Annual Report on Affairs in Palestine for 1892.

Rainfall and Crops.

Last year there fell thirty inches of rain suitably distributed over the rainy season so that fair crops were insured. Twenty five inches of rain are considered necessary for good crops and if less than eighteen fall disaster ensues. The country has been free from unusual sickness so that the year has been one of comparative prosperity which in an Oriental country means that it has been visited by no special calamity.

Quarantine.

We have had two visitations of the plague of quarantine and in fact the second is still raging with unmitigated violence. Owing to the sudden death from an unknown cause of two persons in Acre the local doctor lost his head and sent word to Constantinople that cholera had broken out, and the Syrian coast was at once placed in quarantine, Jerusalem establishing an independent quarantine at three points against the entire country north of it. This was ordered during the first week in July and was continued for about ten weeks although investigations showed that there had been nothing like cholera in Acre. The last week in September Turkey quarantined the whole of Europe and Egypt besides. Neither in this country nor yet in Egypt has there been a trace of cholera or any suspicion of it, and the absurdity of forcing into quarantine in Syrian ports steamers that two or three days previous had left Egypt with clean bills of health must be apparent to everyone. The loss sustained in this way by the business interests of the country is very great although it would be impossible to state it in exact figures.

It is a curious fact that in all the history

of this country cholera has never come hither from Egypt or the south, but it has always approached from the north or the east. Even if cholera should visit this country Jerusalem might be exempt, since it is situated on the top of a mountain 2500 feet above the sea level. The last occurrence of cholera in this city was nearly thirty years ago or in 1865.

Acre is the port whence most the wheat that is sent out of the country is shipped, but this year the place was shut up by quarantine just at the time when the great camel trains should come in from the region east of the Jordan, and the result was that an unusual quantity was brought to Jerusalem. No one remembers when such a sight was witnessed before in this city as has been witnessed this past season when these long caravans came in day after day laden with wheat.

Jaffa and Jerusalem Railroad.

The great event of the past year has been the completion and opening to the public of the Jaffa and Jerusalem Railroad, of which I have made a full report in my Despatches No. 34 and 39 dated respectively September 5 and October 5. 1892. The road is certainly a great public convenience while the prospect at present is of rather small returns to those who have built it.

It may, however, stimulate other parties to provide sooner than would otherwise have been done, two improvements which are pressingly needed, one being a breakwater at Jaffa and the other a suitable water supply for Jerusalem.

The railroad company had almost insurmountable obstacles to overcome in getting ashore the heavy materials for their road owing to the fact that Jaffa has nothing like a quay or harbor, and vessels for safety have to lie out a mile or more from the land. A few small boats are protected by a reef of rocks which runs pretty close to the town wall, but the landing of passengers is not merely inconvenient

It is a difficult and dangerous process, and the wonder is most of time that boatmen strong and brave as they are, are able to bring their boats safely from ship to shore. Very seldom have accidents occurred, but on the 29th of October just past a boat containing nearly forty persons including the boatmen was capsized and twenty lives were lost. Such a calamity ought to stir the government to build a mole at once, but as work of that kind cannot be expected from Turkey it must be done, if done at all, by foreign capital. To say nothing of the thousands of people who land at Jaffa every year the needs both of the Custom house and of the railroad imperatively demand the construction of a breakwater sufficient for the protection of vessels of every class.

Custom House at Jaffa.

The present Custom house at Jaffa was repaired, or rather entirely rebuilt about five years since at a cost of $30.000. Like most of the work of that kind in this country it was an architectural failure and the sea has already so far undermined it the the whole structure is in danger of falling. The government would gladly sell it for $10.000. for the cost of repairing it would be very great. This fact has inclined the authorities to consider a proposition made by the railway company to meet half way, as the distance is at present too great between the Custom House and the station, and share likewise the expense an entirely new structure erected at a point most convenient for the travelling public as well as for the shippers of merchandise. There is a fair prospect that the negotiations now going on between the two parties in the case will result in some plan for their mutual interest and for the public benefit.

Aggravating case of the Land Owners at Jaffa.

This province has been greatly excited the past year by the action of the Turkish government with regard to the land owners of Jaffa. To explain the case fully would require too much space for the present report; but the matter is fraught with such serious consequences not only to the people of Jaffa but to the inhabitants of any and every other city as well that an outline of it must be given.

