

Sheikh Nasser al-Ahmed al-Sabah: an appreciation

I first met Sheikh Nasser in 1978, over 40 years ago, when I was a junior assistant at Spink and Son Ltd, in London. He was acquiring objects and manuscripts for his collection, before the opening of the museum in 1983. Sheikh Nasser was always extremely genial and friendly when he visited, acknowledging all those around him however insignificant their status, which included me.

Spink had recently acquired an Arabic manuscript of immense historical importance. It was *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, by the metalworker al-Jazari, in a copy dated 1215 AD. This had formerly been in the Hagop Kevorkian Collection, and although some pages were dispersed, the bulk of the illustrations and the text remained intact. Sheikh Nasser knew all about the manuscript of course, and came in person to acquire it. He negotiated gently but firmly with the director of the department, Adrian Maynard, and eventually the sale reached a conclusion satisfactory to all concerned. With his customary flair and good humour, Sheikh Nasser put a one pound note on the desk as a deposit for one of the most expensive manuscripts ever sold by Spink. His deposit was later framed and displayed in the director's office and the story was re-told many times. More recently, on a personal note, he was very kind and supportive towards my two sons and we will never forget him.

Michael Spink

