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Letter from Harford Jones to Lord Elgin

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About this record

A copy of a letter from Harford Jones, Resident in Bagdad [Baghdad], to Lord Elgin, HM Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, sent from Bagdad and dated 28 September 1802.

The letter concerns the appointment of Ally Pasha [‘Alī Pāshā al-Kahyah] as Governor of Bagdad. Jones asks Elgin to intercede with the Porte [Government of the Ottoman Empire] to reduce the sum of money it is demanding in order to confirm Ally Pasha’s appointment, stressing the lack of money in Bagdad and threats from the Wa-ha-bies [Wahhābī movement] and Persia [Iran].

Most private and Confidential.

To

His Excellency

The Right Honble the Earl of Elgin

Esq.

Esq.

Esq.

My Lord,

Having Reason from a Letter from Mr. Looke, dated the 6th of this Month to imagine your Excellency has returned to Constantinople, I beg to offer you, my Congratulations thereon, and to bespeak your immediate and active Attention to an Affair in which the national as well as the Company's Interests are most highly concerned.

I have endeavoured to the best of my Abilities to keep the Embassy regularly and well advised of every Event of consequence which has taken place here since the death of Soliman Pasha; and have taken the Liberty of expressing opinions which under different Circumstances occurred to me as advantageous for the Porte to adopt. The unexpected and indeed wonderful Events of the 19th and 20th of this Month, have given rise to a new State of Affairs, and the dispatches which Ally Pasha, received from the Porte on the 26th and the Information which the Company's Agent, then very laudably conveyed to me, were highly satisfactory and pleasing as they denote, that the Porte inclines, to do what is now become absolutely necessary for the Peace and advantage of this Country; namely to appoint Ally Pasha to the Pashalik of Bagdad.

I am some what concerned however to observe, that the Porte, seems inclined to accompany Ally Pasha's Promotion with Terms which were it in his Power to accept, would be very injurious in their Effects, and which I must add, as far as my Knowledge

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Knowledge of this Country goes utterly impossible to be accomplished. In my visit of
yesterday to the Pasha, he gave me the strongest Assurances, of being perfectly ready and
willing to do every thing the Porte could reasonably desire; and a Tartar, as soon as the
over things can be prepared will set off from hence, with very handsome Remittances, and him,
proposals, which I flatter myself the Ottoman Ministry will be inclined to accept. Twelve

My Pasha, however through me, wishes to bespeak, in his favor your to be
Excellency's powerful Interference; and bids me say, that he hopes, previously to the arrival of a very
the Tartar abovementioned you will contrive if possible to have a Conference, with some of the late
Ottoman Ministry, in which your Excellency will take the Trouble of stating the following
Facts. That the Wealth of the late Pasha, seems to be exaggerated beyond all bounds of
credibility - That the supposed Value of his Treasury appears to have been formed from Amos
the length of Time he Governed, without adverting in any Shape, to Incidents which caused
him enormous Expences during the course of it. That it is most notorious, the Revenues
during the first six years of the Pasha's Government, were only made by the most exact not
and scrupulous Economy to answer the Expences; the Country having been then recently
desolated by the Plague and pillaged by the Persians - That almost on the back of this
came the Rebellion of the Montefick Shaik who seized on Buzsora, by which the Pasha, this
not only lost an Year's Revenue of that Government, but was necessitated to undertake an
expedition against him at an enormous Expence, to this succeeded the Rebellion of his Nephew the
Mustafa Aga, which compelled the Pasha, to undertake another very expensive Expedition - All
almost immediately after which the Pasha by order of the Porte undertook the long and
expensive Campaign against Seimour Pasha, and lastly the Campaign against the Ma-habib, the
in which a very large Army at an almost incalculable Expence was kept in the field for near
Twelve

of Twelve Months. That besides these the Pasha, had other causes of great Expence ⁽²⁾ — the provision he made for a very numerous family: the expence of removing Soliman Pasha from as the Pashalik of Orfa, of entertaining Teimour Pasha, and of procuring that Pashalik for and him; the expence, he unavoidably incurred, by two Pilgrimages late made by the Queen Mother of Persia, to Meshed Ally Oca and lastly the expence, of the Repairs, which he ordered to be made, to Meshed Kofein — It ought to be observed too, that there is at this moment, a claim of a very heavy Claim on this Government by the Honble Company for Military Stores supplied to the Pasha of the late Pasha.

If these Circumstances which are all fact are taken into due consideration, your Excellency will perceive that a great deduction from the popular opinion as to the Amount of the Wealth left by the late Pasha may well be allowed.

Looking at the present Situation of this Government as it respects Persia and the Ma-ho-bis, the Porte must surely perceive how much it is to her Interest not to weaken it too much and therefore let the Pasha's Treasury be ever so rich a considerable part of it should be left here, for the present to answer Emergencies, which may be well imagined as likely to occur: for to me at least it seems that to trust the defence of this Country, to its ordinary Revenue, and the Treasury of Ally Pasha, which from his known and acknowledged Liberality is but small, is in other Words to risk the Loss of Jerusalem. The Porte will with Security draw infinitely greater advantage from, nominating Ally Pasha, on moderate Terms and afterwards availing itself of Things as they turn up, and then obliging him to pay at present supposing it was in his Power which I know it is not to have the enormous Sums it has demanded.

It is most evident, the Porte, cannot now remove Ally Pasha from

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from hence, or refuse, to grant him the Government without throwing the whole of this Country into a State of dreadful Confusion and Disturbance — Is the present a Moment for such an Experiment?

Your Excellency I flatter myself with pardon me dilating on these particulars, but as some of them are local, it is possible, in the Event of your Excellency's warmly interesting yourself as I hope on a public account you will in favor of Ally Pasha, they might not have presented themselves to your Recollection.

Ally Pasha desires me, to present his best Compliments to your Excellency and to assure you in the Event of his Success, he shall be happy to take a proper Method of manifesting his Gratitude, for the Trouble, which he feels confident you will take in his behalf — The Tartar waits — I shall do myself the honor tomorrow or the next, of addressing you more in detail, until when I beg permission to subscribe myself

with the greatest Respect

My Lord,

Your Excellency's

Most obedient and devoted

humble servant

H. J.

4P5/9/76/269

Bagdad

The 28th September 1802.