

Le Gaulois

Monday, July 4, 1881

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QUESTIONS

TUNISIA AND ALGERIA

Here the dispatches which we received at the last minute:

Tunis, July 3

An English warship left for Sfax at the same time as the Italian ship Carridi, and with the same instructions for the protection of the people and the belongings of the nationals.

The consul Maccio will leave Tunis Friday. We are assured that Gabès and Sfax are to be occupied by a body of two thousand Tunisian troops, which will be assisted by some French detachments.

In addition, we find in *Le Temps* the following details on the riot that drove all the European colony out of Sfax.

Tunis, July 2, 2 o'clock.

Yesterday, the postal boat *Mustapha* brought 800 fugitives from Sfax, the majority Jews.

The city has been plundered by the natives, the house of the vice-consul ransacked, as well as the shops of the French subjects. In addition to the consular agent, two French were wounded and two Maltese killed.

It is proven that it was the commander of the place, Ali Cherif, who gave the signal for the revolt. The notables of the city alone protected the embarking of the Europeans. The large majority of the inhabitants pursued the vice-consul of France and the French citizens as far as the sea.

Monastir, July 2, 4:00 evening.

Some passengers newly arrived from Sfax, on an Italian steamer, recount the following facts:

On Monday, of the Arabs from outside the city, together with those of the city, invaded the European districts, breaking the equipment of the French consul and threatening a massacre of all the European population. These immediately sought to reach the ships in the harbour by any means.

During the escape, or at the time of the embarkation, the consul of France had an arm broken by the strike of a pickaxe. Mr. Sodal, who fulfills the functions of Swedish consul, received a blow of a sabre to his neck; his brother, a sabre blow to the hand. One named Padovani, a nephew of the French Consul, received a dagger wound in the thigh. A Maltese employee of the tobaccos regulators was killed, and his corpse immediately cut in pieces. An unknown Maltese underwent the same fate. A Jew was stabbed to death. Three dead have been counted and approximately twenty wounded. Many escaped only by throwing themselves into the sea to reach the gunboat *Chacal*, which accomodated all that it could and has taken under its protection a mass of refugees from all the nations, that the insurrection has forced to leave their residence.

The Italian consul is on board the *Alma*, which also accomodated a certain number of refugees.

The insurrectionists have named a bey who directs the operations.

If one could believe the Havas agency, peace would be reigning in Kairouan and Monastir, and the movement would be restricted in Sfax. We are far, for our part,

from sharing the confidence which the Havas agency appears to have.

Particular information teaches us, on the contrary, that all the tribes of the Sahel have risen, that considerable troops of natives have arrived at Sfax, and arrives there every day.

The fanaticized Arabs want to resist. It is certain that we will easily be finished with this bunch of rebels. But the occupation of Sfax by our troops will not be enough to restore peace in the south of the Regency.

It will be necessary to make a new expedition to the border of Tripolitaine.

Then, why have most of our troops been recalled?

It will be necessary to send new regiments in Tunisia?

And on the border of Tripoli are the Turks. Who can say that we will not be obliged to come to blows with them?

Where are we going?

It is time to know however, in truth.

Instead of striking extremely from the beginning, in Tunisia as well as in Algeria, only half-measures were taken.

We see, unfortunately some of the results: Waste everywhere.

The Arabs seem to make fun of us. In the south of Oran, they make us proposals for an arrangement.

But since when does one deal with rebels?

We are thus believed to have fallen low.

Morbleu! 'Zounds!' That we can be finished one time with all this awkwardnesses, all this procrastination, in Tunisia as well as in Algeria, if we do not want to be thrown into the sea, as the government throws the incompetents into the water.

We believe it is interesting to give our readers some information on the town of Sfax, today in the power of rebellious Arabs:

Sfax or Sfaques, is situated on the northern coast of the gulf of Gabes, facing the Kerkna islands, close to Tripoli and not far from Malta.

The city, built in an amphitheatre, on the coast, has a rather good port.

The population comes to about 16,000 inhabitants, including 12,000 Moslems, 2,000 Jews, and the remainder Christian, located in two different districts. In one, Arabs; in the other, Jews and Christians. As with all the important cities of the Regency, Sfax has a wall of crenelated ramparts and is dominated by a kasbah. It is the center of a quite large trade in oil, cumin, pistachios, almonds, peppers, dates and other food products of Le Midi. Imports are mainly fed by Malta, Italy, Turkey and France.

It is by Sfax that most of the arms smuggling comes, that is intended for the natives in the south of Regency and in Algeria, the Sfaxiens being in direct commercial relations with Tebessa and Tuggurt.

The gardens of Sfax are célèbres and deserve their reputation.

A very strongly scented jasmine is cultivated there, from which the essence of that name is manufactured, so renowned in Tunis.

The surroundings also produce maize, figs, barley, melons and excellent cucumbers (*sfakous*, in Arabic) from where comes the name of the city.

The dryness is the flaw of the country. It is remedied through the utmost skill and effort. Not only does each house have its cistern, but the countryside is strewn with tanks intended to collect and preserve the least water drop which fall from the sky into its vicinity.

Sfax is a town of Arab origin. In its fields one finds no trace either of the Romans, nor the Vandals, nor even of the Byzantines.

From the military point of view, the position of Sfax is important, in the sense that it is a setback in the Sahel and the holy city of Kairouan, and that it is, as we said, one of the most important points in North Africa for the entry of contreband of war.

In a few days, by means, if necessary of a bombardment, Sfax will be in our power.

It is obvious that a permanent garrison, supported by a man-of-war, will be left in the place.