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## 'Memorandum respecting Koweit'

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### About this record

This is a confidential memorandum, printed for the use of the Foreign Office on 30 October 1901, and authored by Robert Venables Vernon Harcourt, dated 29 Oct 1901. The memorandum primarily focuses on the position of Koweit [Kuwait] in regards to Turkey (Ottoman Empire) from 1871 onwards. In the left and right hand margins there are references to various correspondence, reports and agreements between 1878 and 1901, as well as giving subject headings, which include: 'Difficulties with Turkey', 'German railway scheme', 'Dispute between Koweit and Nejd [Najd]', 'Defences of Koweit', 'Use of Turkish flag in Koweit', and 'Proposal to make Koweit a port of call for Mail-steamers'. Folios 150 to 151 include extracts of correspondence from Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Anthopoulos Pasha, dated 11 September 1901, and Admiral Sir Day Hort Bosanquet, Commander-in-chief, East Indies, to Admiralty, dated 31 August and 4 October 1901. There is an Annex between folios 152 and 153, which includes a translated agreement ('Arabic bond') with the Sheikh of Kuwait, Mubārak bin Ṣabāḥ Āl Ṣabāḥ, dated 23 January 1899, signed by Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm John Meade, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf at Bushire, and witnessed by E Wickham Hore, Captain of the Indian Medical Service (IMS), John Calcott Gaskin, and Muhammad Rahim bin Abdul Nebi Saffer [Muḥammad Raḥim bin 'Abd al-Nabī Ṣafar], Native Agent at Bahrain and friend of the Sheikh of Kuwait; and a translation of an Arabic letter from Meade to the Sheikh of Kuwait, dated 23 January 1901.

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Printed for the use of the Foreign Office. October 30, 1901.

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CONFIDENTIAL.

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(7596.)

*Memorandum respecting Koweit.*

THE position of Koweit, as regards Turkey, has recently given rise to considerable discussion. There seems no doubt that in 1871, when Midhat Pasha made a successful attempt to reduce the Emir of Nejd to subjection, the Sheikh of Koweit declared himself on the Turkish side, assumed the Turkish flag, and was instrumental in inducing other Chiefs on the Arabian Littoral of the Persian Gulf to imitate his example. For this action he received the title of Pasha, and was granted considerable tracts of land in the neighbourhood of Fao. It would appear that about that time a Turkish custom-house was established at Koweit, but it must have been maintained for a short time only.

In 1876 Lieutenant-Colonel Prideaux, the Acting Resident at Bushire, enumerated as the principal Turkish ports on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf, Koweit, Khateef, and Ojair. In May 1878 the Government of India proposed "that from Bussorah to Ojair" (which is situated on the coast considerably to the south of Koweit) "the authority of the Porte should be recognized as established on land, but that at sea the British Government should continue to exercise some concurrent Protectorate, pursuing pirates if necessary into Turkish waters and dealing with them wherever found, whether at sea or on shore, within certain limits through the Resident in the Gulf." This proposal was discussed between the Foreign Office and India Office and somewhat modified.

India Office,  
September 17,  
1878.

To Sir A. Layard,  
No. 12.

In a despatch dated the 5th January, 1879, Lord Salisbury authorized Sir A. Layard, then British Ambassador at Constantinople, to propose  
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to the Porte an arrangement by which British ships of war should be instructed to pursue their operations for the repression of piracy as far as possible outside the territorial waters of the Arabian mainland north of Odeid, but should also have authority to pursue and capture piratical vessels within the 3-mile limit on that part of the coast wherever this might seem indispensable to the attainment of their object. This arrangement, which would by implication have admitted Turkish territorial sovereignty as far south as El Odeid (which is south of Ojair), was mentioned by Sir A. Layard to the Turkish Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and submitted by them to the Council of Ministers, but got no farther.

Sir A. Layard,  
No. 496,  
May 11, 1880.

In August 1888, in consequence of a report that the Turkish Government contemplated an attack on Oman, Sir W. White was instructed that Her Majesty's Government recognized Turkish jurisdiction on the coast as far as El Khateef, and were anxious that it should be effectively exercised within those limits. Beyond that point Her Majesty's Government considered the Chiefs to be independent. (El Khateef, though situated to the north of Ojair and Odeid, is still considerably south of Koweit.)

To Sir W. White,  
No. 269,  
August 29, 1888.

Sir W. White, in reply, called attention to some recent practical assertions of Turkish jurisdiction south of El Khateef, and represented that it would be difficult to lay down that Khateef was the hard and fast limit beyond which Turkish influence should not extend. He did not therefore make any statement on this point in his communication to the Porte protesting against any aggression on Oman.

No. 381,  
October 1, 1888.

In April 1893 Sir C. Ford stated officially to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs that Her Majesty's Government admitted Turkish sovereignty from Bussorah to El Khateef.

Two Memoranda, prepared in 1896-97, at the time when the present Sheikh Mubarak was making efforts to consolidate the position he had acquired by the murder of his brothers, show considerable divergence between the views of British officials as to the actual status of Koweit at that time.

The first, by Mr. Stavrides, legal adviser to the Embassy at Constantinople, contains the following:—

In Mr. Herbert,  
July 6, 1896.

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"The country of Koweit, although entirely independent, figures in the maps as being a part of the Ottoman Empire; the reigning family possesses large landed property at Bussorah, and especially at Fao, which belongs to them. That is the reason why the Sheikhs accept their investiture sanctioned by the Sultan, who grants them the rank of Kaimakam, with the title of Pasha, of which the Sheikh does not deign to make use."

In Sir P. Currie,  
No. 203,  
March 24, 1897.

A subsequent Memorandum, by Captain Whyte, formerly Her Majesty's Consul at Bussorah, directly traverses this view:—

"Mr. Stavrides describes Koweit as being entirely independent, but it seems to me that the acceptance by the Sheikh of an appointment from the Sultan as Kaimakam precludes the possibility of any foreign Power recognizing under the present conditions his independence."

In view of these conflicting statements, Sir P. Currie, Her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, inquired what was the view of Her Majesty's Government in regard to Turkish authority.

To Sir P. Currie  
No. 307,  
July 17, 1897.

The answer was as follows:—

"Her Majesty's Government have never admitted that Koweit is under the protection of the Turkish Government. But since it is practically under Turkish influence, it is doubtful whether we could deny the latter."

Inclosure in  
India Office  
March 24, 1897.

The Government of India were at the time inclined to recognize Turkish authority in order to exact satisfaction from the Ottoman Government for the alleged connection of Koweit with a piratical attempt on the Indian vessel "Haripasa" during the previous year. This was, however, decided to be inexpedient, and a proposal for the appointment of a Commission containing both Turkish and Persian members was not pressed.

India Office,  
April 7.

By the autumn of 1897, the question of Koweit had assumed more serious political importance. The Sheikh Mubarak, despairing of obtaining from Turkey a recognition of his independence, had preferred a definite request for British protection.

Inclosure in  
India Office,  
October 15, 1897.

The answer of Her Majesty's Government is conveyed in a telegram to the Government of

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India, stating that "they are not disposed to interfere more than necessary for maintenance of general peace of Persian Gulf, or to grant protection to Koweit."

But this declaration was afterwards modified.

The Resident at Bushire was of opinion that Koweit was, in itself, desirable as a harbour; that its importance in relation to a possible railway from Port Saïd was considerable; while the extension of the *pax Britannica* to Koweit, as to Bahrein and the Trucial Chiefs of the southern shore, would further the ends of civilization by checking the growth of piracy and the Slave Trade. The Sheikh, though he had procured his title by a double murder, appeared to British officers in other respects a popular and enlightened Ruler. It was urged (1) that the responsibility of protection would be amply repaid; (2) that the Sheikh's position was precarious. If our help were refused, he would make terms with Turkey or seek protection elsewhere, in either case changing the *status quo* to our disadvantage.

Sir N. O'Connor was consulted, but before any reply was received from him the India Office were informed as follows:—

Inclosure 4 in  
India Office,  
November 13,  
No. 23.

