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## 'Shahr and Makulla. Secret Letter from India, No. 16, Dated 2nd February 1881.'

<b>Holding Institution</b>	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
<b>Reference</b>	IOR/L/PS/18/B23
<b>Date(s)</b>	7 Mar 1881-1 Sep 1881 (CE, Gregorian)
<b>Written in</b>	English in Latin
<b>Extent and Format</b>	6 folios
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### About this record

A letter and a short postscript, in which Arthur William Moore writes to the British Government describing an ongoing financial dispute between the chiefs of Shahr and Makulla, two principal ports on the south coast of Arabia. The author mentions the likelihood of the region falling into Turkish hands should the dispute continue, and outlines British attempts therefore to settle it. The dispute remains ongoing at the time the postscript was written.

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(B) 23 (11)  
Confidential.

SHAHR AND MAKULLA.

*Secret Letter from India, No. 16, dated 2<sup>nd</sup>  
February 1881.*

Makulla and Shahr are the two principal ports on the south coast of Arabia, distant from Aden respectively 250 and 270 miles. The chiefs belong to the Kasadi and Kaieti branches of the Yaffae tribe of Arabs, by which this part of the Arabian coast was acquired, some 400 years ago, from the large and powerful Katheri tribe.

Since 1873, the two chiefs have been at feud, which was actively prosecuted up to 1877. An account of the origin of this dispute is given in a long report from the Resident at Aden, dated 3rd June 1879 (Encl. 69). The versions given by the two parties are irreconcilable, but the quarrel seems to have had that not unusual source,—a temporary alliance against a common enemy, the Katheris. The cost of the operations was to be borne by the two allies in equal shares, but was defrayed in the first instance by the Chief of Shahr, to whom the Ruler of Makulla finally stood in debt 180,000 dollars.

This was never paid, and, in 1873, was "wiped off" by an agreement between the two families, under which one half of Makulla and one half of the port of Broom were sold to Shahr for 240,000 dollars, *i.e.*, the debt aforesaid, and a balance of 80,000 dollars, which was paid to the Nukeeb of Makulla, in cash. The Nukeeb admits that a bond to the above effect was passed, but alleges, (1) that it was extorted by treachery, (2) that it was afterwards cancelled, after a conflict in which he was victorious over the Chief of Shahr and his troops, and (3) that one of the conditions of peace upon this occasion was that he should keep the 80,000 dollars which he had received.

However this may have been, two things are certain: Makulla *has* kept the money, and Shahr has never obtained possession of the stipulated consideration.

The Government of India, it should be observed, has treaty relations with both parties, dating from 1863, when the two chiefs entered into engagements to abolish and prohibit the export and import of slaves. These engagements were formally renewed in 1873 with Sir Bartle Frere, Special Envoy to Zanzibar.

But the Indian Government has a closer interest in the affairs of these Arab States, arising from the connection which exists between Shahr and Hyderabad, where one of the heads of the Kaieti family settled more than 70 years ago. Of *his* three sons, one, known as Barak Jung, has remained at Hyderabad in the service of the Nizam; the other

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two have successively ruled at Shahr. The union between the three brothers appears to have been complete, and the representative of the family at Hyderabad has always taken an active interest in the struggle in Arabia (1) between the allies and the Katheris, and (2) between the former friends, supplying assistance in the shape of men, money, and material.

For some time, the Makulla party had also a supporter at Hyderabad in the person of one Mukaddum Jung, an Arab of the Hadhramaut, in the Nizam's service; but the weight of money and influence seems always to have been with Barak Jung and Shahr.

The interference of these Hyderabad Arabs in the Shahr and Makulla quarrel has given rise to much correspondence between the Indian Government and that of the Nizam, upon which strong pressure has from time to time been put to prohibit and prevent such interference on the part of its servants.

Otherwise, the action of the Government of India has been limited to attempts at mediation by the Resident at Aden, and to the prevention of hostilities by sea,—to the great advantage of Makulla which is vulnerable from the sea, but comparatively strong against attack by land.

