

necessary for the construction and working of these pumps was carried. I had great difficulty in getting any precise information on this, I imagine, somewhat complicated subject, and as there were too many other pressing matters to be dealt with, I postponed further inquiries. When, however, the insurrection broke out I was able to put in practice some of my ideas, but for several reasons they did not then prove as efficacious as I still think, with more study of the question, it would be possible to make them.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER THE ARMISTICE.

BEFORE dealing with the immediate causes of the insurrection, it is necessary to revert to the events in Mesopotamia which succeeded the signing of the Armistice. At the conclusion of that agreement with Turkey there is no question that British prestige throughout Iraq¹ was higher than it had ever been before. The situation, from a military point of view, was all that could be desired. The First Army Corps, after a rapid and successful advance up the Tigris, had captured at Shergat, Ismail Haqqi, with his force of eleven thousand men and fifty guns; and Mosul, protected by only one regiment and a few disorganised fugitives, who had escaped from the disaster further south, lay at our mercy. The Third Army Corps had occupied Alttun Keupri on the Lesser Zab; and the 15th Division, which was operating on the Upper Euphrates, after successfully enveloping the 50th Turkish Division practically entire, had its advanced troops at Hadithah on the Aleppo Road.

Apart from these local victories, brilliant and impressive as they were, day after day brought news of further gains in Syria. Jerusalem was in our hands, the last Turkish line of resistance had crumbled, and an avalanche of cavalry, with dusty infantry pressing on its heels, had

¹ The boundaries of Iraq are approximately—north, Balad to Fallujah; west, Ramadi and west of Karbala and Najaf to Nasiriyah; east, undefined; south, a horizontal line drawn south of Nasiriyah. The word Iraq in Arabic means cliff and refers to a kind of cliff or bluff which runs roughly along the western border, and which is very noticeable when approaching Mesopotamia from the desert.

captured the whole Turkish Army, and was riding in triumph through the streets of Aleppo and Damascus.

In Europe, Bulgaria and Austria had accepted the terms of the Armistice dictated at the pleasure of the Allies, and the turn of Germany was soon to follow. The British Fleet had passed the Dardanelles, and Constantinople had fallen, while our forces in North Persia were at Erzeli, on the Caspian Sea.

These facts were widely known and appreciated by the people of Iraq, who, with their own eyes, had seen on the Tigris the mighty fleet of river boats and the endless columns of troops which pressed forward north, east, and west. It was neither their desire, nor did they possess the strength, to question the actions of a Power backed as it was by overwhelming force.

It was hardly surprising that, flushed as they were with success, those who directed affairs in Iraq should have hurried on to complete their victories. The terms of the Armistice practically left it open to us to take possession of such places as we wished; and in consequence Mosul, Zakhō, Amadiyah, Rowanduz, Arbil, Sulaimaniyah, and Tel Afar were occupied, while on the Euphrates Anah and Dair-al-Zaur were taken under our administration. The communications to most of these places were long and difficult, and the Political Officers who were entrusted with their administration, and were backed by a show of force or by locally enlisted levies or police, performed the mission and enforced their orders largely by relying on the prestige which our troops had won.

The signing of the Armistice had opened the door for the employment in the Political Service of numbers of officers who, during the operations, could not be released for that purpose from their military duties. These officers, who, almost without exception, had no experience of the work that would be required of them, were added to the civil administration, and were stationed in outlying districts such as Shatrah, Qalat Sikar, Diwaniyah, and Afaj; while at headquarters the administrative work was mainly controlled by members of the Indian Civil Service. These

latter, who had had varying periods of experience of Indian methods, and some of whom were men of great ability, were accustomed to a settled and highly centralised form of administration, and one which is noteworthy for its fondness for regulations and red tape. The Sudan Civil Service, whose methods are more elastic, and to whose officers more initiative seems to be granted than in India, provided four officers of experience and capacity, all of whom had the advantage of knowing Arabic well. The remaining officers of the civil administration of Iraq were principally recruited from Territorial Force officers who joined at the Armistice, and were demobilised in due course. As these officers laboured under the disadvantage of having no previous acquaintance with the country and no knowledge of its people or experience of administrative work, they were employed as Assistant Political Officers, but in some cases as Political Officers.

