having missed by dilatory tactics a providential opportunity of capturing Ibn Rashid and his bodyguard in the open, raided the environs of the town and,

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^Bunable the Shammar herdsmen outside Hail and, having killed some 30 of them, came away with a rich booty including 1,5000 camels, 10,000 rounds of ammunition, many sheep and much camp furniture.

Ibn Saud had flatly refused to allow me to accompany this expedition on the ground of the fanaticism of his own force, practically entirely drawn from Akhwan elements, and party doubtless, owing to his own doubts which he could not bring himself to admit, regarding the issue of the venture and his memory of the fate of Captain Shakespear on the last occasion when he tried conclusions with Ibn Rashid. I rejoined him, however, at Qusaiba on his return from Hail expedition, on the 25th September and found him, so confident, as the result of his expedition, that he readily waived all further objection to my remaining with him. Meanwhile I had obtained authorisation from you- in view of the necessity of keeping Ibn Saud actively employed- to keep him in funds to the extent of £10,000 monthly, and the communication to him of this news had so favourable an effect, that the arrival, almost

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at the same moment, of the news of a third unsuccessful attempt on Ihurme by the Sherifian forces failed to damp his buoyancy. He was very confident of bringing Ibn Rashid to his knees by the efforts he intended to keep up at high pressure until that object was attained.

Little did he or I know of the disappointment in store for him. Even as we were on our way to Tarafiya to refit for the next blow at Nail, the military forces of the Turks were collapsing and, during the first days of October, I received without explanation of the charges which had supervened intimation that H.M.'s Government desired Ibn Saud to desist from his operations, and that in the circumstances, they were not prepared to place at his disposal 1,000 rifles promised him in exchange for a similar number of inferior weapons previously supplied.

Coming as they did without explanation, these orders produced a sensation akin to con

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sternation; Ibn Saud suspected the Sharif of having indulged in further successful machinations against himself and expressed himself bitterly disappointed at the treatment he had received from the British Government; the recent attack on Khurma began to appear to him in a different light, and finally, letters received from Fakhri Pasha, the Commandant of the forces at Medina, congratulating him on the Akhwan victory over the Sharif and offering to supply him with arms, ammunition and funds to prosecute an anti-Sharifian Campaign.

It must be admitted that the circumstances attending the receipt of these orders were most unfortunate and that the orders themselves looked extremely like a formal severance of relations with Ibn Saud, who was bitterly disappointed at the withholding of the arms promised to him and non-plussed by H. M.'s Government's change of plans regarding Heil. He delivered himself of what practically amounted to an ultimatum: "who," said he, "will

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trust you after this? The people of Najd, who have all along criticized my policy of alliance with you, are justified by the event. What shall I reply to them now? There are now but two alternatives acceptable to me- let the British Government choose between them; either let our active alliance against the enemy be affirmed and H. M. 's Government do its part in helping me with funds and material to prosecute it vigorously, or, if the British Government desires me to remain inactive, I am perfectly ready to fall in with their desires, on the condition that they guarantee me against aggression by my enemies, the Sherif, Ibn Rashid, the Sahmar, the Ajman and the Shaikh of Kuwait."

I thought it inexpedient to allow Ibn Saud to reduce this ultimatum and the reasons, which inspired him in delivering it, to writing, as it was in my opinion, advisable to prevent him committing himself to any irrevocable step before his people. Accordingly, after much representations to Government in the matter.

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At the same time Ibn Saud gave me to understand that the alternatives set forth above represented his minimum demands and that, if Government was unable to modify its decision, he would consider himself free to take action, as indicated by circumstances, to protect his own interests and that he would not expect me to return.

A year's work collapsed before my eyes; I had but little hope that Government would modify in any material degree a decision conveyed in terms so emphatic, and I assumed that they desired or were prepared for a rupture of relations with Ibn Saud as a pass-alter out of the Central Arabian dilemma. I foresaw the early outbreak of hostilities between the Wahhabit border-irritated by long restraint and the Shari's forces.