Sir N. O'Connor,  
No. 667, Secret,  
December 22,  
1858.

"If the Government of India is of opinion that the Protectorate can be undertaken without difficulty, or any inconvenient extension of the duties of police already exercised in the Persian Gulf, Lord Salisbury would approve of such a step, and would be prepared to acquiesce in the establishment of such Protectorate, and to support it diplomatically in case the Porte should raise counter-claims."

Sir N. O'Connor's observations were shortly afterwards received. While supporting generally the idea of a British Protectorate he pointed out that caution was necessary. A Minute existed recording a conversation, in 1859, between Sir A. Sandison, Oriental Secretary to Her Majesty's Embassy, Constantinople, and the Grand Vizier, which implied a recognition of Turkish sovereignty as far as El Katif, and his Excellency was of opinion that any formal assertion of British Protectorate would produce very serious diplomatic complications. He thought, however, that "acts of piracy and of regular Traffic in Slaves would justify the interference of the Indian Government and afford ground for coming to a direct and special arrangement with the Sheikh, which need not

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necessarily be made public," and such acts were of frequent occurrence.

At this stage more decisive action was precipitated by the report of a Russian Railway Concession from Tripoli in Syria to Koweit.

It was then proposed to enter into a separate engagement which was to take the form of a promise by the Sheikh not to alienate any portion of his territory to any foreign Power, and was to be considered distinct from the question of an ultimate British Protectorate. The Imperial Government merely availed themselves of the superior facilities for negotiation possessed by the Government of India, while in no way pledging the latter to accept any liability under any circumstances that might arise in the future. The proposition for the establishment of a Protectorate was tacitly dropped, though the Government of India were of opinion at the time that the proposed negotiations would have a Protectorate as their final result.

To India Office,  
January 4 and 18,  
1899.

On the 23rd January, 1899, the Sheikh signed an Agreement\* (to be kept absolutely secret) pledging himself not only to cede no territory but to receive no foreign Representative without British sanction. In return for this he was promised the good offices of Her Majesty's Government, and a payment was made of 15,000 rupees from the Bushire Treasury. The Government of India were also authorized to instruct British naval officers to prevent by force any attempt on the part of the Turks to attack Koweit.

India Office,  
September 4, 1899.

The conclusion of the Agreement, however, involved a serious question regarding the property of the Sheikh in Turkish territory. Aliens are by Turkish law precluded from holding landed property, and it was feared that, if the Sheikh were suspected of having agreed to a British Protectorate, the Turkish authorities would attempt to dispossess Mubarak of his property near Fao. The hope was, therefore, held out that the British Government would "do what they could" to protect him and his brothers in the matter.

Inclosure in  
India Office,  
February 14.

Inclosure in  
Sir N. O'Connor's  
No. 259,  
May 24, 1899.

An appointment made at this time seemed likely to disturb the peaceful outlook. Hamdi Pasha, the new Vali of Bussorah, was intimately acquainted with the family history of the Sheikhs of Koweit, and opposed to the present Ruler.

\* See Annex.

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During Hamdi's first tenure of office Mubarak had procured the murder of his two brothers and usurped the Sheikhdum. Hamdi supported the claims of two nephews, urging upon the Porte the necessity for effective occupation of Koweit and the danger of recognizing a determined usurper who would aim at independence. For the moment, Mubarak's position was precarious, but with much energy and decision he succeeded in buying every official of any importance and, finally, secured his investiture.

Two years later the reappointment of Hamdi Pasha seemed to forebode the revival of a counter-claim on behalf of the nephews, and, with it, in all probability, a reassertion of the dormant rights of Turkey.

The outward and visible sign of Turkish supremacy in Koweit was the acceptance by the Sheikh of the post of Kaimakam, but though this is frequently mentioned in despatches, it seems, if Mr. Stavrides' view is correct, to be little more than a formal dignity incidental to the investiture, and accepted in respect of the property of the Sheikhs in Turkish territory.

Mr. Stavrides in  
Mr. Herbert,  
July 6, 1896.

A local Quarantine Board on several occasions attempted to impose illegal and vexatious restrictions on British vessels in the Gulf, but its protests were disregarded when clearly contrary to the Venice Convention, and Colonel Meade understood that "the Quarantine arrangements under the Sanitary Board at Constantinople in no way implied that the Turks have any sort of jurisdiction or rights at Koweit."

Difficulties with Turkey.

India Office,  
June 21, 1899.

In September it was reported that a Turkish Harbour-master had been appointed. This was considered a more serious matter, and for the first time since the conclusion of the Agreement it was proposed to intimate to the Porte the interest taken by the British Government in the Sheikh's affairs.

After consultation with the India Office, Sir N. O'Connor was informed by telegraph that this "was not a matter we could recognize as depending on the Porte. Turkish Government should be warned that we have friendly relations with the Sheikh, and that a disagreeable question would be raised if it was attempted to establish Turkish customs without previous agreement with Her Majesty's Government."

To Sir N. O'Connor,  
No. 87,  
Telegraphic,  
September 8, 1899.

A gun-boat was ordered to Koweit, but, at the suggestion of Sir N. O'Connor, it was afterwards directed merely to call at Koweit and to come

Sir N. O'Connor,  
No. 41,  
Telegraphic,  
September 12.

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away. It was easy, he thought, to watch Turkish action and to counteract it without any hostile demonstration. The Government was inclined to be friendly, and to disclaim responsibility for the appointment, which had been made by the Naval Commandant at Bussorah, and not by the central authority.

Admiral Douglas had reported in February that in case of attack the navy alone could undertake the defence of Koweit, and no further measures were taken.

Mr. Wratislaw, in Sir N. O'Connor's No. 85, March 13, 1900.

Hamdi Pasha was soon afterwards again dismissed. The cause of his fall is neither apparent nor important, but the effect was to replace a prominent official with a definite anti-English policy by a rival who, in order to maintain his position, was anxious for the moment to avoid controversial matters, and to limit the interference of his Government in the Sheikh's affairs.

Mr. Shipley, No. 20, July 7 (received August 13), 1900.

But difficulties were already arising in a fresh direction.

German railway scheme.

It had become apparent to the promoters of the German railway from Konia to Bagdad that an outlet upon the sea was vitally necessary to their scheme. They proposed, therefore, to acquire Kathama Bay at the western end of Koweit Harbour, and Sir N. O'Connor reported that the Germans would in all probability negotiate directly with the Sultan without regard to the Sheikh of Koweit, who would not be asked to grant a concession of land. Lieutenant-Colonel Meade feared that the Turks and Germans combined would take some action on the strength of which Turkish authority over Koweit might afterwards be claimed to exist.

Sir N. O'Connor, No. 2, Telegraphic, January 7, 1900.

Admiralty, February 14, 1900.

The impression prevailed that it was intended to take advantage of the entanglement of this country in South Africa to push the matter to a conclusion in conjunction with Turkey. In the opinion of Captain Denison, of the "Melpomene," then in the Gulf, "the presence of the German Consul-General for Constantinople pointed to greater things than a simple railway terminus."

Colonel Meade's views were unchanged: "our own preponderating influence at the place must be maintained to the exclusion of any other." The presence of Turkish, Russian, or German officials was equally injurious to our interests.

No. 24, January 22.

Sir N. O'Connor pointed out that the enterprise was private and international rather than poli-

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tical. A friendly warning, he thought, to the promoters of the scheme would obviate any official notification of our relations with the Sheikh, a course of action likely to induce an international scramble in which this country would at the moment be heavily handicapped.

The view of Her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople received confirmation some months later from Berlin.

Count Bülow informed Sir F. Lascelles that the German Consul-General had been granted leave to accompany the Mission, not in his official capacity, but for his "local knowledge."

Sir F. Lascelles,  
No. 156, June 15.

