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## Copy of a Letter from HM Chargé d’Affaires to Persia, Henry Willock, in Tehran, to Major-General Sir William Grant Keir

<b>Holding Institution</b>	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
<b>Reference</b>	IOR/L/PS/9/68/255
<b>Date(s)</b>	10 Mar 1820 (CE, Gregorian)
<b>Written in</b>	English in Latin
<b>Extent and Format</b>	1 item (10 folios)
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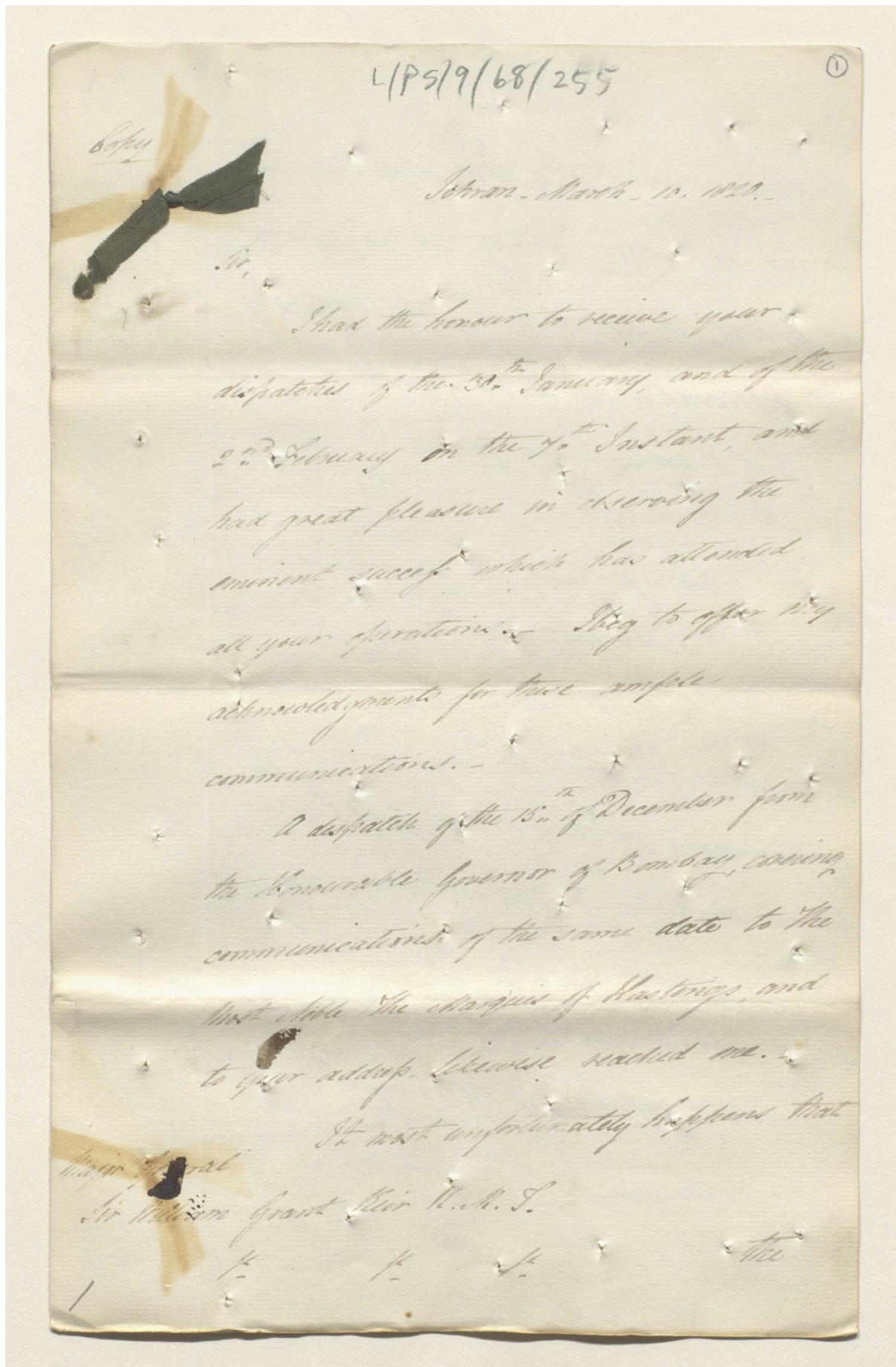


### About this record

Copy of a letter from HM Chargé d’Affaires to Persia [Iran], Henry Willock, in Tehran, to Major-General Sir William Grant Keir, of 10 March 1820. The letter concerns the British aim of establishing a base in the Persian Gulf from which to suppress ‘piracy’ following the British expedition against the al-Qawasim and their allies, with a particular interest in the island of Kishma [Qeshm], over which the Persian Government disputes sovereignty with the Imaum [Imam] of Muscat. Willock details his communications with the Persian Ministers on the subject, in absence of the Shah, who is at Kashan. He also relates the Persian concerns regarding British expansion into the Gulf, and offers proposals for inducing the Persians to acquiesce to a British base on Kishma.

