

# CARTHAGE AND TUNIS,

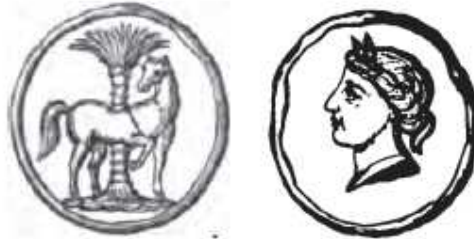
PAST AND PRESENT:

In Two Parts.

BY

AMOS PERRY,

LATE UNITED STATES CONSUL FOR THE CITY AND REGENCY OF TUNIS.




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## CHAPTER III.

History of the Middle Age from the Seventh to the Sixteenth Century.

## SECTION I.

THE ARAB CONQUEST AND THE COUNTRY UNDER THE LIEUTENANTS  
OF THE ORIENTAL CALIFS AND UNDER ITS FIRST INDE-  
PENDENT PRINCES.

N the year 662, after the foundation of the dynasty of the Ommyades, Okbah ben Nafy invaded Byzacium; and in 666, Moavia invaded it again. After the latter had defeated near Tripoli the troops sent by Constans II from Byzantium, the cities of Susa and Bizerta and the island of Gerba fell one after the other into his hands. Having extended the terror of Mussulman arms from Egypt to Tunisia, Okbah wished to have a point of support for Islamism, and, for this purpose, founded in the year 670, in a fertile and flourishing plain in the centre of Byzacium, the famous city of Cairwan, which became henceforth the holy city of Africa and the capital of the Mussulman possessions in the Maghreb (west).

Appointed for the second time governor of this province, to succeed in office Moavia and Dinar,

Okbah extended the Arab conquest to the extreme west, stopping only at the Atlantic, whose waters he entered on horseback, calling on the God of Mohammed\* to witness that he stopped in his victorious march only where land failed him.

In 694, Hassan ben Noman took and destroyed Carthage and Tunis. The Berbers arose in arms and resisted his sway at first under Koussila, who took possession of Cairwan. Afterwards, under the heroine Damia, surnamed Kahenna, they inflicted upon the Arabs severe losses and drove them back as far as Gabes. But soon Hassan defeated Damia in a general engagement, and employed the subjected Berbers to combat the independent tribes at a distance.

Master of Sfax and of Constantine, Hassan organized the government of the country and returned to the east, where he exhibited the spoils of the Maghreb to encourage recruits for the conquering army.

Musa ben Nosair succeeded him in Africa. It was he that conquered Corsica and Sardinia and sent his lieutenant Tarik to take possession of Spain through the treachery of count Julian (707-711) under the calif Walid. After that period until the establishment of the dynasty of the Abbasides in the east and from the foundation of the califate Ommyades in Spain, the unity of Moslem rule in Africa began to give way, and many rival principalities sprang up, combating by turns each other and the inhabitants of the country.

\* According to Mussulman scholars and usage, their prophet's name is *Mohammed*. The French, however, employ the epithet *Mahomet*, which is adopted by some of our best writers doubtless for the sake of euphony, regardless of strict historical accuracy.

In the year 800 A. D. (184 H.), Ibrahim ben Aghelib, appointed emir by Haroun-ar-Rashid, founded in Africa the independent dynasty of the Aghlabites, which had eleven princes, and with Cairwan for its capital, extended its rule from Tlencen to Tripoli. It was under the reign of its third prince, Abou Mohammed, that the conquest of Sicily took place in 827. The last Aghlabite was driven away by insurgents who were led on by Abou-Abd-Allah.

The dynasty of the Edrissites, contemporary with the Aghlabites, reigned over Morocco with Fez for their capital. North Africa was found then divided into eastern Africa, with Cairwan for its capital under the Aghlabite califate, extending from Tlencen to Tripoli; and western Africa, with its capital at Fez, and its territory extending from Tlencen to the ocean.