It will thus be apparent that the majority of the members of the civil administration which was set up to rule the country after the Armistice could have little exact knowledge of the people they were called upon to govern, and had to acquire from day to day the experience necessary for the smooth execution of their duties. It is evident, therefore, that the directing influences from administrative headquarters were based in the main on past Indian experience, the result being that a system came into existence which was far too rigid, and one to which the people not only were not accustomed, but for which they were wholly unprepared. Indeed I have sometimes thought that if the inhabitants, who had known Turkish methods of assessing crops, had remembered the tale of Simbad the Sailor—himself a native of Basrah—they might have felt that the Old Man of the Sea, in the form of red tape, had come back to hold them in his toils. The exact collection of revenue, in particular, became a fetish, and the reports and returns which were called for were so numerous that in normal times an officer in his endeavour to cope with them was tied to his office, when he would have been better employed in touring the district in his charge.

That the task to be undertaken by this scratch and somewhat incongruous team of civil and military officers, some of the former experts in their own line, the latter tyros almost to a man, was one of exceptional difficulty will be clearer when the nature of those to be governed and administered is understood.

Within the territories which were in our occupation at the time of the Armistice are the following classes of

Arabs:—

1. The Badawin (Bedouin), who are pure nomads, proud of their descent, by nature independent, and with fixed and jealously-guarded traditions as to hospitality, treatment of strangers and questions of chivalry, which include particularly the giving or refusing quarter to an enemy. With these nomad tribes we were little concerned; and although they inhabit the borders of Iraq they are inclined to avoid conflict with even differently-disciplined troops, confining any hostile enterprise to raids against communications.

2. The half-settled Arabs, of whom certain sections cultivate the land, and others pasture their flocks with the Badawin in the desert during the winter and early spring. The tribes to which these Arabs belong vary as to the dependence which can be placed upon them, for some have strictly adhered to the traditions and principles of the pure Badawin, while others are to be relied on in diverse degree, a few being quite untrustworthy. As an instance of the different treatment to be expected at their hands, I may here mention two separate cases which occurred during the insurrection, in one of which two officers of the Royal Air Force, who fell into the hands of a section of the Bani Haclain, were murdered; and in the other, two officers of the same corps, who landed in the Bani Hassan country, were comparatively well cared for, and finally sent into our lines (see Appendix II.) Among such people it is essential for the administrator to know the personality of the shaihs and the comparative reliability of their tribes—those whom he can trust, and those who are fickle.

3. A third class are the settled cultivators, who comprise

the vast majority of the tribes of the interior of the country, and who include the Marsh Arabs or dwellers in the swamps of the Tigris and Euphrates. The latter are generally regarded as quite untrustworthy, while the characteristics of this class in general resemble those of their half-settled neighbours.

4. The last type which must be mentioned are the Effendi in the towns—that is to say, the settled townsmen—a class which prior to and after the Armistice received but scant attention. Their importance was probably measured by the opinion held of their power to cause trouble, and that was regarded as being so problematical as to be unworthy of consideration.

These townsmen may be divided into three sub-classes:—
 (i) The landed proprietors, whether Muhammadan, Christian, or Jew, whose houses during the war had in many cases been taken as billets. Such a course was recognised by them as inevitable; but as time went on and the Armistice became a thing of the past, ill-feeling was engendered through the fact that their house property was still being utilised, and at rentals considerably below the market rate. That such should have been the case was directly attributable to the fact that the question of the strength of the permanent garrison of the country, on which would have gradually relieved the grievance, was undecided. But besides the soreness that was created owing to the small profits which were derived from the post-war tenant, it is to be feared that a more potent cause of ill-feeling lay at the door of the policy which was pursued of supporting the tribal shaihs and the cultivator against the landed proprietor. In some districts this procedure was more marked than in others; but the result generally was that the tribesmen acquired an exaggerated idea of their own importance, including an amused contempt for the administration, while the land-owner, besides being exasperated, was filled with alarm and dismay. I will quote one story which came to my knowledge after the insurrection, which bears out what I have just stated.

