Condition and Needs of the Jerusalem Consulate.
~~Department Circular June 24,1905.~~

Consul.

This is a difficult post and whoever occupies it must expect to encounter many obstacles and must be willing to do a great deal of hard work. Taking care of ten or twelve hundred naturalized Jews,fifteen hundred to two thousand tourists,and a considerable number of troublesome cranks as many documents on file in the Department will show,to say nothing of many other duties,is no easy task.

Vice Consul.

He should be also Deputy Consul. Mr Clark the present Vice Consul is obliged to be absent on account of his business several times during the year and this frequently happens in the season of travellers when he is most needed. There does not seem to be any suitable person to take his place,-should that be thought of.

Dragomans or Interpreters.

Two are absolutely needed. Our second dragoman,Mr D.Feinstein,is a Jew and his services are indispensable. He is reliable and strictly honest. He knows the many 'jargons' which our army of naturalized Jews speak. He has a store and cannot be in our office more than two or two and a half hours a day. He receives from our Government only $100.00 a year. On such pay we have not the face to ask him to spend more hours in the Consulate. He does a great deal of clerical work in connection with our accounts,invoices,and other matters. Our First Dragoman,called 'Interpreter', Mr Antoine Thos.Gelat,is able and thoroughly efficient.His character and his services for the Consulate are known to the Department. By his knowledge of the Turkish law and his wisdom in dealing with Turkish officials many matters are settled in Jerusalem which,under less skilful management,would flare up into serious and annoying controversies between the two Governments. He is paid $1000.00 a year.

Guards or Kawasses.

We have two. During the six months embracing the busy season three kawasses are greatly needed. It is next to impossible for two to do,at that time,the necessary work. One of them is on duty in the Consulate every night and in case one is sick the work becomes hard. These are paid,each,$200.00 annually.

Jaffa Agency.

At the Agency five persons are employed and they are all needed. See my Despatch to the Department,no number,July 5,1900, on the needs and work at that post,and the reasons why it should be raised to a Vice Consulship with a small salary attached. Since the present arrangement was made many years ago the Jaffa Agency has grown immensely in importance. The amount of work is fifty fold greater than it was then. The Department ought to be acquainted with the character of the work required at that post.

On account of the large number of naturalized American Jews arriving at Jaffa and residing in its neighborhood the work of the Agent is chiefly dealing with foreign officials who have no respect for the treaty rights of Americans and who do not hesitate to invent ways to annoy them. This the Department will understand,is delicate and difficult work,for a false move would involve our Government with the Turkish Government in some serious collision.

A Safe.

A Safe is greatly needed for the Consulate. We have some important documents which should be cared for more carefully than is done at present. Moreover every year money,jewelry,and other valuables are entrusted to us and the best that we can now do is to lock them up in the Consulate. Occasionally we have a considerable amount of money belonging to some person deceased,which we must keep. If it is said that in the case of travellers and residents we are not obliged to do this it would,on the other hand,be very uncivil to refuse to do this favor.

Telegraph.

We use the telegraph as little as possible and from year to year our bill for telegraphing is small. This will continue so unless some special emergency should arise.

Letters.

The number of letters received making inquiries about business matters is large. I am obliged to answer all these letters which I do faithfully. If I could be authorized to decline to answer about one half of these,because the questions become absurd when asked in view of the conditions existing in this country,our postage bill would be lessened a few dollars each quarter. The entire expense,however,seems small; still it is an item. If without such authorization I decline to answer letters of that class,I expose myself to complaints.

Writing Machines.

I have two machines,one in the Consulate and one in my private residence,and both are my own. The only expense the Government has incurred for writing machines is a few sheets of carbon paper and half a dozen ribbons three of which have not yet been used. I use and repair my machines myself. But were I to be removed from this office and a person appointed who does not own a machine and does not know how to use one,the matter of copying all letters and documents by hand would come again into vogue as was the case formerly,and this would throw much extra work upon the Interpreters who,with all the work now required of them,would scarcely be able to do it.

Rent.

