



D'ARCY, JOSEPH

D'ARCY, JOSEPH (Pers. “Mester Bārūt,” “Qūlūnel Khan,” “Qonsūl Khan”; b. Portsmouth, England, 14 March 1780, d. Lymington, England, 17 February 1848), major (later lieutenant colonel) in the British Royal Artillery who arrived in Persia in 1226/1811 with the ambassador Sir Gore Ouseley. He was one of a group of British officers and enlisted men who were to reform and equip the Persian army. Before reaching its headquarters in Tabrīz, D’Arcy and his companions were forced to stay in Shiraz for three months, during which D’Arcy was put to work collecting geographical and other information and surveying local sites. His highly accurate and perceptive account of Firūzābād pleased Ouseley, who had selected him as commanding officer of the mission partly because of his training in such matters (Ṭāherī, I, pp. 435-36; Ruck, pp. 28, 38). Early in 1227/1812 D’Arcy arrived in Tabrīz, where he commanded more than thirty officers, as well as enlisted men. They accompanied Persian forces led by ‘Abbās Mīrzā against Russian attacks on Ṭāleš and Qarābāg. The ensuing victory over the Russians at Solṭānābād, on 29 Moḥarram 1227/13 February 1812, was attributed mainly to D’Arcy’s artillery force, which destroyed the Russian magazine (Campbell, p. 226; Wright, 1977, pp. 50-52). In August, however, Britain and Russia made peace, and in October Ouseley ordered an almost total withdrawal of the British forces from the Persian army, though D’Arcy was among those who remained in the country.

By late 1230/1815 the British government had lost interest in the military mission in Persia and had begun to withdraw all British personnel. Before leaving D’Arcy agreed to take five Persian students to Britain to study various



sciences and languages. Persian and British sources often disagree on D'Arcy's intentions and the manner in which he supervised the young men after their arrival in London in October 1815. There is evidence to suggest that the idea of an educated and skilled assemblage of Persian experts on both military and nonmilitary matters did seem to both the Persian and British governments, at least at some point, politically prudent. On the other hand, personal financial and professional considerations were often on D'Arcy's mind (Mīnovī, p. 401; Maḥbūbī, pp. 131, 145; Wright, 1985, p. 76; Ruck, p. 29). In any event the whole affair turned into a bitter clash of personalities. The main issue was, of course, money, which came from Persia irregularly and in insufficient amounts. In the end the students left Britain with little regard for the man who, in their opinion, had "neglected" them (Wright, pp. 75-78; for an account by one of the students, see Mīrzā Ṣāleḥ Ṣīrāzī).

Information on D'Arcy's personal life is scant; the only available published source is the work of his great-granddaughter Bertha Ruck, who revealed that he was the father of an illegitimate daughter by a Georgian woman and that, despite the assertion of Maḥbūbī that he was killed at the battle of Fīrūza, he died peacefully at home in Lymington (Ruck, pp. 106-15, 178; Maḥbūbī, p. 101).

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