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Copy of a Letter from Sir Harford Jones, Envoy to Persia, to Lord Minto, Governor-General of Bengal

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	IOR/L/PS/9/67/121
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About this record

A letter from Sir Harford Jones, British Envoy Extraordinary to Persia [Iran], to Lord Minto, Governor-General of Bengal, sent from Tehran and dated 13 April 1809. The letter concerns: the diplomatic ascendancy of Britain over France at the Persian Court; the payment of a six-month subsidy and supply of military stores to Persia; the Persian Government's request for a loan of officers and gunners; the state of the Persian army and economy; and the threat from Persia to British-held territories in India.

The letter was enclosed in Jones's letter No. 7 to Sir Robert Dundas, President of the Board of Control, dated 1809.

Copy of a Letter from Sir Harford Jones, Envoy to Persia, to Lord Minto,
Governor-General of Bengal [1r] (1/12)

(Copy)
No. 6.

L/PS/9/67/121

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Tehran April 13th 1809.

My Lord,

Judging that your Excellency has been anxious to receive an account of my proceedings at this Court, it has been extremely distressing to me not to have been able with propriety to make such a communication at an earlier period - My dispatch however on the 16th March to the Gentleman in charge of the Company's Factory at Bushire if he has fortunately had the means of conveying the contents of it to India, will I flatter myself have relieved your Excellency from much suspense.

I now consider myself as able respectfully to offer your Excellency my congratulations on the ascendancy which the British influence has obtained

His Excellency
Right Honble Lord Minto

Yr. Yr. Yr.

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Governor-General of Bengal [1v] (2/12)

obtained in this country over that of France, and
for the means by which this has been brought about,
I beg to refer you to the enclosed Copies of dispatches
from me to the Right Honble Mr. Secretary Canning
N^o 3. 4. 5. 6. and to the Right Honble Robert Dundas
N^o 3. 4. & 6. -

The known candour and liberality of your
Excellency make me confident you will make the just
and proper allowance for the difficulties & disadvantages
under which on many points I have laboured, and if in
some instances I have stepped a little beyond the
instructions I received either at Home or from your
Excellency you will have the goodness to recollect I found
things here in such a state, as to leave me but the
simple alternative of taking some responsibility on
myself, or of seeing our Enemies prevail. I trust and
hope I shall have the consolation to receive your
Excellency's approbation of my conduct.

I am assured the King means this year
to march in person to Tabreze or even further north,
should

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Governor-General of Bengal [2r] (3/12)

(2)

should circumstances require his presence; and I incline to give credit to this information from the preparations which I see making here. On this plea, however, the Persian Ministry have pushed me so hard for an advance of the Subsidy, and the French Charge' d'affaires so long as I deferred granting their request succeeded so well in impressing them with the idea "que les Anglois jouent la Cour de Perse", that I found it absolutely necessary to consent to an advance of six months as soon as I can conveniently collect the money. Your Excellency may be assured I will not consent to any further advance, until I have the honor of hearing from you, and I entertain some hopes of being able to arrange that a part of the Subsidy shall be received in cloth for clothing the Army: this, however, whilst the French Charge' d'affaires ^{remains} here, is a project I shall not broach.

