OUR PALESTINE LETTER.

FIRST RABBINICAL CONFERENCE.

GENERAL STORES ON THE BIBLE.

MESSAGE TO KING GEORGE.

(By Moses Levene.)

JERUSALEM, May 7.

For the first time in modern history, rabbis from every part of Palestine, Ashkenazim, Sphardim and Yemenites, gathered at Jerusalem in conference to devise ways and means for creating in the Holy City a spiritual centre for the Jewry of the whole world. The initiator of this conference was the Jerusalem Rabbinical Office, which received moral and financial support from the Zionist Commission, as the latter body is now most anxious to come to an understanding with the different parties, especially the orthodox, who have kept aloof from Zionist activities on religious grounds. Besides rabbis, there were quite a number of laymen present as well as delegates from different bodies interested in the spiritual development of the Jewish Communities in Palestine.

The conference was opened on Thursday afternoon, May 1, at the Sphardic Orphanage synagogue in the Jaffa Road, in the presence of General Storrs, Military Governor, representatives of the French Italian and Spanish nations, and the Zionist Commission members. The chairman of the Conference was the venerable Rabbi Eliashoff, but the proceedings were opened by his younger colleague Raham Bashi Uziel of Jaffa, who paid a warm tribute to the historic friendship of the British Government towards the Jewish people, the representatives of which, like Cyrus of old, deemed to be instrumental in the reconstruction of the Jews on their own soil. He then continued to read some of the main resolutions that had already been passed at a preliminary meeting, the most important being: (a) that the Rabbis in conference demand the recognition of Palestine as the Home Land of the Jews; (b) that the Hebrew language be recognised as one of the official languages of the country; (c) that the Sabbath Day be regarded as one of the official rest days on which Jews be exempted from duty; (d) that Jews be judged by their own ecclesiastical law in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance; (e) that facilities be granted by the British Government for disinterring Jewish soldiers from non-Jewish cemeteries for interment in Jewish graves. A prayer was then recited for the happiness of King George, the British people and their Allies.

General Storrs then mounted the platform in front of the Ark of the Law, and addressing the conference of rabbis in Hebrew, thanked them for their blessings to his king and country. He had spent all the years of his youth in the spirit of the book, and he was now proud to be in an official position to strong words with the people of the book. He concluded with the Hebrew greeting of Shalom, peace.

Dr. de Sola Pool, in welcoming the rabbis on behalf of the Zionist Commission, said that they had been the cause of Israel's existence in the lands of the Diaspora since the days of the Temple's destruction, and they would in future continue the development of the holy traditions of Judaism. Palestine was the land which gave birth to the Bible; it was the land that had rescued from extinction the great rabbinical academies, and once again would it become the home of Hebrew culture, for it was the only place most adaptable for the continuance of the law and tradition, as from Zion shall issue forth the law and the Word of God from Jerusalem. The present moment was the most vital in all Jewish history. Much depended on the conference. It was a time for harmony and union, and the abatement of all differences that divided them. Only on unity depended their success. He hoped that peace would go forth from the conference and that a rapprochement would take place between all the other sections of the Jewish people. The Jews were distinguished for their patience, and the rabbinical conference could certainly not deny them this distinction. He hoped that patience would govern all their discussions and deliberations, and in the name of the Zionist Commission he wished them every success.

The rabbinical conference sat for four days, passing important resolutions. They made a firm stand as regards the education question, maintaining that instruction in the schools should be inspired by and on traditional lines. The conference also expressed conservative views as regards the women franchise, and refused to recognise the validity of the proceedings of the preliminary conference for the calling together of a General Jewish Assembly. The resolutions passed will be published in due course.

At the termination of the conference the following telegram to King George was despatched through official channels: "Palestine Conference humbly conveys its benedictions to your Majesty. May He Who granteth salvation unto kings, aggrandise your throne, prolong your life, and in your days may Judah be saved and Israel dwell in safety in his ancestral land."

MAIL FROM HOME.

A mail from home was distributed yesterday. It brought the London papers of Friday, May 2, and Saturday, May 3.

The aviation scheme of the Australian Commonwealth, of which the initiation has already been cabled, is receiving the enthusiastic support of the British Government, which is making a free gift of one hundred of the latest design aeroplanes, balloons, and airships to the Commonwealth.

ALEXANDRIA BOURSE.

The market was a little weaker yesterday, the following being the officially quoted closing prices.

Unsified were in request at £89 3/8, 1/8 rise; Banque d'Orient advanced 3 fr. to fr. 116 and Banque d'Athenes fell 25 cents to fr. 88 1/2.

