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HANDBOOK FOR TRAVELLERS
IN
ALGERIA AND TUNIS

ALGIERS, ORAN, TLEMÇEN, BOUGIE,
CONSTANTINE, TEBESSA, BISKRA, TUNIS,
CARTHAGE, BIZERTA, ETC.

BY SIR R. LAMBERT PLAYFAIR, K.C.M.G.

AUTHOR OF 'HANDBOOK (MURRAY'S) TO THE MEDITERRANEAN';

'TRAVELS IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF BRUCE';

'THE SCOURGE OF CHRISTENDOM,'

ETC.

FIFTH EDITION, THOROUGHLY REVISED

WITH MAPS AND PLANS

©
LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1895

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1537. Several of the cities of Tunis, amongst others Susa and Kerouan, revolted against Mulaï Hassan, who was forced once more to apply to Charles V.; by his command the Viceroy of Sicily sent an expedition against Susa in 1537, which, however, proved unsuccessful.

Two years later (1539) Andrea Doria reduced the principal cities on the coast—Kelibia, Susa, Monastir, and Sfax—to the authority of Mulaï Hassan, and Monastir received a garrison of Spanish soldiers.

Mulaï Hassan resolved to crush the insurrection by the reduction of Kerouan, against which he marched with a considerable force of native troops and the Christian garrison left behind by Charles V., but the former nearly all passed over to the enemy, and he was glad to get back to Tunis accompanied only by his Spanish allies. No sooner was the Spanish garrison withdrawn from Monastir (1540) when that town, as well as Susa, Sfax, and Kelibia, again revolted, and placed themselves under the protection of the celebrated corsair Draguth, an officer trained under Kheir-ed-din, and scarcely inferior to his master in bravery, talent, and good fortune. After a year, however, Doria again appeared on the coast and drove off the Turks.

Sfax is 116 m. from Mehedia. This is the ancient *Taphroua*, and the most important city in the regency, after Tunis. The modern name is said to be derived from the Arabic word for a cucumber. It has a population of 45,000, of whom 2900 are Europeans, and of the latter 1350 are Maltese.

The anchorage is at least 2 m. from the shore, and there is a rise and fall of 6 feet in the tide at springs; at Gabes the rise is 8 feet. The lesser Syrtis is almost the only place in the Mediterranean where there is any tide at all.

Sfax may be said to consist of three

distinct portions. The European town to the S., along the seashore, in which many important improvements are being carried out by the municipality, such as roads, piers, etc.; then comes the Arab quarter, surrounded by a picturesque wall flanked by towers, some round and others square; and beyond this again the French military camp.

The distinctive feature of **Sfax** is the suburb, consisting of gardens and country houses, which extends for 6 or 8 kil. to the N. and W. Nearly every family has an orchard or garden, with a little house in it, where the owner passes at least the summer, frequently the entire year, riding to town and out again every day from his work.

The Government is doing all in its power to encourage the cultivation of olive and almond trees. About 30,000 hectares have been conceded for that purpose, which promises a plantation of 500,000 trees.

One of the most interesting sights of the place is the series of several hundred bottle-shaped reservoirs for collecting rain-water, within a walled enclosure almost as large as the Arab town itself.

This is the only place on the coast where there was anything like a serious resistance to the French.

By the end of May 1881 the whole country was in a state of revolution; and the fanaticism of the people of **Sfax** was thoroughly excited against Christians in general, but against the French in particular, who, however, had fewer representatives amongst the European colony than any other nation.

About the 25th of the month the Bey proposed to man the forts with Tunisian soldiers. This excited the suspicion of the populace, who, on the 28th, broke out and proclaimed a *Jehad*, or holy war. Almost all the Europeans went on board French men-of-war, or other vessels in the roads. The ironclad *Alma*, and the postal-steamer *Manoubia*, arrived on the 29th with 1500 Tunisian soldiers, but it was found inexpedient to land

them. In the evening H.M.S. *Monarch* and *Condor* arrived, to the great satisfaction of the British community.

On the afternoon of the 5th July the bombardment commenced by the French gunboats and two ironclads; the Sfaxiots returned the fire as best they could, but entirely without effect; desultory firing continued for more than a week. On the 14th of July more French vessels arrived, and there was now a squadron of four gunboats and nine ironclads. On the 15th the bombardment commenced in earnest; on the 16th the boats were sent on shore, under cover of the ships' guns, and a landing was effected, though not without some loss; the Kasba was occupied by 8 A.M. By the middle of August the town had resumed its usual quietness. The town had to pay a war indemnity of £250,000, and an international commission was formed to recompense Europeans for the losses they had sustained. The Arabs of the town soon returned to their occupations, but the Bedouins fled to Tripoli, leaving the whole of the southern portion of the Regency nearly depopulated. They did not return for several years.

This is one of the centres of the sponge trade.

After leaving **Sfax**, the steamer touches at **Gabes**, the ancient *Tacape*.

Before the French Protectorate only one solitary building existed at the landing-place of Gabes, but now this has become an important military station; barracks for a large number of troops have been built; about 200 houses have sprung up; a pier upwards of 200 mètres long has been constructed, and an abundant supply of water has been brought in two streams from a distance of 5 miles.

Gabes can hardly be called a town, like the other principal places on the coast, but rather an assemblage of villages scattered through a beautiful oasis of palm trees.

The most important are *Djara* and *Menzel*, purely Arab towns, of no particular interest; the houses appear to be constructed, to a great extent, with the cut stone and broken columns of