In the month of April some more definite steps were taken towards an understanding with Germany. Sir N. O'Connor, while pointing out in January that immediate action was inexpedient in view of the situation in South Africa, did not fail in April to make clear to the German Ambassador at Constantinople the full sense of our agreement with the Sheikh for non-cession of territory. Her Majesty's Government, he said, had an Agreement with the Sheikh of Koweit which, although not opposed to the *status quo* yet prevented the Sheikh from making any concession of territory to another Power without the consent of Her Majesty's Government.

Sir N. O'Connor,  
No. 130,  
April 10, 1900

Baron von Marschall said that he supposed this would not prevent the construction of a Railway, and that he was quite alive to the disadvantages of provoking any feeling in England which would have the effect of preventing British capital from taking part in the construction of the line.

"I was anxious," Sir N. O'Connor proceeds, "that no doubt should remain in his mind as to the position in which the Sheikh of Koweit stood towards Her Majesty's Government, and to make it quite clear that the Sheikh was not at liberty to cede or otherwise alienate to the Railway Company either the harbour of Kathama or any other part of his territory without the consent of Her Majesty's Government. . . . . In the course of conversation he said that Koweit was a part of the Turkish Empire, to which I promptly replied that we did not want to disturb the *status quo*, but that the Sheikh was not a free agent. . . . ."

At the same time his Excellency informed Tewfik Pasha that—

"Her Majesty's Government did not desire to interfere with the *status quo*, or with the Sultan's authority in

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those parts, but that, in view of their great interests in the Persian Gulf, they could not view with indifference any action which would alter the existing condition of affairs or give another Power special rights or privileges over territory belonging to the Sheikh, with whom Her Majesty's Government had certain Agreements."

India Office,  
April 21.

Meanwhile, however, it was reported that the German Railway Company had taken the matter into their own hands, and were already making arrangements for the construction of a pier.

May 10, 1900.

Sir N. O'Connor suggested the appointment of a British Secret Agent. The India Office, when consulted, replied that "until the question of policy was determined, the presence of a Secret Agent would be a mere waste of money."

Admiralty,  
May 19, 1900.

At this juncture the Admiralty forwarded a report stating that two German steamers were expected to go to Koweit, and inquired what would be the policy of Her Majesty's Government in the event of a collision between Germans and Arabs.

To India Office,  
May 31, 1900.

The reply was that Lord Salisbury "scarcely thought that any definite instructions were necessary until some confirmation was received of the reported intention of German ships to visit Koweit or until there was some indication of the methods of action they intended to pursue. If the construction of a pier were attempted by private persons without a mandate from some recognized authority, the Sheikh would be within his rights in opposing such an attempt and, in this event, if any action was to be taken by Her Majesty's ships it should be in support of the Sheikh's authority."

June 14, 1900.

The India Office concurred while pointing out that the eventuality contemplated (in which alone action was to be taken) would in all probability never occur.

After the summer of 1900 various incidents began to point to a renewal of Turkish interest in Koweit.

Sir N. O'Connor,  
No. 275.  
August 7.

In August the first of several attempts was made to induce the Sheikh to visit Bussorah, and Mubarak found some difficulty in avoiding direct communication with the Turkish authorities.

In October the order of the Svetiaz was conferred upon him as "Kaïmakam" of Koweit, and the "Ikdam" of the 10th November announced that at Mubarak's request a mosque erected by him was to be called after the name of the

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Sultan, the Sheikh again being given the full title of Mubarak-es-Sabah Pasha, Kaïmakam of Koweit.

But an opportunity for more effective intervention, of which the Turkish Government were now slow to avail themselves, was afforded by the growing dissension between Mubarak and the neighbouring Ruler of Nejd. The affair, which on its merits was little more than an intertribal squabble, led to political results of such importance that it is necessary to describe in some detail the course of the struggle.

The quarrel arose from a raid by Sheikh Abdur Rahman-bin-Faisal upon Nejd territory with the connivance and assistance of Mubarak, the movement being supported on the north by Sadun Pasha, a Turkish subject, Chief of the Montefik Bedouins.

At the first news of disturbances it was at once proposed to send Colonel Kemball to Koweit "to counsel Mubarak to avoid giving the Turks an excuse for interference," and as the Agreement of 1899 had promised the good offices of Her Majesty's Government the Resident was also to be instructed "to endeavour to warn the the Amir that no attack on Koweit would be permitted."

Preliminary measures were to be taken to protect the Sheikh, but no force was to be landed without reference to the home authorities.

Shortly afterwards, however, reports were received that the crisis was over, and at Colonel Kemball's own request his visit was postponed. It appeared that Mubarak was able to hold his own, and the presence of a ship of war would give him undue encouragement.

A despatch from the Consul at Bussorah summed up the situation. A conflict had been averted, though at the cost of a considerable increase of Turkish prestige. The Vali, Mohsin Pasha, having prevailed upon both sides to keep the peace, had induced Mubarak to accompany him to Bussorah, there to make solemn professions of allegiance to the Sultan, and to promise to cease "coquetting with foreign Powers." The result seemed to an independent observer likely to "prove a considerable blow to any pretensions of Mubarak to being an independent Sheikh."

A declaration of some importance was made about this time with regard to the status of

Dispute between Koweit and Nejd.

Mr. de Bunsen,  
No. 63,  
Telegraphic,  
October 3.

November 14.

India Office,  
December 10.

Mr. Wratislav,  
No. 44,  
November 22.

Mr. Lyle, in  
Mr. Mackenzie's  
letter, Decem-  
ber 28, 1900.

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Koweit. An Arab native of Koweit, concerned in a case of smuggling arms, had been claimed as a Turkish subject. The Resident was informed by the Foreign Office, in answer to his inquiry whether he should contest the claim, that—

“although Her Majesty's Government had promised their good offices to the Sheikh of Koweit, the district has never been formally placed under British protection. Her Majesty's Government cannot, therefore, claim natives of Koweit as British-protected persons.”

Late in December Mubarak was reported to be making fresh preparations for an attack on Nejd, and the second phase of the quarrel begins.

In February Sir N. O'Connor expressed his opinion on the general situation.

An outbreak of hostilities, his Excellency observed, would scarcely fail to bring the Turks again into the field.

“Her Majesty's Government may thus be placed in a difficult position, and be forced either to raise an unpleasant question with the Ottoman Government, or to assert effective control over Koweit, or else sacrifice the privileged position acquired by the Convention of January 1899. It is hardly to be expected that the Sheikh of Koweit will respect an Agreement from which he derives no security and little material advantage.”

His Excellency was strongly averse to doing anything which would “encourage the Sultan's anxiety in regard to British policy in the Persian Gulf,” and he suggested that the Amir of Nejd should be approached through his Bussorah Agent, while the Porte might be informed that Colonel Kemball would use every effort to restrain the Sheikh.

On the 28th February the Viceroy telegraphed that the Resident's advice had been already tendered to Mubarak (though, as afterwards appeared, not personally but through the news-agent) and refused. The proposed visit, therefore, did not seem likely to have any result, while “a second failure might even be embarrassing.”

As in November hostilities were allowed to begin without any formal remonstrance on the part of the British authorities.

On the 29th March the complete defeat of the Koweit forces was reported, and it was rumoured that the Sheikh had been killed in

No. 59,  
February 10.

Sir N. O'Connor,  
No. 11,  
Telegraphic.

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action. If the report was true it was obvious that Mubarak's death would seriously endanger the Agreement of 1899, and a ship of war was placed under orders. Colonel Kemball visited Koweit (April 18). He found the Sheikh alive, but was satisfied that he had been severely defeated. Nothing was said to the Amir.

Mohsin Pasha had remained comparatively inactive since his diplomatic success of November, but the defeat of Mubarak now brought on Turkish interference in a more acute form. A Turkish Field-Marshal left Bagdad for Bussorah on the 19th April, followed on the next day by Turkish troops. It was generally believed that the Ottoman Government intended to make use of force with a view to the deposition of Mubarak.

A British gun-boat was ordered to Koweit, and Sir N. O'Connor was definitely authorized, in the event of hostilities being resumed, to warn the Porte "to refrain from any action against the Sheikh in view of our arrangement with him."