It was not until I arrived at Kuwait that I received the news of the remarkable change, which had so suddenly come over the

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war situation every where and especially in regard to Turkey. The orders of Government were now intelligible to me and the receipt of authorisation from You - issued in anticipation of the sanction of H. M.'s Government - to release the 1,000 rifles for despatch to Ibn Saud removed a fruitful source of irritation. I was able to write Ibn Saud a letter of assurance explaining matters, which in the interior had seemed to convey a meaning so different and, above all, I was satisfied that Ibn Saud would be the first to recognize that H. M.'s Government's Orders were the inevitable outcome of their victories over the enemy and in no way connoted any desire on their part for the termination of friendly relations with him.

13. The Sharif and Ibn Saud.

In the previous section I have had occasion to refer briefly to the mutual incompatibility of the ambitions of the Sharif and Ibn Saud.

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The subject was not only of first-rate importance in relation to the work of the Najd Mission during the period under report, but deserves very serious consideration in relation of the plans of H. M. 's Government for the future of the Arab world.

When I arrived at Riyadh in December 1917, it became immediately evident that Ibn Saud was actuated by consuming jealousy of the Sharif and genuine apprehension in respect of the latter's unveiled pretension to be considered the overlord, if not the actual ruler of all Arab countries by virtue of his position as de facto supreme spiritual head of Sunni Islam. Concrete expression had been given to his claims in this direction by the Sharif's assumption of the title of "King of the Arab countries" (Malik Diyar al Arab.) . Ibn Saud made no secret of his suspicion that the assumption of this title rested on some secret understanding with H.M.'s Government of his unwillingness to accept the position involved in such a claim and of his anxiety lest H.M.'s

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Government's commitments towards himself, as expressed in the treaty signed by Sir P. Cox in 1916. should be prejudicially affected by their arrangements with the king. I made a haste to assure Ibn Saud that H.M.'s Government had no intention whatever of departing in any way from their treaty obligations towards himself and that the Sharif's assumption of the title in question was unauthorised so far as H.M.'s Government was concerned. The fact that I was again able reassure Ibn Saud on these points on my return from Egypt, where I had had ample opportunity of discussing the matter, militated largely in disposing him to accept with resignation the modification of H.M.'s Government's military proposals regarding which I had orders to inform him.

During the conversations with the Sharif, which took place at Jidda in January 1918, I was impressed by the fact that Ibn Saud's jealousy and distrust of the Sharif was only equalled by the latter's uncompromising attitude towards Ibn Saud whom he

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regarded as the chief obstacle to the realization of his own ambition of supremacy in all Arabia. This is in effect he was and is and always will be, but it is not without interest to speculate whether it would not have been possible in the earlier stages of the war for the Sharif to obtain at any rate a substantial recognition of his title by Ibn Saud by the adoption of a more conciliatory policy.

Ibn Saud was always in need of financial and material assistance, in return for which it is not inconceivable that he would have been ready to place his own resources at the disposal of the Sharif for the prosecution of his operations against the common enemy, as he did or tried to do later with us during the period of the Mission's activities; the Sharif however, pursued the policy of keeping Ibn Saud bare of resources and undermining his power by supplying arms and money to tribesmen of Najd as a bribe to induce them to desert their allegiance to Ibn Saud. By this action he roused the jealousy and earned the undying

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hate of Ibn Saud, while at the same time adding enormously to his strength by arming people, who, once supplied and equipped, would naturally turn to Ibn Saud for further guidance.