The Fatimite califs, who claim to be the descendants of Fatima, a daughter of Mohammed, began to establish their power at Segelmessa in Morocco, and, by the aid of the natives, extended their sway rapidly towards the east. They soon reached Egypt, where they founded Cairo, which became the second city of the east and the seat of one of the two vast califates, which undertook the control of the Mussulman world, treating each other as usurpers. Segelmessa, Tahart, Cairwan, Media and Cairo, were successively the capitals of the Fatimite califate in Africa. When the Fatimites established their headquarters at Cairo, their lieutenant in the Barbary provinces, Yousef (Joseph) ben Zeiri became by degrees independent and founded the new dynasty of the Zeirites, which pre-

vailed until 1148 (543 H.), under eight different princes.

But in 1007, Hammad, of the second branch of the Zeirites, founded the Hammadite order of sovereigns at Bougie and Constantine; and in 1055, arose in the Maghreb the Almorabides, who professed to be the special friends of religion. The last of the Zeirites, Hassan Ben Aly, (1121-1148), reigned and fell in the midst of disasters and disorders of various kinds. The Normands of Sicily had conquered Gerba, and king Roger of Sicily, profiting by the wretched state to which famine had reduced the country, took possession of Tripoli, Media, Sfax, Susa and Tunis, while Hassan fled to the east.

Then Abd-el-Moumen, founder of the dynasty of the Almohades in Morocco, left that country, in 1159 A. D., (554 H.), with 100,000 men. He took Tunis, Sfax, Gabes and Tripoli, and established governors in each important city and a supreme lieutenant at Media. According to the Arab historian, Ibn-Khaldoun, the Almohades had thirteen princes, under whom occurred many insurrections, and several emigrations were made into Sicily and Spain.

In 1195, the Beni Merin, a Berber tribe, driving off the Almohades, took possession of Fez and Morocco. In 1266, (665 H.), the last Almohade, Aboul Ali, was conquered and killed by the Merinites, who inherited his dynasty. There were twenty-five Merinite princes who had their capitals at Fez, Segel-messa and at Morok. They reigned until the end of the fifteenth century, when they were supplanted by

the actual dynasty of the scherifs\* of Morocco. But in the thirteenth century, the territory of the Merinites corresponded nearly to the present empire of Morocco; for the Beni Zian established themselves at that time at Tlencen, and ruled over most of the actual province of Algeria, and over *Ifrikia*, which constituted the present department of Constantine together with Tunisia and Tripoli. The Beni Zian founded the new dynasty of the Hafsites or of the Beni Hafs in 1228 (626 H.).

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\* This word implies nobility. The scherifs claim to be lineal descendants of Mohammed, through his daughter, Fatima.

ing the kasbah, his treasures and his women, he directed his course towards Algiers. Tunis capitulated, and Charles V was received under the walls of the city by a deputation which came to offer him the keys and to implore his mercy.

He entered Tunis as a conqueror, covered with a magnificent armor, which is still preserved in the museum at Madrid. Terror-stricken, the Mussulmans shrank from view; Christian slaves, delirious with joy, rent the air with their huzzas, to which were added in strange contrast the ferocious yells of the soldiers, who, in spite of the positive orders of Charles, already scented the prey of every sort which this great city offered them. The pillage lasted three days, and, without speaking of the other cruel excesses committed by a soldiery whose sufferings had aroused their fiercest passions, it is sufficient to say that 70,000 persons were massacred. We involuntarily recall the not less horrible entrance into Jerusalem of Godfrey of Bouillon, in 1099, when the victorious crusaders literally inundated the streets of the city with *blood ankle deep*, says a historian of that time.

Muley Hassan, reëstablished upon his throne, began by a memorable treaty which recognized his entire dependence on the emperor. The following are the principal clauses of this treaty signed on the 6th of August, 1535:

1. The unconditional liberation of all Christian slaves.
2. The right of Europeans to unrestricted trade at Tunis, to live there and build churches.

3. The engagement of the kings of Tunis to give no countenance whatever to corsairs.

4. The abandonment of the Goletta to Spain, and the payment of an annual tribute of 12,000 gold crowns for the maintenance of the Spanish garrison of this city.