But the astute policy of Mohsin Pasha again prevented matters from coming to a head. The Turkish Field-Marshal stopped short of Koweit, and the Vali himself, with a small escort, paid a friendly visit to the Sheikh. He was unable to enforce proposals for the establishment of a Turkish garrison, but Mubarak accompanied him to Fao, renewed his protestations to the Sultan, and returned to Koweit after a second act of apparently spontaneous loyalty.\*

Mr. Wratishaw,  
No. 30, June 1.

On the 28th May the Amir of Nejd appealed for British protection, but, after consultation with the Viceroy, the India Office expressed the opinion, in which the Foreign Office concurred, that it was not advisable to—

"incur the difficulties and embarrassments which must ensue from the declaration of a Protectorate over either the territories of the Chiefs of Koweit and Nejd." India Office,  
June 14.

The Viceroy, however, pointed out that some answer must be given to the Chiefs, and Colonel Kemball again visited Koweit with general instructions to find some *modus vivendi* between the

\* Mohsin Pasha has since been dismissed (Sir N. O'Connor No. 358, October 2). Nouri Pasha replaces him as Vali and Military Commander at Busrah.

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Telegram  
communicated by  
India Office,  
August 14.

Sheikh and the Amir, while maintaining our hold upon the Sheikh.

Early in August he saw Mubarak, who suggested the Sheikh of Mohammerah as intermediary, and Mr. Wratislaw was subsequently authorized to assist communication between the latter and the agent of the Amir.

But renewed rumours of Turkish concentration again raised the larger diplomatic question.

In July Sir F. Lascelles had had a conversation with Dr. Rosen, of the German Foreign Office, upon the prospects of the Anatolian Railway and the general situation.

An expression used by his Excellency describing the Sheikh as "technically a subject of the Sultan but enjoying a considerable amount of independence" which on a previous occasion had passed without comment (see Sir F. Lascelles' No. 156 of the 15th June, 1900), now drew from the German Representative an assertion that the Sheikh was "merely a subject of the Sultan."

To Sir F. Lascelles,  
No. 128,  
Telegraphic,  
August 10.

It was therefore pointed out to Sir F. Lascelles that the German Government might take advantage of his language to argue that the Sultan could dispose of the territory of the Sheikh.

The view that the Sheikh was simply a subject of the Sultan was one that Her Majesty's Government were totally unable to accept, and his Excellency was instructed to use language on the lines of Sir N. O'Connor's despatch No. 130 of the 10th April, 1900 (see p. 8).

To Sir N. O'Connor,  
No. 103,  
Telegraphic,  
August 10.

Sir N. O'Connor was at the same time authorized to state, if occasion arose, that if Koweit were threatened, Her Majesty's Government would use force to prevent attack.

Important communications now took place at London and Constantinople.

Telegrams  
Nos. 92, 93,  
August 21.

Considerable pressure was being exercised on the Ottoman Government by the German and Russian Embassies, and though a proposal of the Vali of Bussorah to use force against the Sheikh had been rejected by the Council of Ministers, Tewfik Pasha informed Sir N. O'Connor that Koweit was regarded as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.

A warning given by the Commander of the "Perseus" to the Captain of a Turkish corvette off Koweit that no troops would be permitted to

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land was largely magnified in transmission, and occasioned further protests.

Tewfik Pasha inquired on the 29th August whether Her Majesty's Government intended to establish a Protectorate, and on the same day the German Embassy in London received a pressing instruction to state that a British Protectorate would be contrary to the Treaty of Berlin, and that in view of her interest in Koweit as the future terminus of the Anatolian Railway, Germany would be compelled to regard such a proceeding as an unfriendly act. Telegram No. 102.  
To Sir F. Lascelles,  
No. 306.

The reply in each case was that His Majesty's Government had no such intention, Sir N. O'Connor adding the reservation "provided that Turkey did not force our hands by interfering with the Sheikh."

On the 3rd September Count Metternich called to say "that if by threats of force His Majesty's Government prevented the Sultan from landing troops at Koweit, they were refusing to recognize the Sultan's authority with which they had stated (in a Memorandum communicated by the King to the German Emperor, see p. 15) that they did not desire to interfere in those parts, and that the German Government considered that Koweit formed unquestionably part of the territories belonging to the Sultan."

Sir T. Sanderson promised to report his observations to Lord Lansdowne, and said he could at once state that His Majesty's Government had no desire to disturb the *status quo*.

Next day telegrams were communicated by the Turkish Ambassador protesting against the reported intention to declare a British Protectorate and describing the Convention of 1899 as without validity, but the Sultan had meanwhile been advised by the German Government to be satisfied with the assurances given to Count Metternich, and to ask for their repetition.

On the 6th September Sir N. O'Connor was sent for by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The assurances given by his Excellency on this occasion were considered by the Ottoman Government "of a nature to terminate the present controversy," and Anthopoulos Pasha was instructed to ask for their confirmation.

The following note was accordingly addressed to him:—

'Memorandum respecting Koweit' [150r] (15/27)

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"The Marquess of Lansdowne to Anthopoulos Pasha,

"Foreign Office,  
September 11, 1901.

"Your Excellency,

"I HAVE taken note with satisfaction of the telegram from the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, communicated by you on the 9th instant, in which his Excellency states that the Turkish Government will not send troops to Koweit, and will maintain the *status quo* there, on condition that His Majesty's Government will abstain from occupying that place or establishing a British Protectorate there.

"I have pleasure in confirming the assurance which has been given to his Excellency by His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople that, provided the Turkish Government abstain from sending troops to Koweit and respect the *status quo* there, His Majesty's Government will not occupy that place or establish a British Protectorate over it.

"I am, &c.  
(Signed) "LANSDOWNE."

In a Secret telegram dated the 7th September, Lord Lansdowne, while pointing out that "the situation requires very careful handling as our arrangement with the Sheikh is not very precise, and it was entered into without the knowledge or concurrence of the Porte," instructed Sir N. O'Connor that "we cannot recede from our position, and if Porte should insist on raising question of their rights we may have to convert into something much more precise the present indefinite understanding with the Sheikh."

In view, however, of the assurances recorded in the note quoted above, his Excellency has not found occasion to communicate these instructions, and the controversy with the Porte rests for the moment on the basis of a mutual maintenance of the *status quo*. The Turkish Ambassador has expressed himself well satisfied with the present state of affairs (October 1), and on the same day Sir N. O'Connor was assured by the Minister for Foreign Affairs "most positively that the Imperial Government had no intention whatsoever of occupying or attacking Koweit." There is an understanding that the two Governments are to co-operate in maintaining the peace, Turkey endeavouring to restrain the Amir, while Her Majesty's Government will do what they can to discourage the Sheikh from aggressive action. Mubarak has been told that the good offices of



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Her Majesty's Government will be extended to him only if he follows their advice.

On the 9th September a further communication was made to Count Metternich.

A Memorandum upon various subjects, including Koweit, drawn up by Lord Lansdowne for the King's personal use, and handed by His Majesty to the German Emperor at their recent meeting, had elicited a formal reply from the German Government which Count Metternich had left at the Foreign Office on the 3rd.

To Sir F. Lascelles,  
Nos. 304 and 312,  
September 11 and  
12.

It was now explained to him that the Memorandum, which had been hastily prepared, was a purely informal and unofficial document. The statement referred to by Count Metternich on the 3rd was a repetition of Sir N. O'Connor's language in 1900 which might be more correctly described as having stated that His Majesty's Government have no desire to interfere with the Sultan's authority *as it exists* in those parts.

There could be no doubt that this authority was of a very limited description. The Sheikh belonged to a class of native Chiefs enjoying a large measure of practical independence with whom His Majesty's Government found it necessary to have direct relations for the sake of the maintenance of tranquillity and the protection of British trade.

Therefore, although ready to maintain the *status quo*, His Majesty's Government had been unable to acquiesce in attempts recently made by Turkey to impose on the Sheikh conditions from which he had hitherto been free. They had considered it a matter for direct and friendly discussion with the Porte, who now regarded the incident as closed, and Count Metternich was informed of the assurances exchanged.