A case occurred in a certain district where a tribesman asserted that the title-deeds of a landlord had been obtained by the help of bribery some years earlier. In many cases such an assertion would have sufficed for the landlord to be ejected and the matter decided in favour of the tribe concerned. Yet, even if the tribesman's contention had been true, the landlord held his freehold title-deeds, registered in the Ottoman Courts, and dated many years previous to our occupation. The officer to whom it fell to deal with the matter rightly refused to have anything to do with the case, which in this instance was, on the face of it, fraudulent. After hearing the refusal, the petitioner laughed and said, "Sahib, you are right. It is a put-up case, but so and so (mentioning names) were successful in their cases, and I thought I might as well have a try, as it is always well to get something for nothing!"

(ii) The Effendi class, by which are meant former officers of the Turkish administration and officers of the army. Of these a number were employed under the civil administration, but hundreds remained out of work, eking out a miserable existence by selling such property as they possessed or mortgaging their houses. Where pensions were given they were on a scale which was totally disproportionate to the increased cost of living.

(iii) The ordinary townsmen—merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, &c.—some of whom were affected by the seizure of their houses as billets, by the great rise in prices, and lastly, by the imposition of a ten per cent house tax, which is still regarded as an unjust and oppressive measure.

Such then were the various elements, rural and urban, whose customs in the case of the former have for centuries remained practically unaltered, which a scratch administration undertook to fashion into the Indian mould. When one looks back at the magnitude of the task which was then undertaken by the Acting Civil Commissioner, Lieutenant Colonel A. T. Wilson, one cannot help feeling that, even if the results fell short of what was anticipated—because the system was too far in advance of that for which the country was prepared—the bitter criticism to which he has been

subjected was undeserved. According to the Arab metaphor applied to our administration, there are two ways of leaving a house—one by the stairs, the other by jumping from the roof—and the method chosen, the quicker but more dangerous, was the latter. It seems probable that if, in conformity with the intentions of the Allies, an indigenous government, somewhat on the lines of that which exists as I write these lines, had been set up soon after the Armistice, the aspirations of the people would, in the main, have been satisfied, and the large army of malcontents, more especially those of the Effendi class, would have had less excuse to mix themselves up in the numerous political intrigues which helped to cause the insurrection of 1920. But it must be remembered that there are those—and they embrace a considerable section of the population—who are accustomed to and prefer an alien government, and our own experience in other countries did not encourage the adoption of the indigenous form. Be that as it may, I must now resume the narrative, and endeavour to show what followed when the army was reduced, and the system of administration, getting a firmer hold upon the country, became more rigid daily and *pari-passu* more efficient.

On the 30th November 1918 a communication was sent to all Political Officers by the Acting Civil Commissioner requiring them to obtain the opinion of the people as to the establishment of a single Arab State under British tutelage. Should the inhabitants concur in the advisability of forming the future Iraq State, they were to be required to express their views as to placing it under a titular Arab head, and make suggestions as to who the Amir should be. The inquiries made in accordance with the instructions contained in this communication led to acrimonious discussions throughout the country, and the vast majority asked for an indigenous form of government under an Arab ruler. There is little doubt that the majority said what they thought would please the Government, as is the way with all Orientals, more especially because, at the time the opinion was given, there were many troops in the country.

As time went on the people of Iraq, more especially the Effendi class, began to show signs of impatience. They, like others, had been sounded as to what form of government they desired, and, longing as they were to escape from the state of straitened means and genteel poverty in which they found themselves, the delay seemed to them interminable. As month succeeded month and the consummation of their hopes was still deferred, some turned their minds to political intrigue, indulging in it according to the dictates of their individual ideas. Others went over to the Turks, and helped to swell the ranks of their Army; while Syria, where the Amir Faisal, the son of King Husain of the Hijaz, was established as a practically independent ruler, absorbed a goodly number. Of these Iraqis many were Faisal's best officers, on whom leading positions in the army and administration were bestowed. In the eyes of the Syrians such preference was not unnaturally distasteful, and the cry of "Syria for the Syrians!" arose.

Meanwhile the Iraqi officers in Syria were well informed as to events in their own country, with which they were in constant communication, and the state of feeling prevailing there. Their conclusions were that the time was approaching when the opportunity would be favourable for creating in Mesopotamia a condition of affairs similar to that existing in Syria, and that the moment had arrived when action towards that end was necessary. Thereupon they deliberately started a campaign of propaganda, designed to secure, if not the independence of Iraq, at least suitable positions for themselves and their friends. The chain of communication ran from Syria to their relatives and friends in their mother-country. These, in turn, spread propaganda, some of it markedly skilful, among the tribes, in which they were enthusiastically helped by the Ulama or Shiah religious leaders (literally "men of knowledge") of Karbala and Najaf, and, to a lesser degree, by those of Kadhmain, who are Persians and of the same branch of the Muhammadan religion as that people.