The letter was enclosed in Willock’s letter to the Secret Committee of the East India Company of 17 March 1820 (see IOR/L/PS/9/68/254), which was received on 13 July 1820.

Copy of a Letter from HM Chargé d'Affaires to Persia, Henry Willock, in Tehran,  
to Major-General Sir William Grant Keir [1r] (1/20)



Copy of a Letter from HM Chargé d'Affaires to Persia, Henry Willock, in Tehran,  
to Major-General Sir William Grant Keir [1v] (2/20)

The Shah is absent on a party of pleasure to  
Bashan, so that it is only in my power  
at present to inform you of the nature of  
my representations to the Persian Ministers.  
The Shah is not expected to return before  
the 16<sup>th</sup>.

I made a full and candid exposition  
of the views and objects of the British Govern-  
-ment, and stated that for the permanent  
suppression of piracy the possession of a  
commanding position in the Gulf was  
deemed necessary; - that we already had the  
choice of two places, either Basid, Ormus  
which perhaps might not be considered  
sufficiently central, or the Island of  
Mashoon.

(2)

Musbina which Shah no doubt would be  
 ceded by the Imam of Muscat, if its  
 occupation proved convenient; but this  
 point would be determined by your  
 personal observation, and I considered it  
 probable that the Persian Government might  
 be asked to cede one of the Islands suitably  
 situated for the objects we meditated, if the  
 position of Musbina was found acceptable;  
 that such a grant would not be demanded  
 without the proffer of reciprocal advantages;  
 the British Government, as a preliminary  
 testimony of their desire to strengthen the  
 power of Persia had decided you to transfer  
 to the authorities of the Shah, such portions  
 of the Persian Coast as you might have  
 occasion to reduce, or such as might