5. A perpetual concession to Spain of the coral fishery upon all the Tunisian coast.

6. The recognition of the perpetual sovereignty of Spain, shown by an annual present of twelve horses and twelve falcons.

7. In return for all these engagements, Spain promised to protect Tunis against all other powers.

At his departure, Charles V left at the kasbah 200 picked men to be under the orders of Muley Hassan, until the entire pacification of the country. He assembled all the cavalry at Rades, and ordered them and the materials of war to be put on board the ships. He then returned to his headquarters at Carthage, and, before sailing, directed the construction of a strong fortress at the Goletta, and 1,000 men were left under the orders of Mendoza, and twelve galleys under Antony Doria.

Charles V reached Trapani in Sicily, and from there sent an expedition of 5,000 men against Media. A storm prevented the success of his plans, but the Spanish fleet occupied the cities of Bizerta and Bona, where it left garrisons.

Soon, however, the restored power of Muley Hassan was shaken by insurrectionary movements among his subjects. The natives could not bear to see their prince appear as the vassal of an infidel monarch.

Susa and Cairwan revolted. In the latter city, a scherif named Arfa, laid pretensions to the throne, and found numerous partisans.

Muley Hassan asked anew the aid of Charles. The viceroy of Sicily sent ships and troops against Susa; but the Spaniards were defeated there, and suffered a severe loss. It was only two years afterwards that the illustrious admiral Andrew Doria avenged this loss and placed Susa under Muley Hassan. He also took possession of Kalibia, Sfax and Monastir, and left a Spanish garrison in the last-named place. It was by the aid of this garrison that Muley Hassan attempted to re-take Cairwan. Abandoned by his Mussulman soldiers at the moment of the combat, he had to retreat under the efficient protection of the Spaniards.

When, subsequently, the garrison of Monastir was withdrawn by Spain, that city, as well as Kalibia, Susa and Sfax revolted again and called to their aid the famous Turkish corsair, Dragut. But Doria returned to reduce Monastir; and Susa of its own accord came again under the jurisdiction of Muley Hassan.

The latter, to put an end to the rebellions always breaking out, once more solicited in person the aid of Charles. He departed in 1542, leaving the government to his son, Muley Hamida. Profiting by the absence of his father, Hamida had himself proclaimed king of Tunis, despite the protest of the garrison at the Goletta, which, however, was too feeble to resist him.

On receiving this news, Muley Hassan hastened

from Sicily with 500 Mussulman soldiers and 2,000 ill-assorted Christian recruits. Contrary to the wise counsels of Don Francisco de Tabar, the Spanish governor at the Goletta, he insisted upon giving battle before Tunis. He was defeated and taken prisoner. His son Hamida had his eyes put out and then let him depart for Sicily and Italy, where he died in 1545.

The garrison at the Goletta, reinforced by 1,500 men sent from Naples, drove off Muley Hamida and put in his place his uncle Muley Abd-el-Malek, a respectable prince who lived to enjoy his throne but thirty-six days, and was succeeded by his son Muley Mohammed.

Muley Hamida, drawing back to the interior of the country, and fomenting everywhere civil war, took possession of Monastir. He then marched boldly upon Tunis and drove off his cousin, who fled to the Goletta and lost permanently his throne. The corsair Dragut profited by these events to make Media the base of his operations in Tunisia, and take possession of Gerba.

In 1551, Don Juan de Vega, viceroy of Sicily, came and besieged Media. The corsair arrived too late to defend it. The city capitulated, and Don Alvar de Vega, the son of Don Juan, maintained himself there some time, but was finally overcome by a revolt of the garrison, which took for its chief a certain *Aponti*, and lived by pillaging the country around. Charles V decided at length to abandon this place. The fortifications were destroyed and the garrison was recalled in 1553.

very irregular mountainous chains, which diminish in height from the Algerine frontier to the sea.