Fortune favoured them, for they succeeded in obtaining

the support of the Ulama, who are, by nature as well as by heredity, inclined to intrigue. But something had appeared on the horizon which stirred their inmost feelings, and made them cast to the winds all thoughts of moderation or discretion. This was the, now defunct, Anglo-Persian Agreement. They had seen in Mesopotamia the then current British ideas of what a mandate and self-government meant, and felt gravely suspicious as to our real intentions regarding Persia's future, fearing that should it become a British dependency, the same fate would overtake their own country. This at all costs they were determined to prevent, and, from their point of view, they had every reason for trying to embarrass and disturb our position in Iraq. It has been said that the insurrection, which was now not far from breaking out, was due to a plot hatched in other quarters, but the evidence thereof is not convincing; and my own opinion is that the Arab rising was the direct result of intrigue which originated in Syria, and fell on soil which was ready to receive it. How far the Persian emissaries who visited Karbala, Najaf, and Kadhmain were influenced by Bolshevik promises or suggestions it is impossible to say. It may be noted, however, that the fact of the occupation of Enzeli by the Bolsheviks shortly before the outbreak in Iraq seems to support in some degree the contention that their intrigues were a contributory cause of the trouble that befell us.

I have now shown not only how but why the Syrian and Iraq extremists were able to secure the support of the leading religious elements in the country. It remains to examine the means by which they obtained the armed assistance of a large number of tribesmen, and why those tribesmen helped their cause.

The tribes of Iraq, although, generally speaking, they may be described as eager, fierce, and impetuous, are not given to showing fanatical instincts when they are likely to come into contact with a power or strength superior to their own. Easily roused as they undoubtedly are, before rising they give due weight to two considerations: the amount of loot likely to be obtained, and the nature of

opposition probably to be encountered. The settled Arab of Mesopotamia has no fanciful notions as to dying the death of a hero, such as are associated with the Ghazi of Afghanistan or the Arab of the Sudan. The mainspring of his actions comes from no exalted source, but from the hope of getting plunder, more especially if it can be obtained with a minimum of risk to life or limb. Indeed, as a rule, no oratory, no matter how impassioned, would arouse him to the point of joining issue with the troops of a civilised power unless in the background he could see something more profitable than mere patriotism. No! he is cast in clay of a distinctly material mould, and possesses a temperament which is keenly acquisitive. But even his rule admits of exceptions, and in the summer months of 1920 his somnolent patriotism was to some extent aroused. The seeds of Sharifian and religious propaganda fell on fertile soil, and, ultimately germinating, produced a rich crop of armed insurrectionists. The reasons for his attitude on this occasion were various, but it may be said without fear of contradiction that his patriotism and his courage grew as our troops gradually left the country after the Armistice. There is a saying among the tribesmen—the synonym of our proverb "Seeing is believing"—that the brain of the Arab is in his eyes, a statement which is almost literally true. He believed what he actually saw, and failed to realise that the river steamers, ocean-going vessels, and trains which took our troops away could, equally readily, bring them back. Indeed, it has come to my knowledge that, since the rebellion, certain men of education who were implicated in it and who seem since to have acquired some power of deduction, have declared that "India is too near." By this they mean that, even if the last insurrection should be only the forerunner of other risings, the tribesmen can never have a real chance of success.

But the propaganda which had so strong an influence was not confined to one form in particular. Agitators were at hand who were ready to turn to account every item, no matter how insignificant, that could help the cause they had at heart. The weak points of the officers