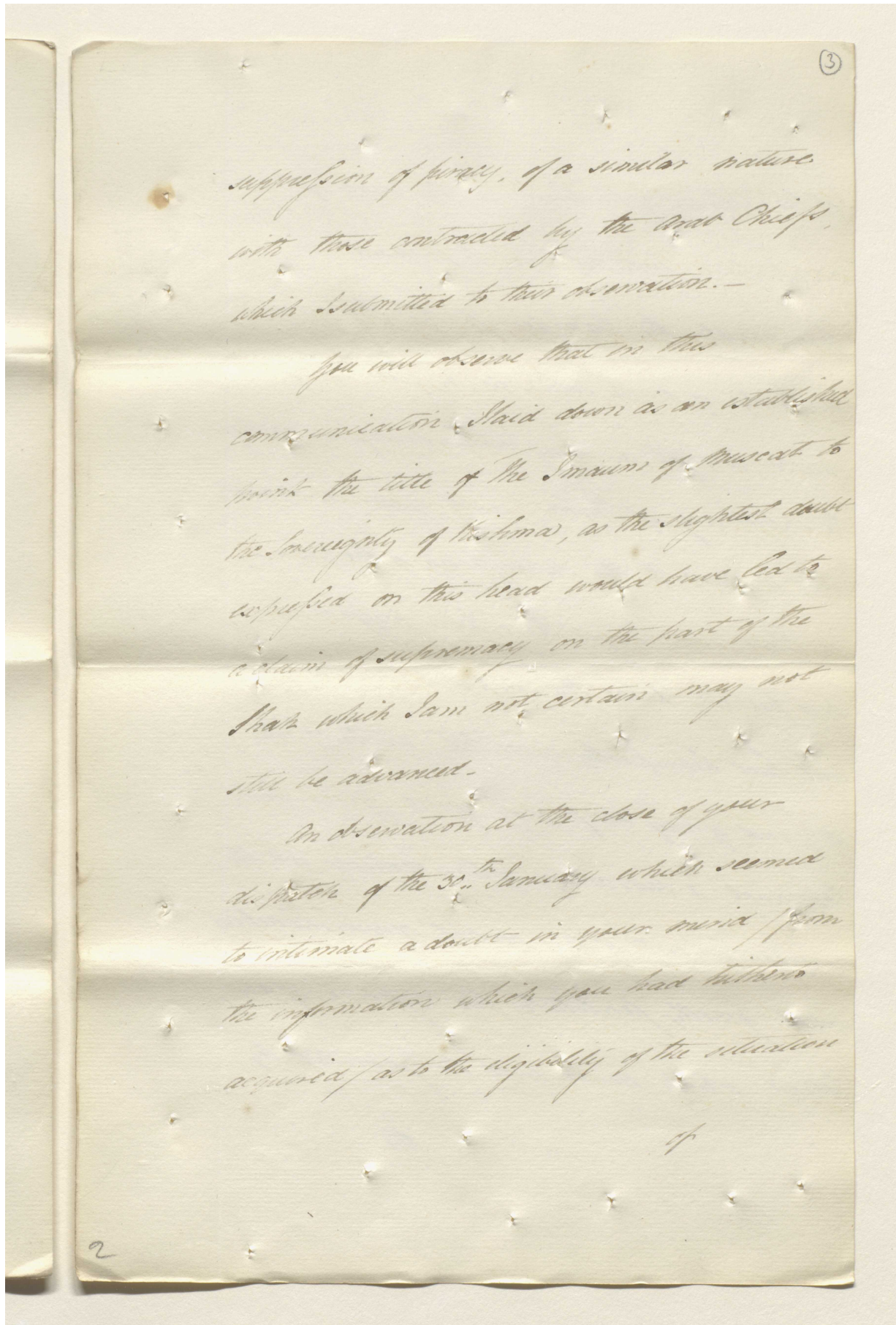
Voluntarily

voluntarily consent to acknowledge the  
supremacy of Persia, and that the Islands which  
were now independent might by acts of  
meditation or compulsion be induced to submit  
to the Persian authority. - The British Government  
had learnt the desire of the Sheikhs to subdue  
the Islands of Bahrein, and it seemed probable  
that the Woker Sheikhs might be induced  
by the mediation of the British Government  
to pay a tribute to Persia. -

Submitted all the arguments suggested  
by the Honourable Mr. D'Arville to convince  
them of the integrity of the intentions of the  
British Government, and stated the necessity  
of His Majesty's establishing regulations  
at the Persian Ports for the future.