“The regency of Tunis,” says “Pelissier, “lies between  $37^{\circ} 20'$ , and  $33^{\circ}$  north latitude, and between  $7^{\circ} 40'$  and  $11^{\circ} 40'$  east from the meridian of Greenwich, and can be divided into four regions: 1st, the region of the north, comprising all that territory which lies at the north of the first Atlas chain, and consequently the Tunisian valley of the Majerda;\* 2d, the region of the west, extending between the two Atlas chains, from the Algerine frontier to the most eastern of the chains; 3d, the region of the east, which lies between the second division and the sea; 4th, the region of the south, comprising all that territory which lies to the south of the second Atlas chain, and extends to the frontiers of Tripoli. The most important and populous places of these divisions are: in the northern region, Tunis, Beja and Bizerta; in the western region, Kef; in the eastern region, Cairwan, Susa, Monastir, Media and Sfax; and in the southern region, Gafsa, Tozer, Nefta and Gabes.” It is in accordance with this simple and rational plan, that we proceed to give a summary description of Tunisia.

The northern region comprises the lower basin of the Majerda. This river is the largest of Barbary, though it is not navigable. The valley through which it runs is broad, fertile and magnificent. Unfortunately the banks of the Majerda are so steep and elevated as to render it difficult to employ the

\* The Majerda, ancient Bagrada, rises in the Algerine Tell, a province of Constantine; a part of its valley is then beyond the Tunisian frontier.

the present time three kaid. They can readily put 3,000 horsemen under arms.

To the southwest of the Jelas, is extended over a vast territory the tribe of the Majer, divided into three fractions, but governed by one kaid. It can furnish 2,000 cavalry. To the west of the Majer, upon a still larger territory, are the Frashish, having 1,000 horsemen. The Hamema encamp south of the Majer, and the Frashish and their territory extend to the Gereed. Their kaid holds habitually his "smala" (court) under the walls of Gafsa. They can put 4,000 horsemen in line of battle. They are divided into four fractions, which are often at war with each other. The Hamema have a well established reputation for their turbulence and rapacity. Between the Hamema and the sea are the Swassi, divided into many parts, and reckoning 10,000 horsemen. They are known for their habitual resistance to tax-gatherers.

South of the Swassi are the Metelith, whose territory extends south and west of the district of Sfax. Their soil is excellent and produces abundant crops of grain and olives, but as they are easily reached by way of Monastir, Susa and Sfax, they are more especially exposed to the exactions of beyal tax-gatherers, who show them little mercy, scarcely allowing them to enjoy the ease which with a wise administration would become general. Though they live in tents and have no fixed villages, they are much more laborious and partake less of the character of vagabonds than most nomads. With their industrious habits and a fertile territory, they would consti-

tute, under an intelligent and protective government, excellent farmers. They can furnish about 3,000 horsemen.

Between the Metelith and the Hamema, are the Mahedeba and the Taifa, which are parts of the same tribe, separated by the Nafat, a more important tribe, scattered over a light and sandy soil, which is nevertheless very productive during the rains of winter, and which they leave during the parching heat and drought of summer. The Nafat have about 800 horsemen.

In the Gereed, where the people live in the oases, we find the Nafzawa and the little tribe of the Shawia. The latter governs itself, paying annually to the bey of the camp a tax agreed upon from time immemorial, in order to be left free in the management of its affairs. There is also the little wandering, pillaging tribe of the Nemensha. The inhabitants of the Gereed are divided for administrative purposes into five districts, which are governed by kaid's residing respectively at Gafsa, Nefzawa, Nefta, Tozer and Oudian.

In El-Arad are the inhabitants of the oases and the Nomads, who live on the intermediate plains. These are the Beni Zid in the north; the Allaya and the Hamerna in the south. Mixed up with this last tribe are very many Negroes, enjoying precisely the same rights, wearing the same costume and living the same life as the whites, in the midst of whom they have been established for centuries.

