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After having paid our tribute of admiration to the amphitheatre, one of the largest of the Roman world, we cross the village colored by dust and cactus. All the population is crowded on the route of the Minister. Here and there, a young woman, a girl, by a half-open door, shows a fresh brown face, curious to see, "Sîdi el Ouzir" (Noble Minister) but at the risk of being struck by their father or their husband.

Again the cars roll within vast expanse of bush, which will eventually become pastures. It is like this until the approach to Sfax. Then the ground is covered by olives, the famous olives which are not only the pride and the richness of the Sahel, but also of the plain of Sfax. Then the closed gardens with walls or hedges of cacti, filled with the most varied fruit trees, follow one another, as well as market gardens, as at the approach to large cities. One passes in front of a number of small villas where well-to-do Sfaxiens come in summer to seek a little shade by breathing the sea breeze. In the middle of this opulent belt of gardens appears Sfax, the largest city of the Regency after Tunis.

The animation of its approach roads would be enough to give one a presentiment of its importance. Like all the fortified cities of Tunisia, it is enveloped in a crenellated wall flanked by towers and bastions of medieval aspect. Night was coming when the cars penetrate there by broad roads that were quite clear. We leave the Minister at the Contrôle Civil where Mr. and Mrs. Theller wait, and where we will come to join him to dine when we get rid of our luggage at the hotel.

Everyone knows the development that has taken Sfax these last years, and whose starting point was the exploitation of phosphates from Metlaoui. The loading of these phosphates brings a perpetual motion to the port. The production of olive oil became another important element of prosperity. Sfax moreover has trade in figs, almonds, sponges, dried fish, fresh fruits, vegetables, esparto, and well deserves its title as second city of the Regency.

The new city which developed outside of the ramparts, along the beach, takes - thanks to the way in which it was largely designed and built in the indigenous style - a splendid aspect and of a style unique in Tunisia. The streets and the avenues are bordered with palm trees. The public buildings and houses particularly those with terraced rooftops raise everywhere their dazzling white facades. Perhaps it is regrettable that palm trees have been planted to the exclusion of other trees, because the shade will

never govern these broad streets set at right angles to each other. And however, as of April, a relentless sun projects its rays there, and the inhabitants suffer from this violence of the light, so skillfully resisted by the natives with their tortuous and narrow lanes. In any event, from the French point of view, we have place to be proud of this development and the embellishment of Sfax.

In the morning a hive of activity reigns in the souks. Jews and Moslems, those in green turban, come and go busily in the sunny lanes where mosques raise their cupolas and minarets.

After having assisted at the port the loading of phosphates, we are led to the Town hall and the municipal theatre, two beautiful buildings of recent construction. The greatest luxury of the interior decoration of the Town hall lies in the beautiful Roman mosaics found in the area, of which someone had the happy idea to cover the walls and to pave certain rooms.

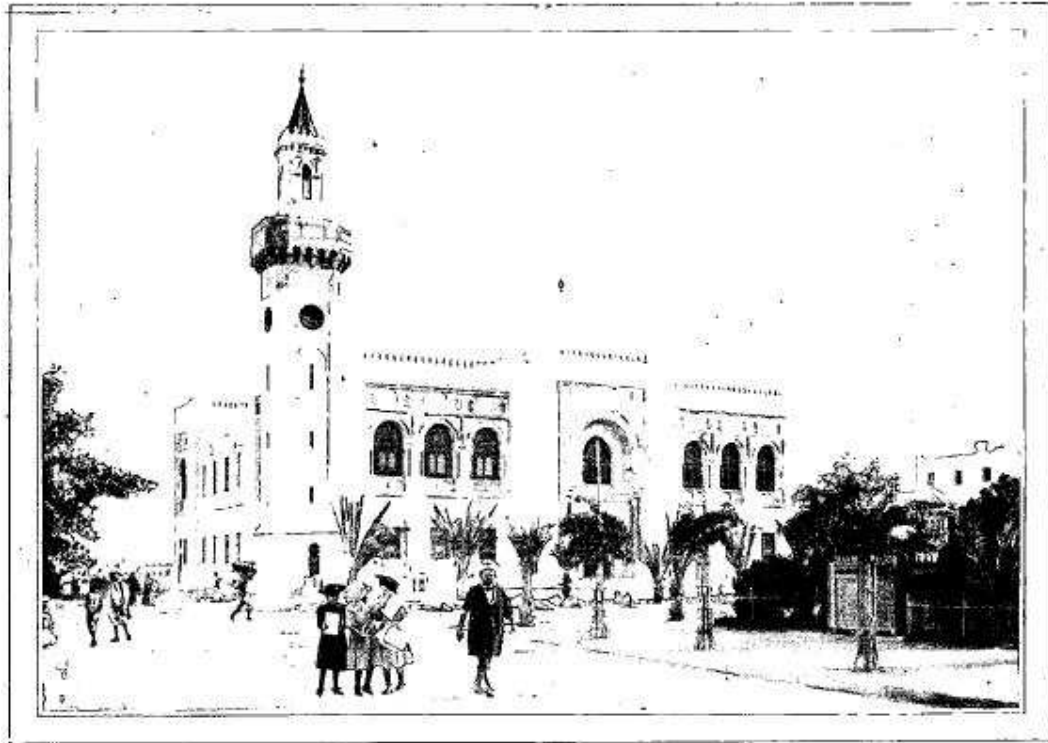
After lunching we will visit by car the famous forest of olive-trees. All the people who visit Sfax admire this forest. Its regular and widely spaced plantation, approximately seventeen to the hectare, the repeated ploughings, carry this culture to its high degree of perfection. Sfaxiens have realized again, on a plan traced by the administration, to which the greatest honor belongs to its author the former director of agriculture Mr. Paul Bourde, as in Roman times, richness of this part of Tunisia. It was then covered with cities and villages which one cannot explain except by the prosperity due to the cultivation of the olive and the fruit trees.

