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Letter from Harford Jones to Alexander Stratton

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About this record

A copy of a letter from Harford Jones, Resident in Bagdad [Baghdad], to Alexander Stratton, HM Minister Plenipotentiary to the Ottoman Empire, sent from Bagdad and dated 16 July 1802.

The letter concerns the recent sack of Meshed Hossein [Shrine of Imām Huṣayn bin ‘Alī, Karbala] by the Wa-ha-by [Wahhābī movement], the ongoing threat to Bagdad from the Wa-ha-by, and the possibility of a Persian [Iranian] expedition. Jones urges that the Porte [Government of the Ottoman Empire] co-operate with Persia to counter the Wa-ha-by. The letter also reports the establishment of a Russian diplomatic mission in Bagdad.

A duplicate of this letter is catalogued as IOR/L/PS/9/76/258.

To
Alexander Stratton Esq:
His Britannic Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary &c. &c.
at the Ottoman Porte.

Sir,

The Pasha dispatching a Tartar to the Capital affords me an opportunity of acknowledging the Receipt on the 4th Instant of your favor of the 12th June, and of requesting you to accept my Thanks for the perusal of your dispatches to his Excellency the Most Noble the Governor General, obligingly left under flying Seal for that Purpose.

In answer of my communications on the Affair of Meshed Mehemet I beg leave to trouble you with a copy of Notes of the material points of a Conference with the Pasha, with a copy and Translation of a Letter from me to Mevza Bey and with a copy of the Pasha's Reply to the King of Persia's Letter to him.

It needs but a slight review of the present political Situation of Persia, to perceive how critical a one it is, and it would be almost impertinent to enter into detail how much Great Britain and the Honourable the East India Company have become interested in the Stability and prosperity of his present Persian Majesty's Government from the equivocal, and alarming proceedings of the Court of Petersburg on the shores of the Caspian, and on the Persian Frontier

Frontis towards Georgia.

Independent therefore of any Considerations directly affecting the present State of this Government, which by the way gave additional Matter to the well wishers of both States, to hope that nothing on the part of Persia might be undertaken in haste, it seemed it might be highly useful for me, in the Manner of a free and unreserved Correspondence, to state to Muzza Beazurg, and some of the other Ministers those difficulties, and disadvantages attending the Execution of the Kings proposed march against the Shahs by the Route of Bagdad which the Height of the general Resentment in Persia might possibly suffer to escape the Notice and Attention they deserved. The disadvantages of his Majesty's march towards Bagdad, are not by any means multiplied, indeed they are not stated in my Letter to Muzza Beazurg to their full extent, for whenever the King turns his back, on Tehran to come towards Arabia, it will from the Nature of the Expedition be (if one may use the Expression) a species of Siege, rather than a regular Campaign. Fanaticism thirsting for Revenge, is not likely to be provident, and the plains of Bagdad or Meshed may probably exhibit such Scenes as were acted on those of Constantinople, in the 12th and 13th Centuries.

Should the Court of Tehran fortunately for itself and for the Turks listen to the hints given to Muzza Beazurg, I would recommend that this Govern-ment be ordered by the Porte, in the most positive Manner to co-operate with the Court of Tehran in every shape on the plan laid down with good faith and Activity

(2)

I mention this because from a circumstance which took place in a
 conversation between the Dewan Effendi Mohammed Reza Khan and myself
 it appears the Pasha and this Government if once relieved from their present
 apprehensions of the Persians marching towards Bagdad would not be very
 anxious to give them such Assistance, as might be in their power, by way of
 Bahrain; for as an additional Instance to his Majesty's Ministers to adopt
 the plan proposed to Mirza Bozurg, I had in the rough draught of my Letter
 mentioned that I conceived the Pasha in case of its being necessary would have no
 objection to send a part of the Bussoora fleet to assist in the Transportation of the troops
 and Stores from Bushire to Bahrain, and on stating it in some manner, at the Conversa-
 tion above alluded to, the Dewan Effendi said he was expressly and directly ordered
 by the Pasha, to declare that he would on no account come under such an engage-
 ment. The subject was accordingly erased from my Letter and from the Impression
 this imprudent, and impolitic declaration made on Mohammed Reza Khan one
 may conceive the Effects of it at the Court of Tehran will not be the most favorable
 to the Pasha's Interests.

I wish to repeat what I have before advanced that this Government has
 not the means of combating the Na. ba. by with effect, so far from it, that if left
 to itself and the Na. ba. by continues as active as he has lately been it must sooner or
 later be subdued. This is true however if the Porte continues superior is not confined to
 Bagdad, Bussoora, or any particular Spot. The Factions of these Innovators are
 incompatible with the civil and religious constitution of the Turkish Empire; are
 incompatible.

incompatible with the civil and religious Constitution of any Mohammedan State, existing in Asia; and now apparently there is no other Chance, of preventing their future giant-like progress, than that of a well concerted League for this purpose being immediately formed between the Courts of Teheran and Constantinople. In putting the divinity of Mohammed's Mission out of the question, it would be difficult to find, a more seductive, enchanting, and intrincating political draught to man in all countries, and under all forms than the doctrine of the Wa-ha-bys.

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It has come indirectly to my Knowledge, but in such a Manner as to deserve Attention, that a Russian Consulate, or vice. Consulate, is soon to be established at Bagdad in the person of one Jean Murat - a Constantinopolitan Armenian Merchant - a mass of consummate Intrigue. This circumstance, though probably known to you, I judge it proper to mention, and also to trouble you with an Extract of a Letter I lately received from Persia.

I have the honor to be with profound Respect

Sir

Your most obedient humble Servant
Harford Jones.

Bagdad
the 18 July 1802.

Enclosed with yours is
one to the Chairman
of the 18 July 1802

Recd Stewart
13 Oct 1802

True copy
Harford Jones

Copy
Harford Jones
to the
British Embassy
at the Castle

Bagdad
16 July 1802