

TUNIS AND TRIPOLI.

EARL DE LA WARR rose to question the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as to the alleged statement of M. Tissot, the French Ambassador at Constantinople, to the effect that instructions had been given to the general in command of the French troops to cross the Tunisian frontier into Tripoli, if necessary, for the preservation of order, and to ask whether any information could be given with regard to the military organization which was stated to be taking place in Tripoli under the Turkish Governor, Nasif Pasha, in consequence, as alleged, of the occupation of Tanis by the French. He felt, he said, that he ought to offer an apology for again bringing this question under the consideration of the House. His apology was the great urgency of the case, and the more than usual reserve on the part of Her Majesty's Government in withholding information, and in not giving the least information as to what would be their policy on a question which he was sure the noble earl opposite would admit was one of a very grave nature. Arising on all sides were alarming indications of what might result in massacre and bloodshed, and what had begun in Tunis might not end there. Already we heard of a large mobilization of French troops, of the probable bombardment of Sfax, which was not very far distant from the frontier of Tripoli, of the pillage of the town by the natives, of British subjects being killed, of hundreds of Europeans, including British subjects, taking refuge on board ships, though no English ships of war were there; of the probable occupation by French troops of the town of Gabes and of the island of Djerba, near the extreme limit of the frontier of Tunis adjoining Tripoli—these and other rapidly progressing events pointed most unmistakably to two things, the French occupation of Tripoli, or a rising among the natives which could only be repressed by military force. Granting, as he believed the noble marquis below him did, that there was a legitimate exercise of French influence in Tunis of which this country need not be jealous—granting this, he would say that the question had now assumed a new phase, as the occupation by French troops of a portion of the territory of Tripoli might at any moment take place. It had been stated, and if incorrectly, he hoped the noble earl opposite would say so, that the French troops had received instructions to cross the Tunisian frontier into Tripoli, if necessary, for the preservation of order. Now, there was a very remarkable resemblance between this statement and what had occurred in connexion with the crossing of the frontier between Algeria and Tunis. A pretext was only wanting, and an Arab tribe had only to be irritated, and the pretext was at hand. But what would be the consequences? Tripoli was an undoubted portion of the Ottoman Empire. It was protected by treaties as fully as any other part of the Sultan's dominions, and was it for a moment to be supposed that Turkey would allow French

troops to enter any portion of the territory of Tripoli without the consent of the Sultan? He trusted that the noble earl would tell their lordships whether the Governor of Tripoli had not been making military preparations in the event of this emergency. Was it likely, he asked, that Italy could remain unmoved by events which were passing almost within sight of her own shores—events which must have a great influence upon her future prospects? This country had long been on friendly terms with the countries of Northern Africa, and they had placed confidence in England's good faith and in English influence, but their trust had been much shaken by recent events. He desired to give credit to Her Majesty's Government for their intention to serve the interests of this country, and he regretted to be obliged to differ from them upon this important question. He sincerely hoped, however, that they would be able to give some indication of the policy which would be pursued with regard to the daily increasing difficulties in the countries of Northern Africa. The noble earl concluded by moving for papers and correspondence relating to Tripoli.

LORD STANLEY OF ALDERLEY said that Tripoli was 12 degrees to the east of the seat of the Algerian insurrection, and it was impossible in so short a time for the news to have been carried through the desert. The Algerian insurrection was caused solely by the conduct of the French in regard to Tunis. It had been stated that the French had entered into an arrangement with Spain by which the former were to occupy Tripoli and Spain seize Morocco. He did not know if the statement was true; but he thought there had been great inertness on the part of the Government. He valued the goodwill of the French as much as any man; but there were other considerations, especially those of our Indian Empire. He therefore hoped that his noble friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would take steps in conjunction with the Ottoman and Italian Governments to prevent further French aggression.

EARL GRANVILLE.—My lords,I am bound to say that the noble earl opposite always gives me notice of the numerous questions which he is in the habit of addressing to me, which my noble friend at the table (Lord Stanley of Alderley) does not. I imagine that the noble marquis (Salisbury) to whom the noble earl referred and all your lordships agree with the Government that the cases of Tripoli and Tunis are of a perfectly distinct and separate character, and that any arrangements which may be arrived at in respect of Tunis are not in the slightest way applicable to Tripoli. I agree so far with the noble earl; but I repudiate the noble earl's interpretation of my great reticence about this matter. A Government is placed in great difficulty in regard to giving information, charged, as they are, with the affairs of the country in relation to foreign Powers, and is under a disadvantage in furnishing information to the public that depends upon the consent of foreign Governments. But no Government can be blamed for not giving information which they have not received, and, therefore, do not themselves possess. My noble friend at the table, who gave me notice of his question, asks me to give him information as to what has happened between France and Spain with regard to the partition of Morocco. Now, all I can say is, that I have not heard a word of any treaty concluded between France and Spain with regard to Morocco. I utterly disbelieve it, and it is, therefore, impossible for me to give any information about it. The noble earl complains of my not having given information as to the first part of his statement in reference to M. Tissot. But I have to say that I have heard nothing about the military occupation of Tripoli. The only report we have heard was on the 28th of last month that a Turkish ship of war had arrived at the port with a Turkish General of Division on board and two battalions. That is the only report we have heard. The noble earl moves for papers. I shall only be too ready to accede to his request if he thinks they will be of the slightest importance.

The motion was agreed to.