

No 20

Jerusalem

22 May 1849

Sir.

I have the honor to report to Your Excellency that in my recent tour Southwards from Jerusalem, I passed over a country crowded with produce of barley and wheat in various stages of ripeness - green near Jerusalem, but the barley mostly reaped near Esdud, Ascalon, and Gaza.

For day after day in the interior parts unfrequented by travellers, among the now wasted cities and villages of the ancient Philistines, I found undulations of hill and dale all in one piece of green cornfield without divisions or trees - and for hours

had

To Your Excellency
Genl. L. Canning
G. C. B.

Copy of Mr 26
to Field Palmarston
Military Dept

1849
Enclosure 3
in No 19
from Jerusalem

had to wade by the guidance of distant
objects through vallies of wheat reaching
to our horses' backs. - yet scarcely ^{utter} ~~perceive~~?
any population visible for hours in
suspicion.

The district is wastefully sown, grain
covering the beaten roads, and there
trodden down or rolled upon while
growing by soldiery-horses or camels.

For nearly seven days the Plain
which I crossed in several directions
had roads perfectly available for
carriages of any kind.

But amidst all this profusion, the
rural population were cursing their
local governors and regretting the
Egyptians: who though they cruelly
treated the people by conscriptions
and high taxation, yet invariably
supplied the agriculturists with
implements of husbandry if necessary

after they had made them nearly ⁴⁷⁴
destitute.

[At one village, named B'rair, half
way between Gaza and Beit Sibrin,
as I made some enquiries of an
intelligent man named Ali, he
complained as follows -

1. That the local Governors take Miri
according to the estimate of land in
cultivation at the time of the general
survey made in the Egyptian period
by Sherief Pasha, although there are
very few villages with so much land
in cultivation now as at that time.
2. Population is also much diminished since
his father's time, when the village had
three off-shoot villages belonging to it,
all of which are now extinct.
3. The Miri is demanded and paid at
one fifth of the produce of land both
really and fictitiously in cultivation
as above described, instead of one tenth
according

- according to the Sultan's law.
4. Ferdeh is also taken from them to the amount of 18,000 piastres annually.
 5. They are occasionally obliged to give bribes, to buy off cruel treatment of various kinds.
 6. So great are the burdens upon agriculture, that the village is always a year in debt - and their custom is, to reserve out of each harvest a bare sufficiency for the year's food, then pay what they can from the remainder, and sell their cattle or ploughs to pay the deficiency. - This destitution is increasing every year.
 7. The Bash Bezuk come from Gaza before every harvest, to inspect the fields, or demand money, and eat up a sheep each, every night, as long as they stay. - A few days ago twelve of them came to collect seven purses. The new Governor of Gaza has stopped this practice, but he has eaten some money himself.

8. It is the policy of the Governors of Gaza to appoint several Sheikhs to each village, and of course to receive presents from each on his appointment.

- The four principal men of the village were summoned a few days before to Gaza, and kept in a kind of custody, himself being one of these. - but having nothing to give, he had made his escape home on the evening preceding this narration.

9. Sheikh Musabbh, the Nazir of Beit Libin, also eats a good deal of money from his villages.

He concluded by representing how entirely the poor people lie at the disposal of these governors, with no friend to hear of their distress - and implored me, if it were possible, to urge at Constantinople the expediency of having a new estimate made of the lands, as now in cultivation -

His Excellency
Lieut. S. Canning
S.C.D.

So that the Miri might be levied in proportion to existing circumstances - also to represent the iniquity of having to pay one fifth of ascertained produce for Miri, instead of one tenth.

Were these two grievances redressed - especially the former of them - he said that they would endure minor and arbitrary imposts, as well as personal insults, and be grateful to their deliverers.

At Beit Libin I made similar enquiries of the Nazir's brother Abd el Aziz, the Nazir himself being absent in Gaza - and complaints of a kindred nature were the response.

He said that through the payment of one fifth for Miri instead of one tenth - besides many irregular extortions made by Agents in the Miri service - and the heavy loss sustained in conveying the produce to Gaza for sale in order to pay the Miri in cash -

the country is becoming utterly ruined, and the general population reduced to one half of what it has been even within his own memory - ^{by reports} ~~his own~~ village has been diminished from 500 to 200 men, and Tell es Safieh which had 40 Feddans in cultivation during the Egyptian rule, has now only 8 - Some of the people are gone to Egypt, others to Damascus, and others are dead.

On the return (he said) of the Sheikh of Tell es Safieh lately from banishment of nearly three years (whither he had been sent by Mehemed Pasha for refusing to pay for 40 instead of 8 Feddans) they informed him in Jerusalem that he was a debtor to the amount of 188,000 piastres on that account - and all he could do was to exclaim, "Take then, the village, the land, the people, the cattle, and the ploughs, for the

the money cannot be paid."

Such is the melancholy information that I gathered in that remarkably fertile region - where the cry of the people is that they are eaten up day by day, and year by year - and the probability is that the Supreme Government in Constantinople receive little or nothing from this over taxation, of which they are ignorant.

I intend to make it my duty to institute further enquiries on this subject in distinct parts of the country during the summer - and to report accordingly.

— believing that English influence is rightfully exerted in strengthening the Turkish dominion in this country, by removing just causes of disaffection from the rural population.

It is true that Mustafa Said Bek the recent Governor of Gaza who has for so many years carried on this oppressive

oppressive iniquity, as well as his father before him, with Oriental voracity of crime and punishment - is now undergoing an investigation at Beyroot into his official conduct, but the people expect very little or only temporary relief from this proceeding - they have seen the same Said Bek rise and fall, and rise again before now - and most Governors are of the same character.

Their most substantial grievances lie in paying one fifth instead of one tenth for Miri, and having the Feddans calculated at the estimate made in more prosperous times.

I have the honor to be
Sir

with the greatest respect
Your Excellency's
most obedt. humble servant

J. Fynn.

His Excellency
Sir S. Canning
B. C. B.

Jerusalem
9 August 1848

Copy
No 25
My Lord.

I have the honor to report that His Lordship our Bishop in Jerusalem is about to take at his own private cost, a house in Nabloos, to serve for a school and most probably for religious instruction in the Arabic language.

This step has been resolved ^{on} after long and serious deliberation, but in consequence of a number of native Christians having entirely renounced their connection with the Greek Church, having

first Palmerton denominated themselves "Angelijin" or
S. C. B.

1849
Jerusalem 22 May

Mr General Peim.

No 20

Recd

Robert Peim

Archdeacon Bishop