

[Blank page]

44 Jer

1909.	TURKEY	45 Jer 138 (1)
Jerusalem April 16. 1909	No.	Received by <i>post.</i>
Council Bleek No. 30 Last Paper.	(Subject.) <u>The Rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre</u> Reporting on the encroachment by the Armenians upon the space in - liberty reserved for the Copts, as alleged by the Superior of the Coptic monastery at Jerusalem.	
(Print.)	(Minutes.) C. To 7.0. (it) v P.L. No 302. April 27.09.	
(How disposed of.)		
Action completed.)	(Index.)	
Next Paper.		

No. 30.

Jerusalem,

April 16. 1909.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that a few days ago I received the visit of the Superior of the Coptic Monastery at Jerusalem, who came, as he stated, to inform me of an incident which had taken place at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the previous Saturday, April 10th on the occasion of the ceremony of the Holy Fire. His Reverence said that as last year the space in the rotunda of the church hitherto reserved for the Copts had

His Excellency

The Right Honourable,

Sir Gerard Lowther, K. C. M. G., C. B.,

Constantinople.

been encroached upon by the Armenians, he had waited upon the Mutesarrif some days beforehand and had requested His Excellency to see that the encroachment was not repeated this year. Seebhi Bey had promised to do what was necessary. But on the 10th instant the Superior^{on} entering the church noticed that the Armenians had again taken up a portion of the space hitherto set apart for the Copts, and moreover that the limited area of the rotunda had been partly occupied by a triple and in some places a quadruple row of soldiers for the purpose of keeping order, whereas heretofore a double row had been deemed sufficient. The Superior - therefore made a fresh request to the Mutesarrif, who was in the church watching the proceedings, asking that the Armenians should

should keep to their proper bounds and that the soldiers should be removed, His Reverence undertaking to be responsible for the preservation of order by his own people. His Excellency directed the Chief of the Police to attend to the Superior's wishes, but nothing was done. In consequence the greater part of the Coptic pilgrims were unable to witness the ceremony of the Holy Fire. The Superior had telegraphed to Constantinople to complain of this and had also requested the Mutesarrif to cause a regular plan of the interior of the Church to be drawn up, by mutual consent of the different communities, shewing the limits to which each might extend, in order that such encroachments might be prevented in future years. He now came merely to inform me of what had passed, and

did

did not ask me to take any action. I thanked His Reverence and said that if a suitable opportunity presented itself I would touch upon the matter with Subhi Bey.

In the course of the day I visited both the Greek Patriarch and the (Latin) Custodian of the Holy Sepulchre. Both these dignitaries, though usually unlikely to agree, expressed themselves in the same sense as being adverse to the claim of the Copts; they both said that they did not think that any encroachment had taken place and that they were not aware that the Copts were entitled to any special place. This is perhaps the altitude they might be expected to assume; but in any case the incident is over and has no importance save as regards the future. I have not spoken to Subhi Bey, but understand that

that he has suggested to the different Communities the desirability of carefully delimitating the space allotted to each of them. If they consent to do so, doubtless a cause of future conflict will be removed. But I have thought it best to avoid all interference in so delicate and disputed a subject as the rights enjoyed by different confessions in the Holy Places, without definite instructions to the contrary, and I have not even been asked for any assistance in the present case.

I have the honour to be,
with the greatest respect,
Sir,

Your Excellency's
most obedient,

humble servant,

E. C. Beech