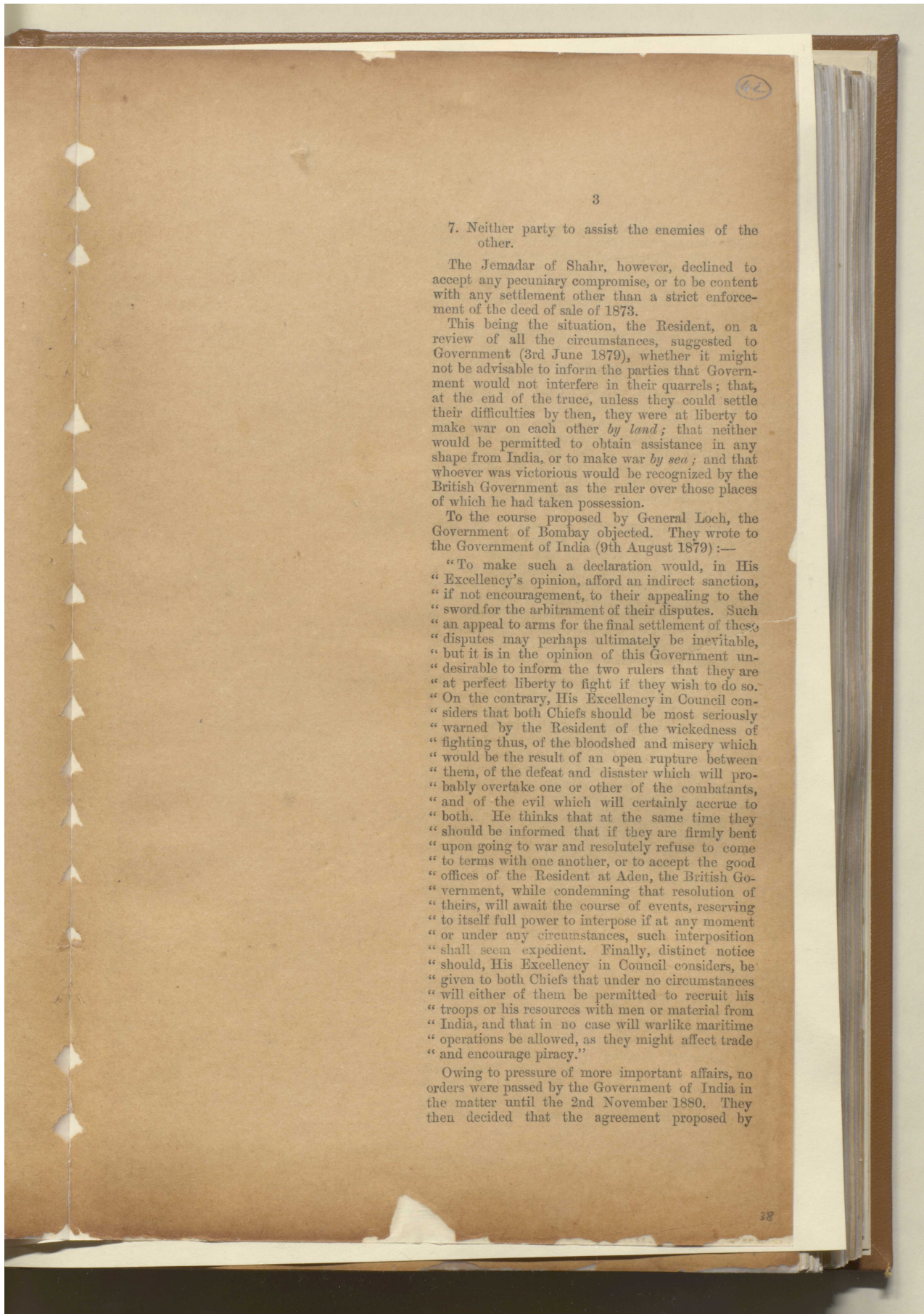
In December 1876, the Resident at Aden, under instructions from the Government of India, concluded a truce between the parties for two years, the intention being that, within that time, the Chiefs should submit their cases to his arbitration. But, from one cause or another, nothing had been done by the end of the truce, which, however, was renewed for a year in May 1879, as the result of a personal visit to Shahr and Makulla by the Resident.

Upon this occasion, General Loch inquired very carefully into the history of the quarrel, and elicited the facts already set forth. He also attempted to effect a settlement of the dispute, and succeeded in persuading the Nukeeb of Makulla to assent in principle to an agreement, of which the main provisions were as follows:—

1. Annulment of the Deed of 1873, by which one half of Makulla and Broom was sold to Shahr.
2. Makulla to refund, with interest, the 80,000 dollars paid in cash on account of the purchase, and to pay the old debt of 160,000 dollars alleged to be due to Shahr.
3. The payments to Shahr to be made by instalments through the Resident at Aden.
4. The Makulla revenues, meanwhile, to be collected for the Nukeeb by Agents appointed by him, but approved by the Resident, whose duty would be to set aside punctually the proportion payable to Shahr.
5. The ports of either party to be open to the other, with facilities for trade.
6. Claims for compensation to be waived on both sides.



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7. Neither party to assist the enemies of the other.

The Jemadar of Shahr, however, declined to accept any pecuniary compromise, or to be content with any settlement other than a strict enforcement of the deed of sale of 1873.

This being the situation, the Resident, on a review of all the circumstances, suggested to Government (3rd June 1879), whether it might not be advisable to inform the parties that Government would not interfere in their quarrels; that, at the end of the truce, unless they could settle their difficulties by then, they were at liberty to make war on each other *by land*; that neither would be permitted to obtain assistance in any shape from India, or to make war *by sea*; and that whoever was victorious would be recognized by the British Government as the ruler over those places of which he had taken possession.

