

*Conserver la couverture*

UN

COMMANDANT A.A'''

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# Mois de Soleil



ALGÉRIE · TUNISIE

PRÉFECTURE  
de MEURTHE-&-MOSELLE  
DÉPOT LÉGAL  
N° 495 X 1908



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S. BERGER-LEVRAULT & C<sup>ie</sup>. NANCY



22 October.

We should have arrived at Sfax at 4 o'clock in the morning by the railroad of the Company of phosphates and to thus cross in ten hours the 250 kilometers which separate Metlaoui from the coast. But the rains which have lasted for several days in this area disrupted the route to the crossing of Wadi El-Leben. The large bridge was swept away by water and covered in sand. The provisional passage built hastily to replace it bent suddenly, in its turn, because of the continuing rains, some moments before the passage of our train and it was considered prudent to avoid using it. It was necessary to tranship over the suspect bridge constructed up to date over the torrent, his luggage and himself in middle of the night. The operation was not without risk. It lasted a long time and when we reach the port, it will be nearly 9 a.m.

Since break of day, in this part of the Tunisian coast, we pass by land of very diverse aspect, even though it all belongs to the recent quaternary era. There are pastures and groups of dwarf olive-trees, then fields of red and argillaceous (clay-bearing) earth.

On the edge of the sea is laid out the oasis of Méharès, whose very wet harvest will certainly be lost, and on the left of the railway, some grassy steppes extend into the distance.

Now that the sun has risen in a sky perfectly clear and limpid, as in the Sahara, we see - 107 - towards the north some more olive trees, alternating with waste lands, moors, cereal fields, then mixing almost little by little with the other plants, although it is in the east and south that the palm plantations are still bordered by cactus and olive-trees.

Even the city of Sfax appeared to me extremely tempting and I acknowledge to prefer it to the similar agglomerations of Algeria, in particular in Biskra. Here, indeed, the indigenous life remained is concentrated, in this part of the Tunisian coast, better preserved, more characteristic than in our Algerian provinces.

The character of the Tunisian city is still almost intact. Souks, covered or not, where the trades group by profession in winding lanes dipping and rising, basket makers, cobblers, commercial fabrics, perfumes and sugar refineries, notaries, arms manufacturers and hairdressers, the obstruction by a calm and placid crowd of the Moorish cafes full of light at this time of Ramadan; the Jewish district and its shops adorned with its women, whereas in the Moslem center none is shown, the costumes of the inhabitants in bright colors, the fez with the green turban, the embroidered jacket, the gaudy scarf, and as a framework the old ramparts and their doors in the Moorish style, all this indigenous life remained itself, in spite of our presence, amazed and interested to the highest degree.

And when one returns to the largely planned European district, prepared for a great future with its long avenues of palm trees, its public garden, its town hall in a beautiful Tunisian architecture, its theatre, its pretty modern houses [beating new], one is charmed by the contrast between the two environments.

This industrial and animated city, which fortunately -108 - forgets the idleness of the decrepit south, is without a wadi and these are the 250 cisterns that distribute water, the source collected 40 kilometers away being manifestly insufficient.

There are still cisterns that almost uniformly border the road of *Triaga* where it comes closest to the city, where the villas spread themselves out in the middle of beautiful gardens surrounded by aloe and cactus.

Beyond these fortunate suburbs, the olive trees develop and furnish a compact halo around the whole city.

From the geodesic point on the Route Triaga [km17 on Rte. Menzel CHaker], the the view is marvelous. On whatever side one looks, one sees the interminable rows of olive-trees as far as the eye can see covering the valleys, climbing the heights, wrapping the city in a

continuous and absolutely uniform dark green coat. The color is harsh and a little drab; however it combines well with the intense light of this sky without clouds.