

guages and 153 dialects. Doubtless this is a difficulty, but by no means an insurmountable one. Each year diminishes the difficulty. With able men at work on all sides and pushing toward a central point, the field seems to contract and the number to lessen, as increased knowledge reveals what these languages are and to what others they are related.

All the languages of Africa fall into certain families or groups, each group having certain marks common to each individual in the group.

In the present paper one of these groups calls for remark—viz., the Bantu group. Roughly, with a few exceptions, the languages spoken over the southern half of Africa belong to this family. In all these the word "Bantu," or some form of it, signifies "people;" and so the word is taken to give name to that family of languages. We are not concerned with all the 168 languages and 55 dialects in this group. Confining our attention to the languages of Nyasa-land, we find they occupy a place in the eastern branch and in the southern sub-branch. It is not difficult in this way to go over the whole of Africa, since all that is known of these languages has been thus worked into a clear and scientific plan by Cust, who would not, like Drummond, speak of "unintelligible" languages.

In the locality of these languages the two Scottish missions—Blantyre and Livingstonia—and the Universities' Mission, are working. In 1875, when the Livingstonia Mission began work on Lake Nyasa, there were only a few words of the language known. It was not known what the Lake languages were. At present we know that in the territory of the Livingstonia Mission there are six in use; in Blantyre territory there are two; and in connection with the Universities' Mission there are two. One language is common to all the missions; and we have therefore seven separate languages to deal with in Nyasa-land. In these there are now about thirty separate publications, ranging from an edition of the New Testament down to a school primer. For such a record of progress we owe hearty thanks to God for help and success.

While the linguistic work of each mission is rightly reported by its own society, the work is a common work, in which all at home and abroad should bear a part. Let us now proceed to specify what we know of the languages of Nyasa-land. Of some we know more than of others, and we may, therefore, notice

#### 1. LANGUAGES OF WHICH OUR KNOWLEDGE IS DEFINITE.

(1) *Nyanja*.—This is the most important language in Nyasa-land. It is spoken in all the district of Livingstonia, the Nkonde district at the head of Lake Nyasa excepted. It is at present, and will doubtless continue to be, the trade language of the Nyasa region. It not only covers a greater area, but reaches a larger population than any other lake language. By means of it we have talked our way from Bandawe on Lake Nyasa to Quilimane on the coast.

All the tribes on the western shore of Nyasa from Bandawe southward