To the course proposed by General Loch, the Government of Bombay objected. They wrote to the Government of India (9th August 1879):—

“To make such a declaration would, in His Excellency’s opinion, afford an indirect sanction, if not encouragement, to their appealing to the sword for the arbitrament of their disputes. Such an appeal to arms for the final settlement of these disputes may perhaps ultimately be inevitable, but it is in the opinion of this Government undesirable to inform the two rulers that they are at perfect liberty to fight if they wish to do so. On the contrary, His Excellency in Council considers that both Chiefs should be most seriously warned by the Resident of the wickedness of fighting thus, of the bloodshed and misery which would be the result of an open rupture between them, of the defeat and disaster which will probably overtake one or other of the combatants, and of the evil which will certainly accrue to both. He thinks that at the same time they should be informed that if they are firmly bent upon going to war and resolutely refuse to come to terms with one another, or to accept the good offices of the Resident at Aden, the British Government, while condemning that resolution of theirs, will await the course of events, reserving to itself full power to interpose if at any moment or under any circumstances, such interposition shall seem expedient. Finally, distinct notice should, His Excellency in Council considers, be given to both Chiefs that under no circumstances will either of them be permitted to recruit his troops or his resources with men or material from India, and that in no case will warlike maritime operations be allowed, as they might affect trade and encourage piracy.”

Owing to pressure of more important affairs, no orders were passed by the Government of India in the matter until the 2nd November 1880. They then decided that the agreement proposed by



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General Loch in June 1879, embodied a fair and reasonable compromise, and should be pressed upon both Chiefs. Instructions in this sense were issued to the Government of Bombay, with the views of the Government of India as to the course to be adopted in various contingencies. These were as follows:—

“Failing a satisfactory understanding between the two Chiefs upon the terms proposed, it will become necessary to announce to them the final intention of the British Government. If the terms are rejected by both parties, they should be informed that the British Government will interfere no further in the matter, and will leave them to settle their quarrel between themselves in any way they please. If the terms proposed are accepted by one and refused by the other, they should be informed that the Government of India will, in the event of an appeal to arms, prevent war by sea.

“Finally, as suggested in para. 6 of your Letter, No. 3691, of 9th August 1879, distinct notice should be given to both Chiefs that, if they go to war, neither of them will be permitted, under any circumstances, to obtain assistance from India in the shape of men or war material; and His Excellency the Governor General in Council relies on the Government of Bombay to make the necessary arrangements for ensuring the proper observance of this condition.”

In the meantime, the prolonged truce had ended and the Jemadar of Shahr prepared to renew hostilities. In this state of things, the Resident again called the attention of Government to the question, with special reference to the danger lest continued inaction might lead to Makulla coming into the possession either of the Turks, the Italians, or the French. Upon this point, General Loch wrote (29th November):—

“Although at present there is little or no trade at Makulla, owing to the present state of misrule and consequent want of safety, together with the dread of hostilities breaking out at any time between the Jemadar of Shahr and Nukeeb of Makulla, nevertheless it is the portal or gateway through which all trade into or out of the Hadramaut country must pass. It is, therefore, obvious that the trade which originally existed there would, under a good and sensible Government, soon be revived. Added to this, Makulla being the easiest port of entrance to the Hadramaut country, any strong power holding Makulla would soon possess themselves of the whole of the Hadramaut, and if the Turks become the possessor of Makulla, they will soon extend their sway to the northward meeting the expeditions which are slowly but surely sweeping from Yemen eastwards towards Oman. It may, therefore, be understood that Makulla must be looked on by the Turkish Government and other persons as a



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“ place of importance and worth having. This  
“ being the case my fears are that when the  
“ Nukeeb finds we have thrown him off entirely,  
“ he will ask aid from the Turks or from Syud  
“ Fazl, now in Constantinople, but whose son is at  
“ present in Jeddah, and that either or both will  
“ be ready to assist, as it cannot be doubted the  
“ former are desirous of obtaining possessions in  
“ Arabia, and the latter is most anxious to be in a  
“ position to return to Dhofar with the ulterior  
“ intention of conquering the Hadramaut country,  
“ which the possession of Makulla would enable  
“ him to do. Should neither of these accept the  
“ Nukeeb's offer it is not impossible the Nukeeb  
“ might then in a fit of passion offer Makulla for  
“ sale to the Italians simply to revenge himself and  
“ prevent the Kaieti getting possession of it.”

In the event of Government thinking it worth while to avert either of these contingencies, General Loch suggested three courses for adoption. These and the views of the Bombay Government in regard to them were explained in a letter from that Government to the Government of India (21st December 1880), as follows :—

“ 4. The first suggestion is, that the Nukeeb  
“ should give up Makulla to the Jemadar of Shahr  
“ in consideration of a monthly stipend, the  
“ payment of which to him by the Jemadar  
“ should be guaranteed by the British Government,  
“ and that the British Government should be  
“ enabled to enforce the due and punctual payment  
“ of this stipend 'by an offensive and defensive  
“ agreement with the Jemadar of Shahr,' which  
“ should authorize the British Government to take  
“ possession of the whole or portion of either place, or  
“ both (Makulla and Shahr) in the event of failure  
“ on the Jemadar's part to carry out the agreement.  
“ And further this agreement should bind the  
“ Jemadar not to sell or otherwise dispose of any  
“ portions of either Shahr or Makulla to any Go-  
“ vernment or persons without the consent of the  
“ British Government.

“ This arrangement would, perhaps, be best for  
“ all parties, but it is very doubtful whether the  
“ Nukeeb would consent to give up Makulla to the  
“ Jemadar.