Suppression

2

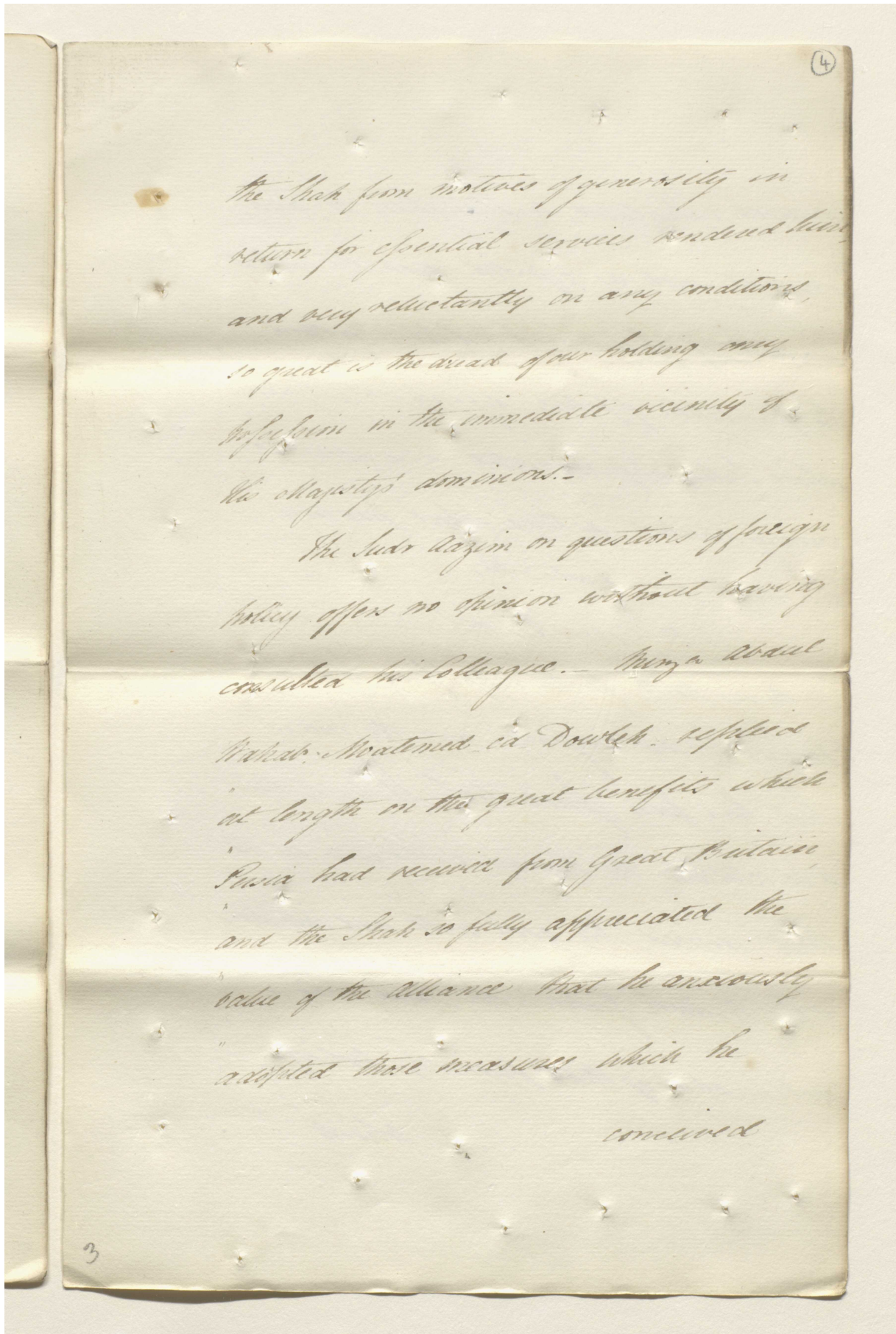


of the Island of Bushma as the seat of  
occupation, induced me to propose as  
provisional the transfer to the Persian  
authority of such Islands as you may  
reduce, or such as may voluntarily acknowledge  
the supremacy of Persia, and your indication  
with a view to the submission of Bahrein.

These advantages have been proffered,  
and probably before this despatch reaches you  
will have been partly executed, without the  
demand of any reciprocal good office; but  
I conceived a reservation of this nature at the  
commencement of my verbal communications  
would greatly facilitate the capture of an  
Island, which never will be granted by

the

3



(4)  
the Shah from motives of generosity in  
return for essential services rendered him,  
and very reluctantly on any conditions,  
so great is the dread of our holding any  
possession in the immediate vicinity of  
the Shah's dominions.

The Sadr Azim on questions of foreign  
policy offers no opinion without having  
consulted his colleagues. My usual

Wahab. Mentioned in Dowle's. replied  
at length on the great benefits which  
Persia had received from Great Britain,  
and the Shah so fully appreciated the  
value of the alliance that he anxiously  
adopted those measures which he  
conceived



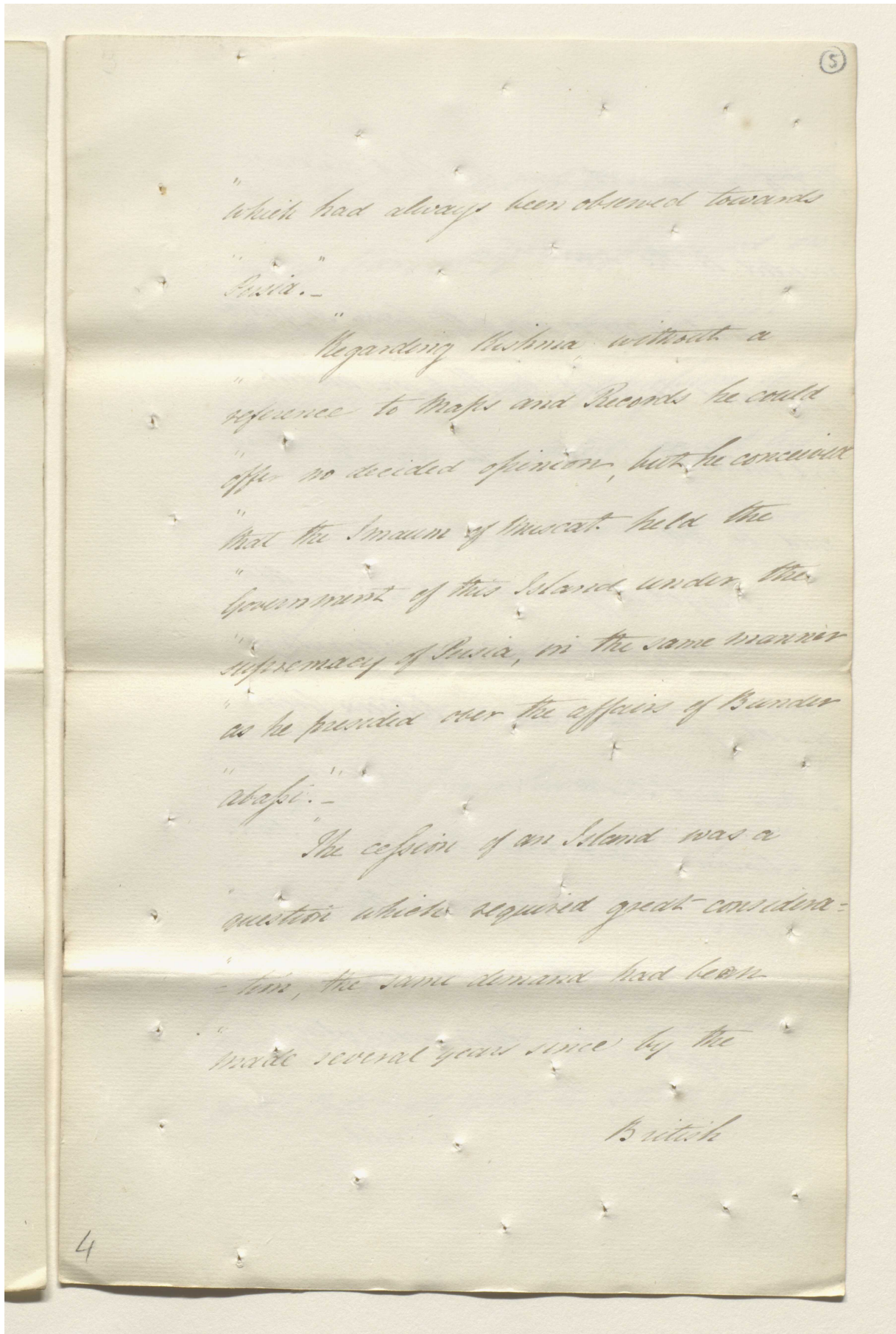
conceived calculated to strengthen it, and  
shunned such as afforded even the distant  
prospect of less intimate relations, or laid  
the foundation of future dependencies; Nations  
whose States approximated were never so  
warmly attached as those whose frontiers  
were remote from each other.