The orange groves of Jaffa extending over several square miles, have a world-wide fame and the raising of this fruit is one of the most profitable industries of the country. The land covered by them is and has been for centuries freehold property. There is in the country plenty of crown land the legal status of which, so to speak, is quite different from that of freehold land.

A year or eighteen months since some officious person made as he thought a great discovery, namely, that as Jaffa centuries ago "was conquered by the sword; its lands belonged to the Sultan, that is that they are crown lands notwithstanding they have been held during all this long period by private owners as free hold property, their names and titles all being recorded legally in the government registers. This man saw a chance of making money and told the Jaffaites what he proposed to do. The offered him a large bribe to keep still, but he demanded three times the amount which they refused to give and he went to Constantinople and laid the matter before the Department of finance. Turkey needed money and the suggestion to take these lands from their owners was favorably received. Notice has been served upon all the land owners at Jaffa that they must surrender their deeds and receive in exchange documents showing them to be tenants of crown lands. Petition after petition has been sent by these people to Constantinople that their rights be regarded and strong letters have been written by the different Consuls especially by

by the German Consul as the Germans are most largely represented among the foreign residents and they are land owners to the extent of many thousands of dollars, but thus far no reply has been received. This silence is interpreted by them as meaning that the authorities at Constantinople intend to carry out this abominable scheme of wholesale robbery.

Freehold property a man can do what he likes with, he can plant, build upon, sell, or mortgage it. He pays upon it a yearly land tax of one per cent.

The tenant of crown land must pay an annual land tax of five per cent, and under certain conditions the government can evict him. He cannot build upon the land without a special permit from Constantinople, which can be obtained only at the cost of a great deal of trouble, time, and especially expense. Moreover all crops raised on such lands are subject to the Tithes, and the producer is always at the mercy of the man who collects the tithes. The producer cannot compell the tithe man to come at any time, he comes at his pleasure. He always disputes with the producer as to the amount, or number as the case may be, the object being to extort money from him. He may neglect to come till the crops is half rotted, the producer cannot touch before this official has seen it.

Jaffa as to growth has during the past year been practically at a stand still. No one will exchange his deeds for the documents which the government proposes to give him instead. There has been no planting of new trees and very little building going on, consequently there are in Jaffa, one thousand or two thousand people who would ordinarily be employed in planting or building who are now idle. These people must live and as they have little or no work they must steal: as a result there have been more cases of robbery in Jaffa the past six months than have occurred there before in as many years.

By the proposed reversal of these lands to the crown the amount of money sent to Constantinople would be prinstipled: say that 20,000 pounds are sent at present, by the change 10,000 pounds would be sent instead, but only for two or three years. It would be killing the hen to get the golden egg, for in five years not only every orange grower at Jaffa but every orange garden would be ruined. Orange trees are of such a nature that they must be cared for constantly or they will perish. One or two years neglect proves fatal. And where a tenant has no privileges and when it costs him a large part of what he raises to satisfy the demands of the government, he is not likely to take any special interest in the care of the land.

The prospect for the land owners at Jaffa is bad, and their case is exceedingly interesting as furnishing a good example of misgovernment.

Jewish Colonies and Immigration.

The prohibition against the influx of Jews which went into effect about the first of July 1891, and which was duly reported to the Department, has not been removed, consequently the number of these people arriving here since that time date may amount to a few score, hardly to a few hundred. During this period, especially during the winter of 1891-1892, thousands of pounds were spent by benevolent Christian societies, chiefly in England, for the relief of poor Jews in this country, and having no drawback the poor immigrant in the way of sickness, and the importation of the wretchedly poor having ceased, the helpless class is far smaller than it was a year ago and their general condition is much better.

The state of the various Jewish colonies in Palestine has not essentially changed since my full report on this subject dated December 3. 1891. Two views are liable to be taken of this matter of Jewish colonization, one highly coloured and overdrawn,

and the other depreciative, and advocates of the one or the other may think that they are perfectly sincere. Under the first head belong all missionaries to the Jews and all that respectable class in England and elsewhere who think that Palestine belongs to the Jews and that they should be allowed and encouraged and even assisted with funds to come here on the other hand it is asked how civilization would be promoted or the world would be the gainer if seven or even ten per cent - the country could not contain more than that of the 7.000.000 Jews in the world could be planted here ?- Whatever views one may hold on this question no one can deny that hired colonists are not likely to be successful colonists, and the history of the Jewish colonies in Palestine is every year illustrations the truth of this principle.