“ 5. The second proposal is, that the Nukeeb  
“ should give up half the town of Makulla and  
“ half the customs revenue, and that for the pur-  
“ poses of fostering the customs revenue, and fairly  
“ dividing it between the two Chiefs, and preserving  
“ order in the town and protecting the Nukeeb  
“ from aggressive conduct on the part of the Je-  
“ madar of Shahr and his people, a European officer  
“ on Rs. 1,000 a month, payable in equal shares by  
“ the two Chiefs, should be stationed at Makulla.

“ In the opinion of this Government the Nukeeb  
“ is not at all likely to accept such an arrangement,  
“ and even if he were disposed to agree to it, the  
“ close contact which the possession of half a  
“ small town by one of the two hostile Chiefs would

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“ involve would be certain to lead to frequent  
“ hostilities, which would endanger the safety of  
“ the British agent, to protect whom a force would  
“ have to be sent, and the British Government  
“ would thus become involved in the quarrel.

“ 6. The third alternative is, that Makulla should  
“ remain in the sole possession of the Nukeeb, who  
“ should be placed under the protection of the  
“ British Government, and should pay for such pro-  
“ tection one sixth of the revenue of the place,  
“ arrangement being made for paying off the debt  
“ to the Jemadar by regular instalments from this  
“ revenue.”

The last of these proposals was, in the opinion of the Bombay Government, the one most likely to be accepted by the Nukeeb. In intimating this view to the Government of India they added that, if the British Government abstained from present interference in the affairs of the Hadhramaut, they might be involved hereafter in complications more difficult of solution.

While this letter was under consideration at Calcutta, hostilities actually commenced, and Broom was seized by Shahr troops. Her Majesty's ship “Philomel” was sent from Aden to Makulla with orders to prevent any warfare at sea. An official of the Residency was on board, who was instructed to endeavour to effect a truce of at least 20 days, during which British subjects could leave the place.

The Nukeeb, however, was unwilling to make a truce, having invited to his aid his former foes, the Katheris, who were on their march to join him. The Jemadar of Shahr, on the other hand, was anxious for a truce of three months, not apparently from any desire for peace, but because he hoped in that time to bribe the Katheris to his own side.

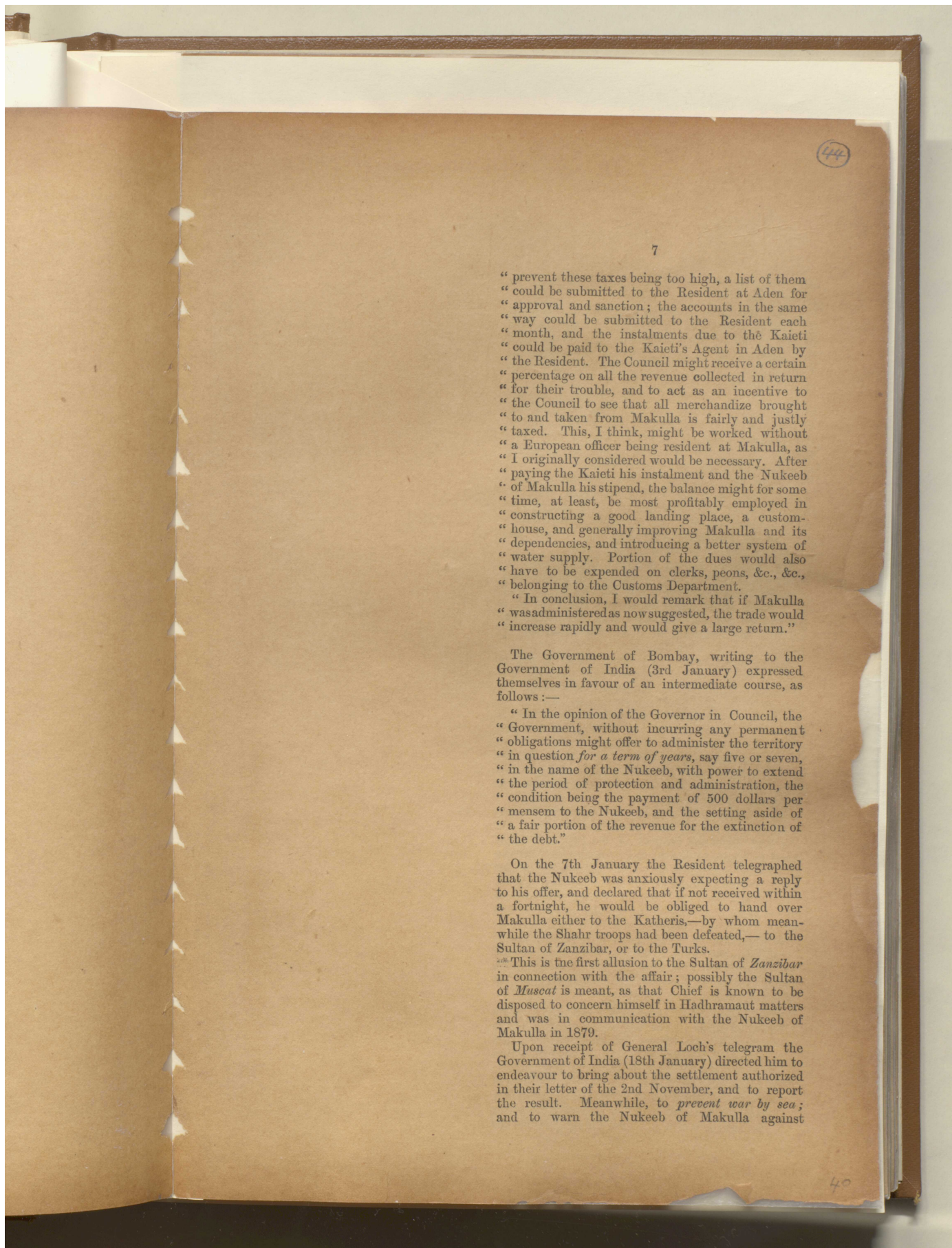
On the 12th December, the Nukeeb, fearing, as it would seem, his allies, the Katheris, not less than his enemy, the Kaieti, wrote to the Resident, offering to *make over his country to the British Government, in consideration of a stipend of 500 dollars a month to himself, his heirs and descendants.* He hinted plainly that the offer, if refused by us, would be made elsewhere. With regard to it, General Loch wrote (16th December):—

