

THE ETRUSCAN QUESTION.

BY PROF. G. D. FERGUSON.

In January last, Professor Campbell, of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, read a paper before this Institute, in which he seeks to prove the affinity of the Etruscan with the Basque, and claims to have found the clue by which he is enabled to read the Etruscan inscriptions. It is an accepted principle that our only hope of deciphering and translating the inscriptions on the monuments of a nation that has passed away is by means of a bilingual inscription. It was in this way that the hieroglyphics of Egypt, and the cuneiform inscriptions have been read. Any other way than this must be hypothetical, and therefore unreliable, for, however ingeniously the researches may be conducted, we cannot accept the results with any confidence. Proceeding on this hypothetical principle it is quite possible, by a mere resemblance in the words, to show with great plausibility the affinity of a language, and consequently of a nation, with any other language or nation. We have not hitherto attached importance to Professor Campbell's researches. Any attention we may have given to comparative philology has been because of its historical importance, and, if Professor Campbell derived any satisfaction from his Hittite or Aztec researches, we were not disposed to detract from that pleasure, for neither the Hittites nor the Aztecs have contributed much to the general development of civilization, and historically considered are unimportant nations. The Hittites had relations with Egypt during the Hyksos period, and during the reign of Rameses II., but they did not affect to any extent the progress of civilization. But Professor Campbell was treading very different ground when he entered the field of Etruscan research. The Etruscans were a very important people. They at one time occupied the greater part of the Italian peninsula, and largely influenced Roman civilization. They had extensive commercial relations with the inland countries of Europe, and with the Baltic.