cutting a deep gorge through the cretaceous barrier that shuts in this upland plain upon the east. The southern wall of the Mejerda valley and of the Gulf of Tunis is formed by a branch of the southern Algerian chain, con­nected with Jebel Aurás (Mount Aurès) by the plateau of Tebessa (Theveste) and running north-east to Cape Bon. Its highest summits (Zilk and Zaghwán) rise above 5000 feet. Another branch of the southern chain runs from the Sahara side of Mount Aurès south-east towards the head of the Lesser Syrtis or Gulf of Gabes. Between these two branches lies a mountainous plateau, whose waters descend eastward but do not reach the sea. Arrested by a line of hills running parallel to the coast, they form a chain of lakes and marshes, which for the most part dry up in summer. It is to this region of inland drainage (the ancient Byzacene) that the plain of Kairwan belongs. Its southern part from Sbeitla (Sobaitala) to the Syrtis is relatively sterile, and even in antiquity appears to have formed an exception to the general fertility of the country, which was one of the granaries of Rome. The upland district from Tebessa southward sinks into the desert by a step-like series of great plateaus, separated by rugged walls of variegated marls, sands, and alluvium, torn into fantastic shapes, and scored with deep ravines by streams which at some remote period of copious rainfall poured down into the Sahara. Farther east the plateaus disappear and the mountains rise like a rampart from the Sib<4kh (sing. *Sebkha),* or Saharian marshes and salt-flats. The depression to which the Sibákh belong terminates to the east in the Shott (Shatt) al-Jeríd, which is separated from the Lesser Syrtis only by a narrow isthmus ; see Sahara, vol. xxi. p. 151. Even the Sahara of Tunis abounds in fertile oases.

*Climate.—*The mean annual temperature at Susa is 75o Fahr., the mean of the winter or rainy season 60o and of the hot season 97o. At Tunis the temperature rarely exceeds 90o, except with a wind from the Sahara. The prevailing winds from May to Sep­tember are east and north-east and during the rest of the year north­west and east. A rainy season of about two months usually begins in January ; the spring season of verdure is over in May ; summer ends in October with the first rains. Violent winds are common at both equinoxes.

*Flora and, Fauna.—*Both are generally the same as those of Algeria (*q.v.*). The lion and panther are almost extinct, but the sportsman finds in abundance the wild boar, partridge, Carthage fowl, quail, and snipe. The African moufflon still exists in the southern mountains. Herds of buffaloes are found in the district of Mater. The stag occurs in the eastern districts. The camel, now so important, was hardly known here before the Roman sovereignty. Red mullet, tunny, and other fish abound around the coast ; and fishing stations are numerous. The town of Bizerta and the Kerkenna Islands are mainly dependent on their fisheries. The coral and sponge fisheries, of which Sfax and the island of Jerba (Djerba) are centres, are also considerable. Of noxious creatures may be named the scorpion, much more formidable than that of Algiers, a venomous tree snake (*Echis carinata),* in the sandy lands between Kafsa and Sfax, and a species of python called *taguerga,* which infests some parts of the southern mountains.

Cork and “zen” trees cover about 360,000 acres towards the Algerian frontier, and the pine and deciduous oak almost as large an area south of the Mejerda ; but the country is much less wooded than in antiquity. The richness of the grain crops is still remark­able, in spite of imperfect cultivation. Olives and many excellent fruits are largely produced, and vineyards have been much extended since the French occupation. Esparto grass abounds in the uplands. The oases of the Jeríd are devoted to the date palm and produce the best dates known in the European market.

*Minerals.—*The mineral wealth of Tunis, like that of Algeria, is considerable, but it has been imperfectly explored. The iron mines of the northern mountains and the argentiferous lead mines of Al-Resás near Tunis were worked in antiquity, as were also the marble quarries of Simittu (Chemtou), on the upper Mejerda, which are now in the hands of a Belgian company. The thermal springs of Hammám al-Anf on the Bay of Tunis are supposed to have heal­ing virtues ; they are now connected with the capital by rail.

*Inhabitants.—*The industrious Berbers (Kabyles), the oldest stock in the country, are less sharply marked off from the Arabs than in Algeria, but are distinguishable by their lighter complexion and often fair hair. They form a large part of the population in the northern and eastern mountains, and in the island of Jerba (Jirba). They are organized in tribes with purely democratic self- government, and laws of their own, which are not those of the Koran. The pastoral Arab nomads are descended from the second Arab invasion, which began in the 11th century (see below). They have little agriculture and are still as indolent and unruly as their ancestors. The Arabs of the towns are usually known as Moors ; among them the Spanish Moors, descendants of the Andalusian refugees, form an exclusive and aristocratic class. The pure Turks and the Kuluglis (sons of Turkish fathers by Moorish women or slave girls) are no longer numerous. Of Europeans there are some 10,000 Italians, 8000 Maltese, and 4000 French (exclusive of the army). The Jews number some 50,000, of whom perhaps half are in the capital. The trade of the country is largely in their hands.