With regard to establishing regulations  
at the sea ports for the suppression of piracy,  
no doubt it was necessary, and the orders  
which had been issued to Sir William Keir  
to re-establish the Russian authorities on the  
Coast evinced the good will and intentions  
of the British Government, and was a  
continuation of that friendly policy

which

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Copy of a Letter from HM Chargé d'Affaires to Persia, Henry Willock, in Tehran,  
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"which had always been observed towards  
Persia."

"Regarding Bushma, without a  
reference to Maps and Records he could  
offer no decided opinion, but he concurred  
that the Imam of Muscat held the  
government of this Island under the  
supremacy of Persia, in the same manner  
as he presided over the affairs of Bandar  
Abasi."

The cession of an Island was a  
question which required great considera-  
-tion, the same demand had been  
made several years since by the  
British

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British Government, and the Shah had not  
" acceded to the request. "

" But on one or any of the points suggested  
" what could be said? the Shah was absent  
" and without consulting His Majesty nothing  
" could be determined. "

Suggested to offer a few more observations.

Stated that the chief advantages  
derived from the alliance between Great  
Britain and Persia, was the trade carried  
on between India and the Persian Ports,  
and commerce with Bussora, the Turkish  
and Arabian Ports was likewise of the  
greatest importance; these advantages

could

(6)