Lord Lansdowne on his return to London said to Count Metternich that it was necessary to bear in mind that where minor Eastern States were concerned it was not unusual to find that they owed a divided allegiance to more than one Power.

To Sir F. Lascelles,  
No. 325,  
September 28

The German Memorandum states that Koweit has an importance for Germany merely as the proposed terminus of the Bagdad Railway and gives an undertaking that the Manager of the Railway Company will be instructed to come to an understanding with the British Government when the time for purchasing land for a railway terminus and a landing-place at Koweit shall

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To Sir F. Lascelles,  
No. 337,  
October 16.

have come. Count Metternich has since confirmed this assurance in conversation with Lord Lansdowne, adding that the railway might be made five years or fifty years hence, or not at all, but that when it was made it was important for Germany to find a peaceful condition of things in that part of the Gulf.

Defences of Koweit.

With regard to the military defences of Koweit the following reports have been received since the statement of Admiral Douglas in February 1899 that the navy alone could afford effective protection :—

*Commander-in-chief, East Indies, to Admiralty.—(Communicated by Admiralty, August 31.)*

August 31, 1901.

Senior Naval Officer Persian Gulf reports Sheikh Koweit cannot, and will not, openly oppose disembarking men of Turkish army. Town not walled. For stopping advance of the troops by land long-range shell fire from ship little use by day, and none by night. Attack by land unlikely in hot weather.

*Commander-in-chief, East Indies, to Government of India.—(Communicated by India Office, October 4.)*

(Telegraphic.)

Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf, informs me that, if political considerations prevent present fortifying or employment of troops, and diplomacy fails to render action unnecessary, withdrawal of non-combatant inhabitants to island in the bay advisable, to permit free exercise of shell fire and prevent occupation of town. Wells are situated 3 miles outside town, which is thus rendered equally untenable for either side.

Use of Turkish flag in Koweit.

The declarations repeatedly made by His Majesty's Government of non-interference with existing Turkish authority have involved some controversy with regard to the use by the Sheikh of the Turkish flag to which British officers in the Gulf are strongly averse.

Mubarak has constantly flown the Turkish flag not only on his dhow while in the company of the Vali of Bussorah, but also at his house on the occasion of the British Resident's visit.

When asked the reason of this he replied that

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"it was flown by his father and grandfather on such occasions as a Mahomedan flag and did not indicate that they were under any control or protection of the Turks."

Inclosure 10 in India Office, July 9, 1901.

On the 19th August the India Office forwarded a suggestion of the Resident that the use of the flag should be discontinued on the ground that it was inconsistent to allow the Turkish flag to be flown while Turkish troops were forbidden to land.

The Foreign Office inquired what flag it was proposed that the Sheikh should fly, but it was pointed out that Lord Lansdowne was not prepared to support any action which might seem inconsistent with the assurance given by Sir N. O'Connor that His Majesty's Government would respect the *status quo*.

To India Office, August 24.

See Sir N. O'Connor, No. 130, April 10, 1900.

The Resident has replied recommending the use of the ordinary red Arab flag, and intimating that the events of the past two-and-a-half years have so disturbed the *status quo* that a determination of the status of Koweit cannot be much longer postponed.

Inclosure in India Office, September 12.

The India Office made no comment on the suggestion, but it has been thought advisable to point out that the Sheikh has accepted the post of Kaimakam, that he holds property in Turkish territory, that the Turkish flag has been flown since 1871, and that Lord Lansdowne does not consider that there is anything in the events of the last two-and-a-half years to justify a departure from the *status quo* upon the maintenance of which His Majesty's Government have always laid the greatest stress.

To India Office, September 24.

In July 1900 an attempt was made to establish a weekly call at Koweit of the British India Company's steamers. Mr. Lyle, an agent of Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie and Co., of Bussorah, was well received by the Sheikh, who made, however, the important stipulation that the call of steamers should not bring with it the establishment of quarantine. The Turkish authorities who were paying much attention to Koweit would almost certainly enforce at that place, as at Bussorah, a ten days' quarantine against arrivals from all ports other than Turkish. It was generally agreed that this extension of quarantine would both be ruinous to the trade of Koweit and undesirable as increasing the influence of Turkey in the Gulf. Colonel Kemball further pointed

Proposal to make Koweit a port of call for Mail-steamers.

Lieutenant-Colonel Kemball, in India Office, September 5, 1900.

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out that in the event of Her Majesty's Government making successful representations to the Porte against a quarantine for Koweit the Sheikh would be subjected to a general system of reprisals and his town treated as a foreign port (a similar difficulty having already presented itself in connection with the Sheikh's property in Turkish territory).

The question was solved for the moment by the Sheikh withdrawing his consent to the scheme. The withdrawal was not, however, conveyed in very decided terms, the compulsion of extraneous influence was apparent, and it seemed to Lieutenant-Colonel Kemball that his objections would be removed at a future date.

In June 1901 the Sheikh intimated that he was now favourable to the scheme. It was accordingly arranged that the mail-steamers should call at Koweit on the upward voyage from Bombay to Bussorah. The quarantine officials at first imposed certain restrictions, but their objections were not of as serious a character as had been anticipated, and they were not maintained. Viewed solely from the commercial point of view the enterprise does not seem likely to be lucrative, but it is hoped that when the state of the country is less disturbed there will be a remunerative export of horses from Nejd through Koweit.

(Signed) R. V. HARCOURT.

Foreign Office,  
October 29, 1901.

Annex.

*Agreement with the Sheikh of Koweit, January 23, 1899.*

(Translation of Arabic bond.)

Praise be to God alone (*lit.* in the name of God Almighty).  
("Bissim Allah Ta'alan Shanuho").

The object of writing this lawful and honourable bond is that it is hereby covenanted and agreed between Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm John Meade, I.S.C., Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident, on behalf of the British Government on the one part, and Sheikh Mubarak-bin-Sheikh Snbah, Sheikh of Koweit, on the other part, that the said Sheikh Mubarak-bin-Sheikh

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'Memorandum respecting Koweit' [152v] (20/27)

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Subah, of his own free will and desire, does hereby pledge and bind himself, his heirs and successors not to receive the Agent or Representative of any Power or Government at Koweit, or at any other place within the limits of his territory, without the previous sanction of the British Government; and he further binds himself, his heirs and successors, not to cede, sell, lease, mortgage, or give for occupation, or for any other purpose, any portion of his territory to the Government or subjects of any other Power without the previous consent of Her Majesty's Government for these purposes. This engagement also to extend to any portion of the territory of the said Sheikh Mubarak which may now be in the possession of the subjects of any other Government.

In token of the conclusion of this lawful and honourable bond, Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm John Meade, I.S.C., Her Britannic Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, and Sheikh Mubarak-bin-Sheikh Subah, the former on behalf of the British Government, and the latter on behalf of himself, his heirs and successors, do each, in the presence of witnesses, affix their signatures on this, the 10th day of Ramazan, 1316, corresponding with the 23rd day of January, 1899.

(Signed) M. J. MEADE, *Political Resident  
in the Persian Gulf.*

Witnesses :

(Signed) E. WICKHAM HORE,  
*Captain, I.M.S.*  
J. CALCOTT GASKIN.

(Signed) MUBARAK-AL-SUBAH.  
(L.S.)

Witness :

(Signed) MUHAMMAD RAHIM BIN ABDUL  
NEBI SAFFER.  
(L.S.)

(Translation of Arabic letter.)