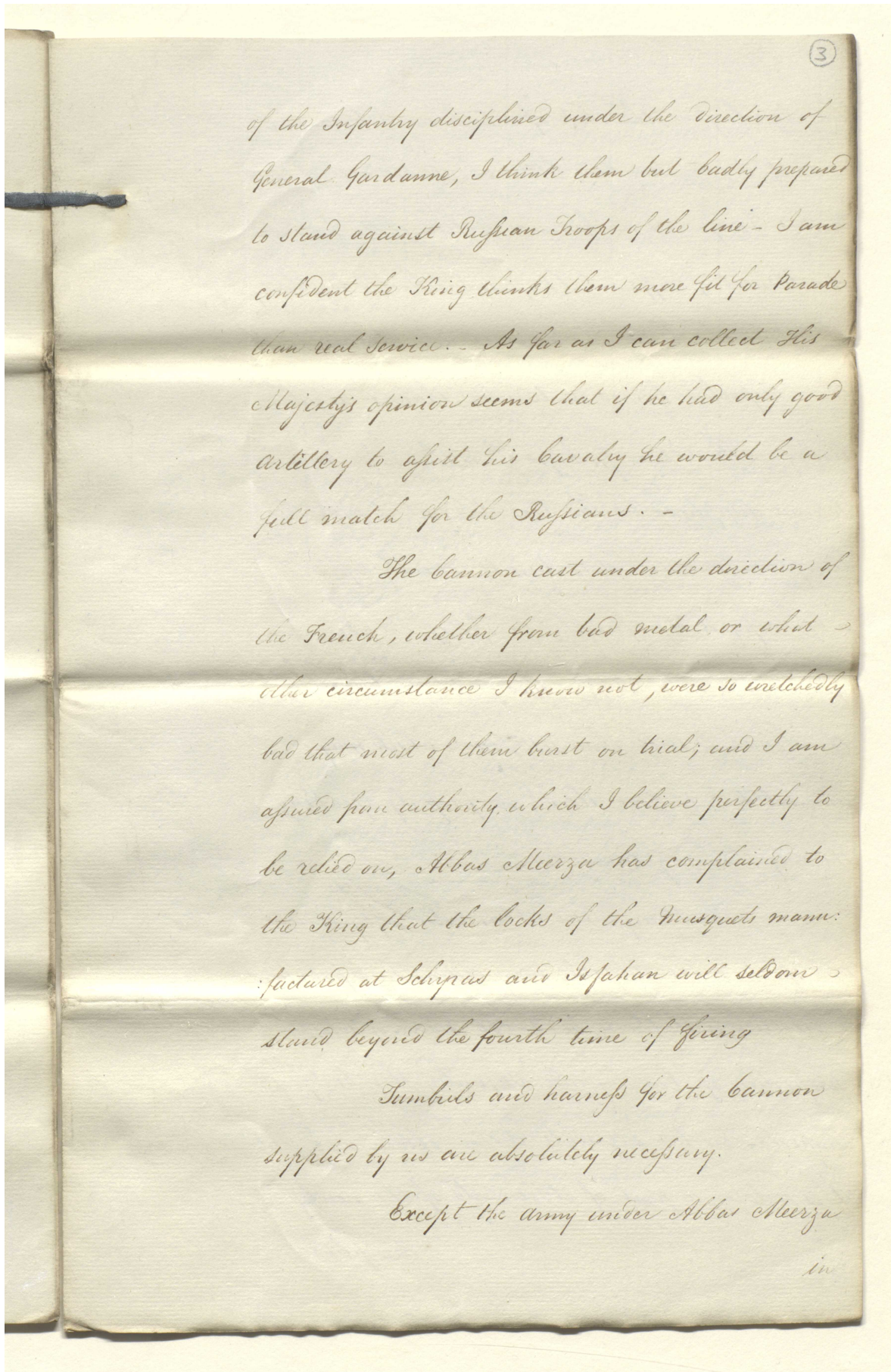
It has been carefully and distinctly explained to the Persian Ministry that in respect to the Military Stores, they can only be supplied at our convenience; nevertheless

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nevertheless it is proper to mention to your Excellency that an immediate supply of 6 to 7000 Stand of Arms, provided the state of our arsenals will admit of it, is expected. I have been given to understand some pieces of cannon were ready at Calcutta, having been formerly intended as presents to the King; these I presume might be sent immediately, and I will deliver them as part of the stipulated aid.

