

THE TROUBLES IN TUNIS

INTENTIONS OF FRANCE AND ITALY.

NO INTERRUPTION OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS TO BE FEARED—ITALY NOT IN CONDITION FOR A WAR—HOW THE DIFFICULTY WILL BE SETTLED—RUSSIA AND THE EAST.

PARIS, April 22.—The Tunisian difficulty drags; its explosion was only known in Paris on the day after the publication in your columns of my letter of the 21st of March by which I announced the imminence of a catastrophe, and although 24 days have elapsed since the Kroumir aggression, we are still uncertain whether operations have really begun. For this delay there are, doubtless, good and sufficient reasons; what they are, the Government keeps to itself in a laudable desire not to frighten the public by a confession that there are breakers ahead—history of the ostrich and the sand—but it does not reflect that this very reticence produces a mischievous agitation, artfully fomented by those of whom it is the mission to trouble the waters either for their own personal benefit or for the benefit of their employers. I hesitate to believe that Tunis will be the starting-point of any general complication. No power, except France and Italy, have any even indirect interests in Africa. The return to office of M. Cairoli and Company ought to be interpreted as a gauge of benevolent neutrality in the question now pending between the Quai d'Orsay and the Bardo, and yet it does not produce nearly the appeasing effect that had been anticipated, as the Italian 5 per cents, which rallied very considerably when those glad tidings were first communicated, have continued to drop at an alarming rate during the last three days, and are not yet at the bottom of the hill. The Rothschilds positively decline to undertake any financial operation in which Italy is a factor, the other big banking firms follow their example, and when the Israelites refuse to lend money the situation must be scaly. If the prime mover of the Tunisian intrigue, M. Maccio, were recalled, it would be a categorical disavowal of his policy, but he has not been recalled, and, therefore, it is evident that this gentleman has only obeyed orders from the Quirinal, where the royal mind is not certain what course to pursue. He is like the man who stood between the devil and the deep sea, this Umberto, of Savoy; his dilemma is distressing. On one side the "foster sons of the she-wolf" clamor for glory, on the other the Treasury is empty, and what may not the Deputies say when the question is asked at their next session, Why did you spend 33,000,000 lire not provided for in the budget on the Army and Navy within the last six months, if you did not mean to use them? Italy has been arming steadily, if quietly, ever since the little black cloud, then no bigger than a man's hand, began to appear on the horizon of the Regency, and the Minister of War would not have ordered the immediate formation of the *cadres*—the officer's roll of 100 battalions of the territorial army—if he had not supposed their employment at least a possible eventuality. For all that, however, I scarcely can credit the report of the imminent dispatch of an Italian expeditionary corps to Tunisian waters, Mr. Barthélemy St. Hilaire wishes, he says, to keep out all foreign elements from a dispute in which only France and Tunis are concerned, and, therefore, will not give a pretext for the appearance of other fleets before the Bardo, by dispatching a French fleet to that anchorage. He is quite right, but his reflection has come too late; if, as I wrote on the 21st of March, he had always refused to recognize any other adversary than Sidi Mohammed, he would not have the present imbroglio. He has locked the door after the horse was stolen, and has now only one chance to avoid the very issue which he dreaded, viz., armed foreign intervention, and this chance is that the column which was to have landed at Tabarca yesterday, and did land for aught we know to the contrary, gets to the capital in time to prevent an outburst of Mohammedan fanaticism against foreign residents. The gentlemen who wear the turban and conform to the teachings of Mohammed about infidels make no distinctions between nationalities when their blood is up. I was an officer in the Turkish service, and had brought in news of a successful cavalry engagement, in which a Russian sabre had left its mark on my forehead, when I was assaulted with clubbed muskets by the Turkish garrison of Kars in 1854. Neither my uniform nor my bandaged head preserved me from the fury of those bigots, who look upon all Ghiaours with the same horror. There are German and Italian and English residents of Tunis, as well as Frenchmen, and, if the Marabouts who are preaching to the rabble the extermination of the Roumi, give the signal for the Holy War, the massacre will be general and France may find that "the arm of the sea" can be traversed more quickly than any land forces can march from the frontier to the spot when their presence is necessary, although the line separating Algeria from Tunisia be "only fictitious" as M. Roustan bade the Bey remember.

