

absurdity; and we shall presently show that this is one of the absurdities in which Prof. Campbell has rather freely indulged.

But there is another difficulty. The Etruscan inscriptions are perhaps none of them later than the second century B.C., but the earliest examples of Basque literature are of the fifteenth century, except a short charter granted to the commune of Daviles in 1150.* Now under any circumstances there must be great difficulty in proving the affinity of languages whose literatures are separated by not less than seventeen centuries, but the difficulty becomes insuperable when it is remembered that one of the languages has been subjected to very great foreign influences. We quote from M. Blabé, the greatest authority on the Basque:—"L'idiome Basque s'est tellement modifié depuis le XVⁱème siècle qu'il est toujours très difficile, quand il n'est pas absolument impossible, d'expliquer les premières textes connus qui remontent à cette époque." If the changes have been so great within three centuries, during which time the language has acquired, we should suppose, some degree of fixity through a printed literature, and when it has been comparatively free from foreign influence, what changes must have taken place in the seven centuries when the country was constantly changing masters, and there was no literature to fix the language. M. Blabé points out that it is impossible, just on account of the mixed character of the language and of the people, to determine the affinity of the Basques or of their language. After a lengthened review of all the sources of information, he says:—"La toponymie ancienne de l'Espagne, la numismatique dite ibérienne, le droit coutumier, et les prétendus chants héroïques, ne jettent donc, jusqu'au présent, aucune lumière sur l'origine des Basques. Les moyens d'information sont limités à l'histoire positive, à l'anthropologie, et à la philologie comparée. Ces trois sciences constatent unanimement que les Basques sont un peuple fort mélangé." M. Blabé plainly points out the great difficulty in determining the

* We are aware that there are two short poems, the *Chant des Cantabres*, and the *Chant d'Annibal*, which claim to have been written at a very early period. The *Chant des Cantabres* claims to have been written in the reign of Augustus, and to commemorate his campaign in the country of the Cantabri. It is rejected for the following reasons:—(1). No original manuscript has been found, but only what purports to be a copy of the original manuscript published in 1817. (2). It is full of anachronisms, it uses Latin terms only found in the Latin of the Later Empire or the Middle Ages. (3). It calls the Cantabri Biscayans, but this term was not used earlier than the fifteenth century. Much the same criticism may be applied to the *Chant d'Annibal*.