On the number of Officers & Artillerymen to be furnished to Persia, there has neither any proposal nor stipulation passed on my part - The compliance therefore with the enclosed list, which I have received from the Persian Ministry rests entirely at your Excellency's pleasure, but I cannot avoid mentioning that the Artificers will be highly acceptable. The force of the Persian Army consists, and I am convinced from the nature of the Country and People, ever must and ought to consist in what we should call irregular Horse; and certainly from the specimen I have seen here
of

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of the Infantry disciplined under the direction of
General Gardanne, I think them but badly prepared
to stand against Russian Troops of the line - I am
confident the King thinks them more fit for Parades
than real service. - As far as I can collect His
Majesty's opinion seems that if he had only good
artillery to assist his Cavalry he would be a
full match for the Russians. -

The cannon cast under the direction of
the French, whether from bad metal, or what
other circumstance I know not, were so much
bad that most of them burst on trial; and I am
assured from authority which I believe perfectly to
be relied on, Abbas Meerza has complained to
the King that the locks of the Muskets manu-
factured at Schyras and Isfahan will seldom
stand beyond the fourth time of firing

Limbs and harness for the Cannon
supplied by us are absolutely necessary.

Except the army under Abbas Meerza
in

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in Azerbaïjan, the state of which as I have not seen it I can say but little about, the rest of the King's Troops are rather a collection of the followers or retainers of different Chieftains collected together to attend the King in summer and dismissed to their respective homes in Winter, than a regular Army. There are perhaps three thousand men in Sahran disciplined as the Persians call it after the European manners - their dress is evidently copied (and a bad copy it is) after the Troops of the Vizier Hidad at Constantinople; these and the Officers of the Household with their attendants which may amount to 4 or 5000 Horse, are properly speaking the only standing Army.

The Army under Abbas Meerza, by those who speak moderately and may claim some pretension to evidence, is stated to be 20,000 men. of what proportion of Cavalry and Infantry this body is composed, no two accounts I can obtain agree; but it is certain a part of it consists of the newly disciplined

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disciplined men. The greater part, if not the whole
of this Army is put into winter quarters at Tabriz
and the King complains loudly of the expence it
occasions him. -

For an object in or near Persia that could
be effected in the course of a Summer I can imagine
the King of Persia might collect from 50 to 60,000
Horse and perhaps 30 to 40,000 of what is called
here, Infantry: but it is most certain the winter
would oblige this army to disperse. -

Comparing what I have seen with what
I have read there seems no country to have been
more misrepresented than Persia - as far as my
observation goes it can rather be called a rich, a
fertile, or a populous Country. The riches, whatever
they may be, are confined to the King and a few
great men; the fertility is confined to particular
spots sometimes of no great extent; and the only
thing that is generally manifest is the scantiness
of

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of population, and the sordid and wretched condition of
those whom I can only designate by calling them the
lowest and middle orders of the State.

Though the maxim by which the Khajirs
have regulated their Government has been to keep all
classes of people ^{as poor as possible}, I still doubt whether the Treasury of the
King is so rich as the Persians are fond of representing
it. - as the only import of Spice of any consequence
which Persia receives comes from Russia, and as this
is known to be counterbalanced by the Exports she
makes to India, I must be permitted to doubt whether
sums such as the Persians talk of, could be annually
drawn from no very large currency to be laid dormant
in the King's Treasury without that currency by its
gradual diminution attesting the fact to the most
careless observer.

There is no account I can frame on
principles satisfactory to myself that makes the Revenue
of the King amount to more than a million and a
half per annum, nor can I bring myself to believe,
exclusive

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exclusive of Jewels and other apparatus, that the King
possesses much more than that sum in ready money. (5)

Notwithstanding all this, and though Persia
herself can never be formidable to us as an enemy,
her resources and possessions at the command of
another power employing them for the purpose of
invading India must become dreadfully so.