entrusted with the administration, to which I have referred, were exaggerated. Some of them, not unnaturally, failed to appreciate the fact that the life led by many of the tribesmen was on a level only with that to be found on the North-West Frontier of India, and that their mental outlook was not far removed from that of savages. Others knew little of the language, and were obliged to have recourse to the medium of interpreters, than which few expedients could be more unfortunate for a good understanding. Then again, the youthful officers carrying out administrative duties were not, in some cases, aware that the Arab, like other Orientals, requires much time in coming to the point, and that only patience will reward the listener. Abruptness, too, and lack of courtesy, and making visitors dance attendance before seeing them, were strongly resented, more especially by men of standing and advanced in years. But the two things which the tribes disliked more than any other were the forced labour which they were required to furnish for making or repairing flood banks or for other public works, and the alteration in the method of assessment and collection of land revenue, to which I shall now refer. As regards the former cause of discontent, the Turks in their day had been careful to consult the local shaiikh or shaiikhs concerning any new scheme, taking care to point out the benefits that would be likely to accrue. The result was that labour was forthcoming in due course, and the scheme proved satisfactory. On the other hand, the method followed by our administration was to demand labour, whether the people themselves wanted the new works or not. No doubt in theory this was right—though I have heard of works which, as predicted by the Arabs who were employed on them, did not have the desired effect—and it may have been essential to build flood banks for the protection of cultivated areas. Nevertheless, this was regarded as oppression, whereas a good flood, even if it ruined a large cultivated area, was accepted with equanimity as being a manifestation of the hand of God. As regards the question of crops, for purposes of greater efficiency and more exact collection of the Government

share, a survey of all standing corn was made in certain districts. In Turkish times the yield had been roughly estimated by eye, and the Government took a one-fifth share in kind. The new method, combined with the fact that we took the Government share in cash, was regarded with suspicion. In feudal times, in England, had a crowd of surveyors and agricultural experts been let loose on the fields, it can easily be imagined that they would have run the risk of being accused of blighting the corn, and would have been burnt for witchcraft.

But one factor certainly which did more than anything else to encourage the tribes to unite against us was the outcome solely of our system and our methods. I refer to the settling and discouragement of blood-fends, the effect of which bridged over century-old squabbles, and created unity among the rebellious Shiah tribes. Unfortunately, too, intensive propaganda and the mistake we made in not adopting repressive methods earlier, threw for a time the Sunni townsmen and the Shiah country-folk together, an amalgamation which approximated to the miraculous.

For the benefit of those who may care to know the origin of the gulf that separates these two sects, I give an extract from the 'Handbook of Mesopotamia.' "The division between Sunni and Shiah is based primarily on political theory. The Sunnis regard as legitimate successors of the Prophet the first three Caliphs who ruled as heads of the Moslem community, whereas the Shiahs hold that they and all the Caliphs who followed them were usurpers, the rightful succession lying in their view with 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and with 'Ali's descendants. 'Ali himself, who was assassinated at Kufah; his son Hassan, who is said to have been murdered at the instigation of the Caliph Mo'awiyeh at Medina; and above all, Husain, the second son of 'Ali, who with his followers was slain at Karbala by the troops of Yazid, Mo'awiyeh's successor, are venerated by the Shiahs as martyrs and as semi-divine. These persons, in the sentiment if not in the theory of the Shiahs, almost take precedence of the Prophet himself."

By the discouragement then of these feuds, enemies, such as the Bani Hassan and Fahlah, were brought together and combined to oppose us. Had the blood-feud been allowed to continue, such a state of affairs would have been impossible, as may be seen at once by examining the methods of the Turks. Under their system, which reminds one of that recommended by Machiavelli to Lorenzo the Magnificent, the blood-feud was encouraged, not only between tribe and tribe, but between sections and sub-sections of a tribe. The fruit of this régime was that a comparatively small force would suffice to bring to order a recalcitrant tribe or section, with the certainty of such a force receiving the support of other sections or tribes. The co-operation of the tribes in carrying out this policy was assured by the fact that the payment of revenue was deliberately allowed to remain in arrears. When therefore it became necessary to coerce a certain section, other sections were called in to help, and promised in return remission of their revenue, an equal amount being extracted by the Government from the recalcitrant section. The military advantages of pursuing such a course, apart from ethical considerations, are undeniable, and I have been told by a leading inhabitant of Baghdad that, under the Turkish system, 25 per cent more revenue was collected from land cultivation than has been secured by our own more righteous procedure.

