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AN ASYLUM FOR THE EXILES

[From the N.Y. Herald.]

Our Constantinople correspondent sends the following: – Since the days when Sultan Bajazet offered an asylum to the Spanish Jews flying from the stakes and scaffolds of Ferdinand II., there never has been promise of such a wholesale migration into the Ottoman dominions as there is at present. Already upward of a thousand Russian Jewish refugees are wandering homeless in the streets of Constantinople, and this, in spite of all efforts to stem, or rather to delay, the stampede until proper arrangements can be made to receive them. The two pilot fish of the exodus – Mr. Lawrence Oliphant and Mr. James Alexander – have made Constantinople their headquarters. As to the sincerity, and as to the disinterestedness, both pecuniary and personal, of these two gentlemen in their efforts to repatriate the Jews, there is not the slightest doubt. But as to the method of realizing the philanthropic object that both have at heart, Mr. Oliphant, and Mr. Alexander hold somewhat different views. It will be remembered that two years ago Mr. Oliphant in his work, "The Land of Gilead," advocated a beginning of the repatriation of the Jews by a settlement, under the auspices of a sort of joint-stock company, of a number of Jews from Eastern Europe and Asia in an agricultural colony situated in the territory which formerly belonged to the tribes of Reuben and Gad – a district comprising about a million and a half acres of rich alluvial soil, and bounded on the west by the Jordan and the Dead Sea. This most favored portion of Palestine is scarcely inhabited. It was once a portion of the great Hittite Empire of Western Asia, whose very existence had already been forgotten as far back as the days of classical antiquity, and whose greatness is only now just beginning to be revealed by modern research. Comparatively recent relics may also be found in the isolated eminences of this region, which contain

reservoirs and cisterns constructed in Scriptural times, and which have fallen but slightly out of repair.

ISLAM'S OPPORTUNITY.

Mr. Oliphant's scheme warmly commended itself to the Sultan as an opportunity for proving that Islam could be more tolerant to a persecuted race, and hence more compatible with modern civilization, than some of the foremost nations of Christendom; and also as a means of obtaining a well secured and increasing revenue from [R393 : page 5] a province that from time beyond memory had yielded nothing to the imperial exchequer. Mr. Oliphant was even feted at Yildiz Kiosque, and the signature of the Sultan to the firman repatriating the Jews was hourly expected. At this promising stage of the negotiation Mr. Oliphant's work, "The Land of Gilead," unfortunately appeared. The Sultan at once thought that he saw the germs of Jewish autonomy, backed by England and France, springing up in his already dwindling dominions. Naturally suspicious, and prone to see a "nigger on every fence," Abdul Hamid remembered that Mr. Oliphant was an Englishman, strongly backed by the late Lord Beaconsfield, by the Marquis of Salisbury, and by M. Waddington. Moreover, one of the numerous orthodox Moslem habitues of Yildiz Kiosque, singularly enough, translated to the Sultan various stirring passages from George Eliot's "Daniel Deronda," where the hopes and possibilities of a great Hebrew kingdom are so vividly portrayed. The wily sheik could have hit upon no better device to arouse the suspicions of the mystic, visionary mind of his imperial master. There was no longer any question at Yildiz of the repatriation of the Jews in Palestine; and Mr. Oliphant was henceforth regarded as a wolf in sheep's clothing, whose real mission was to insert an additional wedge in the already strained fabric of Ottoman autonomy. Three weeks ago Mr. Oliphant again appeared upon the scene. English influence being at the lowest known ebb at

Constantinople, he is now urging the United States Minister – who is at present a persona gratissima at Yildiz Kiosque – to advocate the colonization scheme to Palestine; whither the Jews, for sentimental reasons, much prefer to go, and whither they can be transported at much cheaper rates than to America.

MR. ALEXANDER'S VIEWS.

The modus operandi of Mr. Alexander is somewhat different. Mr. Alexander – himself an Israelite – represents Mr. Cazelet and other well known Jewish capitalists in England, Germany, and France, who believe that all purely humanitarian efforts must fail unless established upon a sound commercial basis. Mr. Alexander demands of the Sultan a concession, allowing him to construct a railway, tramways, and ordinary roads within the vilayets of Aleppo, Tripoli, and Damascus. The length of the railway from the ancient port of Tripoli to Damascus would be about two hundred miles; and it is proposed to obtain a grant of the uncultivated land along the entire length of the line for a distance extending two miles on each side of it, whenever such land belongs to the government. The whole of the profits accruing from the proposed railways are to go to the government. The opening up of such a route would speedily develop the wonderful resources of the country. The estimated cost of the line is about \$50,000 per mile; \$10,000,000 for the whole distance. For the construction of the railway, and the occupation of the conceded territory, which would amount to eight hundred square miles, employment and a resting place would be found for a large number of Jewish refugees. Should the government refuse to grant land in the above named vilayets, then the promoters of this scheme would take any other concession of land suitable for colonization purposes. M. Alexander and his backers are practical business men, and they are fully aware that any wholesale migration of Jews into Asia [R394 : page 5] Minor or Syria would involve the greatest misery and

privation, unless immediate employment be provided for them beforehand. M. Alexander and his agents have lists containing several thousand names of Russian Jewish artisans and mechanics who desire to emigrate to Turkey. The moment that the concession is granted these men and their families will be transported by special steamers to Syria, and upon their arrival will at once receive their wages. The Grand Vizier sent a few days ago a most favorable report upon M. Alexander's scheme to the Sultan, and last Sunday the Minister of Foreign Affairs received the delegates of the Jewish artisans and mechanics of Odessa, and assured them that a peaceful home denied them in Russia would be accorded to them in Turkey.

The following is the translation of the letter of instructions written by the Porte to the Turkish Consuls: – "In all cases when Russian Jews express a desire to establish themselves in Turkey, the following conditions, which the Ottoman government imposes upon this immigration, shall be made known to them: – 1. The immigrants must be established in separate groups, and they are at liberty to settle anywhere in the Ottoman dominions with the exception of Palestine. 2. Without any exception or reserve whatever, they shall be subject to the laws of Turkey, and shall become Ottoman subjects." It should be remembered that the legal status of the Jews in Turkey is exactly the same as that of all other Ottoman subjects, whether Moslem or Christian. They have their own hakam bachi, or chief rabbi, who is the head of their nation in the whole Empire, and its official representative at the Porte. The hakam bachi enjoys the same rank and privileges as the Greek and Armenian patriarchs. It is a curious fact, that whenever the Jews have been oppressed in Turkey, the oppression has come, not from the Moslems, but from Christians; and then not from rivalry in commerce, but from fanaticism. Jews cannot remain in Greece on account of bad treatment; and thus far the Turkish government has proved itself to be the only Oriental government capable of maintaining order between the Christians and

the Jews. During Easter week at Jerusalem, the Turkish authorities are obliged every year to send two regiments of infantry to prevent the Catholics and the Greeks from tormenting and killing the Jews, and in all Turkish towns the Jews are specially placed under the protection of municipal councils. In Constantinople it is by no means rare to find Jews intrusted with high official functions, and many of them form part of the Sultan's Privy Council; and of all other subjects of the Porte, the Jews have always been the most peaceful and easily governed.