THE ATHENÆUM

No. 2602, Sept. 5, 1877.

'The French Revolution.' "I think," he said, one day, "that M. Thiers, who is at bottom a thorough moderate, still better understands the Empire; but I fear he will never get the time to do it." The time to begin the work, at any rate, was 1868, not 1840. After Louis Napoleon's Government in 1840. Nearly all his leisure, during the next five-and-twenty years or more, was duly employed in collecting and cultivating the materials for this monumental undertaking, and, the first volume being published in 1845, it was continued at intervals until the whole appeared in 1863, the twelfth and last, which was published in 1866, being a rather dis-joined supplement to it. As regards literary style and workmanship, it is hardly necessary to say that this is a profound, clear, compact, and incisive dicition, for vigorous portraiture and dignified narrative, it is superior to the 'French Revolution,' and to nearly every other book that has ever been written in this department of literature. Dealing largely in military events, its brilliant descriptions of battles and all the operations of war are hardly to be rivall'd, and its unravellings of political complications and expostulations of political problems and their relations to one another, is no less skillful in this than in that. The appearance of the work has no reason to suppose, moreover, that Thiers was not as honest in his intentions as he was evidently doing in the execution of his task. The Front- face to the twentieth volume, apologising for the slowness of the work, he set forth the conditions of honor which bound him and prescribed for his conclusion: "I speak not for myself—One might proceed more rapidly, I acknowledge; but I entertain such respect for the mission of the work that I am constrained, professing what is inexact with me in confusion. It has no place, until I can find proof for the object of my doubts; I search for it everywhere; I do not seek it in haste, as till now I have acquired a certainty that it does not exist. In this case, I am compelled to pronounce as a judge, I speak according to my infallible belief, but always with an extreme fear of being in error, because I hold that there is nothing more to be condemned, when one assumes spontaneously the mission to speak truth to men on the great events of history, than to gloss it over by cowardice, to distort it by passion, to forge it by indolence, and, knowingly or not, to misstate by the most flagrant falsehoods, that ages come to." And yet this great history of the Consulate and the Empire is biased in every point, incoherent in fact, unwarranted in its inferences, and pernicious in its conclusions, a huge political pamphlet, in comparison with which even Manuzzi's 'History of England' is as much its antithesis as the bigness of Paris is that of Thiers, being a Frenchman, should have set himself to glorify France at the expense of other nations, under the banner of the empire, the material of which might have put him right, and giving a false color to facts that were before him, is not perhaps to be wondered at, and this is a venial offence, seeing how history is still generally written. The grand fault of his book is in the dangerous principles which are enforced in it with a consistent recklessness and an unbridled boldness that is appalling. He read the history of his country by the light of a whole constellation of false theories, and he wrote it in such a way as to present these theories in the guise of incontrovertible demonstrable and absolute rules for healthy national development. Needless of the disasters that had befallen France through errors of her government, he made it his business to glorify its government. Blind to the misery spread throughout Europe during the time of his own youth by military autocracy at home and military usurpation abroad, he praised them in seductive hues, and exhibited to his own generation as the highest virtues all the dominant vices of his government. To say no more, he lived to see the reality of the consequences of his work. That is of the Second Empire, in the Franco-German war, and in the Paris Commune.

The point must always be remembered that Thiers sought no advantage to himself from the outcome of his teachings. In practical politics he was generally honest enough to place himself in opposition to his own reputation. Third, to Napoleon the Third's extirpation of his own maxim. Happily it is not incumbent on us here to dwell much on this, or on any minor riddle of his political life; all the less of its culminating riddle—the exhibition by him, after he had passed the allotted space of three score years and ten, and was like a wrinkled old man, which were altogether during his prime, and of such strange adaptability to the altered temper and times of his country, that he proved himself at once the master of component art and the chief controller of its humours. If he helped by his mischievous authorship to bring about the degradation of France under the Second Empire, it was some compensation that his successful statesmanship mainly enabled France to recover itself as soon as the Second Empire was got rid of. During his terms of office as Chief of the Executive Power and President of the Republic he possessed, and, for the most part, wisely exercised, such moral influence and such personal authority as the great men of the Republic. It was his element, and he regarded as supreme and dangerous, and the unhealthy outburst of which at the time of the Paris Commune he had the opportunity of ruthlesslessly crushing. He is reported to have left behind him a long and elaborate fragment on philosophy, showing that his views thereon had undergone great change since 1821, when, as a young literary adventurer, he came up to Paris "with a complete system of philosophy in his head."

