

copper. They are chiefly interesting for two reasons : That this is the last of them, on account of being merged in the new Empire ; and that they are such perfect specimens of the Minting art. In this latter respect they must claim the victory over the coins of much larger countries. Perhaps their Mints have so little to do that they can afford to do it as if a prize awaited them. However, the German States, and some of the Italian, have long held this superiority.

THE DOLLAR SIGN.



THE dollar sign (\$) was in use long before there was any Federal coinage to be represented. All these old characters grew into use so gradually that their exact origin is often disputed, and frequently lost even beyond the reach of long-armed tradition. The origin of the dollar mark is disputed. Most old writers claim that the \$ came from the old Spanish pillar dollar, which bore on its reverse the two " Pillars of Hercules," the ancient name of the opposite promontories at the Straits of Gibraltar. The parallel lines in it thus stand || stand, according to this explanation, for the two pillars, and they are bound together thus \$ with a scroll. More modern writers claim that as the Spanish dollar was a piece of 8 reals, " 8 R " being once stamped on it, and it was then called " a piece of eight," that the figure 8 with a line drawn through it, as characters were generally formed, produced the sign of the dollar. It was not called a dollar, but a " piece of eight." The name itself was born in Germany and from the fact that the first piece of this character was coined in the Valley of St. Joachim, in Bohemia, in the year 1518, it was called Joachim's Thaler, the last half of the word being pronounced (and often written) *daller*. The character £ is the first letter of the latin word *Libra*, with a line across for the pound sterling, and the letters lb., with a line across it, represent the same word as applied to a pound weight.