“ It appears to me, provided we do not wish the  
“ Turks or any other foreign Power to possess  
“ Makulla, that we might accept the Nukeeb's offer,  
“ and at once agreed to pay him and his descen-  
“ dants 500 dollars a month, the country not in any  
“ way being annexed, but simply placed under  
“ British administration until such time as the  
“ debt to the Kaieti remains unpaid, or until such  
“ time as the Government considered it unnecessary  
“ to continue the administration of Makulla.

“ If Government should think favourably of  
“ accepting the Nukeeb's offer, a council or pun-  
“ chayat, composed of the most influential mer-  
“ chants at Makulla, whose business it would be to  
“ fix the various fees on imports and exports,  
“ wharf dues, &c., &c., could be formed, and to



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“ prevent these taxes being too high, a list of them  
“ could be submitted to the Resident at Aden for  
“ approval and sanction; the accounts in the same  
“ way could be submitted to the Resident each  
“ month, and the instalments due to the Kaieti  
“ could be paid to the Kaieti's Agent in Aden by  
“ the Resident. The Council might receive a certain  
“ percentage on all the revenue collected in return  
“ for their trouble, and to act as an incentive to  
“ the Council to see that all merchandize brought  
“ to and taken from Makulla is fairly and justly  
“ taxed. This, I think, might be worked without  
“ a European officer being resident at Makulla, as  
“ I originally considered would be necessary. After  
“ paying the Kaieti his instalment and the Nukeeb  
“ of Makulla his stipend, the balance might for some  
“ time, at least, be most profitably employed in  
“ constructing a good landing place, a custom-  
“ house, and generally improving Makulla and its  
“ dependencies, and introducing a better system of  
“ water supply. Portion of the dues would also  
“ have to be expended on clerks, peons, &c., &c.,  
“ belonging to the Customs Department.  
“ In conclusion, I would remark that if Makulla  
“ was administered as now suggested, the trade would  
“ increase rapidly and would give a large return.”

The Government of Bombay, writing to the Government of India (3rd January) expressed themselves in favour of an intermediate course, as follows :—

“ In the opinion of the Governor in Council, the  
“ Government, without incurring any permanent  
“ obligations might offer to administer the territory  
“ in question for a term of years, say five or seven,  
“ in the name of the Nukeeb, with power to extend  
“ the period of protection and administration, the  
“ condition being the payment of 500 dollars per  
“ mensem to the Nukeeb, and the setting aside of  
“ a fair portion of the revenue for the extinction of  
“ the debt.”

On the 7th January the Resident telegraphed that the Nukeeb was anxiously expecting a reply to his offer, and declared that if not received within a fortnight, he would be obliged to hand over Makulla either to the Katheris,—by whom meanwhile the Shahr troops had been defeated,— to the Sultan of Zanzibar, or to the Turks.

<sup>22</sup> This is the first allusion to the Sultan of Zanzibar in connection with the affair; possibly the Sultan of Muscat is meant, as that Chief is known to be disposed to concern himself in Hadhramaut matters and was in communication with the Nukeeb of Makulla in 1879.

Upon receipt of General Loch's telegram the Government of India (18th January) directed him to endeavour to bring about the settlement authorized in their letter of the 2nd November, and to report the result. Meanwhile, to prevent war by sea; and to warn the Nukeeb of Makulla against

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attempting to dispose of his country *without the assent of the British Government.*

Upon this the Resident's Assistant, Captain Hunter, proceeded to Shahr and Makulla in Her Majesty's ship "Dagmar." The Nukeeb *accepted* the proposed terms of settlement. The Jamadar *refused*, urging other claims and his present possession of Broom.

In reporting this result (17th January), and the conclusion of a truce for 15 days, the Resident stated that, if it was desired that Makulla should not become a possession of Turkey or any other foreign power, the Nukeeb must be protected against himself (*sic*) and against Shahr.

