

30 Jan

1911.

TURKEY

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Jerusalem,
April 21, 1911

No. INDEXED

Received by post 21. 30

Consul Satow,
no. 26.

(Subject.)
Alleged sacrilege at mosque of Omar
by English excavators.

Reports Moslem Excitement
arising from rumours as to -

Last Paper.

C

(Print.)

(Minutes.)

COMM Mr Fitzmaurice

Capt Parker has stated to Mr Philip Graves that he
excavated under the mosque of Omar (the Temple of Solomon) in
virtue of a secret agreement with David Ben-Gurion, the head of the
T. F. O. in the past

(How disposed of.)

No. 299 Conf. of Mar 3, 1911.

(Action completed.)

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Next Paper.

British Consulate,

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Jerusalem,

April 21, 1911.

No. 26.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that considerable excitement has been evident among the Moslem population of this city during the last week arising out of rumours that an act of sacrilege had been committed at the Harem-esh-Sherif, commonly known as the Mosque of Omar, by, or at the instigation of, the English excavators led by Captain Parker.

So many conflicting and exaggerating rumours are abroad that it is difficult to arrive at the truth of the matter. The story most generally current is that on the night of the 12th. instant two gendarmes were seen at the door of the Mosque with three sacks and that Captain Parker and an Armenian named Wekandar, in his employ, were seen at the gate of the courtyard of the Mosque near the St. Stephen's gate. It is believed that investigations had been carried out under the mass of rock, known as the "Dome of the Rock", round which the Mosque is built, and that some objects had been removed. There are the wildest rumours current as to what

these

The Right Honourable,

Sir Gerald Lowther, B.C.M.G., C.B.,

etc.,

etc.,

etc.,

British Ambassador,

Constantinople.

these objects were, the popular belief inclining to the version that these were the royal insignia of the House of David.

As already stated, Moslem public opinion was greatly excited at these rumours, and angry demonstrations have taken place at the Serai against the Governor and at the Mosque against Sheikh Khalil, one of the guardians, who are believed to have been privy to the attempt. Telegrams were also sent to all the Vilayets of the Empire stating that holy relics of the Moslem faith had, with the Governor's connivance, been removed by foreigners.

A Commission, under the presidency of the Military Commandant, has been appointed to investigate the matter. The two gendarmes, Sheikh Khalil and the Armenian Makasdar, who had left for Jaffa, have been arrested and imprisoned. Search is also being made for a certain Salameh, the dragoman of Captain Parker.

With a view to quieting public opinion proclamations have been issued by the Governor and the local Committee of Union and Progress in which it is stated that the Authorities were occupying themselves with the question and that the people should remain quiet. The Committee proclamation also states that the enquiry is being held under its supervision.

The local Christian population, which is always easily alarmed, has been rather nervous as the discovery of the alleged sacrilege was made just after the departure of the Moslem pilgrims to Nebi Mousa and it was feared that, on the return of the pilgrims, they might vent their wrath upon Christians in general. I do not believe that there is any ground for this alarm, as Moslem irritation has so far been directed against the Governor. In any case the garrison has, as is usually the case at Easter, been temporarily strengthened.

It

It is believed that, as the result of this incident, Azmi Bey, the Governor, may be removed. Sami Bey, the Commandant of the Gendarmerie, is also suspected as it is believed that the gendarmes were employed with his permission.

Captain Parker and his associates left Jerusalem at the beginning of the week. Their operations have never ceased to be an object of interest to the population of Jerusalem, but they have been so successful in keeping their secret that nothing is known either as to their aims or as to the progress achieved. Their object in working up from Siloam has been believed to get under the Temple area, as the Mosque precincts are usually called; and a plausible explanation of the present occurrence is that, finding the subterranean passage which they were following bore away from the Mosque, they were obliged to carry out operations from the Mosque itself.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

With the greatest respect,

You Excellency's

Most obedient,

humble Servant,

H. Salow

P.S. There was a panic in the city at mid-day, arising out of an affray at the Mosque between fellahin and soldiers who tried ^{to prevent} them entering. The latter fired some shots in the air, which caused shop-keepers to close their shops in alarm. Every thing is now quiet.

H.S.