Anything and everything is possible, and anything may happen, but I am inclined to think that the game next played by the Germano-Italian confederacy will be diplomatic, and none the less dangerous on that account. Barthélemy St. Hilaire is not strong in diplomacy, and if he falls into the trap now set for him no one can estimate the troubles which may ensue. I allude to the proposal for the substitution of Khäir-ed-Dinn Pasha as Bey of Tunis, which the present incumbent, which, as the ex-Grand Vizir is supposed to be a Francophile, was put about as a solution calculated to give every satisfaction to French complaints of Tunisian grievances. With that ignorance of facts which, joined to an assumption of entire competency in every question, is a leading trait of the French character, the French press was at first disposed to look favorably on this proposal; but more mature reflection revealed the snare spread for B. S. H.'s unwary footsteps! To accept the deposition of the dynasty of Mohammed-el-Sadyk would have acknowledged the validity of the firman of 1873, due to the initiative of Khäir-ed-Dinn, which reaffirmed the suzerainty of the Porte over its vassal, the Bey of Tunis. At the time of its promulgation, this vassalage was not recognized by the French Government, the direction of whose foreign affairs being then in the keeping of an experienced diplomatist, who foresaw the possible correlative which might be invented some day between the French and the Oriental questions. I need scarcely call attention to the dangers which might result to French colonial interests if the Turkish pretensions were now admitted, and a pretext given for the invocation of that stereotyped bit of balderdash, the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Of the performances of the warriors now in the field I shall keep your readers informed, whenever they offer any features of interest; meanwhile, let me put them on their guard against attaching too much value to what is said either pro or con of French operations by the correspondents who have obtained permission to follow the columns. The *Standard* has sent out its "special;" so have a dozen French newspapers, but each and every reporter has been obliged to sign an agreement not only that he will communicate nothing either by letter or by telegram, concerning the movements of the army which has not received a *visé* of approval from the Staff, but that he will consent to an immediate expulsion from the lines and from the African continent should the journal which he represents publish any information, no matter from what source obtained, reflecting unfavorably upon the conduct of the campaign. I thought the Russians were severe in 1877, but this measure puts theirs into the shade. Evidently Gens. Fergemol and Vinemdon are not desirous that much light should be thrown on their exploits; possibly they may not feel much confidence in their troops, of whom a very large proportion are mere conscripts, who have not been more than five months with the colors. The "special" of the *Temps* writes in glowing terms of the excellent behavior of the rank and file while in camp near Bône, and that "he was glad to remark that the consumption of absinthe was limited," but he was forced to admit that an enormous proportion of the soldiers were laid up with sore feet for which reason the advance of the division was suspended for 48 hours. "Their hide will get tanned after a while," said an old sergeant," adds the correspondent of the *Temps* who evidently had forgotten, if he ever knew that the institution, "old Sergeants," no longer exists in the French Army since its reorganization; I will venture to ask how men who are knocked off their pins by a two days' march of 30 miles in all are likely to stand the fatigues of a long campaign.

The Tunisian question belonging to the category known as "burning," I have dilated