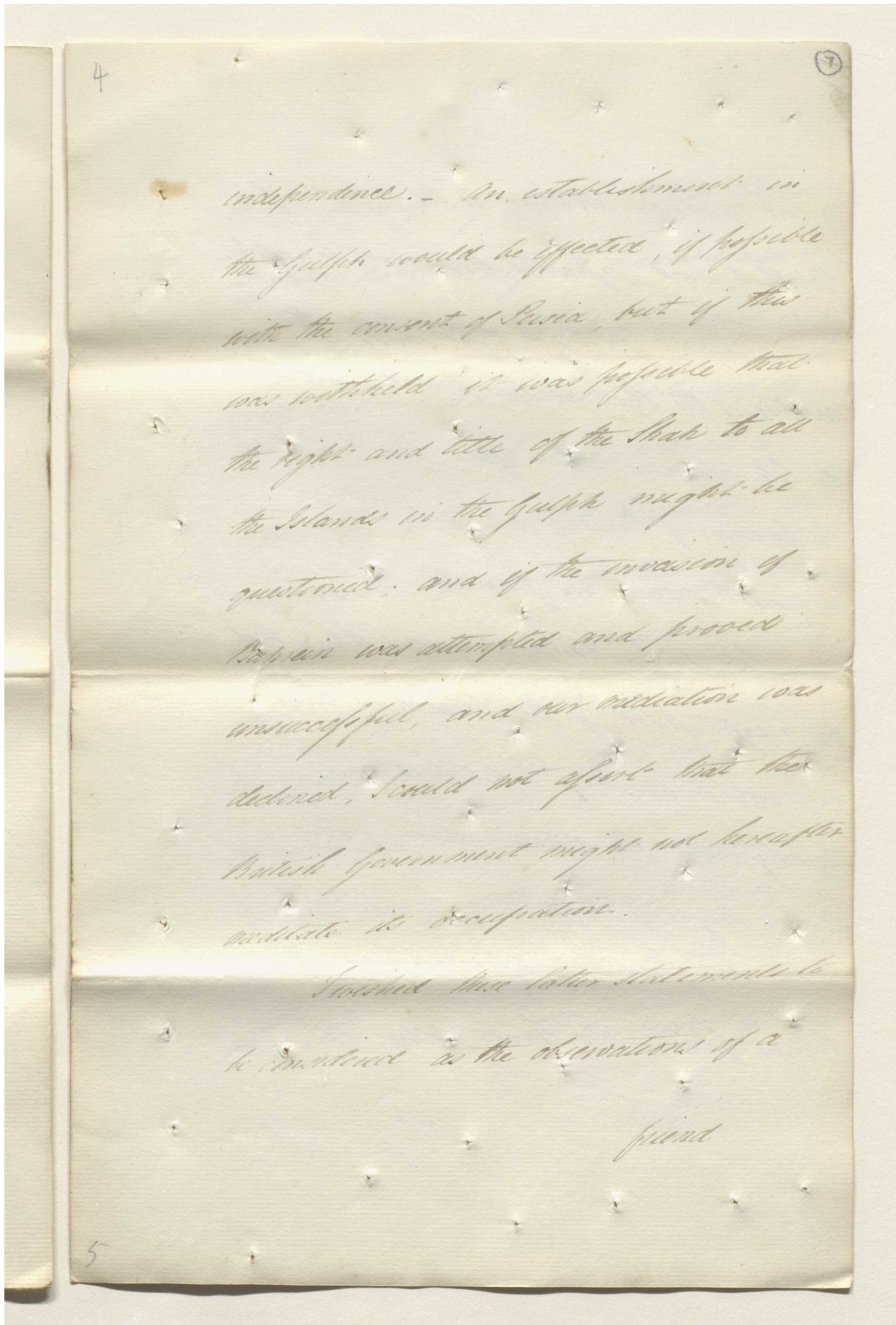
could not be reached to their full extent  
unless tranquillity was preserved on  
the Seas, and we had found from  
experience that the suppression of  
piracy could not be effected except by  
the establishment of British influence  
in the Gulf.

If an English settlement in the  
proximity of Persia was desired, this was  
already effected, and Persia was subject to  
the same danger when a British force  
was stationed at Bas il Whyma from  
whence Troops could be transported to the  
Persian Coast in two days, and which  
of the Ports could resist the attack of 2000  
Men

4  
Men / or at Bushma as if we possessed  
any other Island. -

Appealed to the good sense of the  
Ministers, to past and present events. -  
It had always been the policy of Great  
Britain to strengthen Persia, and at present  
the absolute sway of the Persian authorities  
on the Coast, which it was our study to  
establish, was considered one of the  
principal checks to piracy. - If our designs  
had been sinister, it would have been our  
policy to have recommended the British  
on the Coast to support their  
independence

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friends who was attached to the interests of  
the Shah, and requested they might be weighed.

I have greatly to regret both the  
absence of the Shah at this period, and that  
the late communication from the Honorable  
the Governor of Bombay did not reach me  
a month since, as from the tenor of  
your late instructions it seems likely that  
the greater part of the forces will have  
returned to Bombay before you can  
possibly receive the determination of His  
Russian Majesty -

The great reluctance which the  
Persian Government have always evinced  
to

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to our forming any settlement in their  
neighbourhood is by no means diminished,  
the principal cause of alarm is that our  
views embrace an ultimate extension of  
influence, and they regard such a  
settlement as calculated to check the  
independent pursuit of their foreign  
relations, if ever they should wish to  
adopt a different policy towards the  
European Powers, than that at present  
observed.