On the 25th January, the Government of India desired the Government of Bombay to ascertain from General Loch whether it was practicable to enforce upon Shahr by our gunboats a prohibition against *all* hostilities with Makulla; if so, they should be stopped pending further orders.

The Resident having reported that if Government would order Shahr to cease hostilities *by land and sea*, the presence of a gun boat in the vicinity of Makulla would insure obedience, the issue of a prohibition was directed upon that understanding. Of this the Secretary of State was informed by telegraph on the 29th January.

So the case stands. In sending home the papers the Government of India observe that the questions involved,—touching the exclusion of foreign influence from the Hadhramaut coast,—are of so much possible interest that full consideration of them will be necessary, and they promise a full statement of their views hereafter.

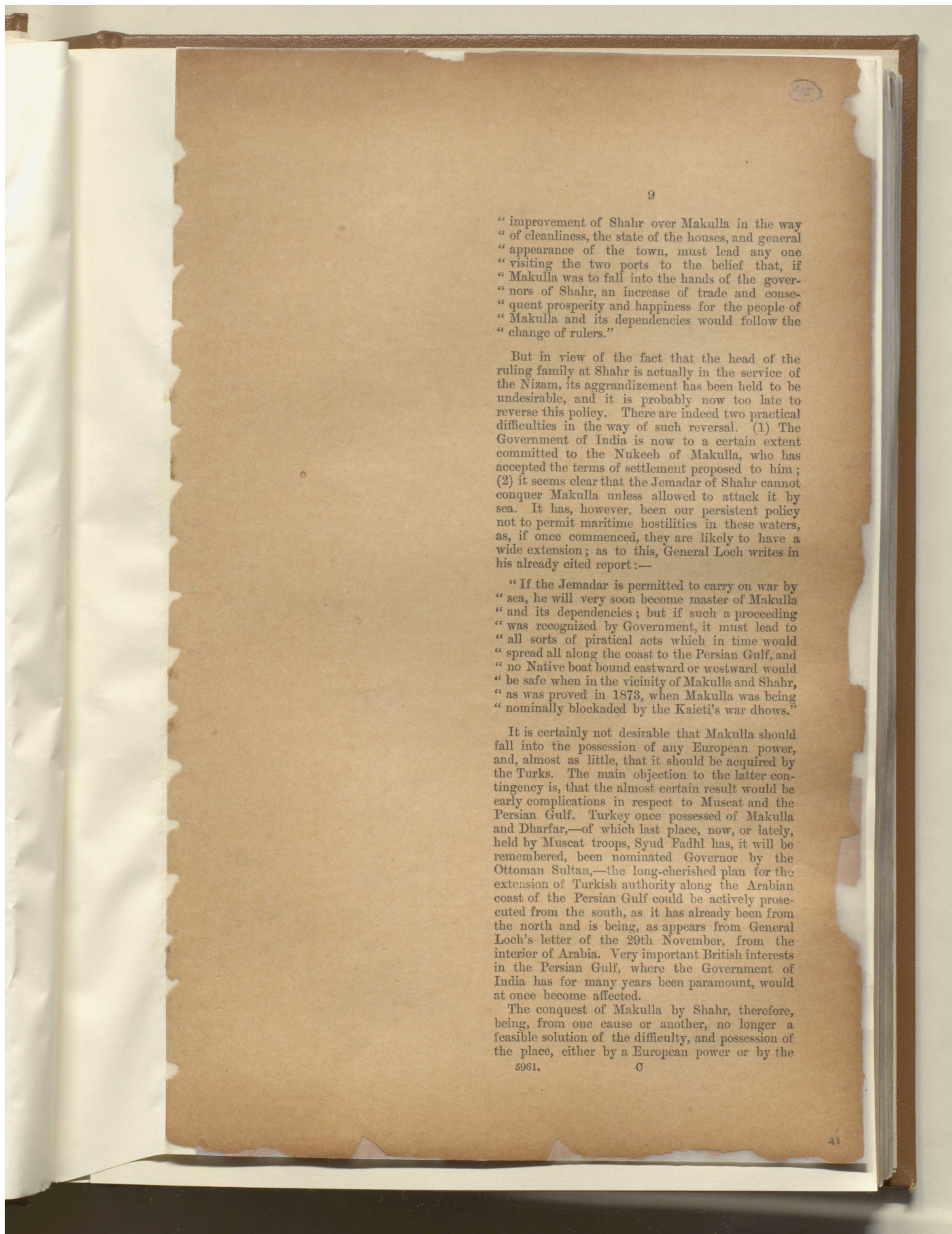
This the Secretary of State may perhaps be disposed to await before expressing any opinion of his own. Meanwhile the following observations are suggested by the papers.

