also professed Christianity. Moreover, poets from the interior were gladly welcomed at the court of the Ghassänian 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 dia- lect. 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 IJijãz 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 somewhat 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 Mahomet 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 language of its pattern, 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 'Omān, 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 in places quite perceptible. About the end of the 2nd 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. But in the language of certain Bedouin tribes remnants of those termina­tions have been preserved down to our time.

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 are obliged to thank them sincerely. 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 “ mangler,” 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 sometime in a very strange manner. Moreover, Arabic philologists seem to have 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 more performed by the prose of the ancient normative traditions (*Ḥadīth).* And the genuine accounts of the deeds of the Prophet and of his companions, and especially the stories concerning the battles and adventures of the Bedouins in the heathen period and in the earlier days of Islam, are 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 wanton 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, ana 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, Motanabbí) 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 *κοιvή,* 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 preserve exactly the grammar and the lexicon of the long extinct language of the Bedouins. As might be expected, this *κοιvή*, like the *κοιvή* of the Greeks, has a comparatively limited vocabulary, since its principle is to retain only those expressions from the ancient language which were generally underst∞d, 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 Arabic scholars 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