retical grammar, in order that he might decide whether in Arabic it were allowable or necessary to express oneself in this or that manner. It is evident that these profound scholars knew of only one classical language, which was still spoken by the Bedouins. The tribes which produced the principal poets of the earlier period belonged for the most part to portions of the Hijáz, to Nejd and its neighbour­hood, and to the region which stretches thence towards the Euphrates. A great part of the Hijáz, on the other hand, plays a very unimportant part in this poetry, and the Arabs of the north-west, who were under the Roman dominion, have no share whatever in it. The dialects of these latter tribes probably diverged further from the ordinary language. The fact that they were Christians does not explain this, since the Taghlibites and other tribes who produced eminent poets also professed Christianity. Moreover, poets from the interior were gladly welcomed at the court of the Ghassanian princes, who were Christian vassals of the emperor residing near Damascus; in this district, therefore, their language was at least *understood.* It may be added that most of the tribes which cultivated poetry appear to have been near neighbours at an epoch not very far removed from that in question, and afterwards to have been scattered in large bands over a much wider extent of country. And nearly all those who were not Christians paid respect to the sanctuary of Mecca. It is a total mistake, but one frequently made by Europeans, to designate the Arabic language as “ the Koraishite dia­lect.” This expression never occurs in any Arabic author. True, in a few rare cases we do read of the dialect of the Koraish, by which is meant the peculiar local tinge that distinguished the speech of Mecca; but to describe the Arabic language as “ Koraishite ” is as absurd as it would be to speak of English as the dialect of London or of Oxford. This unfortunate designation has been made the basis of a theory very often repeated in modern times,— namely, that classical Arabic is nothing else but the dialect of Mecca, which the Koran first brought into fashion. So far from this being the case, it is certain that the speech of the *towns* in the Hijáz did not agree in every point with the language of the poets, and, as it happens, the Koran itself contains some remarkable deviations from the rules of the classical language. This would be still more evident if the punctuation, which was introduced at a later time, did not obscure many details. The traditions which re­present the Koraish as speaking the purest of all Arabic dialects are partly the work of the imagination and partly compliments paid to the rulers descended from the Koraish, but are no doubt at variance with the ordinary opinion of the Arabs themselves in earlier days. In the Koran Mo­hammed has imitated the poets, though, generally speaking, with little success ; the poets, on the other hand, never imitated him. Thus the Koran and its language exercised but very little influence upon the poetry of the following century and upon that of later times, whereas this poetry closely and slavishly copied the productions of the old heathen period. The fact that the poetical literature of the early Moslems has been preserved in a much more authentic form than the works of the heathen poets proves that our idea of the ancient poetry is on the whole just.

The Koran and Islam raised Arabic to the position of one of the principal languages of the world. Under the leadership of the Koraish the Bedouins subjected half the world to both their dominion and their faith. Thus Arabic acquired the additional character of a sacred lan­guage. But soon it became evident that not nearly all the Arabs spoke a language precisely identical with the classical Arabic of the poets. The north-western Arabs played a particularly important part during the period of

the Omayyads. The ordinary speech of Mecca and Medina was, as we have seen, no longer quite so primitive as that of the desert. To this may be added that the military expeditions brought those Arabs who spoke the classical language into contact with tribes from out-of-the- way districts, such as Omán, Bahrain (Bahrein), and particularly the north of Yemen. The fact that numbers of foreigners, on passing over to Islam, became rapidly Arabized was also little calculated to preserve the unity of the language. Finally, the violent internal and external commotions which were produced by the great events of that time, and stirred the whole nation, probably acceler­ated linguistic change. In any case, we know from good tradition that even in the 1st century of the Flight the distinction between correct and incorrect speech was quite perceptible. About the end of the 2d century the system of Arabic grammar was constructed, and never underwent any essential modification in later times. The theory as to how one should express oneself was now definitely fixed. The majority of those Arabs who lived beyond the limits of Arabia already diverged far from this standard ; and in particular the final vowels which serve to indicate cases and moods were no longer pronounced. This change, by which Arabic lost one of its principal advantages, was no doubt hastened by the fact that even in the classical style such terminations were omitted whenever the word stood at the end of a sentence (in pause) ; and in the living language of the Arabs this dividing of sentences is very frequent. Hence people were already quite accustomed to forms without grammatical terminations.

Through the industry of Arabic philologists we are able to make ourselves intimately acquainted with the system, and still more with the vocabulary of the language, although they have not always performed their task in a critical manner. We should be all the more disposed to admire the richness of the ancient Arabic vocabulary when we remember how simple are the conditions of life amongst the Arabs, how painfully monotonous their country, and consequently how limited the range of their ideas must be. Within this range, however, the slightest modification is expressed by a particular word. It must be confessed that the Arabic lexicon has been greatly augmented by the habit of citing as words by themselves such rhetorical phrases as an individual poet has used to describe an ob­ject : for example, if one poet calls the lion the “tearer” and another calls him the “ mangier,” each of these terms is explained by the lexicographers as equivalent to “lion.” One branch of literature in particular, namely, lampoons and satirical poems, which for the most part have perished, no doubt introduced into the lexicon many expressions coined in an arbitrary and sometimes in a very strange manner. Moreover, Arabic philologists have greatly under­rated the number of words which, though they occur now and then in poems, were never in general use except among particular tribes. But in spite of these qualifications it must be admitted that the vocabulary is surprisingly rich, and the Arabic dictionary will always remain the principal resource for the elucidation of obscure expressions in all the other Semitic tongues. This method, if pursued with the necessary caution, is a perfectly legitimate one.

Poems seldom enable us to form a clear idea of the lan­guage of ordinary life, and Arabic poetry happens to have been distinguished from the very beginning by a certain tendency to artificiality and mannerism. Still less does the Koran exhibit the language in its spoken form. This office is performed by the prose of the ancient traditions (Hadith). The genuine accounts of the deeds of the Prophet and of his companions, and not less the stories concerning the battles and adventures of the Bedouins in the heathen period and in the earlier days of Islam, are