

and partly of sand-dunes, which are constantly shifting inland, driven by the prevailing westerly winds. Further east the sands are overgrown by coarse grass and heath, and here sheep, pigs, and geese are reared in large numbers, while still further inland are pine-woods. The planting of trees is encouraged as a check to the inroads of the shifting sand.

Rhoneland.—The Rhone rises on Mont St. Gothard in Switzerland, and flows through the lake of Geneva before it enters France, when, turning sharply south and then east, it joins the Saône at Lyons, and continues the curiously straight valley of that river to the Mediterranean. Rhoneland formed part of Lotharingia (see p. 62), and when that kingdom was subdivided it formed a sufficiently distinct natural region to become for a time the seat of a kingdom called Burgundy. The basin of the Saône is bounded on the north-west by the plateau of the Langres and by the Côte d'Or Mountains, which are specially noted for wines, with Dijon as a centre of the industry. The sheltered position and southern latitude of the Lower Rhone valley promote a warm sunny climate of the dry Mediterranean type; hence the products resemble those of Italy—e.g., silk (largely manufactured at Lyons, St. Etienne, and Avignon), wine, olive oil, and oranges, produced along the Mediterranean coast.

The Rhone is a rapid river, with sandbanks in its lower course, which somewhat impede navigation, and the silt it brings down has rendered it best to place Marseilles, the chief port of the region, to the east of the mouth, since here there is a current in the sea from east to west. This town, like other Mediterranean ports, has benefited by the cutting of the Suez Canal, and is the headquarters of the Messageries Maritimes Steamship Company, which carries on a great trade with the East; but it has felt the competition of Genoa, since the construction of the Alpine tunnels has given that city improved communication with Holland and Belgium. Among the industries of the port is the manufacture of soap, which is fostered by the good local supply of oil.

The coastal belt west of Marseilles is marshy, and studded with lagoons, called *étangs*; but to the east it is extremely picturesque, and many health and pleasure resorts have arisen along the Riviera, as the coast is here termed—e.g., Cannes, Nice, Monaco, and Mentone. Toulon is a naval station. (For commercial statistics on France, see p. 121.)

QUESTIONS.

1. Describe the hinterlands of Marseilles, Bordeaux, and Havre, and mention the probable chief exports from these ports.
2. Why does France both import and export wine and raw wool in large quantities?