Attention needs to be called to the exaggerated estimates that are widely and constantly being circulated of the number of Jews now in this country. I may mention that I had with my colleague, the Honorable John Dickson H. B. M. Consul in this city, many interviews on this subject during the last half of 1891, and we spent nearly two months in our investigations on this point, each by mutual agreement acting independently of the other, and to our surprise the results were nearly the same. We used every possible means to secure approximate accuracy and we certainly had at our command some methods for ascertaining the truth which were not accessable to missionaries to the Jews, much less to enthusiastic newspaper correspondents. But as it is continued to be asserted in print that there are 100,000 to 150,000 Jews in Palestine and 50,000 in Jerusalem alone, when the entire population of the city does not amount to that figure last named it is necessary to reaffirm the results of my

former investigations which I have gone carefully over again during the past few months, namely "that 42,000 or 43,000 represents pretty nearly the number of Jews now in Palestine" and that the number in Jerusalem cannot be much over 25,000 and must certainly be considerably less than 30,000.

Explorations and Discoveries.

The only systematic exploration that has been carried on the past year or in fact that has been allowed by the Turkish government, has been done by an American acting for the English society known as the Palestine Exploration Fund, at Tell El Hesy generally supposed to be the Lachish of the Old Testament, which was besieged by Sennacherib and was of sufficient importance to be sculptured on slabs in the national Galleries of Ninneveh. This Tell is, as this word means, a mound of earth and ruins, and an effort has been made to remove it entirely, bit by bit, in order to ascertain its structure and archeological contents. As is usual in such cases successive layers of civilisation or of building have been unearthed and a variety of bronze implements, stone weights and other relics have been found, but the most interesting find was that of an Assyrian inscription thought to be of as early a date as 1400 B. C. It seems to have been addressed to the Governor of the place who was afterwards murdered by his own subjects.

Many of the discoveries that have been made about Jerusalem within twenty years past have been made by accident. The ground sinks down, a hole appears, and that leads to an examination which results in a valuable addition to our archeological knowledge of the city. This was the way the magnificent ground plan and mosaics covering four hundred or five hundred square feet of St Stephens church near the Damascus gate was first brought to light. This was

built by the Empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius the younger, in A.D. 460, and the spacious tomb chambers, which she cut out of the solid rock near the church and in which she was buried, likewise became known by accident.

During the past year a hole was discovered in a piece of land southwest of the city, a man went down in it, to see what he could find, and large tombs and beautiful sarcophagi were soon made known to the world. In connection with other archeologists I have for many years tried to locate what Josephus describes when he is marking out the line of the wall of circumvallation which Titus during the siege of Jerusalem A.D. 66-A.D. 70, threw around the city, as "the monuments" meaning the "tomb" "of Herod". Wars V. 12, 2. He gives but few general indications, points or objects well known at the time, and that of these "monuments" should be just about where this wonderful find has been made. I suppose Josephus to have in mind Herod Agrippa II. and not Herod the Great who not buried in Jerusalem. The "rolling stone at the door" of the sepulchre six feet in diameter and twelve inches thick, the ornamentation on the sarcophagi, the character of the masonry, and some other bits of evidence, lead me to believe that this is the very monument to which Josephus referred.

Nearly all modern scholar in the Department of Palestinean archaeology having abandoned as utterly untenable the traditional site of the Holy sepulchre as the place of the crucifixion and burial of our Lord, and have fixed upon the hill above Jeremiah's Grotto three hundred yards north of the Damascus gate, as the site of the crucifixion. Adjoining this hill which is covered with Mohammedan graves, is a large garden controlling the face of the hill which is rock for 150 yards. Excavations at different times in this garden have

shown that six or more feet below the surface of the ground there exist interesting ruins, and the rock itself there is a remarkable tomb which has recently attracted much attention. An effort has been made the past year to purchase this garden with its appurtenances, place it in the hands of a general committee so that it should not be in the control of any particular religious sect, have excavations made and every thing that might be found preserved and exposed for the benefit of all who take an interest in such matters. The negociations were, it was thought successful and the money ready be paid; but very recently there has come a hitch of some kind so that after all the project may fail.