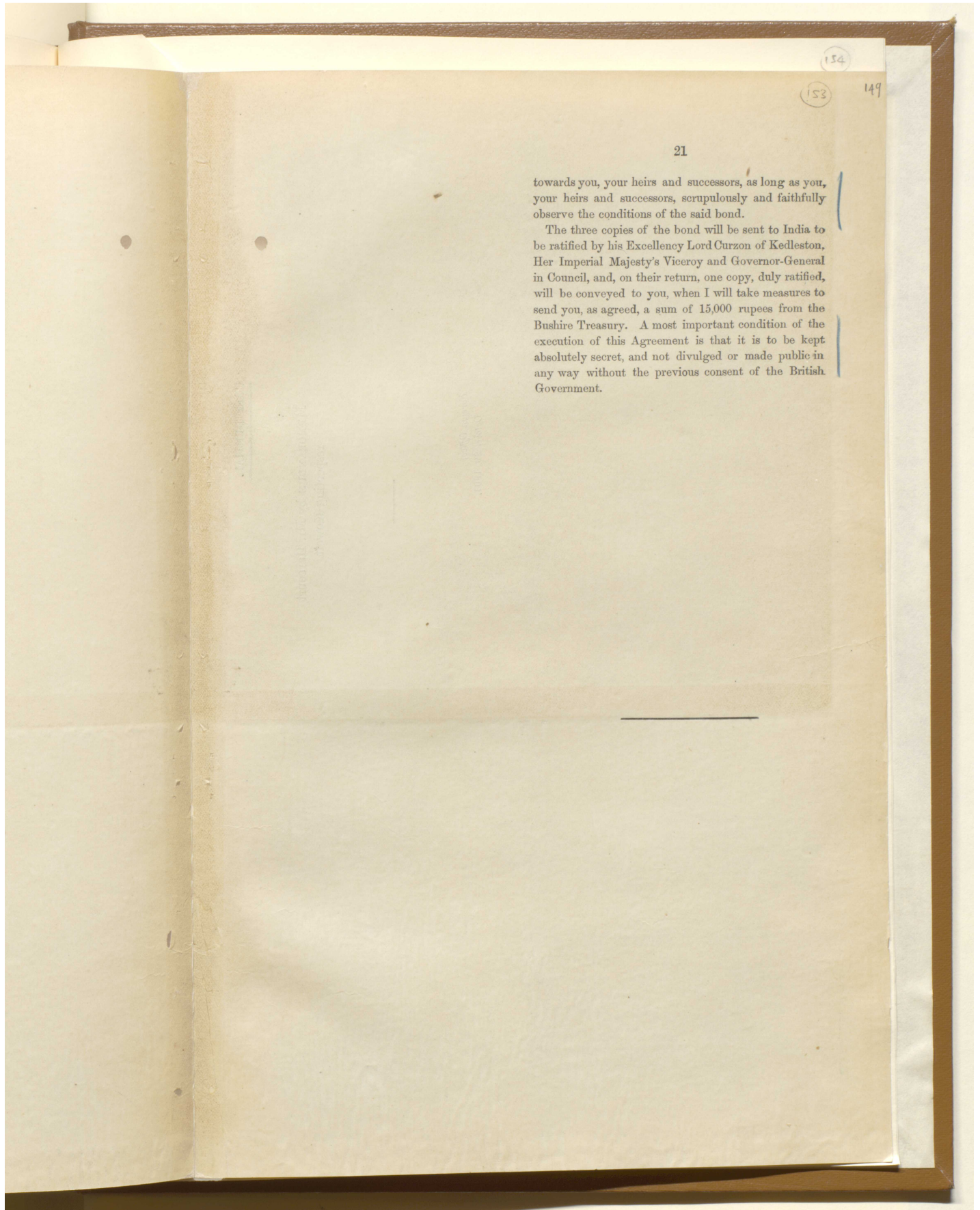
*Lieutenant-Colonel Meade to Sheikh Mubarak-bin-Subah.*

(Secret.)

(After compliments.) *January 23, 1899.*

In view of the signing to-day of the Agreement, so happily concluded between you, Sheikh Mubarak-bin-Subah, on behalf of yourself, your heirs and successors, on the one part, and myself, on behalf of Her Britannic Majesty's Government, I now assure you, as Sheikh of Koweit, of the good offices of the British Government

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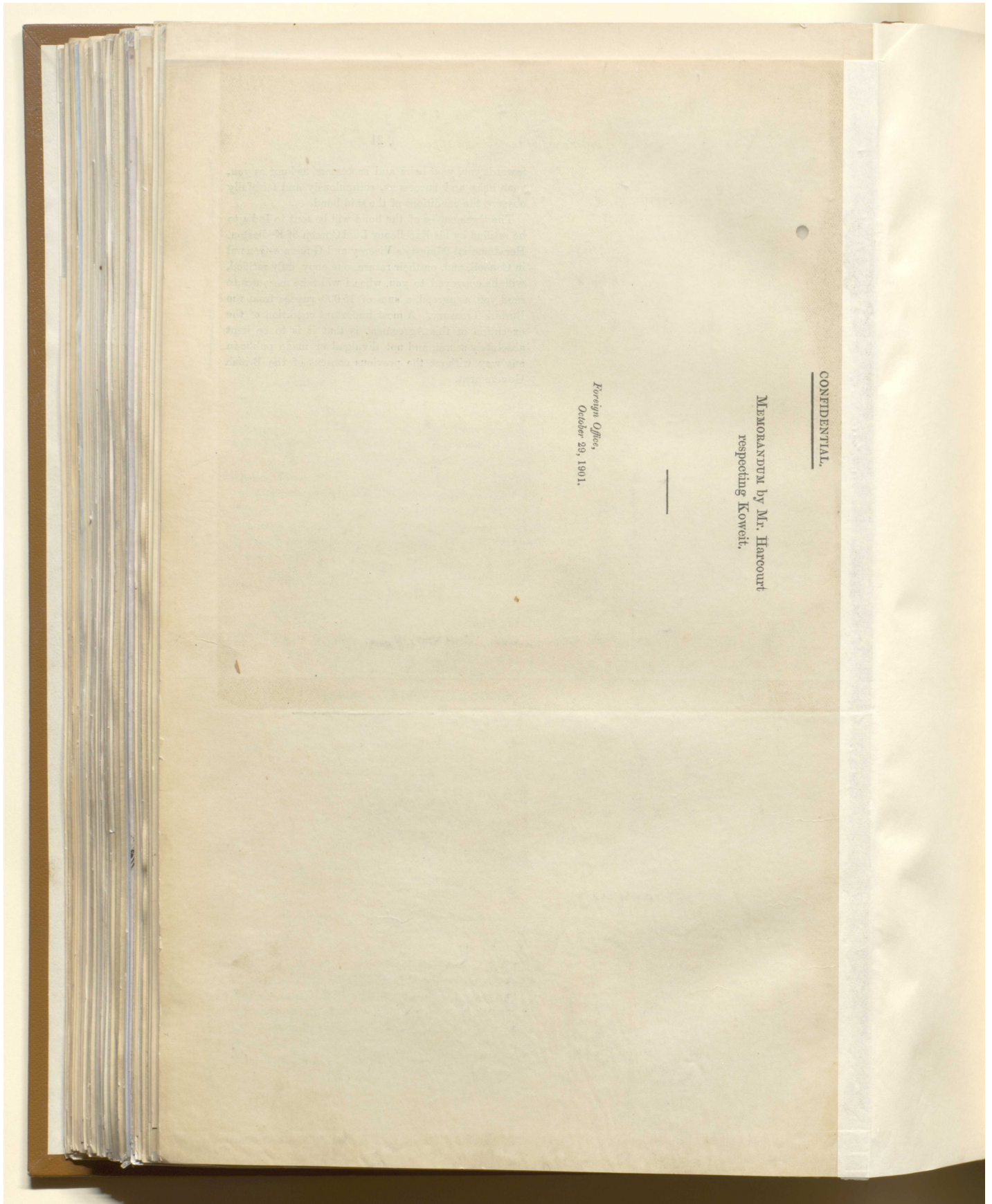


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towards you, your heirs and successors, as long as you, your heirs and successors, scrupulously and faithfully observe the conditions of the said bond.