*Towns.—*For the capital Tunis, see below. Of the coast towns Sfax and Susa have separate notices ; Bizerta (Benzert), the ancient Hippo Zarytus, is the chief place on the north coast, with 5000 in­habitants. It stands on a canal connecting the sea with a lake which might easily be converted into a magnificent land-locked harbour. On the east coast are Hammamet (Hamámát), with 3700 inhabitants ; Monastir, with 5600 inhabitants and a trade in cereals and oils ; Mahdíya (Mehedia), with 6300 inhabitants, the fallen city of the Fátimites, which since the French occupation has begun to rise again, and has a new harbour ; and Gabes (Kabis) on the Syrtis, a group of small villages, with an aggregate population of 14,000, the port of the shott country and a depot of the esparto trade. Of the inland towns the holy city of Kairwan *(q.v.)* is the most remarkable. Its fine mosques are now open to visiters. Sbeitla (Lat. Sufetula), in the mountains south-west of Kairwan, is remarkable for its magnificent Roman remains, the triumphal arch of Constantine, and the three temples which form the *hieron.* The principal towns of the Mejerda basin are Bedja (Bája), the ancient Vaga, an important corn market, and higher up, near the border, the fortress of Kéf (Sicca Veneria), with 4000 inhabitants, boldly perched on the steep slope of a volcanic mountain.

*Commerce.—*The total imports of the regency in 1885 were valued at £1,098,047, of which about 27 per cent were British goods, chiefly cotton fabrics. In 1884 the imports were valued at £1,157,182. The most important export is olive oil, and after it come wheat, esparto grass, barley, sponges. The value of the total exports in 1884 was £745,554, and in 1885 £882,946. In 1885 1,035 vessels (71,133 tons) entered the port of Goletta, and the entries at other ports were 3033 (55,050 tons).

*History.—*The history of Tunis begins for us with the establish­ment of the Phoenician colonies ; see vol. xviii. p. 806, Phœnicia and Carthage. The Punic settlers Semitized the coast, but left the Berbers of the interior almost untouched. The Romans entered into the heritage of the Carthaginians and of the vassal kings of Numidia, anti Punic speech and civilization gave way to Latin, a change which from the time of Cæsar was helped on by Italian colonization. Rich in com, in herds, and in later times also in oil, and possessing valuable fisheries, mines, and quarries, the province of Africa, of which Tunis was the most important part, attained under the empire a prosperity to which Roman remains in all parts of the country still bear witness. Carthage was the second city of the Latin part of the empire, “after Rome the busiest and perhaps the most corrupt city of the West, and the chief centre of Latin culture and letters.” In the early history of Latin Christ­ianity Africa holds a more important place than Italy. It was here that Christian Latin literature took its rise, and to this province belong the names of Tertullian and Cyprian, of Arnobius and Lactantius, above all of Augustine. Lost to Rome by the invasion of the Vandals, who took Carthage in 439, the province was re­covered by Belisarius a century later (533-4), and remained Roman till the Arab invasion, for which see vol. xvi. p. 567. The con­queror 'Okba founded the city of Kairwan (*c*. 670), which was the residence of the governors of Africa under the Omayyads and there­after the capital of the Aghlabite princes, the conquerors of Sicily, who ruled in merely nominal dependence on the 'Abbásids (see vol. xvi. p. 579).

The Latin element in Africa and the Christian faith disappeared in a single generation ; the Berbers of the mountains, who had never been Latinized and never really Christianized, accepted Islam without difficulty, but showed their stubborn nationality, not only in the character of their Mohammedanism, which has always been mixed up with the worship of living as well as dead saints (mara­bouts) and other peculiarities, but also in political movements. The empire of the Fátimites (see vol. xvi. p. 587) rested on Berber support, and from that time forth till the advent of the Turks the dynasties of north Africa were really native, even when they claimed descent from some illustrious Arab stock. When the seat of the Fatimite empire was removed to Egypt, the Zírites, a house of the Sanhaja Berbers, ruled as their lieutenants at Mahdíya, and about 1050 Mo'izz the Zírite, in connexion with a religious movement against the Shi'ites, transferred his very nominal allegiance to the Abbasid caliphs. The Fátimites in revenge let loose upon Africa a vast horde of Bedouins from Upper Egypt (B. Hilal and Solaim),