

Another Parliamentary Paper—the seventh—on the affairs of Tunis has just been issued. It contains the correspondence between our Government and its agents during the important period from May 21 to July 4, the period in which France, having got Tunis within her grasp, was giving the first indications of her future policy. On the whole, it may be said at the outset, the correspondence is such as will be read with satisfaction in England. It shows that our Foreign Office, while determined to do and say nothing which shall cause needless offence to France, is fully alive to the gravity of the situation, and to the necessity of safeguarding the present and future interests of this country. The topics treated in the despatches are mainly three—the illegal search, by the officers of the French gunboat *Léopard*, of the British vessel *Nuova Stella*; the assumption by M. ROUSTAN of his new functions; and the general aspect of affairs as modified by the changed state of things in Tunis, which is dealt with by LORD GRANVILLE in an important despatch to LORD LYONS, dated June 22. The first incident is one of little importance; for it was frankly owned, both by the French naval authorities and by the French Foreign Office, that the commander of the gunboat had exceeded his instructions. The proper apologies were made, and the matter dropped. With regard to M. ROUSTAN's appointment by the BEY as "sole intermediary" between HIS HIGHNESS and all foreign representatives, LORD GRANVILLE's answer to the despatch announcing it is very much to the point. "I have to instruct you," he writes to the English Consul on June 11, "not to take any notice of this communication until you receive instructions from HER MAJESTY'S Government." The nature of these subsequent instructions is already known. The Foreign Office ordered our representative to make no change in his manner of approaching the BEY's Government, but in case of his being referred back to M. ROUSTAN, it permitted him to consider the French Representative as the BEY's delegate. But the position of M. ROUSTAN is fully considered in LORD GRANVILLE's later despatch to our Ambassador in Paris. It is made clear, in the first place, that the permission given to our Consul to communicate with him commits us to nothing. "The Government do not thereby preclude themselves from taking any course which they may deem most advisable in case of an infraction of treaty rights." In the next place, it is pointed out that the double character of M. ROUSTAN may lead to awkwardness and difficulty. As French Minister-Resident his *status* is one thing; as

Consul-General it is quite another, for by our treaty engagements with the BEY, our own consular agent is entitled to be received and dealt with on a footing of complete equality with those of all other Powers. LORD GRANVILLE therefore suggests, and M. ST. HILAIRE takes note of the suggestion, and promises to consider it, that M. ROUSTAN's consular functions should be transferred to some other person.

But the more important part of the despatch, and of the papers which precede and accompany it, is that which relates to the action of France beyond the borders of the Regency. From the moment when the Tunisian expedition was first organized, it has been pointed out that one of the chief difficulties connected with it would be the difficulty of limiting the area of the operations when once begun. The forecast of those who spoke of the community of sentiment existing among the tribes throughout North Africa, and the certainty of their resenting the invasion of Tunis, has been sufficiently justified by the incidents of Sfax and Oran. But the ambition of the French officials elsewhere, who are all of course eager to emulate the doings and to rival the success of M. ROUSTAN, is almost as great a danger to peace as the irritation of the Arabs themselves. It will be remembered that early in June M. FERAND, the French Consul at Tripoli, issued a notice calling upon all Tunisian subjects in Tripoli to come and inscribe themselves at the French Consulate and to put themselves individually under his protection. There are some five thousand Tunisians in Tripoli, and though, according to MR. HAY, the English Consul, only some 150, and those mostly Jews, accepted the French invitation, it is clear that such an act could not fail to be regarded with the greatest indignation both by the Tripolitan authorities and by the PORTE. The despatch of a couple of regiments to Tripoli was the Turkish answer to the demand of M. FERAND; and whether or not the action of the Porte has stopped or will stop there, it is impossible to say. But the example of the French Consul spread, and the same thing was done at Alexandria. M. DOBIGNIE, the French agent at that city, on June 11 issued a precisely similar "invitation" to all Tunisian subjects—and there are many thousands of them in Egypt—to inscribe themselves as such, that is, practically as French subjects, at the Consular Dragomanate. LORD GRANVILLE sees that this is a matter which, to put it in the mildest form, urgently calls for notice. The justification of it, such as it is, is the Sixth Article of the Franco-Tunisian Treaty, which declares that the French consular and

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It is matter for congratulation that LORD GRANVILLE should have spoken in this matter as he has done. It would be a poor service to France if the Government of this country should try to convey the impression that her proceedings in Tunis have been regarded, either by Parliament or the people, with approval or with indifference. The indiscreet language used by the late FOREIGN

SECRETARY tied the hands of the present Government, and made it impossible to protest as energetically as might otherwise have been done while the operations were in progress. But it is well that France should see that on every ground the affair ought not to take any further extension. Sfax has been bombarded and captured; and the next thing, we are told, will be the reduction of Gabes and the island of Djerba. We trust that the French commander will pause before carrying out this programme. It would bring them dangerously near to Tripoli; and as Tripoli is beyond all question a part of the Ottoman Empire, aggression in that direction might tend to open again the Eastern Question—a prospect for which neither Europe in general nor England in particular is as yet prepared. We trust, indeed, that now that a military display has been made, the moderate portion of the French people will see that it is time to stop. They have been rudely awakened from the complacent dream in which their rapid apparent success in Tunis led them to indulge, and in the presence of a revolt, actual or threatened, which may easily spread through the three millions of Algerian and the two millions of Tunisian Arabs, in the presence of an indignant Italy, an alienated Spain, and a cynically jubilant Germany, sensible men of all parties may well ask themselves whether the game has been worth the candle. We ourselves greatly prize the French alliance. We regard it as an immense aid to the prosperity of the two countries, a help to civilization, and a strong guarantee of the European peace. We trust it may long continue, and that it may be cordially supported by the national feeling on both sides. But the way to make it permanent is for neither country to embark upon schemes of aggression and adventure which may lead it, in spite of itself, into dangerous collision with the sentiments and the interests of the other.