THE OGHAM INSCRIPTION.

In continuation of my last notes upon the alphabet "El-Musahajar," as applied to the Ogham or Ogama, I venture to suggest that those interested in Irish epigraphy of the pagan period, obituary, or lichifsigned all known forms, the common and the "ladder" or "stepped" (e.g., †, †, †, †), and send copies to the archeological societies of the Continent before the appearance of Dr. S. Fergusson's 'Ogham.' The little anticipates of Irish may it appear, add considerably to our knowledge of these barbarous Edomians.

My attention has been drawn to this point by the fine folio, 'Intorno agli Scavi Archeologi,' (in the Armaledi property, near Bologna), lately published by Dr. G. B. Guglielmi (Bologna. Fava e Garagnani). P. 32 offers a most interesting table of style (potter's marks), divided into four heads: 1, those scratched (grafiti) on the base of the articles after baking; 2, the marks on other parts of the pottery; 3, the basal grafitti before baking; and 4, those inscribed upon bronze articles.

In the first category, numbering thirty-nine, I find seven, not including the crosses, which may mean anything, more or less directly connected in shape with the alphabet El-Musahajar. The † (†), the † (common h), and the † (circular h = e) are perfect; and No. 2 letter has in this table three variants, the †, the †, and the †. The imperfect are the 3, the 3, the 3, and the 3, the 3, and the 3. In Table III. (p. 33) there are four: the 3, the 3, the 3, and the 3. Thus, whilst, finally, Table IV. (also 7) gives one, the 3, with its variant, the 3.

I venture to believe that these are letters, and not marks. In Table I. you will find the Flavian (a), and the same occurs eight (nine) times. In the third column, which are printed in p. 268 of the treatise and "Irishmen, Bologna," by RICHARD W. STORMIT.

THE DIES MEMORIAL.

For some time a movement has been in progress on the Continent of establishing a memorial of the late Prof. Dietz, the founder of modern Roman philology, in the shape of scholarships or prizes for the promotion of the studies to which his life was devoted. The movement, which was inaugurated at Berlin by a committee of eminent German philologists, has been warmly taken up in Austria and Italy, where similar committees have been formed, and has since been ratified by France. It is intended that the final disposal of the fund, which will to a great extent depend on its amount, shall be determined by consultation among the committees after the closing of the subscription lists at the end of this year.

In conclusion, I allude to a wider circle than that of the students of language, who look up to him as a master and a founder. Owing to the Norman Conquest, it is impossible for Rigaists to investigate to any extent properly understand, much of the history of their language or their literature, and even of their constitution, without some collaboration with the great men of the Paris Commune. This is of the Diess Memorial Fund; believing that England will not show herself among the statesmen and statesmen, who are so intimately concerned. The Committee consists of Prince P. L. Buzaparte, A. J. H. Ein, Prof. Max Muller, Prof. Saxon, Rev. W. W. Skeat, H. Sweet, Eryn, Prof. Full, Soc., and some others, and has for its honorary secretary Mr. Henry Nicol.

THE VOCAL MEMENTO.

The following extract from the magnificent collection of Mr. Robert Hay's Egyptian drawings and notes, in the British Museum, will be read with interest among the students of this science, and will be found full of instruction to all who are interested in the early stages of Egyptian and to the Arab with me impressed, without my making any observation to him, at the same time saying that not a soul was near the statue but ourselves. This statue is of one stone, though very much shattered in all parts—again I have heard the same noise! The stone is a puddling-stone, but varies much in different parts of it." 6d.

NOTES FROM NAPLES.

Naples, August 30, 1877.

The publication is announced of a new 'History of the Events of 1769 in Naples.' "Hibbert," says a reviewer, "that period has been imperfectly studied, as the most important documents connected with it were burnt by order of Ferdinand the Fourth. Prof. H. of the city, has given to the public many inedited documents which regard especially Maria Carolina, the infanta of Naples, and the great Library of the British Museum,—richer than all the others of the world in historical memorials," says the author. "I endeavour to discover the most accredited writers, to investigate the..."