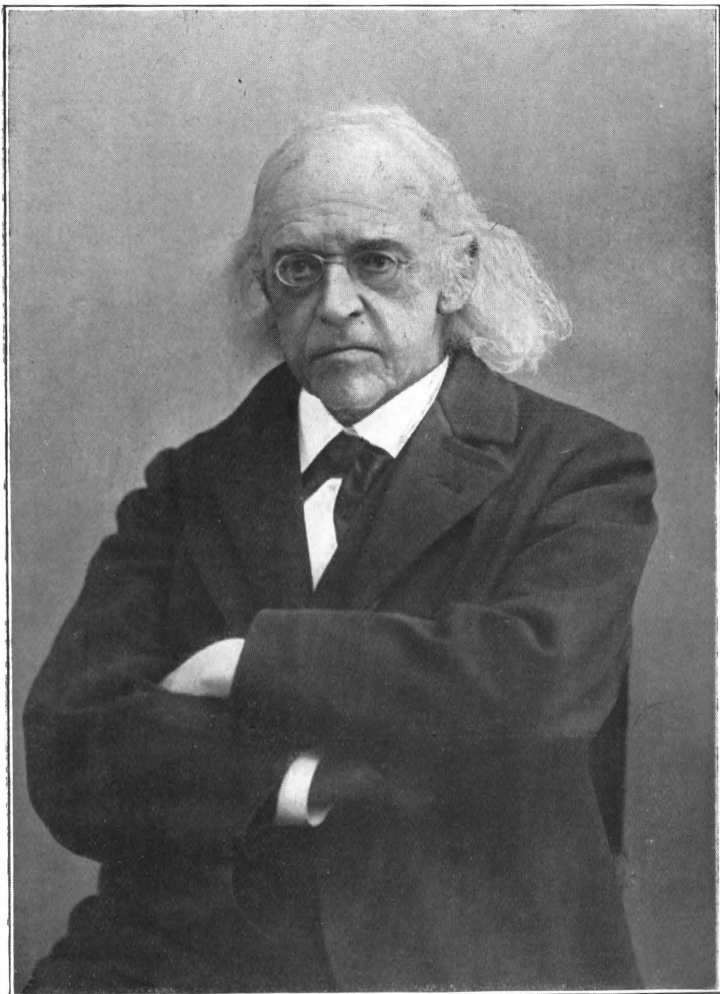
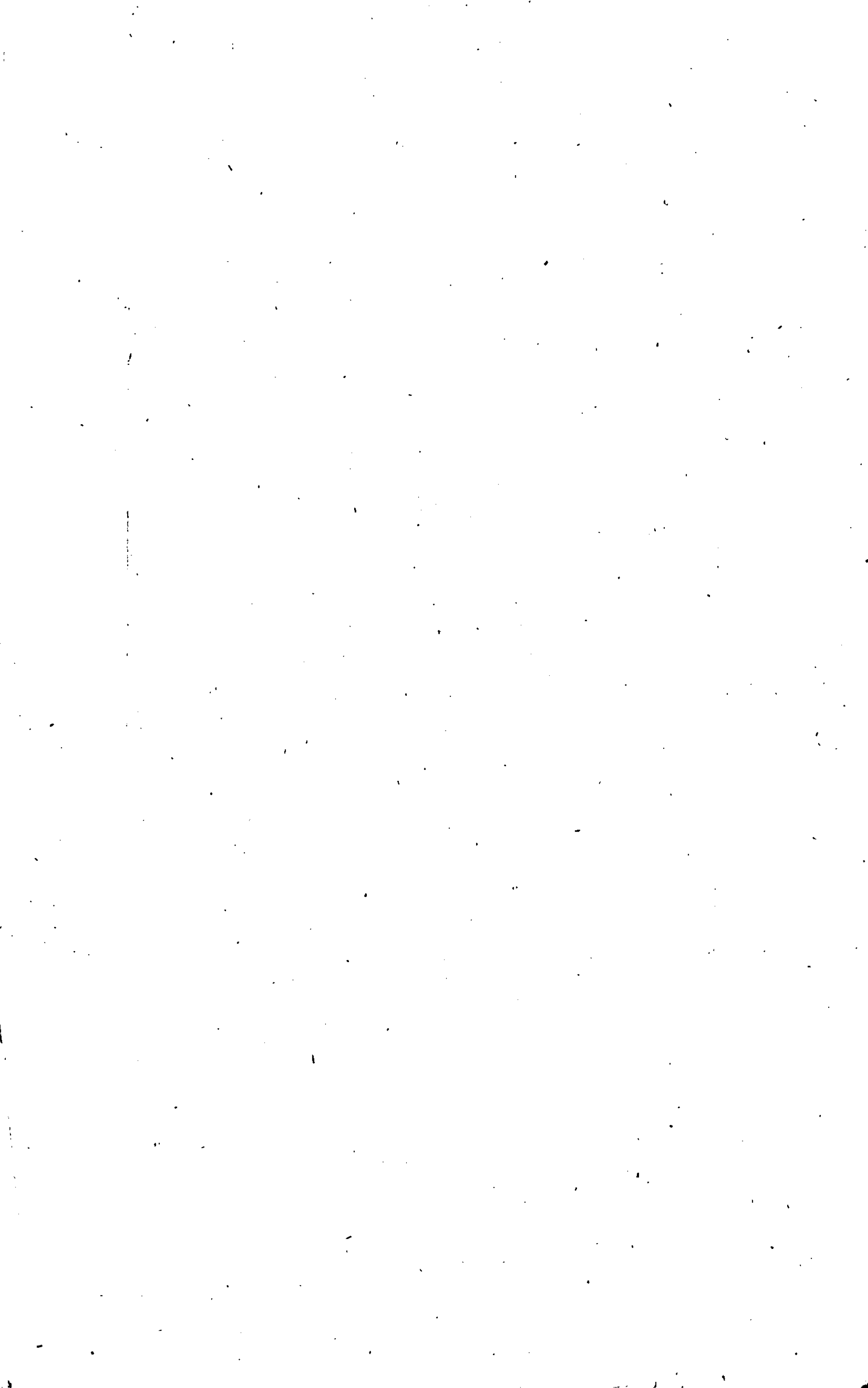