upon it somewhat more at length than I had intended, and yet I am excusable, as out of it nothing seems to interest the Parisians, among whom balls, parties, concerts, and theatricals are losing their savor, and to whom the claims of the Hellenes are becoming indifferent. Yet all is not serene in that quarter; the acceptance of the settlement elaborated by the Ambassadors was not unequivocal, it contained a proviso about guarantees for the "pacific entry into possession of the ceded territory," which, as the Ambassadors could not give, they avoided noticing. Besides, another difficulty seems entirely to have escaped the attention of those who argued that a pacific solution was now a certainty, because M. Coumoundouros did not refuse to listen to reason. The Porte traced a line of frontier, positively declaring that it would make the maximum of concessions which it would make; acting entirely upon their own responsibility, the Ambassadors added to this maximum the demolition of the Preveza forts, the surrender of Punta to the Greeks, and the free navigation of the Gulf of Arica, upon not one of which points do the Ambassadors or any one else know the views of the Sultan and his Cabinet. Abd-ul-Hamid may agree, however, but it will not be with the intention of fulfilling his engagements. Does not the Koran teach that to keep faith with the unbeliever is a sin in the eyes of Allah, and, after the grotesque farce before Dulcigno, can any apprehension exist that Europe's intervention will go beyond the expenditure of much ink and paper? There may be no war, in precise language—no war may be formally declared; but the Palikares will cross the border in arms, and the Moslem will resist them, and there will be much hard fighting and much blood spilled in Epirus and Thessaly before the Crescent makes way for the Cross, which will once more, as in 1877, be carried by the Russians. You must look toward Russia for the incidents which will determine the crisis, and queer things have begun to be noticed on the banks of the Neva, where the State is maintained as it were by the force of inertia only. In any other country the murder of a sovereign would have been followed by social troubles, perhaps by a revolution, but there is a total absence in Russia of any serious element for a serious revolution. Everything is upside down; there is absolute chaos in the Government, at the court, and in public opinion, and this chaos is due principally to an unexpected change in religious opinions. When Solowieff missed the late Czar on the 2d of April, 1879, the people thought that the Czar owed his escape to an interference—the Russian people is exaggerated in its mysticism—of divine providence. But the facts are simply these: when the assassin's first ball passed through the Czar's overcoat, his Majesty jumped from the sidewalk to the carriage and took to his heels, as many other people, not Czars, would have done in similar circumstances; blinded by the smoke, Solowieff did not notice the direction taken by his intended victim, but continued to fire where he thought he still was. Kept in ignorance of this the entire nation, from the members of the imperial family down to the most humble *moujik*, firmly believed that the chief of the orthodox Church was invulnerable, and this conviction became stronger after the failures of the attempts of the 19th of November, 1879, and the 5th of March, 1880, so that when he did fall the edifice of Muscovite faith in the inviolability of "the elect of God" crumbled away, leaving in its place a sentiment of apathetic indifference. Alexander III. was as disconcerted as his subjects; he listened to every counsel offered by those who approached him, but he followed none, his reply being invariably, "Everything must remain as it was." So things did remain, apparently, until after the funeral; but, meanwhile, intrigue was busy, and new aspirants for place and power began to work cleverly, making capital out of the universal panic. The first result of these intrigues was the appointment of Baranow, who, at first, extolled to the skies, is now stigmatized as a "fraud," intelligent and bold, but "lacking all education and honesty of purpose." For a few days Baranow was in high favor, but he is now reported to have lost the Emperor's confidence and to be on the eve of removal from the Prefecture of Police, where Gen. Heintz, now Governor of Kasan, will reign as master. This is an indication of great importance of the tendency of the imperial policy, as Heintz is a protégé of Pobedonoszew, the Procurator-General of the Synod, the most bigoted orthodox in Russia, who declares that the death of Alexander II. was the just chastisement of God for hismorganatic marriage with Princess Dolgorouki. Pobedonoszew is an ardent reactionary in politics and in religion. He is convinced that all Russia's misfortunes are caused by reforms. The merest allusion to Western progress exasperates him to fury, and he threatens the Czar with the thunderbolts of divine wrath if the empire be not expurgated of foreign literature, which he abhors; in his own family he allows but one book—the "Meditations of St. Thomas de Kelios," and, except the *Officiel*, not a single newspaper is tolerated within his palace. Thanks to him, the past fortnight has witnessed the suppression of the *St. Petersburg Gazette* and the *Molva*, the "warnings" to the *Golos*, the *Strana*, and the *Zemstro*, the interdiction from sale in the streets of the *Poriadok*. Worse than this, hatred of the press, however, is his Pan Slavism, which sees no salvation for the world until Russia can preach the doctrines of regeneration from the dome of St. Sophia. But Pobedonoszew is an honest man, his integrity is incontestable, and although a dangerous fanatic is a fanatic from conviction; he would sacrifice a million of soldiers to-morrow for the cause of his Church, but he would not pardon his own son if he were direlict to honor. His influence at Court is now omnipotent, and his advice has prevailed in the adoption of certain extraordinary measures which have stupefied all Russia even more than some of the extraordinary appointments which have been recently signed. Immense ditches have been dug around the Anitehew Palace in search of mines, and, as none were found, iron gratings have been sunk with a network of metallic wires, which, by means of electric bells, are to warn the occupants of the building that the Nihilists are at work. Something like the same precautions are also to be taken at the Winter Palace, where quite a panic was caused by the discovery of a wire leading into the Emperor's library. Everybody ran away immediately, but returned after the Minister of the Interior had assured them that the said wire had been laid by order of Emperor Nicholas, who wished to be in constant communication with one of his most trusty advisers, Klein Michel. It was much ado about nothing, indeed, but all these measures have produced a deplorable effect upon the population; the evident "pusillanimity," as they call it, of the Czar has done more to weaken his prestige than all the machinations of the Nihilists, and the sudden flight of the entire court to Gatschino, whither he was escorted by 300 cuirassiers and Cossacks, has not restored confidence. The journey lasted two hours, and during that time the telegraphic service throughout the whole empire was suspended. One of the main causes of this precipitate exodus, of which not one *St. Petersburg* newspaper has dared to speak, is the nervous prostration of the Empress and the Czarevitch, alluded to in my last letter. It was advised, says gossip, by Baranow, who wants to have a free foot in the capital and shown himself to be indispensable, even be he turned out of his present situation. The appointments to which I referred above are those of Baron Nicolai and Gen. Ignatieff, who has come to the surface a little sooner than I expected. Nicolai and Ignatieff are living antitheses of each other. The first is a German, with a supreme contempt for Russian institutions, and his nomination was thought to mean that the Czar was bent on reforms. Unfortunately, Ignatieff's ideas are directly opposed to these, and the ancient Ambassador to Constantinople has made himself too notorious to leave any doubt as to the signification of his recall to the capital. All the men of ability still in office, such as Loris Melikoff, Milintine, Abaza, Valoniew, who might warn the Emperor of the precipice which yawns before him, stand aloof; they see the danger, but they are afraid to compromise themselves and make enemies of the favorites. Their hope is that the Czar may see for himself the absurdity and extravagance of his new counselors; but, admitting that his eyes be opened some day, what catastrophe may not occur before the hour of his awakening? It is urged by those who are persistently optimistic that Alexander III. has only commenced his reign; the policy which he will follow cannot be rightly judged until after the expiration of his six weeks of mourning. But from the character of those by whom he is surrounded we may form an approximate opinion of what that policy is likely to be, even now. It is not by such as Nicolai and Pobadonoszew and Ignatieff that Russia can be regenerated, and yet Russia had every right to hope for better things from a monarch whose benevolence and virtue are unquestionable and unquestioned.