Again Ibn Saud, who had spent the whole period of his reign in consolidating his authority in his own territories and had obtained from H.M.'S Government recognition of his integrity and absolute independence within those limits subject to subsequent delimitation of frontiers, was wise enough to recognize that he was not and could never be strong enough under modern conditions to extend his frontiers and had set himself to establish his rule firmly on the basis of the Wahhabi system, with in limits already sufficiently wide. The Sharif affected to find in this reality it was no more at the worst than a safeguard against the menace to Wahhabi integrity involved in his own pretensions and, instead of setting to work to kill the Wahhabi revival by kindness, he proceed to fan the fanaticism of the people of Najd by the persecution of Wahhabi elements within his reach- cases in point are the Khurva

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episode, the exercise of tyaranny towards Najdis settled in the Hijaz and the closing of the Hijaz markets to Na'id commerce.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Sharif, in spite of the great advantages he had enjoyed in virtue of his spiritual position and of the resources placed at his disposal by a Power disposed in every way to assist him in the realisation of the ideal of Arab Unity, has, in the conduct of his relations, with his "nearest powerful neighbour," displayed a regrettable absence of that tact, and address, which are the first attributes of royalty. In this connection and in view of the general trend of British policy in relation to Arab affairs, so far as I am able to appreciate it, I cannot sum up the difficulties which seem to me to beset the path of H.M.'s Government in its future dealings with Arabia in words more pregnant or more prophetic than those,

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which appear on page 203 of Mr. G. Wyman Bury's
"Arabia Infelix" :-

"One of the first principles of states
craft in dealing with Orientals is never to
back one ruler in preference to others unless
he is by personal qualities, position and
resources, fitted to wield paramount power.
That is, if a chief cannot rule unassisted,
it is very little use trying to support him
with overt force among warlike races, for the
mere fact of alien armed assistance will
create enemies for him until he becomes a sort
of lightning conductor for political storms
and his suzerain gets the shock".

It is with some diffidence that I
venture on an exposition of the Sharif's
scheme of thing as I am conscious of regard-
ing him through Najdean spectacles as the
embodiment of an unrealisable ideal, but I
have had the advantage of hearing from his
own lips his plans for the reconstruction
of the Arab universe, his irreducible mini-
mum of the requirements of the situation and
something of the methods, by which he hopes

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to work out the salvation of the Arab race; at the same time I have seen him, from the other side of the curtain, raising up against himself perhaps wilfully, perhaps on account of his own lack of administrative and political experience, an unsurmountable obstacle to the realisation of his aims. I can say at once that I do not share the view that he is actuated by a large hearted and unselfish desire for the welfare of the Arab race and the faith of Islam rather than by motives of personal ambition for himself and his house. But that is a matter of little moment.

Discussing historically the origin of his revolt and the motives which inspired it, the Sharif talked freely of certain mysterious documents in his possession, of the contents of which I was never able to acquire any information from any other source- the very existence or genuineness of which there appeared to be reason to doubt. Those documents, he declared, constituted his charter of rights; he would produce them at the psychological moment; he was convinced that the British Government, would never go back on its plighted

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word.

By implication he suggested that these documents contained a recognition of his claim to be King of the Arab nations; to that claim effect would be given, when all the Arab nations were freed of the Turkish domination, which militated against the existence of Arab unity; the restricted title of "King of the Hijaz," to which alone the British Government had publicly committed itself, was a meaningless phantom, unacceptable to himself; he recognised that minor modifications of policy might supervene were, indeed inevitable, as in the case of Palestine newly conquered; nevertheless, he would not rest content with anything less than the substantial recognition of his main ambition and, in the event of his failure to secure that, he would prefer honourable retirement, under the aegis of the British Government, to a limited sovereignty. Meanwhile he pressed for two things—firstly, that so far as possible, we should refrain from coquetting with other Arab elements than himself, any dealings with such

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independent Arab potentates, as the Idrisi and Ibn Saud, being calculated to render the fructification of his plans more difficult, in the assurance, that he had his scheme cut and dry for removing all obstacles from his and our paths, when the termination of the war with Turkey should leave him free to turn his attention elsewhere; and secondly, that it being necessary that the various Arab races should have some tangible ideal of unity, up to which to educate themselves and on which to concentrate their attention, formal recognition of the self-assumed title of "King of the Arab countries" should be accorded to him. The vicious circle, which as Commander Hogarth aptly pointed out, was involved in this train of argument, left him cold, -it was, he thought no more difficult to become King of the Arabs by being so addressed than to earn the right to such an address by becoming King of the Arabs.