In the southeast of El-Arad is the tribe of the Ourguema, established upon the plains and upon the mountain slopes of the Tuniso-Tripolitan chain. In

tians and Jews. Among other considerable places in the district of Susa, is Jemal, a town of 6,000 inhabitants. Passing from Susa, by Monastir, to cape Dimas (ancient Thapsus), the coast winds about mostly in an easterly direction; it then takes a southerly course as far as Ras Caboudia (Caput Vada); then it turns to the southwest, and beyond Sfax winds about to form the gulf of Gabes, and later takes a southeasterly direction. Monastir is twelve miles from Susa, and has 8,000 inhabitants. It is built on the site of ancient Ruspina, where Cæsar established his principal camp. Twenty-one miles in a southerly direction from Monastir, is Media (Mehedia, ancient Africa), with 6,000 inhabitants, founded three hundred years after the hegira, by the iman El-Mahedi, who gave it his own name.

In passing along the coast twenty-five miles from Media, we find the Ras Caboudia of the Arabs, the Caput Vada of the ancients, famous for having been the landing place of Belisarius in his successful campaign against the Vandals in 533-4. We also pass a great number of populous though unimportant places, whose wretchedness drew forth from Pellissier the remark that this country is placed under the ineffective protection of a great number of Mussulman saints whose influence is seen more in the erection of places for prayer, than in the elevation and well-being of the people. Sfax, which is situated on the extreme coast of the gulf of Gabes, is one of the largest cities in the regency. Like Susa, it is built in the form of an amphitheatre, with a picturesque and agreeable aspect, and is overlooked by its forti-

fications. It is surrounded with numerous gardens, and, seen from a distance, produces an agreeable impression, which, however, is speedily effaced as we pass within the walls. This is a fertile district, producing in abundance olives, almonds, pistachios and most of the fruits of Europe. On my two visits at Sfax, I was entertained at the Dar-el-Bey, where an extensive and delightful view of the harbor and the surrounding country was enjoyed, and my sojourn was rendered especially agreeable by the courtesies of the kaid and of the consular agents of the place. Under the walls of Sfax are numerous covered cisterns, built and kept in order by the pious legacies of benevolent Mussulmans. The exports of this city are mostly sent to Malta, and consist in olive oil, wool, sponges, woolen fabrics and dried fruits. Much trade is carried on by means of caravans between this port and the Gereed. Sfax stands on the site of ancient Taphnura. The river Shershar, which is the Tanais mentioned by Sallust, empties into the sea a few miles southwest of it. In the war against Jugurtha, before marching upon Capsa, Marius took his supply of water and provisions from this point.

Opposite to Sfax are the Kerkenna islands where, in addition to various other branches of industry, fish and sponges are exported. In catching fish, the inhabitants profit by the tide, which, though inconsiderable in the Mediterranean generally, becomes very apparent from cape Caboudia as far as the frontiers of Tripoli. The tide rises more than three feet at Sfax, and much higher at Gerba and Gabes. The Kerkenna islands are memorable for several historic

events. Hannibal spent there some days before going into exile. Marius landed there on his way to Carthage, after being driven from Italy. During the war of Cæsar, in Africa, Sallust, the historian, then prætor, was sent to these islands to take possession of quantities of wheat stored there by the Pompeian party. Pliny speaks of a bridge which once united the two islands, the remains of which are still visible.

South of Sfax and the Kerkenna islands, is the gulf of Gabes (ancient Syrtis Minor), which maintains its early reputation for inconstancy and fickleness. The sea there swells and becomes furious at slight breezes. The *feluccas* which sail over these waters, are often greatly exposed to the violence of the waves, having few places for safe anchorage. The southwest coast of this gulf belongs to the province of El Arad, of which we have already spoken. The city of Gabes (ancient Tacape) is simply a group of villages surrounded by luxuriant gardens. It contains the tomb of one of the companions of the prophet, and several thousand inhabitants. Opposite to Gabes is the island of Gerba, the ancient Menynx and Lotophagitis, separated from the continent on the south by a narrow strait. With a smooth or undulating surface, its soil is fertile and tolerably well cultivated. It produces grain and fruits of all sorts, and manufactures oil jars, and a fine woollen cloth employed for ladies' burnouses; this last named article is renowned for its fineness and superior finish. It also produces soda and lime in considerable quantities.