The vanity of the Persians makes  
them regard their Country as the most  
favoured spot of the Universe, and  
the



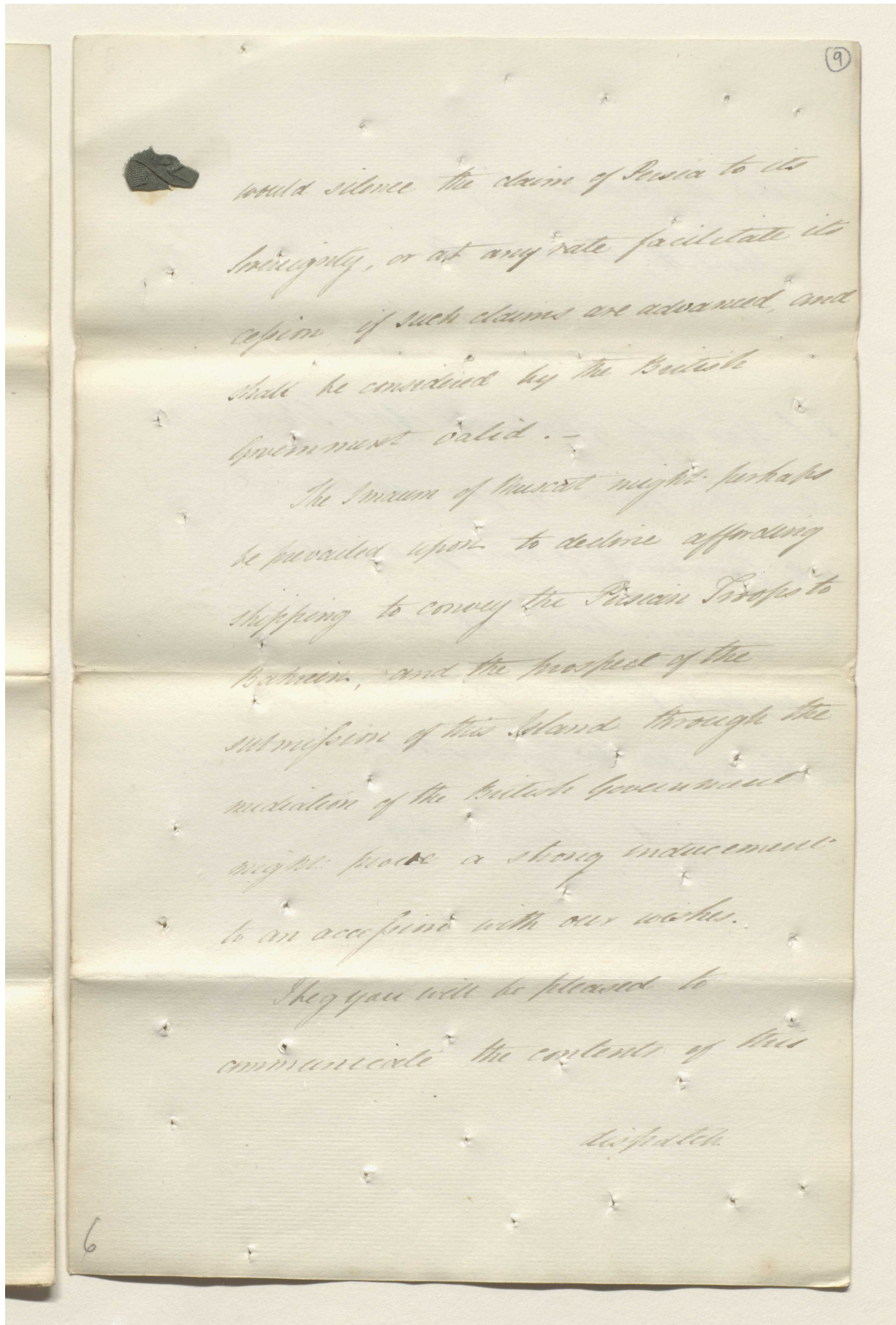
object of envy and desire to all neighbouring  
States.

To practical politicians they recall  
to mind the nature of our first establishment  
in India, from the small extent of our  
original possessions to the final  
attainment of an immense Empire, and  
the inference they draw is that the same  
result is to be expected, if once we acquire  
a footing in Persia, or its immediate  
neighbourhood.

It is humbly conceived to be wished  
that the Island of Vishna may answer  
the purposes we look to, and I think the  
present occupation of that Island

would

6



9

would silence the claims of Persia to its  
sovereignty, or at any rate facilitate its  
acquisition of such claims are assumed, and  
shall be considered by the British  
Government valid.

The prospect of success might perhaps  
be prevailed upon to decline affording  
shipping to convey the Persian Troops to  
Bahrein, and the prospect of the  
submission of the islands through the  
mediation of the British Government  
might prove a strong inducement  
to an acquiescence with our wishes.

