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1907.

TURKEY

Jerusalem,
July 10. 1908

No.

Received by foot July 21

General Black
No. 34

Mutsoarifet of Jerusalem.

Reporting on current affairs for
Quarter ended June 30 1908

Last Paper.

(Print.)

(Number.)

Copy sent marked in red
to F.O. No 42 of July 23.

Colonel Surties
Mr. Fitzmaurice
copy 7.0.

The replacement of the French
by an English one in the clock tower
at Jerusalem was hoped for in Mr
Black's last despatch which we sent
home & which also mentioned the
probable introduction of motors &
oil engines which we have now, at
the request of the F.O, asked him
to report on when the project is
close at hand

Says informant Black as desired
by the F.O. that I have recommended
the transaction as regards the
introduction of oil engines
which we have now.

(Index.)

Next Paper.

could Egypt like the suggestion of a railway going towards
its frontier. Geological advantages of which are all in favour of Turkey?

No. 34.

Jerusalem,
July 10. 1908

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit
herewith a report on events in
this Consular district during
the past quarter.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant

E. C. Bleck.

G. H. Barclay, Esq., C.V.O., C.M.G.

His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary

et.

for

the

Constantinople

As usual, the Mutessarif has been absent from Jerusalem during the greater part of the quarter. His Excellency explains that at this season of the year his presence is required at the various centres for the collection of the tithes, though this is more probably an excuse to enable him to visit the outlying districts and to afford him change of air and relief from the petty worries of official life at Jerusalem. His labours as regards this year's tithes have been most successful. The crops are everywhere abundant, and he assures me that he has been able in consequence to increase the return to the government by nearly £33,000, or

some

some thirty per cent. This satisfactory result has been achieved, according to His Excellency, without in any way oppressing the peasantry. But he is much impressed by the difficulties encountered by the fellahin in the matter of transporting their agricultural produce to the seaports, owing to the absence of roads. As the country in the plain is for the most part flat and sandy, he thinks that motor — or more probably steam — cars with a trailer might be employed for this purpose, and I am corresponding with firms in England with a view to making an experiment in this direction. At a recent interview with His Excellency I asked him

him if he had not been able to convince himself that what was really required was a railway connecting Jaffa and Gaza with the Egyptian frontier; the strategical advantages of such a line seemed to me all in favour of Turkey, and its economic benefits were obvious. But Ekrem Bey thought that such a project would be viewed with disfavour at Constantinople and that in any case its cost would be far greater than that of the proposed service of steam-cars. I pointed out that, even if each car and trailer could convey ten tons, it would take a long time to deal with 40,000 tons, which in good years represents the quantity exported from Gaza, and dwelt on the fact that the conveyance of the grain alone would probably yield an adequate return on the capital required

required to build the railway, as is the case with the Smyrna-Aidin Railway, which derives its revenue chiefly from the freight on barley. Ekrem Bey however thought that any proposal in this sense would be ascribed to a desire on his part to make money. Meanwhile, he has repeatedly urged the Grand Vizier to appoint an Inspector of Agriculture with a view to improving the methods and increasing the area of cultivation.

There are no official changes other than those already reported.

Public security has continued satisfactory. An incident occurred recently in connection with the Sanctuaries at Bethlehem which might have caused trouble. The sentry on duty discovered a Russian pilgrim in the act of chipping out the cement which fastens the Silver Star in the Grotto of the Nativity.

Notice

Notice was at once given of this act of sacrilege, and the Acting Governor, the Russian Consul and other officials proceeded to the spot. The damage done was repaired by the local authorities, and the soldier's vigilance was rewarded by his promotion to the rank of *on-bashi*. I do not know what was done to the Russian pilgrim.

Telegraphic communication is to be established with the newly-created Kaza of Hafir, on the frontier, and on June 28th the first telegraph-post was erected at Beersheba with great ceremony.

The usual recruiting has taken place for the year 1325; in the BIRE Redif battalion 105 recruits were drawn for the *tertib-i-covel*, 11 for the *tertib-i-sani*, 28 recruits excused in former years as the sole supports of their families were drafted into

into the ranks, and 2 deserters; 123 were passed into the Ihtiyat and 71 time-expired men were dismissed. In the Hebron battalion 214 were drawn for the tertib-i-ewel, 23 for the tertib-i-sāmi, 44 belonging to former years and 11 deserters were taken; 103 were passed into the second division (Kisim-i-sāmi). In the nahie of ARKOUTB, belonging to Hebron, 31 recruits were drawn for the tertib-i-ewel and 3 for the tertib-i-sāmi, 5 men from former years and 3 deserters were taken. In the METDEL battalion, belonging to Gaza, 102 men were drawn for the tertib-i-ewel and 14 for the tertib-i-sāmi, 12 men of former years and 14 deserters were taken. In the villages of the RAMLÉ battalion which fall within the Kagā of Gaza 62 men were drawn for the tertib-

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tertib-i-ewel, 7 for the tertib-i-sāmi, 5 men belonging to former years and 2 deserters were taken.

From each Redif battalion within the Sanjak fifty men of the year 1325, after undergoing inspection and drawing the lot, have been assigned to the Third Army Corps and are being sent to its head-quarters, in accordance with orders received.

The returns of exports at Jaffa shew a small increase over the corresponding quarter of 1907, the total being £113,500 against £106,000. The increase is spread over most of the items of export, but there is a falling-off of £10,000 in oranges. The imports are almost stationary, the total being £213,000 against £210,000; there is an increase of £10,000 in cotton goods and of £4,000 in rice, but a falling off of £4,500 in coffee and of £1,300 in sugar.

Iron

Iron, hardware and petroleum are about the same, and timber has increased, but there is a falling-off in tiles and bricks. On the other hand, the consumption of tobacco and tumbeki seems continually to increase.

In shipping there is a falling-off in the total of 18 steamers and nearly 10,000 tons. British steamers were two less in number and 14,000 less in tonnage than in 1907. There is little change as regards French, Austrian, Russian or German shipping; but Italian steamers have risen from 10, with a tonnage of 18,000, to 23, with a tonnage of 39,000. Turkish steamers have fallen from 15 (4,900 tons) to 2 (805 tons), and only 4 Greek steamers of 4,800 tons resorted to Jaffa during the past quarter, as compared with 14 of 12,900 tons in the corresponding quarter of 1907.

I have succeeded in inducing the Mutessarif to replace the French clock

clock bought by him last year for the clock-tower at Jerusalem, and found unsatisfactory, by one of British manufacture, and have almost concluded the purchase with Messrs Dent, of Cockspur Street. The French clock will be relegated to Beersheba, where a clock-tower is under construction.

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