activity in numerous translations from those Arabic and Coptic works which were in use amongst the Christians of Egypt ; besides these a few original writings were com­posed, namely, lives of saints, hymns, &c. This literary condition lasted till modern times. The language, which had long become extinct, was by no means invariably written in a pure form; indeed even in manuscripts of more ancient works we find many linguistic corruptions, which have crept in partly through mere carelessness and ignorance, partly through the influence of the later dialects. On points of detail we are still sometimes left in doubt, as we possess no manuscripts belonging to the older period. This renders it all the more important that the ancient and authentic inscriptions upon the monuments of Aksúm should be accurately published.

Geez is more nearly related to Sabæan than to Arabic, though scarcely to such a degree as we might expect. The historical intercourse between the Sabæans and the people of Aksúm does not, however, prove that those who spoke Geez were simply a colony from Sabæa ; the lan­guage may be descended from an extinct cognate dialect of south Arabia, or may have arisen from a mingling of several such dialects. And this colonization in Africa probably began much sooner than is usually supposed. In certain respects Geez represents a more modern stage of development than Arabic; we may cite as instances the loss of some inflexional terminations and of the ancient passive, the change of the aspirated dentals into sibilants, Ac. In the manuscripts, especially those of later date, many letters are confounded, namely, *h, h,* and *kh, s* and *sh, c* and *d* ; this, however, is no doubt due only to the influence of the modern dialects. To this same influence, and indirectly perhaps to that of the Hamitic languages, we may ascribe the very hard sound now given to certain letters, *ḳ, ṭ,* *ç,* and *ḍ,* in the reading of Geez. The last two are at present pronounced something like *ṭs* and *ts* (the German z). A peculiar advantage possessed by Geez and by all Ethiopic languages is the sharp distinction between the imperfect and the subjunctive : in the former a vowel is inserted after the first radical,—a formation of which there seem to be traces in the dialect of Mahra, and which is also believed to have existed in Assyrian. Geez has no definite article, but is very rich in particles. In the ease with which it joins sentences together and in its freedom as to the order of words it resembles Aramaic. The vocabulary is but imperfectly known, as the theologi­cal literature, which is for the most part very arid, supplies us with comparatively few expressions that do not occur in the Bible, whereas the more modern works borrow their phraseology in part from the spoken dialects, particularly Amharic. With regard to the vocabulary, Geez has much in common with the other Semitic tongues, but at the same time possesses many words peculiar to itself; of these a considerable proportion may be of Hamitic origin. Even some grammatical phenomena seem to indicate Hamitic influence; for instance, the very frequent use of the gerun­dive, a feature which has become still more prominent in the modern dialects, placed as they are in yet closer contact with the Hamitic. We must not suppose that the ancient inhabitants of Aksúm were of pure Semitic blood. The immigration of the Semites from Arabia was in all prob­ability a slow process, and under such circumstances there is every reason to assume that they largely intermingled with the aborigines. This opinion seems to be confirmed by anthropological facts.

Not only in what is properly the territory of Aksúm (namely,

Tigré, north-eastern Abys inia), but also in the countries bordering upon it to the north, including the islands of Dahlak, dialects are still spoken which are but more modern forms of the linguistic type clearly exhibited in Geez. The two principal of these are that spoken in Tigré proper and that of the neighbouring countries.

In reality, the name of Tigré belongs to both, and it would be desirable to distinguish them from one another as Northern and Southern Tigré. But it is the custom to call the northern dialect Tigré simply, whilst that spoken in Tigré itself bears the name of Tigrina, with an Amharic termination. It is generally assumed that Tigré bears a closer resemblance to Geez than does Tigrina, although the latter is spoken in the country where Geez was formed; and this may very possibly be the case, for Tigrina has during several centuries been very strongly influenced by Amharic, which has not been the case with Tigré, which is spoken partly by nomads. Of Tigré, which appears to be divided into numerous dialects, we have several glossaries ; but of its grammar we as yet know but little. Written specimens of this language are almost entirely wanting. With Tigrina we are somewhat better acquainted, @@1 but only as it is spoken in the centre of the country, near the site of the ancient Aksúm, where Amharic happens to be particularly strong,—above all, amongst the more educated classes. In Tigrina the older grammatical forms are often subjected to violent altera­tions ; foreign elements creep in ; but the kernel remains Semitic.

Very different is the case with Amharic, a language of which the domain extends from the left bank of the Takkazé into regions far to the south. Although by no means the only language spoken in these countries, it always tends to displace those foreign tongues which sur­round it and with which it is interspersed. We here refer especially to the Agaw dialects. Although Amharic has been driven back by the invasions of the Galla tribes, it has already compensated itself to some extent for this loss, as the Yedju and Wollo Gallas, who penetrated into eastern Abyssinia, have adopted it as their language. With the exception, of course, of Arabic, no Semitic tongue is spoken by so large a number of human beings as Amharic. The very fact that the Agaw languages are being gradually, and, as it were, before our own eyes, absorbed by Amharic @@2 makes it appear probable that this language must be spoken chiefly by people who are not of Semitic race. This supposition is confirmed by a study of the language itself. Amharic has diverged from the ancient Semitic type to a far greater extent than any of the dialects which we have hitherto enumerated. Many of the old forma­tions preserved in Geez are completely modified in Amharic. Of the feminine forms there remain but a few traces; and that is the case also with the ancient plural of the noun. The strangest innovations occur in the personal pronouns. And certainly not more than half the vocabulary can with­out improbability be made to correspond with that of the other Semitic languages. In this, as also in the grammar, we must leave out of account all that is borrowed from Geez, which, as being the ecclesiastical tongue, exercises a great influence everywhere in Abyssinia. On the other hand, we must make allowance for the fact that in this language the very considerable phonetic modifications often produce a total change of form, so that many words which at first have a thoroughly foreign appearance prove on further examination to be but the regular development of words with which we are already acquainted. @@3 But the most striking deviations occur in the syntax. Things which we are accustomed to regard as usual or even uni­versal in the Semitic languages, such as the placing of the verb before the subject, of the governing noun before the genitive, and of the attributive relative clause after its substantive, are here totally reversed. Words which are marked as genitives by the prefixing of the relative particle, and even whole relative clauses, are treated as one word, and are capable of having the objective suffix added to them. It is scarcely going too far to say that a person

@@@1 Franz Praetorius, *Grammatik der Tigriñasprache,* Halle, 1872. The present writer was also permitted to use the manuscript grammar of a Belgian missionary, who spent a long time in the country.

@@@2 Only an advanced guard of the Agaw languages, the Bílín or dialect of the Bogos, is being similarly absorbed by the Tigré.

@@@3 Praetorius, however, in his very valuable grammar, *Die amharische Sprache* (Halle, 1879), has gone much too far in his attempts to connect. Amharic words and grammatical phenomena with those that occur in Geez.