The three copies of the bond will be sent to India to be ratified by his Excellency Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Her Imperial Majesty's Viceroy and Governor-General in Council, and, on their return, one copy, duly ratified, will be conveyed to you, when I will take measures to send you, as agreed, a sum of 15,000 rupees from the Bushire Treasury. A most important condition of the execution of this Agreement is that it is to be kept absolutely secret, and not divulged or made public in any way without the previous consent of the British Government.

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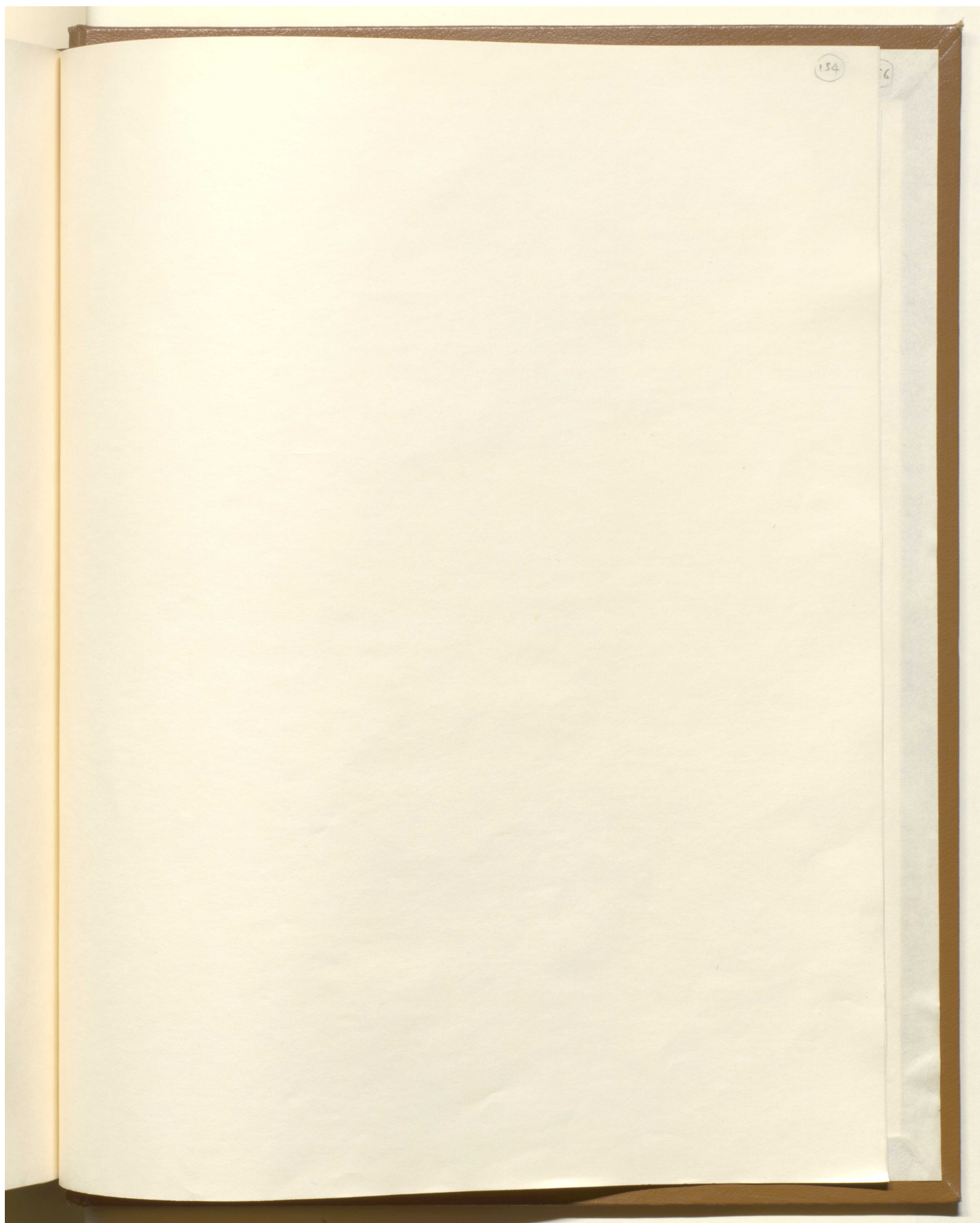


CONFIDENTIAL.

MEMORANDUM by Mr. Harcourt  
respecting Koweit.

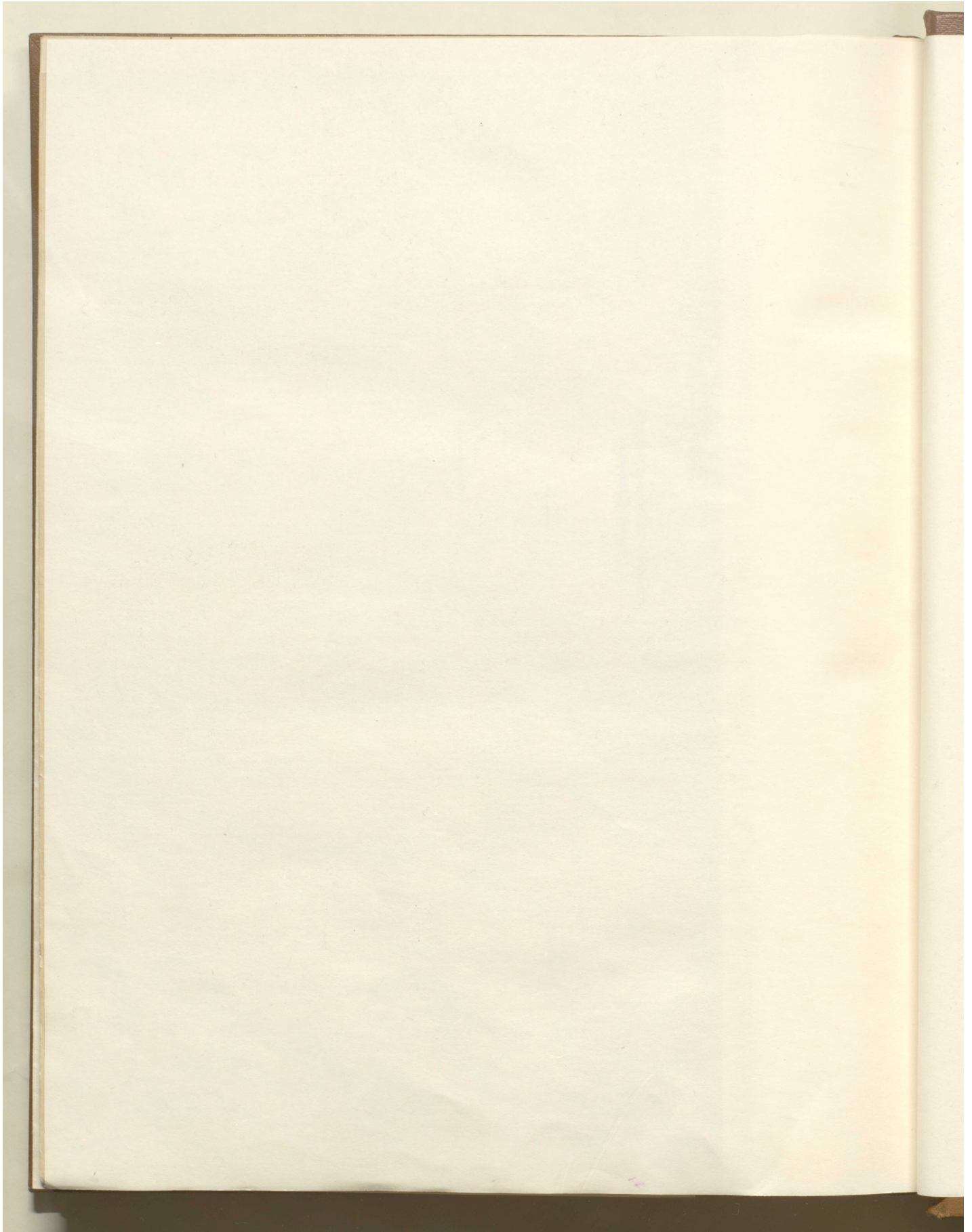
*Foreign Office,  
October 29, 1901.*

'Memorandum respecting Koweit' [154r] (23/27)

