

CARDINAL LAVIGERIE

AND THE

AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

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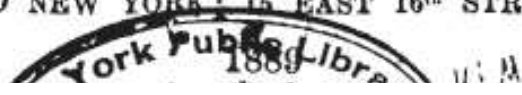


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PART II

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pension to Mgr. Suter, as well as an ample subsidy to his successor in the see. Neither the one nor the other had been done ; and Mgr. Lavigerie, anxious that Mgr. Suter should not suffer through the remissness of France in fulfilling her obligations, allowed him an annuity of 6,000 francs, to be paid out of his private purse.

As soon as possible, the newly-appointed Administrator Apostolic began his pastoral visitation of Tunis. He commenced by visiting those parishes which lie along the coast. Everywhere he met with an enthusiastic reception ; and though it would be useless to attempt giving an account of one scene of welcome after another, we may narrate the circumstances which attended his stay at Sfax, as they serve to show the respect in which he was held by the Mussulmans, and the idea they had formed of his power and influence.

A short time previously the town had revolted against the Bey, who, after recapturing the place, had condemned its inhabitants to pay a heavy fine in punishment of their insubordination. The heads of all the principal families were arrested and thrown into prison as hostages ; and as the unhappy natives of Sfax were totally unable to furnish in the allotted time the indemnity required of them, they feared that the hostages would be condemned to death, and they themselves driven forth from their homes, which would become the property of the Bey.

The day but one before the term of payment expired, the Archbishop of Algiers arrived at Sfax. Hearing of his advent, the inhabitants, almost all of whom were Mussulmans, begged him to grant them an interview, in order that they might induce him to intercede with the Bey on their behalf. To this pro-

posal he readily agreed, and received them in the church, the only place spacious enough to contain so numerous an assembly. The building was speedily crowded. Standing on the altar-step, robed in his pontifical vestments, Mgr. Lavigerie reminded the subjects of the Bey how wrongly they had acted in rebelling against their Sovereign, and asked them whether they repented of their conduct.

‘We repent! we repent!’ they cried. ‘We acknowledge that we have done wrong and behaved like madmen. The Bey is our master; France is strong, and we are weak.’

‘But,’ resumed Mgr. Lavigerie, ‘at this very moment the leader of the previous revolt makes it his boast that a fresh rebellion is preparing for the spring, and he disseminates this assertion all over the world.’

‘He lies! He is a liar!’ shouted the audience; ‘we do not mean to revolt again. He has made victims of us.’

‘Then promise me,’ added the Bishop, ‘swear to me solemnly, that you will never again rebel against the Bey, who is your lawful Sovereign, nor against France, his ally and protector.’

‘We swear it! we take a solemn oath! God be our witness!’ cried the Arabs.

The Archbishop then promised to intercede for them; and having succeeded in calming their excitement, he listened while they explained what it was they wanted.

‘We will do everything thou wishest!’ they exclaimed. ‘May God bless thee! May He increase thy happiness! Truly thou art our father and deliverer!’

He then dismissed them with the assurance that he would pray Heaven to bless them and their city. In

accordance with his promise, he made representations to the Bey, through which their request for an extension of the term of payment was granted to the full.

Mgr. Lavigerie addressed pastoral letters to the clergy and laity of the province soliciting their aid and co-operation in the different good works he desired to found and carry on, and expressing his pleasure at the opening of various colleges and schools. After declaring that it was in no way to himself that thanks were due for these benefits, but to the generous contributors who had come forward from all quarters, frequently in the most unexpected manner, he concluded with the following anecdote, which we give in his own words:—

‘Some months ago a lieutenant in the French army presented himself at the door of the Archbishop’s palace in Tunis, and asked if he could see my secretary in order to consult him in regard to a plan he had formed.

“The campaign is ended,” he explained, “and I am on the eve of returning to France. But before sailing I am desirous of contributing to the *œuvre* which, among all those at present being carried out in the province of Tunis, is the most thoroughly French and the most entirely Christian. On this subject I wish for the opinion of his Eminence.”

‘I was at once informed of the occurrence, and I simply replied that a school was the good work which at the present moment most entirely corresponded to the conditions prescribed.

‘The officer called again as he had promised to do. He fell in with my proposal, and immediately remitted to my secretary the sum of 10,000 francs, which has served to erect a school in the Maltese quarter of the city.’

The buildings which the prelate caused to be erected