Credit Foncier bonds issues 1886 and 1903 were quoted at fr. 438 and 315 respectively; Land Bank being unchanged at £7 1/4 while Alexandria Water Cov. rose 3/8 closing at £13.

Building Lands dropped 1/32 to £1 23/32; Wadi Kom Ombo fell 3/32 to £5 3/16 and there was no change in Privileged Behera which were at £4 5/8.

Urbaines & Rurales closed offered at £3 3/8, 1/8 drop, while Gabbari Lands remained at £ - 7/8 and Société des Immeubles closed unchanged at £6 1/16.

Privileged Trams were offered at fr. 114, a franc drop while deferred shares closed weaker at fr. 165.

There was no change in Nungovich Hotels which finished at £7 1/4; Egyptian Bonded Warehouses being a little firmer at £12 1/2, 1/16 rise.

There was a drop of 1/32 in Salt and Soda which closed at 51/9d. while Brasseries d'Egypte rose 1 fr. to fr. 288 and Privileged Crown advanced 25 fr. more closing firm at fr. 435.

Port Said Salt were steady at 82/3d. a six pence drop; Egypt and Levant S/S. Coy. being a good feature changing hands in large number and closing at 35/6d. showing a drop of 1/4 1/2d.

Deferred Levant S/S. Coy. came into renewed favour closing at 232/- showing a rise of 19/- shillings.

PRESENTATION TO REVD. FATHER P.N. NORTHCOTE.

On Sunday morning, the 11th inst., in the Sacristy, of St. Sebastian's (Catholic) Garrison Church, Mustapha, in the presence of a representative gathering of civilian and military friends. Father P. N. Northcote, M.C., C.F., who is shortly leaving for home, was presented with a writing-case and purse, as small tokens of the universal esteem in which he is held.

Capt. Fleetwood (late Camp Commandant, Mustapha), who was in the chair, said he was making the presentation to the best friend he had ever had, and dwelt upon the affection, trust and admiration which the recipient had evoked in all those with whom he came in contact, whether in the firing line, or, on cessation of hostilities, at the Base. He also affectionately referred to the spiritual ministrations of the reverend gentleman, and of his splendid example, which all would try to emulate. He asked that all should pray for Father Northcote in his new sphere of labour, and concluded by wishing him a long life, full of happiness.

The reverend Father Northcote, in replying, said he was deeply touched by the manifestation of goodwill. Nothing could give more pleasure to a priest than the knowledge of having gained the affections of his people. The life of a priest was one of sacrifice; it was fraught with spiritual dangers, and carried great responsibilities. He asked that all would pray for him, as nothing was so valuable as the prayer of the faithful Catholic, and said that he, in turn, would never forget those who had given evidence of their loving regard.

The collection of subscriptions and arrangements for the presentation were ably carried out by C.Q.M.S. P.J. O'Hanlan, R.A.S.C.

"DIRTY ALEXANDRIA."

In regard to the letter, under the above title, published in our last issue, the remarks of Mr. R. Yorke as to the need for the Municipality to purchase revolving brushes for street-cleaning, such as are used in London, are beside the point since the Municipality has a number of such appliances for the purpose of keeping the streets in good order. However, as they are only used at night so as not to interfere with the traffic, it is to be presumed that our correspondent has not seen them. All the efforts of the Municipality to keep the city clean are in a great measure nullified by the fact that the Alexandrians themselves refuse to give any help in the matter, while in many cases people consider that the streets should be the receptacles for all their refuse.

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THE FOUR PASHAS AT MALTA.

"Wadi el Nil" (a paper from its special correspondent accompanying the Egyptian Delegation in Paris, reporting the arrival of the Delegation at Malta, and the release of the four Pashas who had been detained there).—Malta, April 15. (Delayed). We were told that the steamer would arrive at Malta on Tuesday (to-day) morning and we spent the night looking forward that we might see the island. Some of us asked whether we were nearing the end or were still in the middle of the way. As it was our lot that we would reach Malta about 7 a.m. we went up to the deck to watch the steamer approaching the island, which could not be seen even by means of telescopes. Shortly afterwards the land appeared at a far distance, and the hilly and sandy island began to show itself clearer and clearer in the wide sea until the steamer entered the port of Valetta, the capital. On entering the harbour we first saw a small lighthouse and a group of stone buildings, the four Pashas were detained for a short distance from the shore. As we stopped we began to gaze forward in the hope of seeing the four Pashas come. Every boat that steered towards the ship was hoped to be conveying them but on each occasion our hope failed. This temporary disappointment brought doubts to our minds, and most of us asked for permission to land, for it was stated that the ship would have to wait long there. The Malta Police Officer duly boarded the ship, inspected our passports and took a boat to the port and landed. There we saw one of the servants of Saad Pasha Zaghloul standing beside the belongings of the four Pashas which had been prepared for the voyage. He told us that he was there waiting for them coming from the camp. A few seconds later the four appeared escorted by two officers, one Maltese and the other English, and, hearing this, the steamer would sail soon, for she had only stopped at Malta to land the detained gentlemen. I wrote a telegram to you and requested one of the two officers to be good enough to cable it, which request was acceded to.

