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Tunisian Affairs

BOMBARDMENT OF SFAX

Le Temps receives from one of its special correspondents the details, written by him of hour by hour, of the military operations directed against the outer works and the body of place of Sfax, since July 5th until the 16th of the same month, the day of the occupation of the city by our valiant sailors and soldiers. We reproduce it hereafter:

On July 5th, as soon as the resolution was taken to attack Sfax, the *Reine-Blanche*, under commander Marquessac, gave the order to the *Chacal* to bombard the shaving battery, while approaching the shore as close as possible. The gunboat advances consequently up to 2,000 meters from land and begins fire at once. The ground batteries respond; their balls fall initially at a certain distance from the ship which has just attacked, but little by little the shooting is regularized and finally the projectiles even reach the side of the ship. After one hour of bombardment, the *Reine-Blanche* makes to the *Chacal* the signal for the suspension of fire, after which suspension the ground fires five more shots from its gun.

It is at this time that the drain-hole the *Pique* enters the harbor; and soon it is noted that our artillery had made a breach in the low battery. The ground batteries had fired only eighteen shots from the cannon.

After a fashion, overnight on the 5th and 6th, the besieged repaired the damage which they had experienced, whilst also hurriedly installing in front of their low battery some enormous balls of esparto.

On Wednesday July 6th, around four thirty in the morning, the *Reine-Blanche* and the *Alma* approach land and around five forty, these corvettes open fire on the city, the first on the part to the right of the minaret, the second on the part to the left. This fire is slow.

After the dinner of the crews, the gunboats the *Pique* and the *Chacal* take their combat stations approximately 2,400 meters offshore, and in 3 meters 50 of water. Then begins the general

bombardment of the city and the forts at a quarter past midday.

The shore batteries respond with thirteen shots from the cannon, aimed more accurately at the *Chacal*; but their fire is rather quickly extinguished.

In the evening, we see the gunboat the *Hyène* arriving, mooring close to the *Chacal*, at a quarter past four. The same evening, at eight thirty, the *Reine-Blanche* again fires a cannon shot into the city; and, one hour after, the *Pique* prepares to go to Sousse. What mission can it possibly have in the present circumstances? ... We do not know.

At the end of the general bombardment of July 6th, the order is given to fire on the kasbah, - at the left end of the city. - We cease fire at three o'clock in the afternoon, at the signal of the senior commander.

On Thursday July 7th, early, the corvettes *Reine-Blanche* and *Alma* continue their slow fire on the city. At nine forty in the morning, the two gunboats the *Hyène* and the *Chacal* turn themselves to present starboard to the enemy. They open fire on the shore batteries at ten past eleven.

A few moments after, the steam boat the *Alma*, carrying the commander Morel-Beaulieu and several other naval officers, on reconnaissance very close to the shore, fires some well directed blows at the low battery, which responds to it by some firing some ball, of which none achieves its goal.

In the evening, the drum-boat - a kind of flat barge built out of sheet metal - which is armed with the 14 centimeter gun, from very close to shore will fire on the low battery along with the steam boats of the flotilla. On Friday July 8th a military demonstration of the warships takes place with *Alma*, the *Sarthe* and the *Reine-Blanche*, which approach shore to the distance of approximately 1,000 meters and shoot lively on the enemy. At ten twenty-five, the gunboats *Hyène* and *Chacal* go to support the attack of the boats. Soon after, the commanders of the *Reine-Blanche* and the *Alma*, as well as the commander of the mountain battery on board the *Sarthe*, come together to be installed on the gunboat *Chacal*, from where the orders are transmitted to the

various points, by the higher commander, as the action unfolds.

The shore responds with seven shots fired on the ships, including one with grapeshot; a sailor receives a scratch.

At 11:45am, the order to cease fire, recall the boats and a general rallying. Our shooting, directed to the right and to the left of the city, focuses especially on the Arab market; on the right, on *Moorish* houses of a rather beautiful appearance and on the battery of the Catholic church - with red dome - which battery had fired balls to us of which several passed through the mast of the gunboats.

At 1:25am, the flag ('*guidon*') of command was brought and the commanders descended from the Jackal to rejoin their respective ships.

During the night of July 8th, reconnaissance is made close to shore. The following day, Saturday, the ships *Alma*, the *Reine-Blanche*, the *Hyène* and the *Chacal* fire some shots from a cannon onto the batteries, which only respond by two shots.

The following days, flat calm across the line until the 16th, the day of the arrival of the squadron.

Tunis, July 23, 9:10, evening.

The new arrivals today from Djendouba are sure that sections of the Hammama, the Fréchich and others have pillaged the Beni-Lesghi (probably Blessed-Resghi, a large clan of the large tribe of the Drid, which is of Algerian origin and traverses the country which extends from the middle of the Medjerda valley to the plains of Kérouan). Those moreover were forced to follow the insurrectionists and to join them.

Tomorrow there will be held, it appears, in Seliana (undoubtedly Feriana, a ksour of the Tunisian south between Gafsa and Sbitla), a meeting of horsemen of the tribes convened by the Ouled-Sidi Ab-el-Melek, with an aim of acting in concert on the operations to be undertaken in the area of Kérouan.

A mail arrived today informs me that the caïds of three tribes are meeting with the Zlass.

In addition, the bey ordered the setting up of a camp commanded by his brother Ali-Bey and Zarroud, the former minister of the navy. But I ask myself of which elements the army will be made up.

All the Tunisian soldiers desert or are dissatisfied because they receive neither salary nor food.

We know that at la Goulette we are waiting for the troops coming from France. They will camp at the seaside, on the site of Carthage.

The place is very healthy and the soldiers will suffer less there from heat for which, it should be said, the standard behavior of France is not by no means adapted. Why not test some more practical clothing? The troops which have been here for three months have also an absolute need to renew their effects, which are in bad condition and give them an inauspicious appearance. The authorities should have thought of it a long time ago.

The transport *Dryade* arrived this morning at la Goulette with provisions for Sfax. It will embark some troops which had come by the mail boat.

Tunis, July 23.

General Logerot will have been advised that the enemy horsemen have left Kairouan, with the intention to come and raid the peasants to the south of the railroad and to destroy part of the railway. The general has ordered that several detachments, of 200 men each, would be spread out across the threatened points, and that reconnaissance would be made to a radius of a few kilometers around these various points. The Railway Company placed a train at the disposal of General Logerot for the transport of troops. Agitation reigns between Tebourba and Souk-el-Arba. We are told that Arab bands who traverse this country are urging the natives to revolt against the authority of the bey.

These ideas of revolt are accepted by a certain number of natives, who have uttered threats against the railroad workers, saying to them haughtily that the day is coming where they will take a lively revenge on the defeats of the first expedition; they even announced that on July 23rd, market day of the Ben-Bécher, 2,000 Arabs with weapons would come there; sheik Ben-Bécher ensures that these threats are not serious and answers to instructions.

The soldiers camped in Manouba start to suffer from the heat: yesterday, in the shade, the thermometer marked 45 degrees centigrade. It was announced that the Tunisian army was to make camp close to Bardo; no decision has yet been made in this regard.