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INTRODUCTION.

The differences which exist in the spoken language of France in different districts have been caused by two sets of influences, the one arising from a condition already existing before the Latin language was spread over the Gallic territory by the conquering Romans, and the other due to events which occurred after that language had gained a firm footing there. From the variety which exists to-day in the language of any speech district, we are justified in assuming that a like variety existed in the Celtic language of France before the Romans arrived there. The Latin language, coming in contact with a language thus variegated, was necessarily influenced in one part, in a different way from the influence it felt in another part. In this way the Neo-Latin language was broken up into dialects.

With the wandering of the Germanic tribes the second set of influences commenced. In one part the Burgundians settled: in another, Salian Franks; and, later, came the Northmen. The dialect spoken by each of these had a different influence on the language with which it came in contact. This intensified the work of differentiation wrought by the Celtic.

The common mode of classifying dialects is the geographical one,—a mode far from satisfactory, for linguistic peculiarities always overlap geographical boundaries. A more rational mode of classification is that adopted by Caix for the Italian dialects,—the grouping together in one dialect group of all communities which have certain peculiarities in common. But as each particular phenomenon would thus give a separate dialect group,