The island of Gerba contains no walled cities and

town and the centre of much commerce. Media contains some old cisterns with arched roofs whose masonry is in a good state of preservation. Here is found an opening into a vast subterranean apartment, which tradition represents to be one end of the underground passage of which we spoke in describing the amphitheatre at El-Gem.

Seven miles from Media we find the scanty ruins of Selecta, ancient Syllectum, which was the first stopping place of Belisarius in his march from his landing point at Caput Vada to Carthage. Near this spot are traces of the city of Justinapolis, founded upon the site of the Byzantine camp, in honor of the successful landing and subsequent victories of the imperial legions, which, under Belisarius, resulted in the overthrow of the Vandal power in Africa, 534, A. D.

At Sfax are a few vestiges of Roman constructions, but in some surrounding villages are important ruins. At Messallah are remains of an amphitheatre 600 feet in circumference, and further north, at Bathnia Casser-Essas, are some ruins two miles in circuit. In the environs of Bir-Koum-Maken, north of Sfax, are ruins three miles in circuit, including some enormous masonry of a large theatre; two vast cisterns, and a triumphal gate much disfigured. At Hoonga, on the route between Sfax and Gabes, are the ruins of ancient fortifications, and of an immense edifice which appears to have been a Christian basilica.

At the mouth of the brook Tarf-el-Ma, which empties into the gulf of Gabes, are the ruins of an

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Israelites in Tunisia.\*



IN Africa, as elsewhere, this race, at the same time obstinate and supple, yielding and firm, changing in appearance but remaining unchanged in its essential elements, the elder branch of the human family, intermingles with the other races without being confounded with them, and is distinguished from them by particular characteristics always and everywhere the same. Jewish features are peculiar and expressive. The face indicates intelligence and

\* Mr. Noah, himself a Jew, in his book written more than a half century ago, estimates the number of Jews in Tunisia at 60,000, and in all the Barbary States at 700,000. He says the Jewish exiles from Spain and Portugal found in Fez, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli great numbers of their brethren originally from Judea, some of them doubtless descended from the Canaanites who fled from Joshua and settled in Mauritania Tingitana. Rev. William Fenner, who has enjoyed unusual means of information, has furnished the following table of the Israelitish population: SEAPORT TOWNS.—Tunis (the capital), 32,000; Goletta, 200; Soliman, 100; Nabel, 600; Susa, 3,000; Monastir, 500; Media, 400; Ksoor-es-Sef, 50; Shobba, 30; Sfax, 5,000; Gabes, 2,000; Gerba (island), 7,500; Porto Farina, 25; Ras-Gebel, 100; Bizerta, 400. INLAND TOWNS.—Gereed (oases of), 3,000; Kef, 500; Beja, 350; Mater, 80; Testour, 250; Medjez-el-Bab, 25; Tebourba, 50; Mukneen, 400; Zaughan, 50; Nomadic Jews scattered among the various tribes of the interior, 3,000. Seaport towns, 51,905; Inland towns, 7,705; total, 59,610.

shrewdness tinged with melancholy, and in its ever-varying expression are shown great power of language and a natural, insinuating eloquence, which have served the Jew in the greatest straits for centuries. For, reduced by the hatred and oppression of all nations to efface or belittle himself, and resolved by family instinct and national pride to finally triumph in his views and interests, he understands how to gain by circuitous ways places which he could not take by assault. In other words, he dissembles, humiliates and even degrades himself, excites pity, causes disgust, wins confidence, and thus finally succeeds in reaching all posts to which he aspires. This is especially true in commercial and financial affairs. In this country, the Jew is the life of business.