The strength of Sfax is less privileged from the point of view of water. The rains are rare there, and the ground, by this fact, not very suitable for cereals. But as it is light and very permeable, the olive-trees are planted at long distance apart from each other, so that each one benefits from moisture of the subsoil to a greater extent.

We cross vast covered spaces of olives which border the sea. They resemble, so much they are admirably maintained, true parks, and leave far behind them all that one can see of this kind in Europe. In these plantations, during the first six years, corn, barley and wheat are planted between the rows. Everything has already been said on this question of the olive-trees with Sfax. But one thing remaining that could not be admired nor repeated too much, is that this degree of improvement was obtained by entirely indigenous methods and tools and is so effective that modern science can add nothing to

it, nor criticize. Sfaxiens have contributed this, in addition to the high value they put on work, a proof of their special aptitudes all in agriculture.

When one travels officially and by car, one is pushed to see all and quickly. From these imposing plantations, we must also view some more modest, but very original and interesting experiments, the culture of sponges.



L'HOTEL DE VILLE DE SFAX EST UN BEL ÉDIFICE DE CONSTRUCTION RÉCENTE.

From the car, we pass into a large boat in the port which is waiting for the Resident and his companions, and under the control of the captain of the port, we gain the open sea, with the biological station standing 1500 meters from there. At all times, the Tunisian coasts produced sponges, and Sfax is the center of this trade. Formerly, the Sicilians had with almost sole monopoly of this fishing. Today, the Arabs and French also practice it. But it was noted that the richness of the benches of sponged was decreasing, and that this difficult fishing became less and less remunerative. From there came the idea to reconstitute the beds and to create, if possible, [something to protect] sponges, like one does it for oysters. Thus Professor Dubois, of the University of Lyon, proposed to the Tunisian Government the creation on the open sea, offshore from the port of Sfax, of a laboratory of marine biology, which Mr. Allemand Martin directs. We soon reach the small station on its piles where everything is indicative of a place of work and

observation. It is arranged especially for the study of the living conditions of sponges and of their reproduction. This is done in two different ways: by the fragmentation and the sowing of the larvae. After having noted the satisfactory results that one obtains by the system of fragmentation, we take again the direction of the port, happy that this visit with sponges was worth our while, and at the same time, a pleasant and too short outing at sea, at this unique and spectacular hour where the sun lies down in an apotheosis of crimson.

There is this evening great dinner at the caïd of Sfax, Si Sadok Djelouli. His servants come to the *Contrôle* to seek the Resident general and his guests. They are provided with large glass lanterns, used in all the Orient, and precede us in the lanes in the Arab district, through a night superbly spangled with stars.

The caïd awaits the Minister at some distance from his residence where he leads us majestically. Si Sadok Djelouli is one of the best known personalities of Sfax and the most genial. He takes us across a living room where musicians play wildly. Dancers on couches, await the end of the meal to present their spectacle. That promises a very attractive evening of local color for us.