The meeting of both parties was the occasion of a touching scene which I cannot find words thoroughly to describe, and express the meaning latent therein. I would now like to give some interesting details regarding the Prisoners Camp and about Malta and its inhabitants:

The Prisoners Camps in Malta are numerous. They are situated at a distance from the town, and thousands of detained people of different nationalities are housed in them, including Egyptians, Turks, Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, etc. The main places are four: Bellaria, Vardala, New Vardala and Saint Clement. It is interesting to note that the authorities give every prisoner a bed, pillows, and six pence per day, besides food and shelter of course. Saad Pasha and his three colleagues were in the first camp where a compartment of three small rooms was given to each two of them. One of the rooms was furnished with two beds, one used as a dining room and the third is a sitting room. Saad Pasha and Mohamed Pasha Mahmoud occupied the first one apartment and Sidky Pasha and Hamad Pasha el-Hassel in the other. When General Allenby's decision was received ordering the release of the four prisoners they were permitted to visit the other prisoners. Both in the camp the prisoners of war are busying themselves in industry and we have seen some of their work which is very curious and shows considerable cleverness on the part of the men. Prisoners are permitted to receive visits, and the four Pashas had been allowed to have a drive for two hours every day at their own expense. Most of their orders used to be supplied at their expense, but their money had been withheld from them so that they might not use it except for purchasing necessaries.

Malta is a rocky and sandy island; and with the exception of Valetta it has no town in the real sense of the word, but is composed of villages. The villages are clean, and thought it is a poor country the island is inhabited by a good and active community. The Maltese language is to a great degree Arabic with Italian words mixed with it. They boast that it was their tongue before the Arabs themselves, for they are of a Phoenician origin. It is worth noting that the Maltese showed great sympathy and courtesy to Egyptians.

The "Ahram" — Some of the local papers have published a report to the effect that the Egyptian Delegation has sent some of its members from Paris to London with a view to discussing the Egyptian question with the leading politicians there, and that those who are possessed of perfect knowledge of English, especially Mohamed Pasha Mahmoud, have been chosen to carry out that mission. The report goes on to say that the Mission left Paris at the beginning of last week for London. But these rumours still lack confirmation. As a matter of fact we cannot find any proof that they are authentic, nor do we know what sources they have come from. We have, in fact grounds for saying that Mohamed Pasha Mahmoud is still in Paris, for he sent a telegram to his family on the 8th inst. from that capital stating that he was well. The above statements must be either wrong or premature.

POOR EGYPTIANS IN DAMASCUS.

The "Iraly" — News comes from Damascus that there are about 50 poor Egyptians in that town experiencing considerable economic difficulties. They have been stranded there for some time and are now in a pitiable condition. The "Iraly" — Syrian journal of Damascus—suggests that a special fund should be raised there for the purpose of repatriating the men.

The "Alkar" (a Damascus journal of a lengthy article commenting on the above statement). — The present circumstances are exceptional in every country, and require the imposing of restrictions without regard to individuals. The Egyptians who are now stranded in Damascus are not to be blamed for standing in the difficult position where they find themselves. They must be very anxious to return to their country. ... The Syrian paper "Ikab" states that it has suggested the raising of a fund for them, and while we think that journal for its kind feeling, we must not allow our countrymen, who are 50 in number, to be exposed much longer to the effects of circumstances. We should not leave them to wait for monetary gifts on the part of benevolent people. If we do so we may be considered as enemies of ourselves for we forget our own people....

CAIRO PAPER BOYS.

The Cairo Police have been instructed by the Hakemdiria to listen to the cries of the newspaper boys, as sensational news has often been called out, which the papers never contained. An order has been issued that only the paper's title is allowed to be cried by newsvendors.

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SUDAN TRADE.

THE REPORT FOR 1917-18.

VALUE OF IMPORTS.