It is a tradition that a part of the Jews of North Africa have been established there since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; but very many came from Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They occupy there, as formerly in Europe, separate quarters, called *haras*, a word which belongs to antiquity, and means stables or unclean places. The streets are there narrow, dark, damp and dirty. The houses are many of them in a ruinous state, small and badly aired. Numerous and sickly families are often crowded into these unhealthy habitations, and there multiply in suffering and wretchedness. In the rainy season, liquid mud deluges these quarters, and penetrates into many of the houses, which are below the level of the ground. Of late years, however, the new municipality has done much to improve the sanitary condition, and

introduce light and air into this quarter. Good new houses are now rising on points where but recently were squalid ruins crowded with wretched tenants.

The custom which formerly prevailed of closing the gates of the *harras* at night was discontinued many years since at Tunis, where several times these unfortunate people, unable to escape, fell a prey to the flames; and their distresses were more than once aggravated by the uncharitableness of Christians as well as Mussulmans, who, influenced by religious animosity, neglected to come to their relief. But since the reign of Ahmed Bey, it is only the mass of the Israelitish people that live in the *harra*. Families in easy circumstances, especially if they are of European origin, select elsewhere their dwelling, and from the top of their palatial mansions look out on the entire city.

We have seen an essay, entitled, "The Jews our Lords." It was a suggestive satire, setting forth in a clear light a remarkable truth. In the midst of our industrial and commercial activity, where capital and prices absorb attention, it is certain that influence and success attend speculative and financial genius, of which no people possess so great a degree as the Jews. They are engaged in almost every important speculation, and have, in proportion to their population, more eminent business men than any other people on the face of the globe, for the simple reason that each one aims at business and depends upon it. In this country nothing is done without the Jews. From the management of the finances of the state down to the humblest private speculation, all is in

their hands. Christians and Mussulmans affect to despise and hate them, especially the latter, and yet neither could succeed without them. They are, in all the administrations of the government, the general treasurers and financial agents, and, encountering fearful obstacles and a malicious espionage, they show as much skill and sagacity in business as in avoiding conviction and punishment when guilty of fraud and mal-administration. They are in general suspected and accused by everybody; but they care not for this, and feeling themselves to be a necessary part of the machinery of the government, they shrink from no encounters to maintain their position.

To gain as much money as possible in very little time and at any sacrifice, is the prevailing ambition of the Israelites of this country. Most of them are traders, and all aspire to be such. A few only engage in other pursuits, while waiting for a chance to indulge their besetting propensity. Almost all the trade with Marseilles, Leghorn and other ports, is in their hands, either directly, by the number and importance of their mercantile houses, or indirectly, by their brokers, courtiers, and exchange agents, whose services are indispensable in all commercial and financial operations, and who usually serve in this humbler sphere only until they can appear as merchants in their own names. Showing wonderful tact and fitness for this kind of service, they never fail to take care of their own interest and make sure of their profits, whatever may happen to their employer.

Besides their position as commercial brokers, the Israelites occupy there, as in all the Levant, places

(P.) *The Political Future of the Country.*

Just as I was leaving Tunis, after having endured the heat of the summer of 1867, and breathed a noxious air that brought cholera and death to thousands around me, I received from an eminent diplomatic source a pointed inquiry, whose definite answer, which was then confidential, implied on my part some insight into the future. Though not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, I embraced my privilege as a Yankee and *guessed*.

Since then, I have seen no reason to change my views. As the great ship canal across the isthmus of Suez progresses under French auspices, Tunis, centrally situated on the great highway between the canal and the ocean acquires a new importance which the French people and government are not slow to appreciate and turn to their account. They see on the Tunisian coast better harbors and a richer soil than are to be found in their Algerine possessions, and they evidently mean to bring them under their control. Instead of being animated by a chivalrous spirit and a

desire to diffuse the blessings of civilization, they seem disposed to take advantage of the weakness of this government to extend their power and increase their territorial possessions. Despite his graceful air and comely looks, the French eagle is savagely rapacious; and now the British lion, which seeks the gratification of his own appetite, is powerless to restrain the soaring and plunging movements of this keen-eyed bird. The American eagle, distrustful of both the bird and beast that hovered and prowled around his western domains in the season of his exposure, contents himself with simply noting passing events. The inquiry and reply were as follows:—

#### WHAT IS TO BE THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF TUNIS?

This question is often put, and gives rise to a variety of speculations and answers. Frenchmen apparently regard Tunis as the supplement of Algeria. Englishmen see here an important source of supplies for Malta, and Italians claim special consideration on account of their language and customs, which have to some extent prevailed here from the Roman period to the present time. Italy has the largest colony here; England has the most pressing need of supplies for Malta; but France has the greatest force at hand to control the country.