I have the honor to be,
with the greatest respect

My Lord

Your Excellency's

Most obedient & devoted

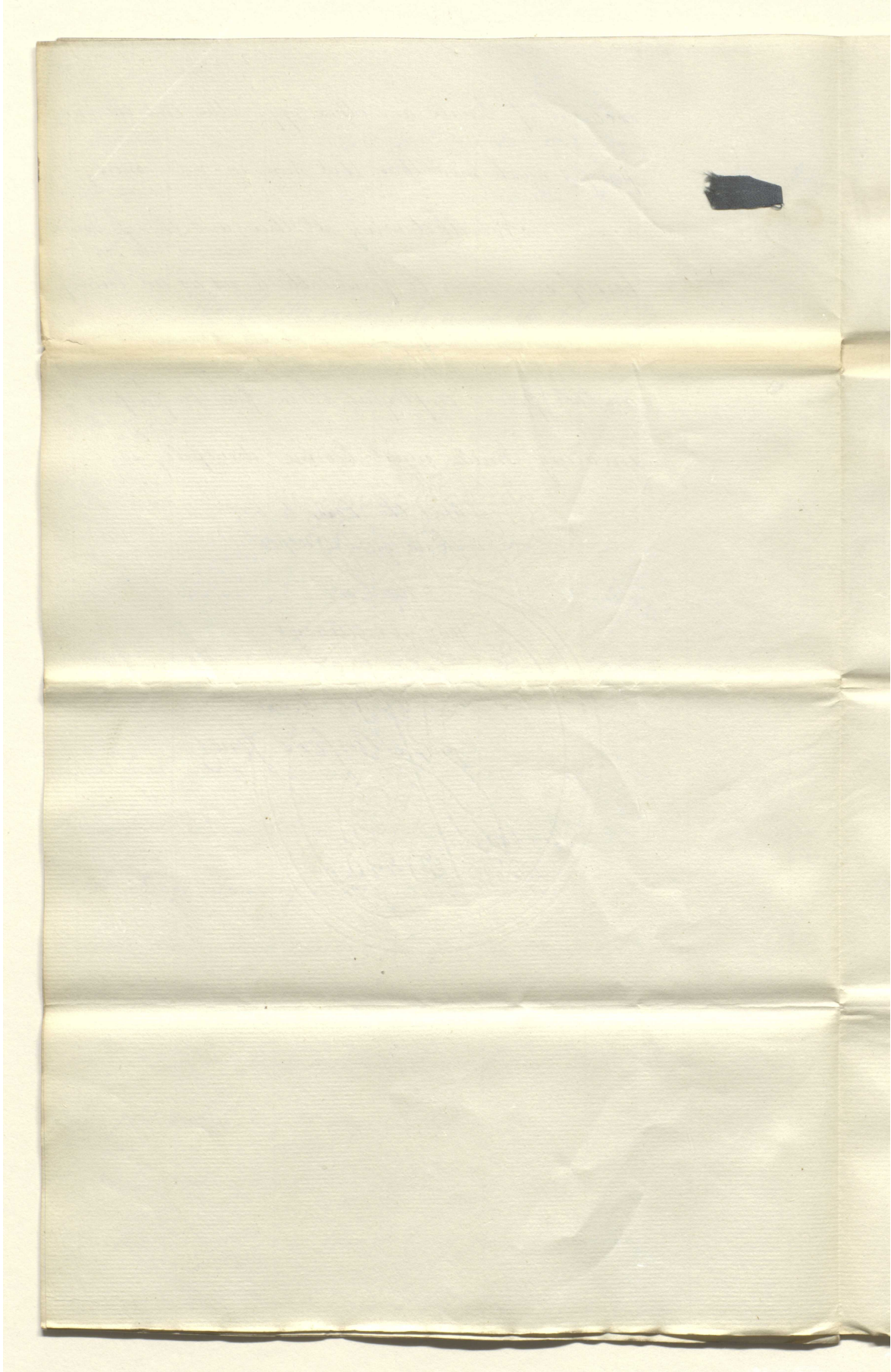
humble servant

(signed) Harford Jones

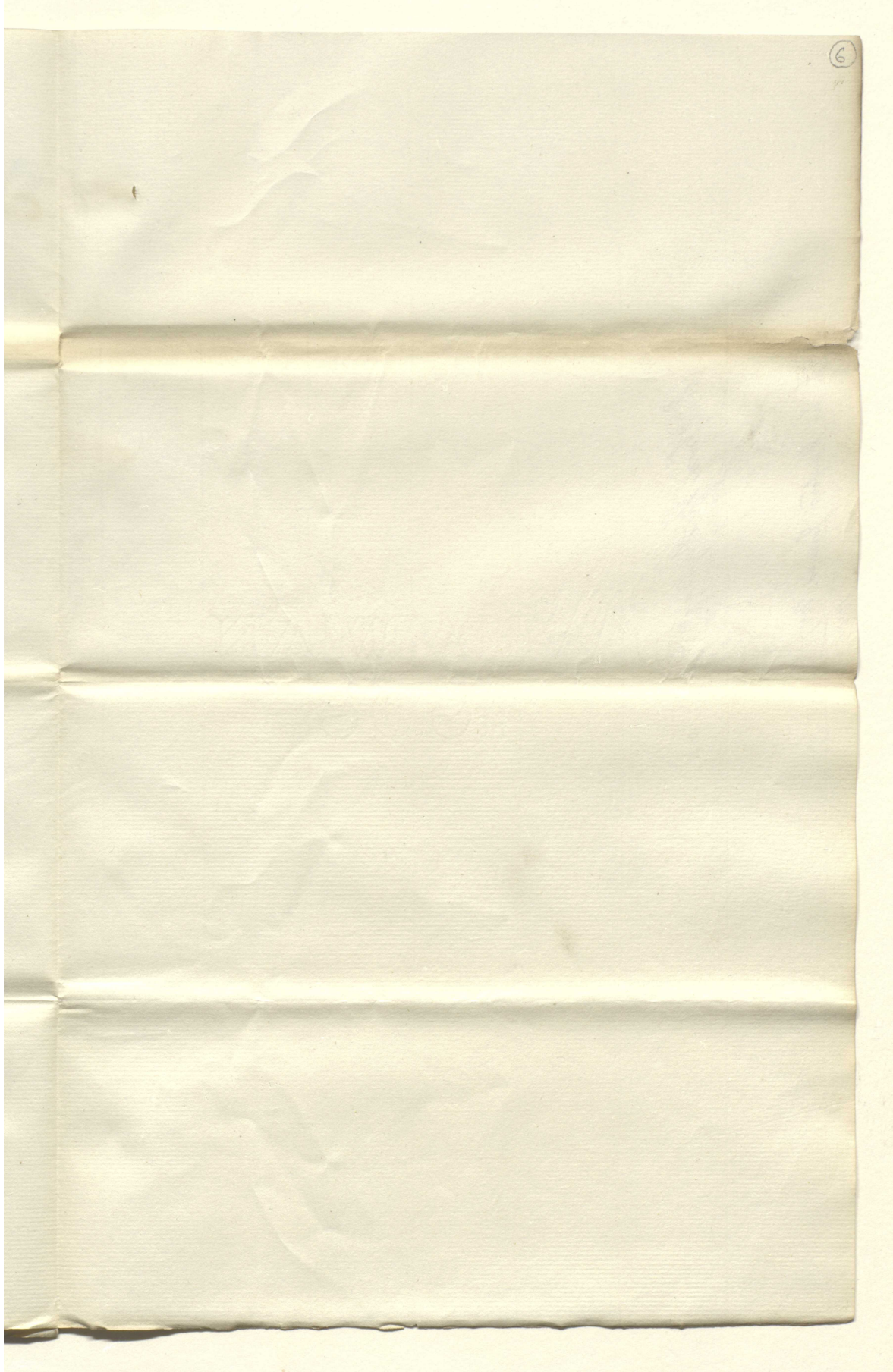
True copy.

(signed) Jas Morier
J.M.

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Governor-General of Bengal [5v] (10/12)



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Governor-General of Bengal [6r] (11/12)



Copy of a Letter from Sir Harford Jones, Envoy to Persia, to Lord Minto,
Governor-General of Bengal [6v] (12/12)

