Great carelessness, great severity, great hardships, and apparently all to no purpose. Quarantine is too profitable for officials to be lightly removed. Only one European died during the past three months of this disease, - and that one did not belong in this district.

I speak in this report of this district only; but I hear that in Damascus there are still cases. With cholera in Egypt and cholera in Syria and plague in Egypt and quarantine everywhere the outlook for travellers is not good. Commerce certainly has suffered; but in my residence in this country we have had quarantine about three years of four, so commerce is almost always suffering.

I remain respectfully
Your obedient servant
(Signed) Selah Merrill
U. S. Consul

No 63

United States Consulate
Jerusalem, Syria, January 28, 1903

Hon. Herbert H. D. Peirce
Assistant Secretary of State
Washington, D. C.

Sir,

I wish to call attention to the American mail and the channel by which it reaches Jerusalem.

The mail from the United States now comes through the local Turkish Post and there has always been dissatisfaction with its management because of delays, annoyances of various kinds, and many actual losses of valuable letters. In the 8ties and again in the 9ties complaints were made resulting in temporary improvements. Mr. E. S. Wallace under date of Jan. 3, 1898 wrote to the Department of improvement in the management of the Turkish Post. Whatever improvement he may have observed was of very brief duration. Many times since returning to this Consular Post in 1898 American citizens residing here have urged me to ask the Department for a change in the channel by which the American mail comes. My reason for not doing so was, not that annoyances and losses had ceased, but that between the United States and Turkey there were several unsettled matters and I did not wish to add to these another irritating question.

Besides the Turkish there are four post offices in Jerusalem, - Austrian, German, French and Russian. No foreign consul, there are eleven here, - ever sends a despatch through the Turkish Post, nor a private letter unless he is obliged to do so. These two facts are stronger evidence of the incompetency of the Turkish Post than a petition signed by one thousand American citizens could possibly be. During the three months of cholera just past the mail was sent by train from Jaffa. It arrived in at the Turkish Post office Jerusalem at 11, o'clock A. M. but it was never ready for delivery before 3 or 3.30 o'clock in the afternoon. Those who receive their mail through the French, German, or Austrian post offices receive their mail promptly and safely. There are very few annoyances of any kind and almost no losses. These offices are managed with efficiency and honesty.

All

All English mail comes through the Austrian Post. This is for Americans likewise the most convenient and the one I would recommend. As regards bulk of mail from foreign countries that from America is third in order, hence its importance. I trust the Department will consider this matter and if possible grant the request of the large number of American citizens residing here that the mail from America be sent to Jerusalem through the Austrian Post Office.

Respectfully
Your Obedient Servant
(Signed) Selah Merrill
U.S. Consul

No 64

United States Consulate
Jerusalem, Syria, February 16, 1903

Hon. Herbert H. D. Peirce
Assistant Secretary of State
Washington

Sir,

Your despatch No 63, January 2, 1903, with inclosures from C. H. Patton and Sm. J. Lindsay is at hand.

I inclose extracts from the Baptismal Register, and the Minutes of the Local Committee in Jerusalem of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. These records cover a period of ~~fourteen~~ twenty years, or from 1853 to 1877.

These records show when this woman, Madame Mountford, was born, baptized, and emmigrated to America. She was the daughter of Samuel Finkelstein, as Lydia in baptism, in 1865, she ~~was born~~ was baptized — later she became Lydia von

von Finkelstein:— later Lydia Mamreoff von Finkelstein:— then Lydia Mamreoff von Finkelstein Mountford:— and now Madame Mountford.

The Finkelstein family were always known as Russian Jews who became converts or proselytes in 1853,— that is the year of their baptism. From that date till 1877 when the family disappeared from Jerusalem, they were constantly helped by the Missions as the reports grants of money recorded in the Society's Minutes sufficiently show.

It was not till some years after this Lydia went to America that the "von" and the "Mamreoff" appeared in connection with her name. The people of Jerusalem thought it strange that they had never known of these names or titles in connection with the Finkelstein family and they do not know why they were adopted.

Lindsay's letter:— "She is a lineal descendant of the dukes of Mamre the original inhabitants of Northern Palestine". Mamre was in Southern Palestine.— The name passed out of history in the time of Abraham, 2,000 years before Christ.

Ibid:— "went to Russia and bought the von Finkelstein estate".— Compare the minutes of the London Jews Society as inclosed.

As you have asked the question I will say that I think it very unwise if this person is allowed to have any prominent part in connection with the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

In 1877 this Lydia went to America. Between 1882 and 1886 she returned to Jerusalem and claimed to be an American citizen. I was here at the time but did not remember about her papers, if she had any or not. About 1890 she claims to have been