I beg you will be pleased to  
communicate the contents of this  
dispatch.

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Copy of a Letter from HM Chargé d'Affaires to Persia, Henry Willock, in Tehran,  
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dispatch to Captain Collyer.

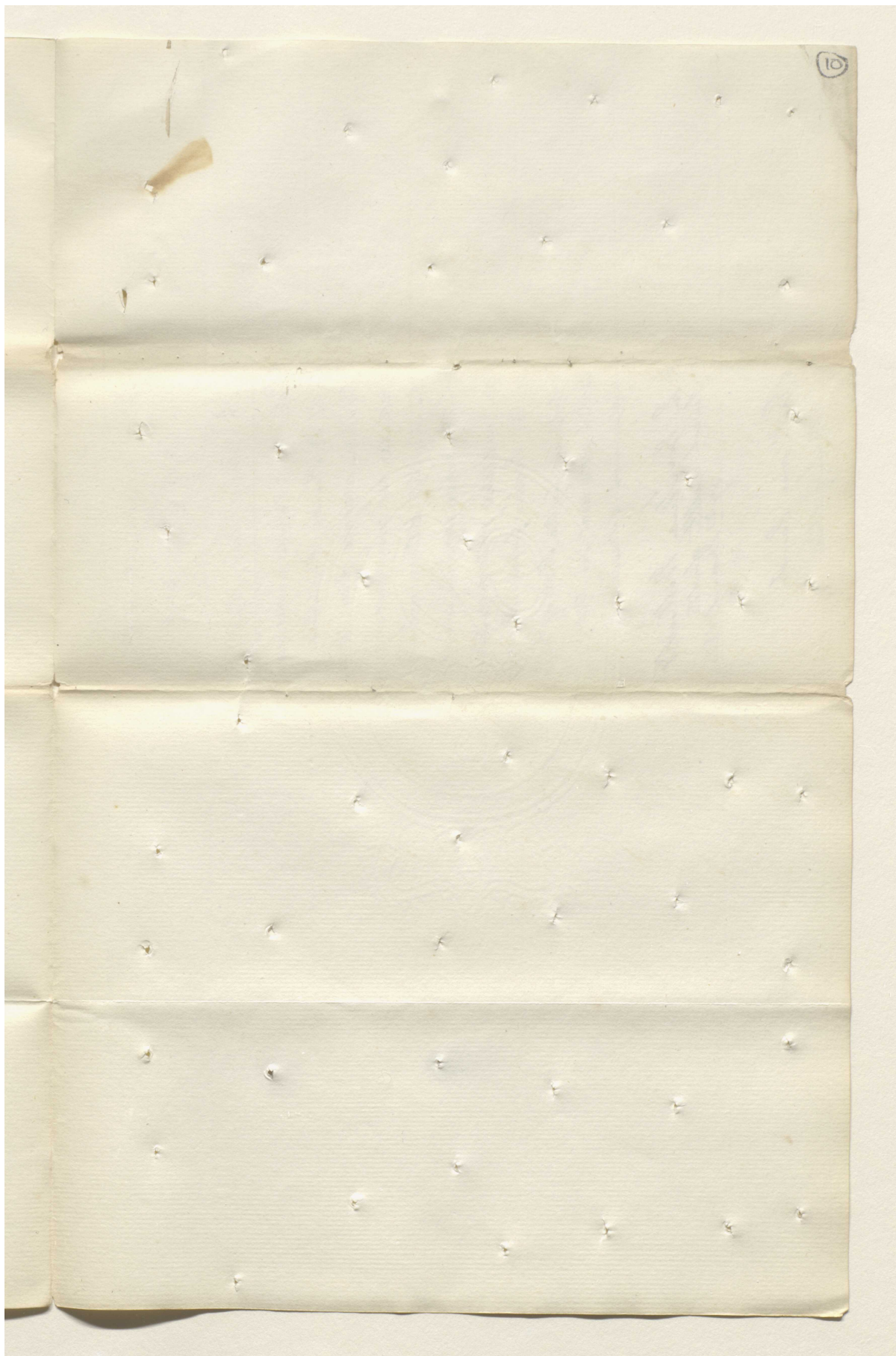
I have the honour to be

signed - Henry Willock

P.S. If an early opportunity offers, I shall  
esteem it a favour if you will transmit  
to the Government of Bombay a copy of  
this communication, as it will not be  
in my power for some days to address  
the Honourable Mr. Spenser.

signed - Henry Willock

Copy of a Letter from HM Chargé d'Affaires to Persia, Henry Willock, in Tehran,  
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to Major-General Sir William Grant Keir [10v] (20/20)

