this appointment after long and careful consideration, & I believe it will give satisfaction to our American citizens residing at Jaffa. I hope the Department will approve of this appointment & forward Mr Hardegg's commission as soon as possible.

I am Sir, Your obedient servant
Sig R. Beardsley
U S Consul.

Acd. D. 30. 1871

No 61. United States Consulate at Jerusalem October 30th 1871.

Hon Second Assistant Secretary of State
Washington D.C.

Sir,-

Jerusalem ever has been & perhaps ever will be notorious for its religious controversies & disputes. Political religious quarrels are constantly disturbing the peace of the community & would often culminate in actual warfare were it not for the police authority exercised by the Ottoman Government who stands as peace-maker between the different Christian & Jewish sects.

A brief

brief notice of some of the latest of these ecclesiastical quarrels may not be without interest to the Department, as illustrating the difficulties of government in Palestine, as well as the intense jealousy with which the different christian sects regard each other.

About three years ago a fire in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem destroyed the pictures & other ornaments which surrounded & decorated the "Manger", in the grotto beneath the Church. Some of the pictures thus destroyed belonged to the Catholic church, & others to the Greek church. When their restoration was attempted, soon after the fire a dispute arose between the two Churches as to the places formerly occupied by their respective pictures each claiming for theirs, new pictures the places of honor.

The dispute waxed warm & then hot, blows followed words, & a general warfare was threatened between the two Churches, when the Turkish authorities stepped in & bound each party over to keep the peace. The fire having only shouldered, & threatened to break out with renewed force at any moment, the pictures were not placed, & the matter was referred to Constantinople. After a year of diplomatic intrigue the Governor General of Syria & Palestine was ordered here to decide finally the future location of the pictures.

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He examined the merits of the case as carefully as possible & placed the pictures as near their former position as he could. Thus terminated the quarrel known as the war of the "Mangers".

Within the walls of the Armenian Convent at Jerusalem is the Church of St James. For many years the Catholics had worshipped here on St James's day, whether by right or privilege had never been clearly defined. For the last two years the Catholics have been excluded entirely from the Church even on St James's day. The Armenians maintain that the Church of St James has never had the character of a mixed sanctuary but has always been exclusively Armenian property, & that the right of officiating in it which the Catholics now claim, has never any more than a privilege courteously conceded by the Armenians as a favor which they are at liberty at any time to revoke. The Armenians say that the Pope since the promulgation of the infallibility dogma is the Anti-Christ & that his followers would profane their church by worshipping in it. They further allege that sometimes while officiating in the Church of St James the Catholic priests did not hesitate to use injurious & insulting expressions regarding the Armenians, after lamenting that the sanctuary was in the hands of infidels &

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The catholics protest barely against being denied admission to the church & have referred the matter of the Sublime Porte, which however, has as yet pronounced no decision.

At Lydda near Ramleh are the ruins of the old church of St George, built by the Crusaders. The possession of this property has long been angrily disputed by the Catholics & Greeks, both sects being desirous of rebuilding the ancient edifice. At times the quarrel ran so high that the peace of the neighborhood was threatened.

The question was finally referred to the Government at Constantinople which has but lately decided in favor of the Greeks.

The Greek patriarch has consequently taken measures for the immediate restoration of the old church.

During the past summer a bitter & lamentable dispute arose between the Greek & Catholic churches in regard to the possession of the cave known as the "Milk Grotto" at Bethlehem. The Virgin Mary is said to have rested in this grotto in her flight into Egypt & some of her milk having dropped upon the floor of the cave the rock thereof became possessed of the miraculous power of increasing the amount of a mother's milk. This shrine has always been in the possession & considered the property of the Greeks, although the Catholics contested

their night & even went so far as to refer the matter to Constantinople for the Porte's decision ~~before~~.

The Porte deferred the decision hoping that the difficulty would eventually be settled by mutual concessions on the part of the rival sects. The Catholics however wearied of waiting for the decision which never came & dreading its nature when it should come resolved on a "coup de main" & set to work silently & energetically to execute it. On St James's Day the monks taking advantage of the darkness of the night & the solitude of the place which is just without the village built an outer portal of cut stone to the grotto, in which they placed a massive iron gate surmounted with the papal arms.

As all of the materials had been prepared & collected beforehand the work was speedily finished and morning saw the Franciscan monks fortified within the grotto & prepared to defend it against any attack of the Greeks. The latter of course protested against this high handed violation of their rights & called to their aid the local police. The police seeing the determined air of the monks refused to interfere & the Greeks supported by the Russian Consul demanded that the

Governor

Governor of Jerusalem should eject the Catholics from the grotto by force. The Governor shirking the responsability of a decision referred the matter to the Government at Constantinople stating that any longer delay in deciding as to the right of property in the Grotto at Bethlehem may seriously endanger the peace of the various Christian communities in Palestine.

As yet no decision has been made & the Catholics have undisturbed possession of the grotto.

The various disputes over the holy places in Palestine may at first thought appear petty & insignificant, but they are, & ever have been fertile sources of political disturbances, often spreading far beyond the borders of Palestine & occasionally culminating in long & bloody wars.

It may be remembered that in recent times the quarrels over the Holy Sepulchre by the two jealous sects of the Eastern & Western Churches were among the chief causes of the Crimean war. The noisy clamors of the rival monks within & around the Sepulchre of our Lord found echo in the guns of at Sebastapol & it is just possible that a petty quarrel over the resting place of the peaceful Mary may result in drenching the civilized world in blood.—

I am Sir very respectfully
Your Obedient Servant
Sig J. R. Beardsley
U. S. Consul.