Be that as it may, H.M.'s Government in spite of repeated representations by the King, found themselves unable to give way on the question of title, though, so far as I

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know, they raised no formal objection to his continued use of the unauthorised designation in his official correspondence- the matter was of little import except that, whereas Ibn Saud might conceivably have brought himself to recognise the title of "King of the Hijaz," he made a special point, in spite of my representations on the subject, of replying to the Sharif of Mecca when addressed by the King of the Arab Countries. On the first point, however, H.M.'s Government's modification of their ideas in respect of the Heil operations substantially conceded the king's claim to be the sole recipient of Government's high consideration and largesse.

It was, as I remember, his attempt to obtain recognition of his temporal position that the most concentrated his energies and so far, as I remember, little was said at the Jidda conversation on the subject of the Califate. That to him presented no difficulty; he would take in it his stride; his spiritual claim as the greatest of the living descendants of the Prophet was incontestable; in any case,

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the Califate would not be refused by the faithful to the successor of the Sultan of Turkey in the role of the greatest independent Islamic power- indeed the name of Husain ibn Ali was already beginning, in various parts of the world to fill the gap once occupied by that of the ruler in the formal Khutba of the Friday prayers. A word of caution seems however, to be necessary on this subject, in so far as the Wahhbi element of Central Arabia is concerned. Sir Percy Cox, at a conference held at Cairo in March 1918, of which I have recently seen the Minutes stated as his opinion that, while Ibn Saud would never recognise the Sharif as his temporal sovereign or suzerain, he would probably be prepared to admit his claim to the the Califate. That is true but with an important reservation, which with due deference to Sir P. Cox. views I consider it necessary to state: Ibn Saud, while admitting that the Sharif's claims to be Calif of Sunni Islam is as good as, is not better than that of anyone else, including the Sultan of

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Turkey, in virtue of his direct descent from the Prophet- as a matter of fact, I doubt it he would now, in view of what has happened during the past year, even permit himself to this admission, -regards Sunni Islam itself as a perversion of the true doctrines of Muhammad, which are represented only by the Hanbali or Mabbahi school, and, while raising no objection to the Sharif or anybody else becoming Calif, would on no account, admit his spiritual suzerainty over himself and his people.

Unless by the use of force, it seems to me as certain as anything human, that the Sharif will never attain to sovereignty or suzerainty over Najd. I have indicated above how the adoption of a different policy by him might have changed the history of that country in relation to himself, and I have, perhaps, said enough to show that the last hope of Arab unity disappeared with the first Sharifian attack on Khurma, if not before.

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In any case, I understand that the ideal of Arab unity under a single ruler, which came into prominence in the early stage of the negotiations with the Sheri, has definitely been abandoned by all serious students of the problem. Nevertheless, the necessity of finding some solution for the Arab problem remains- that is to say, if we are not definitely prepared to leave Arabia to its own devices with the prospect of continual strife and bloodshed- and recent correspondence indicates the revival of the old ideal in a modified form, embodied in the formula "Priority of King Hussain without prejudice to the territorial rights of other Arabian Chiefs", which occurs in a telegram of the High Commissioner, dated the 12th August 1918.

I am not sure whether this policy is intended to be synonymous with what is called the "Suzerain policy" by the High Commissioner in a letter, written in May, with which a long

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note by Colonel C.E. Wilson, British Agent at Jidda, was forwarded for the consideration of H.M.'s Government, in which the idea of establishing King Husain as the suzerain of all Arab potentates and of educating the latter up to the acceptance of such a scheme was developed in detail.

The ideals of priority and suzerainty amount in effect to the same thing. Whatever happens, there can be no doubt that King Husain, by reason of his activities during the war, of the territories which presumably he will directly control, of the greater resources at his disposal and of his world-position in spiritual matters will always be the most important unit in the Arab world. It is obvious, however that something more than this is intended by the High Commissioner, as it is without doubt desired by King Husain- namely, that, by political or other potentates, whom we are in a position to influence.

