No 26

Jerusalem
December 30. 1857

Sir.

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of Your Excellency's Despatch No 3 of September 17th requiring answers respecting the Quarantine stations within the district of this Consulate —

I have delayed to reply until the return of my Canulliere from Petra, that he might give me the result of his personal observations from Hebron.

I have the honor to state that the Lazarettos of Gaza and Hebron seem to me to be placed in the two best stations that could be selected for their purpose as commanding the two principal roads from

Right Honorable
His Excellency
Sir S. Canning G.C.B.

Despatch, Political
No 10
to Viscount Palmerston

Dated. Jerusalem
Dec. 29. 1857

Copy

Enclosure
in Mr Consul Finn's
No 25
of December 30. 1857

from Egypt and Sinai.

The buildings themselves have the appearance of being well adapted to their object, but that at Hebron being built against the surface of a rock, is always humid in winter, the season when European travellers arrive from Egypt and Sinai — and they complain much of being compelled to reside within a damp house of stone, after passing a long time in the dry pure desert — Formerly they were allowed on payment of an extra fee to live in their own tents near the Lazaretto under charge of a guardian — but for above a year past this indulgence is discontinued —

The term of restraint is five days at both stations — that is to say, three entire days —

The fees are all included nominally in one payment of 95 piastres for each room, but really the Dragomans always make presents to the guardians —

I have often wished that in these Lazarettos the Tariff of fees were shewn in some European language as well as Turkish which few people in Palestine and I suppose no Dragomans can read.

I have not heard any well-founded complaints against the officials of those establishments for either remissness or over strictness in performing their duty.

On the whole subject of Quarantine I am scarcely capable of forming an opinion having never yet lived within reach of pestilence: but of this I am certain that if Quarantine be effectual in preventing contagion or infection the two stations of Gaza and Hebron are ridiculously insufficient for their purpose, and the case would not be bettered by ten or a dozen more such upon the frontier — the mountain nature of the country, and wild character of the Arabs defy all such regulations, or any force that Lazaretto establishments can command —

I do not say that Quarantine regulations are ineffectual in time of pestilential disease because I personally know nothing about such circumstances —

I do not say that the officers at present employed are not good and true men —

But I do say that these establishments are irrationally instituted in that part of the world, because existing on both the Egyptian and Palestine frontiers against each other, with several days of healthy desert travelling between.

It has been replied to me by the officials there stationed that possibly the long Sinai journey may be sufficient remedy against suspected plague contracted in Egypt, but that it is necessary to protect the towns of Palestine from the contact of Arabs of the desert, who may come into contact with other Arabs, who may have met with people coming from Egypt.

To this I answer that Arabs coming on their own account for trade to the towns are never impeded by Quarantine regulations.

We

We have them in Hebron and Jerusalem selling corn and buying clothes in the Bazaar as free as other people — and this is not to be wondered at, for unless there were mounted guardians at every 300 yards on every hill and in every low valley from the water's edge of the Mediterranean to the water's edge of the Dead Sea, this cannot be prevented.

But when European travellers arrive with cumbrous luggage, these are spied out by the mounted guardians, and kept upon the high road to the Lazaret stations, and a few of the Arabs compelled to accompany them — thus fees are obtained and there is a show of effective restriction made.

The same occurs to Town merchants passing between Palestine and Egypt with laden camels.

In the instance of my Camelline returning from Petra lately, three Arabs kept with him as far as Kurnub where the out-stationed guardian is found — the two of them returned, and the other proceeded with

Lt. Hon. the
His Excellency Lt. J. Canning
G.C.B.

with him to Hebron where he was detained in Quarantine: before however that the time of restraint was expired, the Man two were walking about the streets of Hebron, waiting to assist him in leading back the camels.

One cannot therefore wonder at the natives regarding Lazarettos with their officials and guardians, as scarcely more than inventions of Europeans in Constantinople to annoy Europeans travelling here — or that Europeans on their side, feel vexed at being exposed to risk of sickness in a damp house after enjoying free health so long in the desert, and represent it all as a system of providing places for Italian apothecaries, especially in such healthy times as these.

I beg to add that it seems to me irrational to impose Quarantine restriction on parties returning from Petra to Jerusalem who have only gone from Jerusalem to Petra.

For myself when I visited Petra in April last, I returned along the beach of

the Dead Sea to Ain Jidy, and so reached Jerusalem — this I did on purpose, not so much to avoid the Quarantine of Hebron, though I knew it was a point calculated on by the disappointed Abdennabman, that I should be taken there by force: but because I wanted to see the Salt mountain, Masada, and Ain Jidy, and knowing that there is no Quarantine for people coming that way from Kerak — however on approaching Jerusalem I did select a spot at the distance of quarter of an hour, and place myself in voluntary Quarantine, which I kept for the usual time observed in Hebron.

My Cancelline on making the same journey lately returned to Hebron in order to learn by experience what rules are enforced.

In conclusion I wish to add that the Agents in the Seaports complain of Quarantine being a serious impediment to their trade particularly from the fact of Egypt and Palestine placing each other in Quarantine.

Such are the remarks which I have to

make upon the subject of Quarantine
I have the honor to be
Sir
with the highest regard
Your Excellency's
Most obedient
humble servant
J. Pirn

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Right Honorable
His Excellency Sir S. Canning
G. C. B.

Jerusalem 30 Dec
Sir Colquhoun Pisani
No 26
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Recommends an Quarantine station at Akaba and Suez

Entered C L
Akaba & Yambo

No 27

Jerusalem
December 30. 1854

Sir.

I have the honor to enclose to Your Excellency, Copy of my Despatch No 11, Political to Viscount Palmerston respecting the facility of proceeding from Jerusalem to Petra -

I have the honor to be
Sir
with the highest respect
Your Excellency's
most obedient
humble Servant
J. Finn

Right Honorable
His Excellency
Sir. S. Canning G.C.B.