We extract the following from the annual report of the Central Economic Board of the Sudan Government:

Although the value of imports has increased the quantities of the important articles imported in 1917 was L.E. 29,660 less than in 1916. For instance imports of cotton fabrics fell by 802 tons, but the value of the import increased by L.E. 124,212. Similarly the import of sugar was less by 845 tons than in 1916, but the value of the import was L.E. 79,405 higher. Owing mainly to the difficulty of obtaining supplies from India and elsewhere imports of wheat flour were only 3,226 tons in 1917, as compared with 6,752 tons in 1916. The value of the import in 1917 was L.E. 28,669 less than in 1916.

Lack of overseas supplies has compelled the Sudan to rely very largely upon its own resources for food.

Consumption has been cut down by diluting wheat flour with 25 per cent. of flour made from oilseeds.

Considerable quantities of Sudan wheat are now milled in the country.

The cultivation of wheat and other food grains has been stimulated as much as possible. In the winter of 1916-1917 wheat cultivation increased by some 10,000 acres and in the winter of 1917-1918 an addition to the cultivation of wheat, maize and barley was made to the extent of about 9,000 acres.

Late arrival of pump and engines prevented the completion last winter of the wheat growing schemes at Sennar and Kassala. These are referred to in the annual report for 1916-1917.

The import of fish, coal and oil, has been a matter of great difficulty. There has been a shortage of supplies, which still continues.

One of the consequences of the difficulties of importing coal and oil, combined with other circumstances, has been a great demand for local wood fuel which has been considerably in price. Charcoal has also risen in price, the large demand in Egypt being one of the contributing causes.

TRADE WITH BRITISH EMPIRE.

British Trade with the Sudan continues to increase in value. In 1917, exports to British Territory were of the value of L.E. 3,319,294 representing 95 per cent. of the total value of exports as compared with 75 per cent. in 1916. Imports from British Territory were of the value of L.E. 2,831,809, representing 91 per cent. of the total value of imports as compared with 88 per cent. in 1916.

EXPORT AND PRICES OF DURA.

The export of millet (Dura) in 1917 is the largest on record, namely 86,901 tons, nearly the whole of this being consumed in Egypt.

Prices ruled very low in 1916, but at no time reached P.T. 100 per ardeb (155 kilos) at Wad Medani in the principal grain market except for a few days before the break of the rains. The sudden rise in prices then experienced was due to the rains, owing to the lateness of the rains. There were and are still ample supplies of millet in the country. Prices fell as rapidly as they rose as soon as the rains commenced.

The native population, whose principal food is millet, have therefore been under no hardship. The large exports of the last three years have of course greatly improved the economic position of the cultivators.

As regards food supplies in general, the situation during the year has been satisfactory.

In most essentials the Sudan can support itself and its bulk of the people can well afford to pay the enhanced prices.

TARIFF PRICES.

It has been necessary to tariff some of the foodstuffs, such as sugar, wheat flour, and local tariffs have been imposed by Governors of certain other articles.

IMPORTS OF FOOD PRODUCTS, AND NECESSARIES.

Food and all other articles imported from overseas have become still more difficult to obtain. They have risen greatly in price as will be seen from the following table showing the percentage of increase in price in April 1918 as compared with March 1914.

	Increase per cent.
Flour	100
Rice	50
Tea	50
Sugar	100
Macaroni	100
Dried Fruits	178
Vinegar	150
Beer	225
Table Salt	150
Matches	100
Soap (Egyptian)	100
Candles	233
Paraffin Oil	100

MEAT AND LIVESTOCK.

In spite of the large export of cattle and sheep to Egypt meat has been plentiful and local prices have not increased abnormally.

The demand for livestock in Egypt which is now unable to draw upon overseas supplies, has been very strong, and if the rains are satisfactory this year and grazing good, a still further increase in exports may be anticipated provided disease can be kept in hand.

GUM ARABIC.

The export of gum arabic, still the chief export from the Sudan, was also satisfactory, amounting to 10,613 tons as compared with 19,615 tons in 1912, the maximum quantity exported in any previous year.

Prices at El Obeid varied from P.T. 204 per 100 kilos to P.T. 478 as compared with prices varying from P.T. 185 to P.T. 389 in 1916.

COTTON.

Last year was one of the best ever experienced in the Sudan cotton growing industry, exports of ginned cotton being 4,168 tons as compared with 2,241 tons in 1916 and 1,656 tons in 1915, the highest pre-war export. Prices, however, were roughly double those of 1916.

The crop at Tokar, in Red Sea Province, was one of the best on record and realised exceptionally high prices.

OTHER PRODUCTS.

These products and others are dealt with in more detail elsewhere in this report. Details of prices and exports are given in the appendices.

COAL IMPORTS.

Between the 1st of January and the 8th of May 472 tons of coal were imported at Alexandria. During the corresponding period of last year the imports amounted to 1,221 tons.

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