In our American cemetery on Mount Zion I was overseeing the digging of a certain grave and at a depth of four feet we came upon flat blocks of stone. I tried to dig in two places near the first with similar results. At last we dug the grave elsewhere and subsequently I employed men to remove the earth from the stones referred to and at that point and at two others where I made examinations I found the remains of a large building which I judge was a church. These foundations of pillars were on a pavement six or seven feet below the surface of the ground, and it is a curious fact that wherever we attempt to dig a grave in that yard we come at the depth mentioned upon human bones and skulls. It seems shocking but as the ground is full of such remains there is nothing to be done. This filling in must have been done long ago for this ground has been American property since about 1850. I hoped have walled in these finds so that they might always be exposed, but this was too expensive for my private means and I have partially covered them and marked the places so that they can be avoided whenever it is necessary hereafter to dig graves.

Number of American resident and Travellers.

I have made an effort to ascertain the number of Americans residing in this consular district the past year and find it to be, Americans 43, naturalized 370, total 413. The average number of Americans residing in this district during the past ten years is 40, and of naturalized Americans 270, total 310. Transient Americans to the number of 450 visited this country during the past season, or more definitely (the season is thus reckoned here) from June 1, 1891 to June 1. 1892. This number is probably below rather than above what it should be since absolute exactness is impossible, but 450 we are certain of. This is about forty per cent of all the travellers that have been recorded as arriving in Palestine during the period mentioned. Seasons vary here as everywhere also & sometimes the number of American travellers is 50 or 60 per cent of the entire number. To avoid misapprehension I may say that we do not reckon as "travellers" or "tourists" people who visit this country as "pilgrims" of which class there are from 5,000 to 10,000 annually. The amount spent by these 450 travellers I have estimated from various reliable data, to be about $75.000. This does not indicate all the money that comes from America to this country annually for priests, Jews, charitable institutions, and different individuals receive large sums for various purposes, the amount of which it would be impossible to ascertain.

Prices of Land near Jerusalem.

The price of land about Jerusalem is something surprising when we consider that the place has almost no manufactures very little foreign commerce, and that the

city contains a multitude of poor people. Still a great deal of land changes hands every year and the prices asked & paid are simply exhorbitant. I will give a few examples that have come within my own knowledge within two years past since they will serve as general illustrations.

No. 1. Two acres sold in 1890 for $250 per acre, sold in 1891 for $750 per acre.
No. 2. Twelve acres sold in 1890 for $435 " " " 1892 $2178 " "
No. 3. Seven " " 1886 $363 " " " 1892 $6534 " "
No. 4. Two " " 1886 $1200 " " " 1892 $3000 " "
No. 5. One half " " 1891 $200 " " " 1892 $3700 " "
that is for the half acre. No. 6. One acre sold in 1872 for $40, sold in 1892 for $12,000.
No. 7. Two thirds of an acre sold in 1866 for $100, sold in 1891 for $3600.
No. 8. One acre sold in 1865 for $1000, sold in 1891 for $24.000.

There are not in one section or locality but in different directions about the city varying from one fourth of a mile to one mile distant from the town.

Land is sold by the Pick and Dunum, Turkish measures which, finding no tables anywhere. I have taken pains to work out into square inches, square feet, & square yards as shown by the following tables. I give the results as computed by inches and also by centimetres since there is a slight difference in the amounts.

A Dunum is 40X40, or 1600 □ Pick.
A Pick land measure, masons, &c, is 29½ inches,
while the merchants Pick is only 27 inches.
In one Pick land measure there are 75 centimetres.

Estimated by inches		Estimated by centimetres
870.25 □ inches	in 1 □ Pick	871.87.
6.04 □ feet	" " "	6.05.
9669.44 □ "	" 1 Dunum	9687.44.
7207.85 □ Pick	" 1 Acre	7194.46.
4.496 Dunum	" 1 "	4.496.

Practically there are 4½ Dunum in one Acre.
I think land is almost always, certainly all land of any value, is sold by the Pick.

