

by the cultivation of flax in Belgium. The chief towns engaged in manufacturing woollen goods are Roubaix, Reims, and Amiens, much of the foreign wool required to supplement the local supply being imported at Dunkirk. Lille has cotton and linen, besides woollen, industries, and linen is also made at Cambrai. Sugar-beet is grown in North France, and refined in several places. The towns at the base of the Vosges are engaged chiefly in manufacturing cotton, and largely employ water-power for this purpose. The best supplies of iron in the country are found around Nancy on the Moselle, and rather further north. The position of France with regard to England has promoted the growth of important packet-stations at Calais, Boulogne, and Dieppe, while Cherbourg is a naval station.

*Brittany*, which forms the hilly peninsula of Western France, consists of granite and other old rocks. It is relatively unproductive, and a large part is covered with poor grass and gorse. Its climate is equable and moist, and the coast is subject to fogs. A number of the inhabitants depend on the sardine and oyster fisheries off the coast. The population is pre-eminently Celtic, and is descended from certain tribes who were driven out of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons, and sought refuge in this region, which has therefore received the name of Brittany. The region possesses two naval stations—Brest and Lorient—and the port of St. Malo. In the bay to the east of St. Malo stands the picturesque rock of Mont St. Michel, crowned with the ruins of an abbey.

*The Central Plateau*.—With the exception of a group of extinct volcanoes in Auvergne, locally termed 'Puys,' this region is highest in the south-east, where it is called the Cevennes. Outside this volcanic area it is composed, like Brittany, of generally unfertile crystalline schists and granite, and is devoted chiefly to sheep-rearing. The valley of the Allier, however, which crosses it, is a very rich agricultural district, which has been fertilized by the volcanic soil washed into it and mixed with other alluvial deposits. On the eastern flanks of the plateau there are small coalfields, round Creuzot and St. Etienne, where iron goods are manufactured, since iron also is found near the former place. The impervious nature of the rocks of the central plateau has had a great influence on the Loire, which rises there, causing its volume to vary much at different times; for rain, instead of sinking far into the ground and gradually re-appearing in the form of springs, tends to flow rapidly off the surface, producing first a flood and then a lack of water. Nevertheless, the Loire is navigable throughout the greater part of its course.