Another difference between the methods followed by the Turks and ourselves was that they strove by all means to weaken the authority of the shaihs and deal rather with the individual than through the headman. We, on the other hand, seem to have acted on the Sandeman system, of which the Agha Khan spoke to me with approbation on the voyage to Bombay. Whether that system has proved altogether satisfactory I am not prepared to say. It demands the utmost care in the choice of shaihs, who in some cases are inclined to abuse their power and enrich themselves at the expense of their followers, and in consequence when trouble arises, like Trades Union leaders at home, they fail to control those followers. It is not sur-

prising that certain of the paramount shaikhs in Mesopotamia, to whom was paid money due for tribal labour on public works and which they were trusted to distribute, found the temptation beyond their power to resist, and failed to do so. The rank and file in consequence, deprived of the price of their labour, grew discontented, and so helped to bring about the insurrection of 1920. Had more direct dealings with the tribesmen been adopted, it is possible that they might have escaped the rapacity of their chiefs and had no reason for complaint; for, as stated above, our system of taxation falls more lightly on the cultivator than it did during the Turkish rule.

From April or May 1919, propaganda directed from Syria was poisoning the minds of the inhabitants of Iraq, but more especially those of the Lower Euphrates tribes. As the end of the year approached the time seemed opportune for furthering the cause by some overt, and, if possible, dramatic stroke. Should success attend some action of this nature, the cause in Iraq proper would be materially helped, and in any case the intentions of the British Government as regards that country would be disclosed. A point on the Upper Euphrates, Dair-al-Zaur, some three hundred and twenty miles from Baghdad, far away from adequate support, where the Political Officer's force consisted only of a couple of armoured cars and a few Arab levies, was chosen for the scene of action. The plan of the irreconcilables was well thought out. A certain Ramadhan al-Shallash, who had formerly served in the Turkish Army, and later in the Sharifian service, a member of the Abu Sarai section of the Aqaidat inhabiting the country in the vicinity of Raqqa, was selected as a suitable agent. He had the reputation of being an irresponsible firebrand, and in addition was the proud possessor of a celitoid nose, so skilfully designed as to defy detection, which he wore to conceal the loss of his own by disease. His mission was to raise his own tribe and capture Dair-al-Zaur, while the Sharifian government, disclaiming all responsibility, but hoping to profit by his action, would be ready to express regret that they possessed no power to control him. The

scheme fell out as arranged, and Dair-al-Zaur was captured on the 13th December 1919.

The question of the moment then became, "What will the British Government do in the matter?" Nothing was done; the insult was accepted, and from that time the subsequent rising in Iraq was, in the opinion of some, a matter of absolute certainty. They foresaw that the general opinion far and wide would be that if the Aqaidat—a base-born tribe of no fighting reputation—could expel the British at their pleasure, how much more easily would the more warlike inhabitants of the Lower Euphrates be able to achieve the same result. As, a few months later, the loss of some vessels on that river and the defeat elsewhere of a detachment of British soldiers were exaggerated and recounted to the credulous tribesmen as the rout of the British Fleet and Army, so the incident at Dair-al-Zaur was one admirably suited to furnish the desired propaganda.

Worse, however, was to follow, and after Abu Kamal was evacuated by us, the Lower Euphrates tribes must have purged themselves of any doubt that may have lurked in the minds of the pusillanimous among them, that they were not fit to match themselves against our arms.

I do not propose to touch upon the question of whether the reoccupation of Dair-al-Zaur was practicable or not. Could this, however, have been promptly done and shortly after handed over in proper form to the Arab Government, the subsequent trouble at Abu Kamal and Anah would have been avoided. I might even hazard the opinion that the subsequent rising in Iraq would never have taken place.

The disastrous results of weakness were evident to our friends among the Arabs; and Fahad Beg, or, to give him his full title, Fahad Beg ibn Haddhal, the chief of the Amarat section of the Anizah tribe, who stood loyal to us throughout the later insurrection, prophetically remarked in February 1920 to an officer of my staff: "Whether you believe it or not, if you do not reoccupy Dair-al-Zaur you will have a rebellion on the Lower Euphrates within

six months." After reoccupation, this trivial town on the river bank, so important when later events are considered, could have been handed back to the Sharif or not as seemed advisable; but the main thing was to show our power to reoccupy the place, and our determination not to accept with misplaced Christian meekness the insult offered to us.

CHAPTER IV.

STORM CLOUDS.