This is very high as compared with Beirut and some other cities with which I am acquainted. The present office is convenient and central both for business and for travellers. It has been the American Consulate for a large part of the time during

the last forty years. It is a stone building and we occupy the second storey and have entire control of the only entrance. It is an old building and far from elegant. Some travellers do not hesitate to criticise our present Consulate for its (in their judgment) lack of modernness and smartness. But my observation has shown me that the efficiency of a Consular Officer does not depend upon the elegance of the apartments he occupies . Our present Consulate is owned by the Armenian Convent and twice during the past six years they have been on the point of demanding the building in order to pull it down and to erect a new one. They may do this at anytime,-of course with the formal legal notice. The Spanish have for a long time owned a consular building but for twenty or more years they have not occupied it as such. The Russians own their own building. They have in fact a number of buildings besides a large compound,but they are no example for us since their national purposes are entirely different from our own. Within a few years past the Germans have bought property so that now they own their Consulate. This makes really but two out of twelve governments represented here who own their consular buildings. Personally,if my opinion may be expressed,I disapprove of the plan of the Government owning its consulate for many strong reasons.

Should we change our Consulate for another we should have to pay more rent than we are now paying. The English,French,German, Austrian,and Russian,have quite showy buildings,compared with which ours is very humble.

Fuel and Lights.

During the year this is an item although not a large one. In former years I paid for these expenses myself,but in recent years it has been charged to Contingent Expense account. The natives of the country have little fire,but foreigners cannot get along without warming their rooms in some way. One of the kawasses remains in the Consulate all night and he cannot get along without light and some fire. Further the kawass on guard must have a bed,and bedding with its repairs and cleaning is also a small item of expense.

Furniture.

All our furniture is plain,some of it very plain. Formerly it was shamefully plain,but better was never allowed. From time to time this needs repairing or replacing which must be done.

Flags and Flagstaff.

Our flags are frequently torn by the strong winds especially in the winter storms. We have also very strong winds all summer, every afternoon. The flags are kept in repair at a small price.

Carriages.

During the year there are a number of occasions when carriages have to be employed and there is no provision for this outlay under 'contingent expenses'. These bills I pay with my own funds. If a carriage is employed to meet a newly appointed Consul or some one of the governments represented here,or to make an

official visit when,for example,the Russian Consul General orders an "official reception" on the occasion of the Czar's accession day,it is not the American Consul but his government that is asked to pay these compliments to a friendly power,and it would seem to be right for this expense to be charged tothe government instead of being borne by the Consul himself. I do not consider it out of place for me to call serious attention to this matter.

Special Clerk.

The work of this Consulate has increased so much during the past twenty years that a special clerk is greatly needed. The Consul and two Interpreters have more writing than they can possibly do,with all the other work that demands their attention. There is a great deal of indexing that ought to be done which at present is neglected simply because we cannot do it.

When I visited the Cairo office last November I found letters,documents,and papers arranged and indexed in a neat and useful manner. But I was told that the expense for this work was borne by a wealthy gentleman and was not borne by the Government.

A person who is a fairly good penman,a fairly good English scholar,who knows short hand and typewriting,who would receive say $600.00 a year,would be invaluable in this office. Had I means I should hire such a person myself. But that is out of the question. Sometimes there is a great pressure of writing when a special clerk would be of the greatest service. Not infrequently at such times,my wife comes to the office and spends half a day upon copying or the writing of letters as may be necessary. I do not wish to boast,but this very report has been written out on the writing machine by my wife because from the pressure of other duties I was not able to do it myself.

The Consul and the two Interpreters advise with each other on most matters and work together in harmony. The Consul decides all legal cases. He conducts all the correspondence except the actual writing of letters in Arabic,Turkish,French,and Hebrew (Jewish). Official calls are made by the Consul accompanied by Mr Gelat the first dragoman. Mr Feinstein interprets for the Jews,prepares invoices,keeps the accounts,and does some of the copying. Mr Gelat does the court business,attends to some of the complaints,looks after the Jews that are robbed or beaten,is the general peacemaker (when that is possible) in all Jewish quarrels family,neighborhood,rent matters and taxes,overreachings,thefts, ~~scow~~s not paid,fraudulent dealings of all kinds,houses,cisterns,drainage,protested bills,personal squabbles,&c.,&c.,without end,and defends American citizens in the Turkish Court. His work is the most annoying,the most trying,the most perplexing,the most delicate,of the three divisions. Hundreds receive the benefit of his constant,patient,and skilful labors. Some of these people are grateful,while not a few seem to have little sense of gratitude. For the most part our American Jews are too poor to pay for any services,but we cannot refuse to do these services for them so long as they are reckoned as American citizens. -- This last remark touches the secret of more than half the labor and worry attendant upon the carrying on of this Consulate.

