



## HARDINGE, ARTHUR

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**HARDINGE**, Sir ARTHUR HENRY, British diplomat (b. London, 12 October 1859, d. East Sheen, 27 December 1933). Arthur was the only son of General the Hon. Sir A. E. Hardinge and a cousin of Viscount Hardinge of Penshurst (q.v.). He was educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, and was elected a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, in 1881. He entered the Foreign Office in 1880 and served successively in Madrid, St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Bucharest, Cairo, and Zanzibar before being appointed Minister in Tehran, where he served nearly five years (1900-05). Subsequently he went as Minister to Belgium, then Portugal, and finally as Ambassador to Spain in 1913, before retiring in 1919.

It has been said that Hardinge “appreciated better than any of his predecessors the strength of Russian influence in Tehran and the relative inefficacy of English measures to stop its growth” (Kazemzadeh, p. 387). He worked assiduously and effectively to counter this influence and enhance that of Britain. To this end, he successfully supported William D’Arcy’s (q.v.) efforts to secure an oil concession in 1901, and was largely instrumental in persuading the Iranian Government not to permit the Russians to build an oil pipeline from Baku to the Persian Gulf. He regarded the Imperial Bank of Persia as Britain’s “principal political lever” in Iran (Foreign Office Papers, F060/676, Hardinge to Lansdowne 28.3.1903), encouraging it to make an advance to the shah in 1901, and to the shrine at Mašhad in 1903, as well as to open branches outside Tehran. He played a leading role in arranging and negotiating the Anglo-Indian loans of 1903-05, whereby the Government of



India lent the Imperial Bank 500,000 Pounds Sterling for on-lending to the Iranian Government. Strongly supported by Curzon, then Viceroy of India (q.v.), Hardinge persuaded the British Government in 1902 to accede to the request of Shaikh Kaz'al of Moḥammara (Korramšahr) for a written assurance of their protection of his “hereditary rights and customs . . . so long as you remain faithful to the Shah and act in accordance with our advice” (Oriental and India Office Collections, L/PS/20/C 158A, Hardinge to Khaz'al, 7.12.1902).

The State Visit by Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah to London in August 1902, inconveniently soon after the Coronation of King Edward VII, owed much to Hardinge's persistence. He accompanied the shah throughout the visit, which he saw as an important step in improving British standing at the Iranian Court. To encourage the shah to undertake the journey he had led him to believe that he would receive the Order of the Garter, given to his father by Queen Victoria, which he was known to covet. However, Edward VII's refusal to bestow it on a non-Christian monarch marred the visit. Largely through Hardinge's efforts partial amends were made when the King eventually gave way and sent Lord Downe to Tehran the following January to invest the shah.

Hardinge established close links with the ulama who were, he reported “very much discontented with the subserviency of the Shah and his Grand Vizier to Russia” (Foreign Office Papers, F060/137, Hardinge to Lansdowne 22.8.1902). In order to influence them and discourage anti-shah disturbances which might provoke Russian intervention he was authorized by Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, to make “careful payments” to the ulama both in Iran and in Najaf and Kerbala.

Hardinge was a gifted linguist and quickly learned Persian, in which he addressed the shah at his birthday ceremony in 1901. A British visitor to Tehran that year commented on the high esteem in which Hardinge was held by the Iranians and his “quite extraordinary talent, with a quick-working brain” (Savage-Landor, p. 96). He was knighted in 1897, and other honors followed. In retirement, saddened by the death of both his sons in accidents, he wrote two volumes of memoirs and the biography of his friend the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon.



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