

LE
CORRESPONDANT

RELIGION — PHILOSOPHIE — POLITIQUE
HISTOIRE — SCIENCES — ÉCONOMIE SOCIALE
VOYAGES — LITTÉRATURE — BEAUX-ARTS

SOIXANTE-QUATORZIÈME ANNÉE

TOME DEUX CENT SIXIÈME

DE LA COLLECTION

NOUVELLE SÉRIE. — TOME CENT SOIXANTE-DIXIÈME]

PARIS

BUREAUX DU *CORRESPONDANT*

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Per 8° 10491

The Situation

Economic, Political and Social in Algeria and Tunisia

(p. 624-625)

In Algeria, the only reproach makes against the olive-tree appears to me to be to remain ten years after the plantation without bringing in money, a defect common to any shrub plantation. This reason was perhaps admissible for the first colonists who doubted the future of their establishments now it is no longer an acceptable excuse for a serious farmer, wanting to increase the value of a property.

In Tunisia, it is totally different; this culture is ruined by the tax department. Throughout the north of the regency, the State actually collects, 1° the tithe of the oil produced; 2° a right to market of 6.25 % of the amount of the sale; 3° a right of export of 10 francs per 100 kilos; 4° it takes possession of the oil cakes (1).

However, the truth begins to come to light and, for the south of the regency, it is already understood that only the olive-tree can bring back the vanished life. In the south of Sousse, indeed, no culture other than the shrub culture can succeed; this area is the true field of the olive-tree, as the desert is that of the palm tree. The grounds are light, permeable, absorb rainwater and keep it underground. The experiments made by the civil controller of Sfax established that when “the surface layer of the ground gave 0 (zero) moisture, at 0.20m of depth, one found 6 in proportion; at 0.50m, one obtained 10; and, at 1 meter, 14 (2)

The Romans also, according to Salluste, had found this region a dreadful desert, and they had transformed it so well that the Arabs called it El Kadra, the Green, so wooded was it (3). The memory of Byzacène and its ancient wealth, some time before our occupation, had already haunted the heavy imagination of the Turks. About 1871, the bey had

repurchased the rights that a wealthy family, called Siala, had on the Sahel of Sfax, and resold the grounds for a small price (returning approximately 25 francs a hectare), on the condition that olive-trees are planted there within four years. At the time of our conquest, this planting program had

slowed down; then, when we had understood the value of the redevelopment of the fruit-bearing forest, we again used the Turkish decree to improving it. The State sells the concessions at a rate of 10 francs a hectare, maintaining the same condition that any land would be planted by the end of four years. One can put twenty trees on a hectare which will start to pay at the end of ten

p624 years... For this kind of cultivation one associates with a *m'rharci* or indigenous tenant farmer, who has the responsibility of planting and looking after the trees until they are eight years of age, at which time one shares the plantation with him (1). It is after twenty years that the property will be in full production; it will be worth approximately 1,000 francs a hectare and will give an income of 100 francs to 150 francs which, after the division of the sharecropper, will leave the nets amount of 50 to 75 francs in the hands of the owner. This business is of the first order and offers almost no risk. But those who desire a concession in the Sahel must hurry; the majority have been distributed, and our politicians have not missed allocating some to themselves.

One former minister possesses, himself, 10,000 hectares.

After the vine and l' olive-tree, it is necessary to quote the fig tree and l' almond tree, which are also truly indigenous cultures. The fig tree, very rustic, grows everywhere, succeeds well in mountains, as high as altitudes of 11 to 1,200 meters, while the olive-tree barely exceeds 800 meters. It reproduces by bursts, grafting or cuttings of two year old wood. It starts to pay after

1 Jules Saurin. *Manuel de l'émigrant en Tunisie.*

2 Report of M. Bourde.

3 Ibid.

five years, but only reaches its maximum output at twenty years. One can plant 257 trees a hectare which would give 32 quintals of dry figs in the South of France, in Algeria it is not rare to obtain double that output with only 80 trees a hectare. The fig is almost as nutritive as the bread, 1.033 kg of dry figs is equivalent to 1 kilogram of the best bread. I can not, for the remainder, give a better argument in favour of the culture of the olive-tree or of the fig tree, than comparing the density of the population. In the part of Kabylie where they are cultivated, the population was one inhabitant for 62 hectares, where shrub cultures do not have the same importance it reached no more than one inhabitant per 3 hectares (2).

The almond tree is sown, it produces at five years of age and lives as many as sixty, it adapts to all the land, even rubble. By putting 69 almond trees on a hectare, one can have a clear profit of 130 francs (3).

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- 1 One can then employ the *m' rharci* as tenant farmer or sharecropper for part of harvest (because originally, he was a sharecropper on the capital).
- See. for these curious contracts the report of Mr. Bourde, p.44.
 - 2 All this information is drawn from the work MM. Rivière and Lecq and from a report of Mr. Lecq at the Geography Society of Algiers.
 - 3 Rapport de M. Bourde.

Charles DE BOURBON

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