Fewer naturalized American Jews should be allowed to come here to reside forever or more help should be provided to enable us to do the ever increasing amount of work. While the work is peculiar and hard, everything in our power is done for the interests of American citizens visiting Jerusalem or residing in this Consular district. No Consulate takes greater pains to help its subjects than does the American Consulate. And this work is carried on under a government which does not like our Treaty by which we exist here, and which is very far from being too willing to assist the Consul in his special duties towards American citizens. As to expenses I do not see how it is possible to carry on this Consulate more economically than is done at present. The appropriations should be larger and soon must be or American interests here will suffer.

The Growth of Consulates.

It seems to me that Congress which provides the money for the support of the Consular service, does not realize that the responsibilities of the Jerusalem Consulate and the work necessary to carry it on successfully have vastly increased in the last twenty years. The same should be said of the Jaffa Agency. The salary of the Consul, first Dragoman, and each of the two Guards, has been increased, but in other respects everything remains as it was many years ago when, to mention but one item, we had less than two hundred naturalized American Jews to care for whereas now we have more than twelve hundred.

Selah Merrill
Consul.

Jerusalem, Syria
September 8, 1905.

That the whole matter of this Consulate and its Needs may be before the eye at once I will copy from my unnumbered despatch of July 5,1905,referred to above,what I reported relative to the Jaffa Agency. --

"Jaffa Agency.

E.Hardegg is the Agent. He has served faithfully many years and is indispensable. He receives no salary. A great deal of his time is spent in running to the custom house,the local governor,to the police station,to help naturalized Jews whose troubles are many,-who pay nothing,-who forget to be thankful. The Agency has two dragomans and two kawasses. None of these four persons receive any salary. They frequently have to leave their work when it is inconvenient for them to do so,in order to attend to some important Consular matter. One of the dragomans is a prominent citizen. He is a physician,graduated at the American College and Medical School in Beirut, is highly respected in his profession,and as a citizen. Because of his position as a doctor he is on friendly terms with the local authorities,governor,police,and customs, and is frequently able to do American interests as they come before the Consulate,great service. He is of special service in cases of illness on shipboard,invalid sailors,and the like. I do not see how his services can be dispensed with. We are particularly fortunate in having at our command such a man. The other dragoman,Mr Moussa,(the other is Dr.Ghoreyib),is the son of a former dragoman of the Consulate who served it without compensation for many years.

The kawasses at Jaffa: - The Turkish authorities want them dropped. They are necessary to the Consulate. They receive no pay. They earn their living as boatmen. There are frequent disputes between the quarantine doctors and the boatmen as to the boats starting before the proper time. The boatmen are arrested and imprisoned. They pay a fine and are discharged almost immediately. This goes on constantly,although I presume the Department will scarcely credit it. The two American boatmen (kawasses), - the authorities cannot arrest and fine, -hence they have repeatedly demanded that they be dropped as kawasses. For twenty years we have fought this and succeeded till now in keeping them along. This demand of the Turkish authorities comes up periodically. Sometimes I report it to the Legation and sometimes I get along without doing so. The last time I reported it was April 10,1905.

The work of carrying on the Agency at Jaffa is more important than can be realized at a distance. The coming and going of ships,the arrival of hundreds and even thousands (so in late years) of American tourists,the constant arrival of recruits from New York to swell the army of American naturalized Jews in Jerusalem, -this class are sometimes robbed,sometimes abused,their passports and baggage taken from them,- requiring the interference of the Consul, the scores of American Jews that live in Jaffa or belong to the Jewish colonies in the neighborhood of Jaffa, all of whom have to come to Jaffa for 'their rights' if they are in trouble as they always are,- the Jewish quarrels,the court business,the legal papers that must be made out in the Consulate (in order to be legal) when Jews buy and sell land,the hundred

and one interruptions, annoyances, and serious duties that must be attended to at once,- seems to demand that the Agency at Jaffa be raised to a Vice Consulate with a reasonable salary attached. With all these important,- and the majority of them are important although disagreeable-, American interests at stake it seems to me now and has seemed to me for a long time that our Government sell cy,- without a penny of salary to any of the five men who are doing their work as they have done it for many years faithfully."