I confess I regard this ideal as entirely Utopian- however desirable it may be from the point of view of King Husain and

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H.M.'S Government - and Mr. Bury's dictum, already quoted, should be sufficient warning against any attempt to force a solution of the problem on Arabia, if only, lest we raise up so great a volume of oppositor of the Sharif himself, that his position will become untenable and the British Government find himself itself called upon to intervene to keep the peace - even to safeguard Mecca.

The Sharif has only himself to thank for the bitterness, which exists between himself and Ibn Saud. His attacks on Khurra will long rankle in the breasts of the people of Najd as an example of his methods of conciliation. Ibn Saud recognizing his own interest in preserving friendly relations with the Sharif on account of his special position in our favour, has long withheld his hand in spite of provocation, he has even held out the olive branch in the shape of a friendly letter written, at my suggestion, against his better judgement, but in the end,

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more or less spontaneously. That letter was returned unopened, the messenger himself with treated with ignominy and even threatened, and the king delivered himself of strongly worded uncomplimentary remarks about Ibn Saud.

In the face of this behaviour on the part of the Sharif, it seems to me idiotic to pretend that he had the slightest desire for the maintenance of even a semblance of friendly relations with Ibn Saud. A more public and galling insult it would be difficult to conceive. The prospect of Ibn Saud willingly accepting the suzerainty of the King or acknowledging his superior position in any way may be left to the imagination.

For these reasons, I regard even the modified ideal of the "suzerain policy" as incapable of achievement, and the possible further alternative of a suzerain power for all Arab lands except Nejd I dismiss as being likely prima facie to present precisely similar difficulties. Ibn Rashid, for all the

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efforts of the Sharif and his sons to placate him during the last few months, I regard as more likely to join Ibn Saud for mutual protection against the ambitions of the Sharif than to accept the latter's overlordship; Maskat, Bahrain and the states of the Trucial Coast are little likely of their own volition to merge their independence in an United Arabia; the Idriai and the Imam have nothing to gain by adherence to the Sharif; to go further afield, there is, as far as my personal experience goes, little ground for supposing that the people of Mesopotamia would submit to Sharifian overlordship except by force and with extreme reluctance.

I am fully aware of the fact that my criticisms are purely of a destructive nature and contain no germ of a constructive policy. I can only say that the interests of the various Arab States, which go to the composition of the Arab world, are as diverse as those of the various provinces and divisions

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of India and are as incapable as they of being welded into homogeneous political entity, except under the influence of a stronger foreign domination, capable, at least of keeping the public peace between jarring sects and diverse interests.

Arabian unity as an ideal, in the broadest sense of the term, is doomed to perish if our prestige and influence in Central Arabia have suffered serious, though not irrevocable, diminution through our attempt to give it life. I can see no reasonable solution of the problem before us, short of the recognition of such Arab States as we find to be in enjoyment of political independence, and I can conceive no role in the future, more honourable and satisfying to British aspirations, than that of controlling the destinies of the independent States of Arabia under a loose political hegemony, responsible- if we except the moral responsibility to ourselves and the states themselves to develop their resources-

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only to localise conflicts and keep the peace, where the interests of the majority are jeopardised.

His Majesty's Government have, during the past few years, grown accustomed to regard the Sharif as the strongest power in Arabia and have, perhaps of their unconscious modesty, tended to minimise the part played in the Sharif's actual military operations by the forces and resources, to say nothing of the services of the British Officers, placed at his disposal. It is not therefore entirely unnecessary to call attention to the growing power of Najd, based on the unifying influence of a stern fanatical creed and consolidated, after years of patient work, by a monarch who fills to-day in Arab estimation the place occupied but yesterday by Mohammad Ibn Rashid. It is, at any rate, incumbent on H. M. 's Government to avoid provoking that power to action, and one cannot but hope that the adoption of such a policy will not prove altogether incompatible with

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