

5.—*Topographical Notes on Tunis.*

[“THIS paper appears to be a careful compilation of considerably more than a century ago. Some of the places described are correct, as far as the compiler goes, but many changes have occurred in the interim. His mention of mines requires verification, for it is difficult to pronounce what is authentic and what he gathered from itinerant Jews and others. There are evidences of the manuscript having been ransacked, but I do not remember having met it in print.”—Vice-Admiral W. H. SMYTH, K.S.F., F.R.G.S., &c.]

*Biserta*, a large town about 50 miles north-west from Tunis, seated by the sea-side; about half a mile long, but narrow. The lake, on the banks whereof it is seated, discharges itself into the sea by the town walls, and forms the port. Towards the east is the island where the Christians formerly lived. The inhabitants are pretty numerous, and are for the most part of the race of the Andalusian Moors who were drove out of Spain. They have about this town very good arable land, which produces a great quantity of beans, chichorie, and sundry other sorts of grain, which is exported for Italy and France, except wheat and barley, that not being exported without a particular licence. They sow cotton and tobacco. The lake reaches up 30 miles in the country; and there is an ebb and flow every six hours, and at the full of the moon then it is more. In the year 1755 there was found an old-built well of very fine fresh spring-water; it was stopt up; it is in the market where they sell the wheat.

*Ras El Gibel*, a town of about 300 houses, 8 miles west from St. Farina, and about a mile from the sea. There are seven churches with steeples.

*Porto Farina* is a an unwalled town of above 100 houses: a large lake is before it, at the end whereof is a very handsome large bason for holding the men-of-war and cruisers belonging to Tunis, it being the safest and best port belonging to the kingdom of Tunis. To the northward of the town is a salt-work. In 1739, when I was first there, there were two men-of-war—one of 50 guns, given by the Grand Signor in 1732, and the other of 50 guns, built by one Mr. Markham, an English builder, which has never been at sea yet, nor, I believe, never will. Near this place, about 1750, was discovered, by a Milanese, a quicksilver-mine, very good, but neglected by the Bey.

*El Alea*, a neat town seated on the top of a hill, whence its name (the high), is inhabited chiefly by Andalusian Moors, about 10 miles south-west from Porto Farina. It is at this place only where the thistles grow which are used by the capmakers at Tunis; they will thrive nowhere else, as has been tried.

*Solyman*, a small unwalled town of about 200 houses, about 22 miles south-

east of Tunis, is seated on a plain a mile from the sea, inhabited chiefly by Andalusians and Tripolines. Saffron also grows hereabouts.

*Hammam Leef*.—This is a famous hot-bath seated at the foot of a very high, steep, rocky hill. Here are two baths built, one for the men, and the other for the women: they go down three or four steps to them, and the water is up to their middle; there is a bench of stone to sit on; it is frequented chiefly for the cure of the French disease. The water of this bath is entirely sulphurous; it is about 12 miles south-east of Tunis.

*Galipia*, a small town situated at about 15 miles south-east from Cape Bona, and about 2 miles from the sea-side. The castle stands on the top of a rocky hill close to the water-side, and is a very ancient building, and very difficult to go up.

*Zowwan*, a neat town of 450 houses, seated on a hill at the foot of a large hill, inhabited chiefly by Andalusians, who are dyers and gardeners, there being a very good spring of fresh water, which comes out of the hill above the town, which serves both for dyeing and for their gardens. Where the head of the spring is, is the ruins of an old temple built over it; it is round.

*Mesakin*, a small town of about 100 houses, inhabited chiefly by Sherifs, who won't allow neither Jew nor Christian to enter the town.

*El Jeridde*, a large tract of land lying on the borders of the Sahara or Desert and subject to Tunis. It is a sandy soil, and the only produce of it is dates, with which they drive a great trade with the Moors round about them; besides, they make great quantities of fine barracans and fine burnouses of wool they get from the Emamma, a tribe of Moors who are near them, in exchange of their dates. The caravan that goes from South Barbary to Cairo every year calls at the Jeridde, both going and coming, and exchanges goods for dates. The people are yellow and thin, and have bad sight by reason of the heat of the sand. They reckon three days' journey from the Jeridde to Tuggurt. The water of the Jeridde is purgative to strangers for a while, till they are used to it. Madder is cultivated here; and, upon a demand in Tunis, they carry it there from hence, it not turning to account, by reason of the land-carriage, unless very scarce and dear.

*Bahar Pharaon*, or the Sea of Pharaoh, is a kind of lake in the Jeridde; some part water, but the most part sand, and in several places quicksands; so that where the people passed over is marked with stumps of date-trees, otherwise there would be no finding the way.

*Tozer*, the chief town of the Jeridde. Here is a palace built for the Bey, where he commonly resides when he comes to the Jeridde. At this town the caravan that goes from South Barbary to Cairo and back again, calls here; and the Codemsees pass here mostly.

*Nefta*, a town of the Jeridde, 15 miles south-west from Tozer. They have plantations of date-trees and springs of warm water.

*Sfax*, or Sfacus, is a handsome town, four-square, and walled round. The town is seated on a sandy plain about a stone's-throw from the sea. It is about a mile in circuit, and very populous. They make a great deal of linen cloth there. This place drives a great trade to Alexandria for flax and rice; and ships off from thence (when the Bey gives leave) oil, olives, and soap for Alexandria, and wool for Christendom, and henna for Tunis.

*Sminjah* is a plain so called, famous for the defeat of Hassein Ben Allie by the Algerines in 1735, and afterwards for the defeat of Sidie Jonas about two months afterwards by Hassein Ben Allie. And in this plain are some quarries of black marble, pretty good.

*Mezezelbeb*, a neat town situated on a plain on the eastern bank of the river Mejerdah, inhabited chiefly by the Andalusians. At this place is a fine bridge over the river, built by Mahomet Bey. The river is very deep here, and as broad again as where the bridge is going to Porto Farina.