Revenue, Roads, and Miscellaneous Statistics.

Public Revenue.

Tithes	$245,718.	
Land tax	186,750.	
Sheep and Goat tax	44,987.	
Military tax	29,007.	
Shop tax	11,117.	
Sale and Mortgage Fees	20,745.	$538,324.

Municipal Revenue.

Carriage road to Jaffa	$ 6,360.	
Gate tax	12,500.	
Building	3,181.	
Miscellaneous	4,115.	
Selling liquor tax	1,820.	$ 27,976.
Total		$ 566,300.

The carriage road between Jerusalem and Jericho which has been so long in building is ready for use only about one half of the distance and there is no prospect of its immediate completion. Funds are provided, then squandered, meantime the road waits.

The carriage road to Jaffa is badly out of repair and the section of twelve miles between Ramleh and Jaffa has for two years past been in a shocking condition, in places simply impassable and carriages have been obliged to go in the fields. Money has recently been sent from Constantinople, it is said officially about two thousand pounds, for the repair of this road, but probably by the time it reaches through the hands of the contractor, and the sub-contractor, and the sub-sub-contractor, the man who actually undertakes to do the repairs, this sum will have shrunk to about five hundred pounds. The business of this road is already feeling the effects of the new railway.

It is certain that there will be no work for a majority of the carriages that have hitherto found employment on this road and it is now very difficult to say to what the owners of these carriages can turn their attention. Their condition is far worse than it could possibly be in a civilized country where labor and capital can without special loss direct themselves from one form of industry to another.

Permits have been granted for 30 new houses and 150 for repairs and additions, chiefly for buildings outside the walls of the town.

The amount of grapes brought into the city this season was not far from 1,400,000 pounds, of which the Convents took 500,000 pounds, Public Houses 400,000 pounds, private families 200,000 pounds, all these for wine; and 300,000 pounds were for sale in the market for table use.

Commerce and Navigation at Jaffa.

The imports at Jaffa for the year ending September 30. 1892, amounted to $1,656,215, and the Exports for the same period amounted to $1,141,500.

The Tonnage is reported at 646,403,743, — entered and 644,403,665 cleared. The Kinds and amounts of merchandise and the different nationalities represented in the shipping that are given in detail in the inclosed report from our Consular Agent at that place.

United States Consulate,
Jerusalem, November 10. 1892.

(S.) Selah Merrill,
U. S. Consul.

Inclosures:
1. Table exports Jaffa
1. " imports "
1. " Navigation.

Names of persons employed at the United States Consulate, Jerusalem, December 31, 1892.

Name	Rank	Place	Of what country citizen or subject	Date of appointment
Herbert E. Clark	Vice Consul	Jerusalem	American	June 23, 1887
Gabriel A. Farugi	Dragoman	"	Turkish	July 11, 1888
David Feinstein	2nd do	"	English	October 1, 1891
Asad Hanna	Guard	"	Turkish	April 1, 1875
Mohammed Abbas	"	"	"	July 1, 1889

Jaffa Agency

Ernest Hardegg	Consular Agent	Jaffa	Germany	Oct. 27, 1871
Jacob E. Meyer	Dragoman	"	Turkey	Dec. 15, 1871
Elias G. Lorayb	"	"	"	Oct. 19, 1882
Ali Ibrahim Effendi	Guard	"	"	January, 1883

S. H.

United States Consulate
Jerusalem. Syria.
January 2. 1893.

Hon. William F. Wharton
Assistant Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I send you inclosed herewith the accounts and returns of this office, with the necessary vouchers for the quarter ending December 31. 1892. as per the subjoined list of inclosures:

I remain respectfully,
Your Obedient Servant.

List of inclosures:

1. Rent & miscellaneous expense account.
2. Salary of Interpreters and guards.
3. Digest of Invoice book.
4. Record of Notarial services.
5. Register of Official letters sent.
6. " " " " received.
7. List of U. S. Citizens Jerusalem.
8. " " " " & employes Jaffa.
9. Names of employes U. S. Consulate Jerusalem
10. List of letters sent Department.
11. Names of Deceased American citizens.

Note: For some years past this Consulate has made a separate account for Loss by Exchange with a special Trust for the same fund, at the request of the Treasury Department in a letter dated September 14. 1892, we now