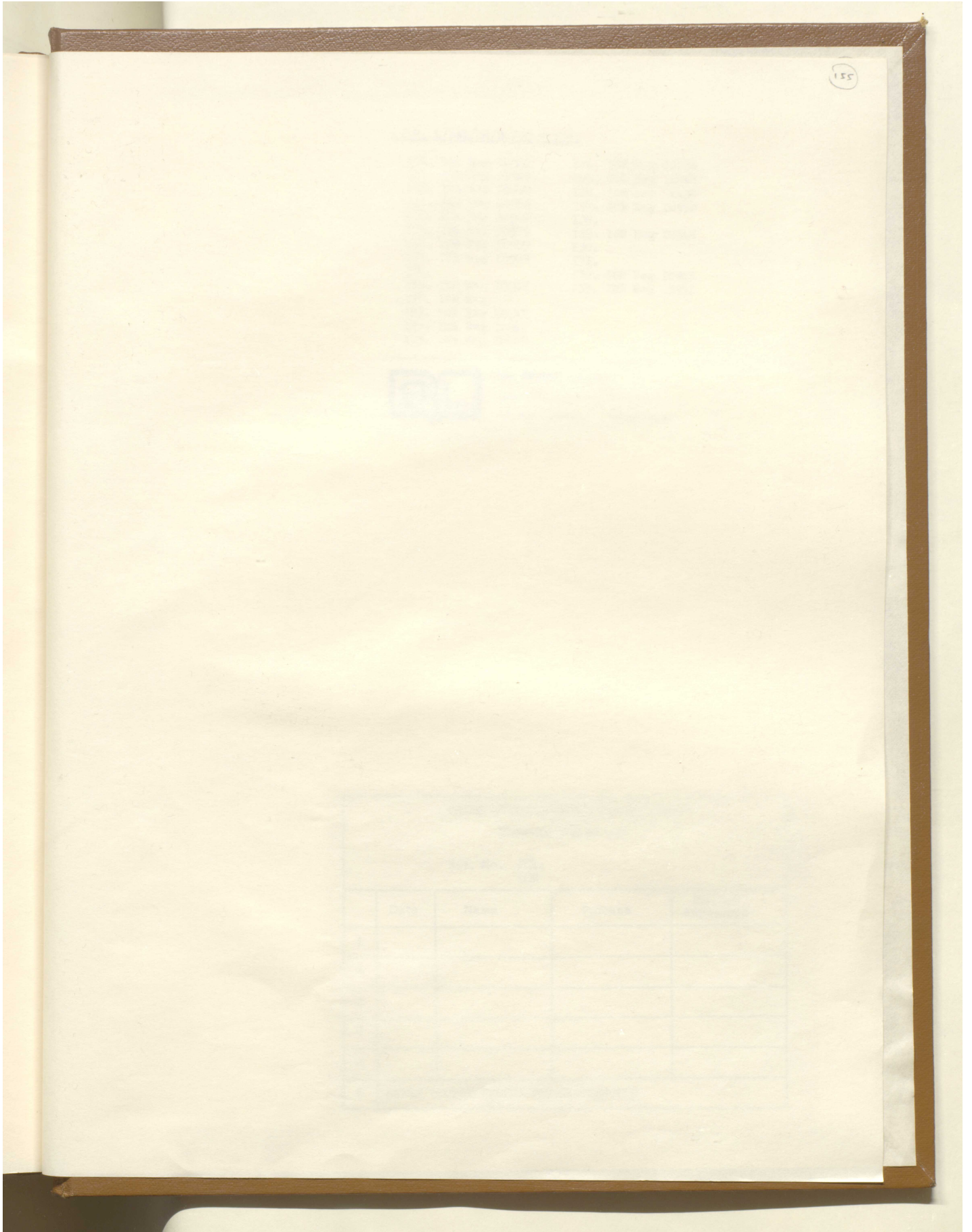




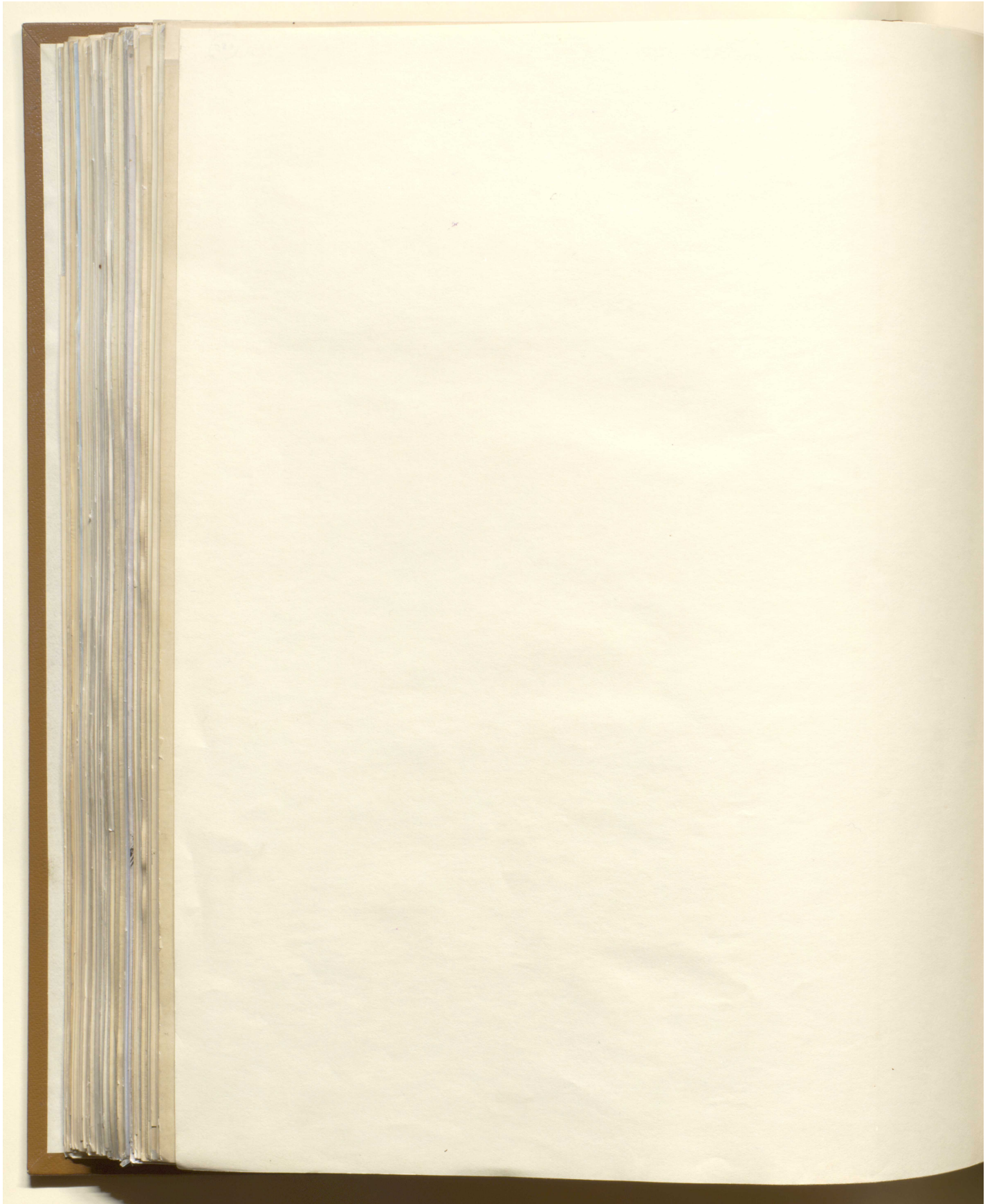
'Memorandum respecting Koweit' [154v] (24/27)



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'Memorandum respecting Koweit' [155v] (26/27)



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