

CURRENT OPINION

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PALESTINE IS FLOURISHING UNDER THE BRITISH MANDATE

ABOUT 10,000 Jewish immigrants have entered Palestine since the war, according to a report submitted to the British Government by Sir Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner of the mandatory districts of Palestine and Trans-Jordania. The report, made public by the League of Nations News Bureau, covers the year ending June 30 last, and will serve as a basis for the report promised by the British Government to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.

It is especially interesting as reflecting the development of Palestine as the future home of the Jewish race. The High Commissioner points out that the country, if properly developed, ought to experience a future far more prosperous than it enjoyed before the war. Its geographical position may once more render it an important center to the commercial traffic of the larger surrounding territory. Within the limits of the province, he says, it offers the varieties of soil and climate of a continent. He describes the 64 Jewish agricultural settlements made since the inception of the Zionist movement and draws a drastic comparison between their prosperity and the condition of the rest of the country, with its hopelessly primitive agricultural methods.

The entire population is reported to be a little short of 700,000, or less than the province of Galilee alone in the time of Christ. Four-fifths of the population are Moslems. There is a small percentage of genuine Bedouin Arabs, while the rest, altho they speak Arabic and are termed Arabs, are largely of mixed race. There are 77,000 Christians, the majority of whom belong to the Orthodox Church and speak Arabic. It is surprizing to read that half a century ago there was only a handful of Jews in the country, and that an overwhelming majority of the Jewish population has entered it during the last forty years. The total number of members of that race in Palestine is now 76,000—less than one in ten.

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Nevertheless, the recent immigration of Jews has proved far too rapid for the country to take care of, and for this reason as much as for any other the anti-Jewish outbreaks around Jaffa in May this year were made an excuse for closing the ports to additional immigrants. Conditions are said to be practically normal at present, and the ports have been opened to persons who can prove themselves belonging to one of the following categories: (1) Persons of independent means who intend to take up permanent residence in Palestine; (2) members of professions who intend to follow their calling; (3) wives and children and other persons wholly dependent on residents in Palestine; (4) persons who have a definite prospect of employment with specified employer or enterprize; (5) persons of religious occupation, including the class of Jews who have come to Palestine in recent years from religious motives, and who can show that they have means of maintenance there; (6) travelers who do not propose to remain in Palestine longer than three months; (7) returned residents.

In regard to the future policy of the administration, the High Commissioner says that it is the duty of the mandatory power to promote the well-being of the Arab population as if there were no Zionist question and as if there had been no Balfour declaration. In such a policy he finds nothing incompatible with reasonable Zionist aspirations, and he says that if the present Arab majority were in any way wronged or harmed the moral influence of Zionism would be greatly impaired as a result of it.

Almost from the time of taking office, High Commissioner Samuels has been steadily working toward the establishment of some form of self-government for the district. In October, 1921, he instituted an advisory council with twenty members. Ten members of this represented the administration, and of the other ten, all of whom are nominated by him, four are Moslems, three Christians and three Jews. So far the cooperation between the council and the administration has been pleasant and fruitful, we are told, and no measure proposed by the council has been rejected by the High Commissioner. "Steps are now being taken," says the report, "to form a constitution for the country, which will include the elective element, and the leaders of the various sections of the population are being consulted as to its terms."

Many of the exhausting taxes imposed by the former Turkish administration have been repealed and a rea-

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sonable and modern taxation system introduced. It is expected that in the future in every district a very considerable part of the income of the district will be derived from the tobacco industry which has been growing rapidly since the end of the war. The cultivation of tobacco, previously prohibited, has begun in several districts, while a number of factories have been or are being opened for the manufacture of cigarets from imported tobacco.

Notable work has been done by the Department of Public Health. Under the old Turkish régime there were no hospitals or dispensaries of any kind for the civil population. Now the government maintains 15 hospitals, 21 dispensaries, 8 clinics and 5 epidemic posts. The fight is particularly directed against malaria and eye diseases, which are the two curses of the country. Other epidemic diseases are absent to a marked extent. In the campaign against malaria more than 15,000 wells have been registered and are regularly being dealt with, and 670 villages are in the zone of supervision. The report shows equally promising results in the field of education, which previously lay as fallow as some of the waste lands that mar large portions of Palestine. Any town or village needing a school can now obtain it simply by providing a suitable building and keeping it in repair, while the government out of the general taxes defrays the salaries of the teachers and other costs of maintenance. It is believed that a satisfactory school system will be established in this manner for the entire country within four years.