The question, though not of first rate importance, is not trivial, and presents difficulties. At the first blush the interest of the British Government in places so distant from Aden as are Makulla and Shahr appears to be small. Probably, but for the close connection between Shahr and Hyderabad, the Government of India, in former years, would never have intervened even to the extent it has done; and that connection has been held to interpose objection to what, as it now seems, might have been the most satisfactory solution of the matter, *viz.*, the absorption of Makulla by Shahr. Upon this point General Loch remarks, in his report of the 3rd June 1879:—

" 83. I must admit that such a change of rulers would, as far as I have the means of judging, be beneficial to all classes in Makulla, with the exception of the Nukeeb's family, none of whom are fit to govern, and his immediate adherents; for, although the Kaietis possess the failings of most Arabs, their rule, judging by the rulers themselves, who are in every respect far superior to the members of the Kasadi family, the marked



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“improvement of Shahr over Makulla in the way  
“of cleanliness, the state of the houses, and general  
“appearance of the town, must lead any one  
“visiting the two ports to the belief that, if  
“Makulla was to fall into the hands of the gover-  
“nors of Shahr, an increase of trade and conse-  
“quent prosperity and happiness for the people of  
“Makulla and its dependencies would follow the  
“change of rulers.”

But in view of the fact that the head of the ruling family at Shahr is actually in the service of the Nizam, its aggrandizement has been held to be undesirable, and it is probably now too late to reverse this policy. There are indeed two practical difficulties in the way of such reversal. (1) The Government of India is now to a certain extent committed to the Nukeeb of Makulla, who has accepted the terms of settlement proposed to him; (2) it seems clear that the Jemadar of Shahr cannot conquer Makulla unless allowed to attack it by sea. It has, however, been our persistent policy not to permit maritime hostilities in these waters, as, if once commenced, they are likely to have a wide extension; as to this, General Loch writes in his already cited report:—

“If the Jemadar is permitted to carry on war by  
“sea, he will very soon become master of Makulla  
“and its dependencies; but if such a proceeding  
“was recognized by Government, it must lead to  
“all sorts of piratical acts which in time would  
“spread all along the coast to the Persian Gulf, and  
“no Native boat bound eastward or westward would  
“be safe when in the vicinity of Makulla and Shahr,  
“as was proved in 1873, when Makulla was being  
“nominally blockaded by the Kaieti's war dhows.”

It is certainly not desirable that Makulla should fall into the possession of any European power, and, almost as little, that it should be acquired by the Turks. The main objection to the latter contingency is, that the almost certain result would be early complications in respect to Muscat and the Persian Gulf. Turkey once possessed of Makulla and Dharfar,—of which last place, now, or lately, held by Muscat troops, Syud Fadhl has, it will be remembered, been nominated Governor by the Ottoman Sultan,—the long-cherished plan for the extension of Turkish authority along the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf could be actively prosecuted from the south, as it has already been from the north and is being, as appears from General Loch's letter of the 29th November, from the interior of Arabia. Very important British interests in the Persian Gulf, where the Government of India has for many years been paramount, would at once become affected.

The conquest of Makulla by Shahr, therefore, being, from one cause or another, no longer a feasible solution of the difficulty, and possession of the place, either by a European power or by the

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Turks, being attended with political danger, the only alternatives appear to be, (1) acceptance of the Nukeeb's offer to make over to us the administration of his country; *or*, (2) the imposition upon Shahr of the terms which Makulla has already accepted.

Subject to what the Government of India may have to say, the *second* of these two alternatives seems open to the fewest objections, and, in the existing situation of affairs should be attended with but little difficulty. All hostilities,—whether by sea or land,—are at this moment suspended, and the Jemadar of Shahr runs considerable risk of getting nothing, neither money, nor land, other than the port of Broom, the value of which, by itself, is probably small. Under these circumstances, it seems unlikely that much pressure would be needed to induce him now to accept an arrangement which secures to him, at any rate, the pecuniary equivalent of the disputed bond of 1873.

The points for present decision are, shall the promised further letter from India be awaited, before a reply is sent to that now submitted? and, if not, what shall be the sense of the reply, it being borne in mind that the question is no longer between intervention and absolute non-intervention, but as to the extent to which the intervention already commenced shall be carried?

A. W. M.

7th March 1881.

P.S.—While the papers above summarized were under consideration, the following telegram (7th March) was received from the Government of India, suggesting the very solution of the question which has been referred to as in itself the most desirable, viz., the absorption of Makulla by Shahr:—

“Shahr now offers to buy Makulla outright, subject to British suzerainty. Resident believes Makulla will agree. We consider this a convenient arrangement for termination of the dispute, and would sanction it; but, in regard to sovereignty, we should only stipulate that our advice be followed in all external affairs, giving in return a small subsidy, if required. It appears important to prevent Turkish encroachment and intrigue in the ports of the Hadhramaut.”

