

THE OLD EMPIRE AND THE NEW.

DURING the Christmas festival of the year 800 the crown of the imperial dignity was placed at Rome on the head of Charles the Great of France, and the Roman Empire of the West again came into being, so far as a dead thing could be restored to life. For one thousand and six years afterwards this title of emperor was retained in Germany, though the power represented by it became at times a very shadowy affair. The authority and influence of the emperors reached their culmination during the reign of the Hohenstauffens (1138 to 1254). For a few centuries afterwards the title represented an empire which was but a quarter fact, three-quarters tradition, the emperor being duly elected by the diet of German princes, but by no means submissively obeyed. The fraction of fact which remained of the old empire perished in the Thirty Years' War. After that date the title continued in existence, being held by the Hapsburgs of Austria as an hereditary dignity, but the empire had vanished except as a tradition or superstition. Finally, on the 6th of August, 1806, Francis II., at the absolute dictum of Napoleon, laid down the title of