excellent models of a prose style, although in some cases their redaction dates from a later time.

Classical Arabic is rich not only in words but in gram­matical forms. The wonderful development of the broken plurals, and sometimes of the verbal nouns must be re­garded as an excess of wealth. The sparing use of the ancient terminations which mark the plural has somewhat obscured the distinction between plurals, collectives, ab­stract nouns, and feminines in general. In its manner of employing the verbal tenses genuine Arabic still exhibits traces of that poetical freedom which we see in Hebrew ; this characteristic disappears in the later literary language. In connecting sentences Arabic can go much further than Hebrew, but the simple parataxis is by far the most usual construction. Arabic has, however, this great advantage, that it scarcely ever leaves us in doubt as to where the apodosis begins. The attempts to define the tenses more clearly by the addition of adverbs and auxiliary verbs lead to no very positive result (as is the case in other Semitic languages also), since they are not carried out in a system­atic manner. The arrangement of words in a sentence is governed by very strict rules. As the subject and object, at least in ordinary cases, occupy fixed positions, and as the genitive is invariably placed after the noun that governs it, the use of case-endings loses much of its significance.

This language of the Bedouins had now, as we have seen, become that of religion, courts, and polished society. In the streets of the towns the language already diverged considerably from this, but the upper classes took pains to speak “Arabic.” The poets and the *beaux esprits never* ventured to employ any but the classical language, and the “Atticists,” with pedantic seriousness, convicted the most celebrated among the later poets (for instance Motan- abbí) of occasional deviations from the standard of correct speech. At the same time, however, classical Arabic was the language of business and of science, and at the present day still holds this position. There are, of course, many gradations between the pedantry of purists and the use of what is simply a vulgar dialect. Sensible writers employ a kind of *κοινή,* which does not aim at being strictly cor­rect and calls modern things by modern names, but which, nevertheless, avoids coarse vulgarisms, aiming principally at making itself intelligible to all educated men. The reader may pronounce or omit the ancient terminations as he chooses. This language lived on, in a sense, through the whole of the Middle Ages, owing chiefly to the fact that it was intended for educated persons in general and not only for the learned, whereas the poetical schools strove to make use of the long extinct language of the Bedouins. As might be expected, this *κοινή,* like the *κοινή* of the Greeks, has a comparatively limited vocabulary, since its principle is to retain only those expressions from the ancient language which were generally understood, and it does not borrow much new material from the vulgar dialects.

It is entirely a mistake to suppose that Arabic is un­suited for the treatment of abstract subjects. On the contrary, scarcely any language is so well adapted to be the organ of scholasticism in all its branches. Even the tongue of the ancient Bedouins had a strong preference for the use of abstract verbal nouns (in striking contrast to the Latin, for example) ; thus they oftener said “Needful is thy sitting” than “It is needful that thou shouldest sit.” This tendency was very advantageous to philosophical phraseology. The strict rules as to the order of words, though very unfavourable to the development of a truly eloquent style, render it all the easier to express ideas in a rigidly scientific form.

In the meantime Arabic, like every other widely spread language, necessarily began to undergo modification and to split up into

dialects. The Arabs are mistaken in attributing this development to the influence of those foreign languages with which Arabic came into contact. Such influences can have had but little to do with the matter ; for were it otherwise the language of the interior of Arabia must have remained unchanged, yet even in this region the inhabitants are very far from speaking as they did a thousand years back. A person who in Arabia or elsewhere should trust to his knowledge of classical Arabic only would resemble those travellers from the north who endeavour to make themselves understood by Italian waiters through the medium of a kind of Latin. The written language has, it is true, greatly retarded the development of the dialects. Every good Moslem repeats at least a few short súras several times a day in his prayers, besides being minutely acquainted with the sacred book ; and this must have had a power­ful influence upon the speech of the people at large. But never­theless dialects have formed themselves and have diverged con­siderably from one another. Of these there are indeed but few with which we are tolerably well acquainted ; that of Egypt alone is known with real accuracy. @@1 Although the French have occupied Algeria for about fifty years, we still possess but imperfect informa­tion with respect to the language of that country. It is closely connected with that of Morocco on the one hand and with that of Tunis on the other. Arabic has long been banished from Spain ; but we possess a few literary works written in Spanish Arabic, and just before it became too late Pedro de Alcala composed a grammar and a lexicon of that dialect. @@2 We have also a few ancient speci­mens of the Arabic which was once spoken in Sicily. To the western group of dialects belongs the language of Malta, which, cut off as it is from other Arabic dialects and exposed to the influ­ence of Italian, has developed itself in a very strange manner ; in it a considerable number of books have already been printed, but with Latin characters. The dialects of Arabia, Syria, and the other Eastern provinces, in spite of many valuable works, are not yet sufficiently well known to admit of being definitely classified.

There can be no doubt that the development of these dialects is in part the result of older dialectical variations which were already in existence in the time of the Prophet. The histories of dialects which differ completely from one another often pursue an ana­logous course. In general, the Arabic dialects still resemble one another more than we might expect when we take into considera­tion the great extent of country over which they are spoken and the very considerable geographical obstacles that stand in the way of communication. But we must not suppose that people, for instance, from Mosul, Morocco, San'á, and the interior of Arabia would be able to understand one another without difficulty. It is a total error to regard the difference between the Arabic dialects and the ancient language as a trifling one, or to represent the development of these dialects as something wholly unlike the development of the Romance languages. No living Arabic dialect diverges from classical Arabic so much as French or Rouman from Latin ; but, on the other hand, no Arabic dialect resembles the classical language so closely as the Lugodoric dialect, which is still spoken in Sardinia, resembles its parent speech, and yet the lapse of time is very much greater in the case of the latter.

*Sabæan.—*Long before Mohammed, a peculiar and highly developed form of civilization had flourished in the table­land to the south-west of Arabia. The more we become acquainted with the country of the ancient Sabæans and with its colossal edifices, and the better we are able to decipher its inscriptions, which are being discovered in ever-increasing numbers, the easier it is for us to account for the haze of mythical glory wherewith the Sabæans were once invested. The Sabæan inscriptions (which till lately were more often called by the less correct name of “ Himyaritic ”) begin long before our era and continue till about the 4th century. The somewhat stiff character is always very distinct ; and the habit of regularly dividing the words from one another renders decipherment easier, which, however, has not yet been performed in a very satisfactory manner, owing in part to the fact that the vast majority of the documents in question consist of re­ligious votive tablets with peculiar sacerdotal expressions, or of architectural notices abounding in technical terms. These inscriptions fall into two classes, distinguished partly by grammatical peculiarities and partly by peculiarities of phraseology. One dialect, which forms the causative with *ha,* like Hebrew and others, and employs, like nearly

@@@1 W. Spitta-Bey, *Grammatik des arabischen Vulgärdialects von Aegypten* (Leipsic, 1880).

@@@2 They were published in 1505, reprinted by Lagarde *(Petri Hispani de Lingua Arabica Libri duo,* Göttingen, 1883).