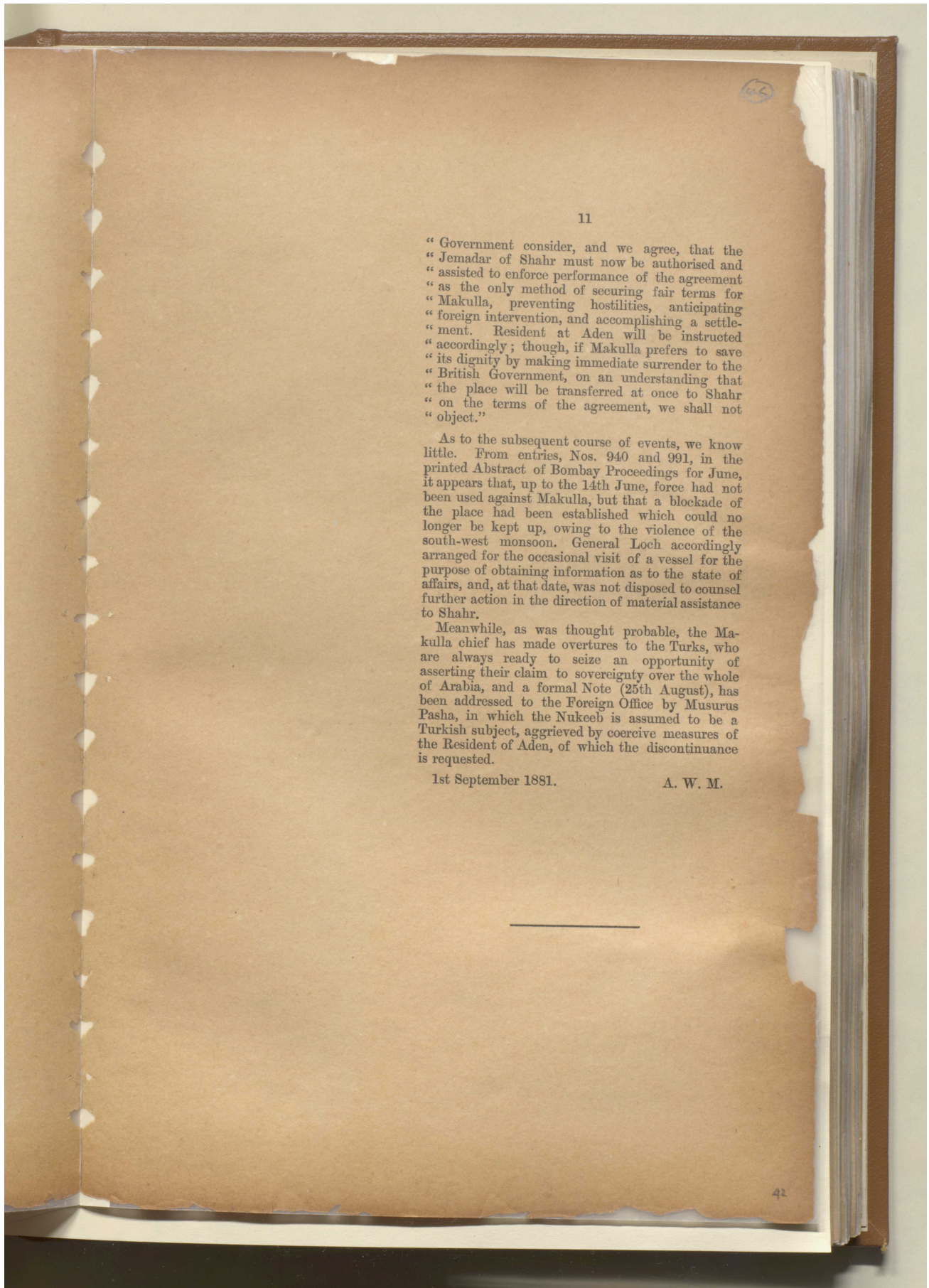
The Secretary of State replied (12th March) that he approved the arrangement proposed, though he should object to assumption of sovereignty, which, however, he did not understand to be contemplated.

The next that was heard of the matter was, on the 5th May, by telegram from the Viceroy, as follows:—

“Makulla, after signing, with some reluctance, an agreement to sell to Shahr, has positively repudiated and refused the sale. The Bombay



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“ Government consider, and we agree, that the  
“ Jemadar of Shahr must now be authorised and  
“ assisted to enforce performance of the agreement  
“ as the only method of securing fair terms for  
“ Makulla, preventing hostilities, anticipating  
“ foreign intervention, and accomplishing a settle-  
“ ment. Resident at Aden will be instructed  
“ accordingly; though, if Makulla prefers to save  
“ its dignity by making immediate surrender to the  
“ British Government, on an understanding that  
“ the place will be transferred at once to Shahr  
“ on the terms of the agreement, we shall not  
“ object.”

As to the subsequent course of events, we know little. From entries, Nos. 940 and 991, in the printed Abstract of Bombay Proceedings for June, it appears that, up to the 14th June, force had not been used against Makulla, but that a blockade of the place had been established which could no longer be kept up, owing to the violence of the south-west monsoon. General Loch accordingly arranged for the occasional visit of a vessel for the purpose of obtaining information as to the state of affairs, and, at that date, was not disposed to counsel further action in the direction of material assistance to Shahr.

Meanwhile, as was thought probable, the Makulla chief has made overtures to the Turks, who are always ready to seize an opportunity of asserting their claim to sovereignty over the whole of Arabia, and a formal Note (25th August), has been addressed to the Foreign Office by Musurus Pasha, in which the Nukeeb is assumed to be a Turkish subject, aggrieved by coercive measures of the Resident of Aden, of which the discontinuance is requested.

1st September 1881.

A. W. M.



'Shahr and Makulla. Secret Letter from India, No. 16, Dated 2nd February 1881.'  
[46v] (12/12)

