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The Gulf of Gabes

The gulf of Gabes, which is currently the theatre of French military operations, is no other than the *Petite Syrte* of the ancients. This gulf, which is located more to the East between Tripoli and Barca.

One can go about without too much danger between the small ports of Gabes and Sfax, while the gulf of Sidra, the modern name of the Greater Syrte, is filled with sand until a long distance from the coast. The port of Bongazi ('Benghazi'), which formerly had a great reputation, because it was very close to the river Lethe, is now only a fishing village.

Ships with a draught of more than six feet cannot approach it, and the food products which were formerly brought from the interior to the market of this locality now seek other outlets. The decline of Benghazi has, without any doubt, contributed to increase the importance of Tripoli which becomes more important each day, because it is located half way between the two Syrtes, which were the terror of the sailors of Phoenicia, Carthage and Rome. While the French warships respect the national colors in the *Petite Syrte* and mark the shelves and sand banks of the *Grand Syrte* on the sea charts of the civilized powers, one cannot prevent oneself from thinking of the frights that *inhospita Syrtis* caused the fugitive Didon and the danger which the army of Caton ran, according to Lucain, in this part of the Mediterranean, whose Latin poet said: "It is neither sea nor land, it is a mixed and indefinable mass."