THE propaganda described in the preceding chapter, which was soon to lead to strife, went steadily on underrated and unchecked. The leaders of the nationalist party in Baghdad poured forth, at the *maulids* or meetings held in the mosques on Friday nights,¹ more and more inflammatory speeches, which were applauded by crowds of excited listeners. The time was now approaching when the tribesmen, free for some months from the labours of agriculture, could turn their minds to fight and plunder. Already north of Baghdad, besides disturbances amongst the Surehi on the borders of Kurdistan, several raids had occurred on the Upper Euphrates and between Shergat and Mosul, and a goods train had been derailed south of Shergat, which led to the issue of an order directing night-running to cease on that line for a time. There was nothing, I was informed, much beyond the normal in the occurrences that were taking place or threatening. The police reports were lurid, but no worse than they had been for many months. Indeed my own impression at this time was that the danger of revolt was not as serious as on the surface it seemed to be, and I felt hopeful that the efforts of the Political Officers and the presence of the troops throughout the country would carry us over the dog-days without the incidence of trouble.

To attempt to gauge the situation on one's own account with no previous knowledge of the Arab or acquaintance

¹ So far only as the Muhammadans are concerned. Their day begins at sunset, thus making our Thursday night the Muhammadan night of Friday.

with his language would have been vain, and the information laid before me from time to time, though on the whole it pointed towards a rising, was so variable that the reliance which I learned to place on it was small.

During my numerous tours I had met, when possible, the local Political Officers, so that not only might I hear their views, but by personal acquaintance be in a position to judge up to a certain point how far their reports in time of trouble were likely to be temperate or exaggerated. But such interviews were brief, and I have so often seen men bend under the weight of responsibility in times of stress, who were like lions when no enemy was near, that I hesitated to put faith in my first impression. I could give instances of innumerable cases where the information of one day was falsified by that of the morrow, but I will confine myself to two only, as they came from sources whence they might have been least expected.

On the 3rd June, two days before I left to inspect the troops in Persia, the Acting Civil Commissioner wrote to me that so far as he could judge there was likely to be serious trouble in the country during the next two months, the threatening areas at present being Nasiriyah, Najaf, and perhaps Diwaniyah. On the same date he visited Hillah, and saw the Political Officers and shaiikhs of that area, and on the following day told me what the latter had said. It amounted to this, that according to their view the source of all possible trouble was to be found in Baghdad, and they pressed him to arrest the instigators. They themselves were ready to guarantee that quiet would obtain on the Lower Euphrates, and had no intention of being influenced by the Mullahs who were trying to rouse the tribes. About a month later, when I was at Sar-i-Mil, I had a letter from Baghdad from a friend who was constantly interviewing, and had a very extensive circle of acquaintances among, the best-informed Arabs, including those of the nationalist party. The letter was dated 1st July, the day after the rebellion may be said to have begun, and contained the following sentences: "The bottom seems to have dropped out of the agitation, and most of

the leaders seem only too anxious to let bygones be bygones. I have many heart-to-heart interviews!"

I mention these two instances to show the great difficulty experienced, even by such admitted experts as the writers of these letters were, in extraching the truth, or what is believed to be the truth, from the Arab. Like the patriarch Jacob's eldest son, he seems to be "unstable as water," and his thoughts and actions are extremely difficult to foresee.

The only result of the Acting Civil Commissioner's visit to Hillah, so far as I was concerned, was to make me decide not to bring to Baghdad from the Kirkuk area a battalion which I had intended to transfer to the Capital as a reserve until the brigade on the Upper Euphrates—my normal reserve—could be brought back. I was not disposed still further to weaken the troops in the northern vilayat, as I had already despatched, under orders from the War Office, two British battalions by motor-lorry to Kasvin; while two Indian infantry units and some artillery, which were stationed between Baghdad and Shergah, were under orders to follow. The landing of the Bolsheviks near Enzei on the 18th May and our withdrawal to positions covering Kasvin, the alarm created in Teheran, and the appeals for reinforcements, had led me unwillingly to arrange for the movement of these additional troops, but the order for their actual movement had not gone forth.

Kasvin is distant from Qumaitu, the end of the Baghdad-Persian Frontier railway, three hundred and sixty-four miles, and the position held by our troops in front of the Bolsheviks was about one hundred miles further north, so that if once reinforcements were parted with, their return could not be counted on under a month. Fortunately, as it turned out, and in spite of the outbreak of trouble in another quarter, I resolved to go to Persia and judge for myself as to the state of affairs in that country from a military point of view, and I shall never regret having adhered to my determination, in spite of influences to the contrary.