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 suras several times a day in his prayers. Nor is this all: the sacred book meets him everywhere. Now the majority of Arabian Moslems understand something at least of the passages they recite or hear; so that the Koran was bound to exercise, on the language of the widest circles, an influence such as has been exercised by no other book in the world. The idiom of the church, of learning and of diplomacy was brought— partially at least—nearer to the average man, with the result that many of its words and locutions passed, with more or less correctitude, into the language of common life, or that its mode of expression was taken as a model, precisely as Latin, the language of the church, science and the state, exerted a powerful influence on the living Romance tongues, even before the Renaissance. Yet, in spite of this, the Arabic dialects have developed on their own lines and have diverged widely from each other. Our knowledge of them has made rapid progress in late years, and we have now good grammars of several dialects. We are best acquainted with the present speech of Egypt, and we are well posted in the dialects of the Maghrib— the African coastal lands from Tripoli to Morocco. To the Maghrib group of dialects belonged that once spoken in Sicily, of which we know little in especial, together with the Spanish Arabic of former times, which is better known to us through several literary monuments and the Grammar and Lexicon of Pedro de Alcala (1505). The shibboleth of these Western dialects is that, in the imperfect, they pronounce the 1st person plural with the ending *u* fas the 2nd and 3rd), and give to the 1st person singular the prefix *n* (as in the plural form). Maltese, also, is of the Maghrib family. This Arabic dialect, the only one spoken exclusively by Christians, is of peculiar interest to the philologist, owing to the fact that for some 900 years it has been completely withdrawn from the action of literary Arabic. On the other hand, it has been exposed to the influence of Italian. Nevertheless, it has developed in a very similar manner to the dialects of the neighbouring African coast: still it possesses many features which are peculiar to itself. Of the dialects of Syria, inner and southern Arabia, and other oriental countries, we also know more than was the case a short while ago ; but the gaps in our knowledge are still too great to allow us to classify them in fixed groups. For the most part the Bedouin language is somewhat strongly distinguished from that of the sedentary tribes; but we should hardly be justified in believing that the Bedouin dialects form a contrasting unity as against the other idioms.

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 ana- logous course. In general, the Arabic dialects still resemble one another more than we might expect when we take into considera­tion the immense 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, Ṣan'ā, 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 de- velopment 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. Side by side with the poetry of the old literary language there arose, in quite early days, another school of poetry which availed itself of the younger, living dialects. So, even in the 12th century, dialectic poetry was flourish­ing in Spain; and down to the present day, in the most diverse quarters of the vast linguistic domain of Arabic, songs have been composed in the various dialects. But this poetry, probably with the sole exception of Maltese, stands in some connexion or other with the antique, and is subject, more or less, to the influence of the classical language. And this is still more the case in other depart­ments of literature. *Märchen,* and other tales, written by the un- educated, merely show a dialectic colouring, frequently combined with a catachrestic use of the grammatical forms of classical Arabic, not the genuine aspect of the dialect itself. These features are particularly evident in works by Jews and Christians. Purely “ vulgar ” texts, of any magnitude, would be hard to discover. The isolated Maltese alone has succeeded in producing a new written language distinct from the classical tongue; and in this a fair amount of material has already been printed in Latin characters. In recent years, however, earnest attempts have been made to elevate the Egyptian dialect to the rank of a literary language: whether these attempts will be crowned with permanent success is a question to be resolved by time. In any case, the ancient written

language, though with all kinds of modifications, will long continue to exist. The very fact that it does not express the vocalization with exactitude is an advantage; for thus the Arabs, from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic, can recognize the same word, although they may pronounce it with different vowels.

Sabaean.

Long before Mahomet, a peculiar and highly developed form of civilization had flourished in the table-land to the south-west of Arabia. The more we become acquainted with the country of the ancient Sabaeans and with its colossal edifices, and the better we are able to decipher its in- scriptions, which are being discovered in ever-increasing numbers, the easier it is for us to account for the haze of mythical glory wherewith the Sabaeans were once invested. The Sabaean incriptions (which till lately were more often called by the less correct name of "Himyaritic ”) begin long before our era and continue till the 6th 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 all the Semitic languages, the termination *h (hū)* as the suffix of the third person singular, is the Sabaean properly speaking. The other, which expresses the causative by *sa* (corre- sponding to the Shaphel of the Aramaeans and others), and for the suffix uses *s* (like the Assyrian *sh),* is the Minaic. To this latter branch belong the numerous South Arabic inscriptions recently found in the north of the Ḥijāz, near Ḥejr, where the Minaeans must have had a commercial settlement. On the other hand, the very old inscriptions, emanating from a colony at Jeha in Abyssinia, are Sabaean. The difference between the two classes of inscriptions is no doubt ultimately based upon a real divergence of dialect. But the singular manner in which districts containing Sabaean inscriptions and those containing Minaic alternate with one another seems to point in part to a mere hieratic practice of clinging to ancient modes of expression. Indeed it is very probably due to conscious literary conservatism that the language of the inscriptions remains almost entirely unchanged through many centuries. A few inscriptions from districts rather more to the east exhibit certain linguistic peculiarities, which, however, may perhaps be explained by the supposition that the writers did not, as a rule, speak this dialect, and therefore were but imperfectly acquainted with it.

A great hindrance to the completion of our knowledge of the Sabaean language lies in the paucity of vowel-letters in the in­scriptions. The unvarying style of the inscriptions excludes further a great number of the commonest grammatical forms. Not a single occurrence of the first or second person has yet been detected, with the possible exception of one proper name, in which “ our god ” apparently occurs. But the knowledge which we already possess amply suffices to prove that Sabaean is closely related to Arabic as we are acquainted with it. The former language possesses the same phonetic elements as the latter. It possesses the broken, plural, a dual form resembling that used in Arabic, &c. It is especially important to notice that Sabaean expresses the idea of indefiniteness by means of an appended *m,* just as Arabic expresses it by means of an *n,* which in all probability is a modification of the former sound. But we may main­tain that, in the later centuries, the *m* had fallen away in the pronunciation, either completely or in the majority of cases. Both in this point and in some others Sabaean appears more primitive than Arabic, as might be expected from the earlier date of its monuments. The article is formed by appending an *n*. In its vocabulary also Sabaean bears a great resemblance to Arabic, although, on the other hand, it often approaches more nearly to the northern Semitic languages in this respect; and it possesses much that is peculiar to itself.

Soon after the Christian era Sabaean civilization began to decline, and completely perished in the wars with the Abyssinians, who several times occupied the country, and in the 6th century remained in possession of it for a considerable period. In that age the language of central Arabia was already penetrating into the Sabaean domain. It is further possible that many tribes which dwelt not far to the north of the civilized districts had always spoken dialects resembling central Arabic rather than Sabaean. About the year 600 "Arabic” was the language of all Yemen, with the exception perhaps of a few isolated districts, and this process of assimilation continued in later times. True, a few echoes of Sabaean have survived in certain grammatical forms and the vocabulary of present-day dialects in those districts; but these dialects are, on the whole, thoroughly “Arabic.” Several centuries after Mahomet, learned Yemenites were acquainted with the characters of the inscriptions which abounded in their country; they were also able to decipher the proper names and a small number of Sabaean words the meaning of which was still known to them, but they could no longer understand