Politically, too, France has the most intimate relations with Tunis. From the beginning of the war against Algiers, the French have been near neighbors of the Bey, and much of the time have been patronized as his special friends. On one occasion they prevented the Ottoman fleet from an organized effort to get control of this government. They have employed the full range of diplomatic arts to introduce and keep up intimate relations between the two countries. The French consul at length acquired a leading, not to say controlling, influence with the Bey. He was consulted, and his aid was regarded as needful to the success of all important enterprises. French subjects were invited to fill places of emolument and trust, and to them were given the most important contracts, such as establishing telegraphic communication between different parts of the regency, making loans to the government almost on their own terms, and introducing water into the city and its environs from the mountains of Zaughan.

With French influence thus strongly established and recognized, in the year 1864 a French consul with little experience in the country attempted to inaugurate a new line of policy, boldly treating the Bey as a French vassal by interrupting his vessels in his own waters, demanding the dismissal of some of his ministers, and recommending other important changes in the government. Not being able to execute this line of policy without resorting to force (from which measure the consul did not shrink), and giving serious offence to other nations, the French government withdrew this consul and has since sent other officers who have pursued a more conciliatory course. Still, during their administration, the Bey has been made to feel the arbitrary power of the French government.

When the Bey was relieved of the presence of the offensive consul, it was regarded as a victory on his part and was so proclaimed abroad. But

I believe France took this step both because she did not wish to encounter the displeasure of other nations and especially because she was not disposed unnecessarily to have another religious war similar to that waged in Algeria. But her ultimate purposes in regard to this country are scarcely to be questioned. While she watches it with a vigilant eye lest it escape her irritating touch, she sees that gentleness is in general better than harshness. Feeling secure of her plunder, she can afford to await the maturity of plans of slow development.

If the French were to take forcible possession of the regency, other nations might protest, and Mussulmans might massacre and plunder. The seizure could be made and the country held. Difficulties would, however, naturally arise in regulating many complicated affairs while encountering the hatred of Mussulmans and the ill-will of Europeans. In view of all the facts in this case, France decides to await the progress of events. Her experience in Algeria and in Mexico probably serves as a warning. Her legitimate influence as a powerful neighbor of the Bey is great, and she has but to persist in the maintenance of apparently friendly relations, and seize every petty occasion to assert her presumed authority, to secure present advantages and a final triumph.

Tunisia is destitute of the elements of life and progress which alone can long save her from falling an easy prey to a stronger power. The policy of her adoption leads directly to ruin. Instead of being judiciously taxed to secure a revenue, a considerable part of the country is annually overrun by an army, pillaging and plundering in the name of the government, and the poor Arabs are fast becoming so miserable and so desperate in their misery as to demand rather than repel foreign intervention; and consuls, who exerted their utmost energy to overcome French intrigues during the late rebellion, are now apparently disposed to menace the Bey with French intervention to induce him to pay his debts, the responsibility of which rests heavily upon some of them. While the Bey pays fifty thousand francs a year to a French subject to promote his interests at Paris, the interests of the French government at Tunis are believed to be gratuitously watched and promoted by both French and Tunisian subjects who are ever near the Bey.

I am, then, persuaded that this country will at length come under the acknowledged protection and control of France, if not with the consent and approbation of other nations, probably without violent opposition. Such at least is the manifest tendency of affairs at the present time, notwithstanding a species of state-craft employed to produce a counter result. The malady is too deeply seated to be overcome by empirics in the name of diplomacy. The Gallic eagle, already scenting the prey, prepares to clutch it, despite the lion's growl and all the shrieks and howls that may be raised as he enjoys his repast.