In the dining room, a table is set, completely in the European style. In front of each guest are aligned several glasses and a goblet of Champagne. Menus enumerate for us in French some very indigenous dishes. Opposite the Resident General the master of the house takes his seat, draped in his heavy white wool burnous. He is a superb and aristocratic old man with an exquisite affability. Unfortunately he does not speak French. It would be necessary for me to be Brillat-Savarin in person to describe in detail this Arab menu. Because it is an erudite and complicated cuisine like that of the grand houses. The preparation is extremely long, and it requires the collaboration of several families to put on the table a dinner like that of this evening.



A GABÈS : DEVANT LE SEUIL D'UNE MAISON  
INDIGÈNE.

LES BOUTIQUES SOUS LES ARCADES DE GABÈS.

After soup with tapioca, there were eggs fried in paste, chickens with vegetables, a *mechoui* and a roast of lamb with almonds. Then came superb and succulent couscous, seasoned in order to satisfy an Arab palate, that is to say to lose ours forever. A tart with honey and almonds excited a transport of admiration from among the guests. It was a great success and caused, I believe, some hesitancy, the obligatory complement for an Eastern feast. Then it was the turn of the fruits, cakes, candies, strange in form and name, and as everything has an end in this world, after having emptied a last goblet of Champagne, the caïd rises and leads us to the living room where the coffee and the liquors are served, everything being done in the French style. It is also the prelude of the dances which will deliver beautiful girls with painted faces, in shimmering trousers of satin, embroidered coins and gold jackets. The presence of the women caused them

difficulty and they simpered a few moments. But to the irresistible calls of the orchestra, the most confident gives the signal, and, the traditional scarf in hand, she undulates, and begins this ungraceful belly dance which represents for the majority of the Orientals the summit of art. After the departure of the third, we take leave of the caïd, and regain our respective lodgings under the escort of the large lanterns.

March 18. - We head now towards Gabès. It is a stage of 135 kilometers on a beautiful road which unrolls its laces in a landscape of loneliness, animated only by some *douars* (Arab tent villages) and their herds of sheep and camels. All the flowers of spring enamel the steppe, and among them tufts of brooms scent the air. Unfortunately, it is written that our stage will not be achieved this time without hindrance. A black series of breakdowns starts halfway from Gabès, which obliges M. Alapetite to leave us behind with M. and Mme. Siegfried. The cisterns spread out along the road, and since until then we had looked for them with only one distracted eye, they consequently gain a higher interest for us, because we go from the one to the other, and there draw water necessary for our engine affected by an inextinguishable thirst. Besides not attending the reception of the Resident General, we must also give up lunch today. The sun darts terribly at full midday, and makes us feel that the climate of the Tunisian South is more favorable to the head of the date palms than to that of the poor broken down motorists. Finally around four o'clock in the afternoon, the palms of the oasis make from the distance, an encouraging call. With difficulty, we reach the Contrôle Civil where awaiting us is a comforting collation prepared by the care of Mme. Livet. It was only a short halt, because we want to enjoy the last vestiges of the official reception organized in the oasis by the caïd of the country.

Some cars take us along quickly. But hardly are we distracted by the paths of the oasis when the marvelous spectacle of fruit trees flowering under the palms is offered to our eyes. Under the dome formed by the high date palms, and on the green carpet where the cereals that cover the ground are raised, reigns a true festival of trees in flowers: almond trees, apricot trees, peaches draw up their heads rosy and white beside the fig trees, of pomegranates and banana trees, and illuminate this undergrowth. The contrast is great, sure to charm the eyes of the travelers who, since Tunis, saw only gray olive-trees and thorny cacti.

The vine winds up these powerful branches, like lianas, to the top of the highest date palms. Water runs everywhere, skillfully irrigated in thousand small brooks, and enchanted we reach the cascade of Chenini opposite which the caïd of Gabès, Si Mohammed Ben Khalifa, has set up an immense Arab tent. One hour earlier we would have attended the reception of the Minister, heard speeches, seen caïds and the notable natives in their beautiful finery. At present the tent is empty. We cross it trampling on the thick carpet, with bright colors, which cover the ground, and take a seat opposite the water foaming the cascade. Some notables remained there to receive the latecomers, we perform with good grace the honors of the buffet, drawn up on low tables, and still well laden with candies and native pastries in front of which we remain extremely perplexed. We take the coffee and taste the *lagmi*, or palm wine, insipid and sweet to the taste. But we are in a hurry to continue our walk and to enjoy during a few more moments the enchanted aspect of the oasis. Within this African vegetation, in league to make our spring that much more delectable, the rays of the setting sun are displayed. Passing from crimson to mauve, they diminish until this exquisite rosy tint which for a few moments glows with a strange gleam after which the night follows very quickly.

B Chantre.