THE LATE PROFESSOR THEODOR MOMMSEN,

AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.



# XII.—OBITUARY NOTICES.

## 1.—THEODOR MOMMSEN, HONORARY MEMBER.

BY F. HAVERFIELD, F.S.A.

[Read on the 25th November, 1903.]

Our age has lost its greatest scholar, full of years. Born in 1817, Theodor Mommsen spanned the nineteenth century with his gigantic contributions to learning. His life was simple but significant. A German of Schleswig Holstein, educated till his twenty-seventh year within the duchy, the struggle of Dane and German gave a reality to his national feeling which lasted throughout his career. A student of law at Kiel university, a friend of Otto Jahn—then concerned with the rising study of inscriptions—he touched thus early the two subjects in which later his learning was most triumphant. Three years of student travel in Italy (1844-7) emphasized for him the value of inscriptions, and brought him face to face with Borghesi, the projector himself of a *Corpus Inscriptionum* and greatest of living epigraphists. He began to write abundantly, and was already known as a scholar of extraordinary powers and activity. In 1848 he became professor of Roman law at Leipsic, but the February revolution gave him other work. He helped the Holsteiners against the Danes; he took the Liberal side in internal German struggles, and as a result in 1850 he lost his professorship. He thus learnt the real character of a revolutionary epoch. Wandering about, first at Zürich university, then at Breslau, he nevertheless continued his work. In 1852 came his first great epigraphic book, the folio containing the 'Inscriptions of the Kingdom of Naples.' In 1854-6 the 'Roman History' followed. Its success was immense; in less than ten years it had been translated into most European languages. In 1858 he settled at Berlin, to live in a quiet suburb for nearly half a century. Politics still had his attention. He sat in the *Landtag* at intervals till 1882, fiercely opposing Bismarck's domestic policy till a prosecution caused his retirement. Occasionally he stepped into foreign affairs, criticising the French in 1870, the Czechs

in 1897, the English in 1900. But he was politician only because he felt deeply. His real life was that of the scholar on the greatest scale. He wrote, organized, made others write. He created the great *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* that now stretches to more than twenty stately folios; nearly half he compiled himself, the rest —no less a hard task—he made others compile. He re-edited the Digest, and half a dozen other 'trifles.' In 1871 he began to set the Roman constitution on a new basis by the first volume of his 'Staatsrecht.' In 1885 he described the Roman provinces in a fifth volume of his history, largely based on epigraphic evidence and possible only to the editor of the *Corpus*. So late as 1899 he issued a monumental work on Roman criminal law, and up to the last he continued a rapid succession of monographs small and large. All the while he was organizing other research. The vast group of great collections which the Berlin academy and other German institutions are now editing—the 'Monumenta Germaniae Historica,' and many more—owe much, some of them everything, to his initiating energy and organizing ability. Quite lately old age had threatened to touch him, and the illness of his wife made his days anxious. But his eye was not yet dim when the death that he had been dreading for another came suddenly to himself.'

His was a unique intellect, remarkable before all things for its combination of sensitive, excitable, imaginative humanity with accurate, methodical, unwearying precision. In him alone, since Gibbon, the creative and the critical elements fully met. The result was, in the first place, an astonishing intellectual vigour and an unparalleled output of work. Fifteen years ago his publications had reached 1,000 in number, and while some of these were little things, others were huge folios. But more, he could organize. He could conceive a great co-operative scheme combining many labourers in it, could inspire, drive, or coerce them to fulfil their tasks, and control the minutiae of the undertaking to a safe conclusion. Few scholars, I imagine, and, perhaps, not many business men, have shown such practical power and imperative force.

And in virtue of these qualities he has done a work which is difficult to realize for its very size. No one remembers what the condition of Roman history was before Mommsen. Outside the

merely elegant and agreeable study of poetical texts there is no section of Roman antiquities which he has not illumined or even transmuted. In particular, he has begun and well-nigh perfected the use of inscriptions as the basis for the true narrative of the Roman empire, showing alike how to collect them and how to understand the mass of collected detail. No less important is his work on Roman constitutional law. There were constitutional writers before him as there will be others after him. But the logic and legal intuition, the grasp and completeness, of his 'Staatsrecht,' mark a real epoch.

FACSIMILE OF SIGNATURE AND PORTION OF LETTER OF THE LATE PROFESSOR MOMMSEN.

By his death our society loses one of its oldest and most distinguished honorary members (elected in 1883). It was appropriate that he should be an honorary member of this and of other English archaeological societies. For he had a sincere regard for our country, and, though he did not admire all our statesmen (he disliked Gladstone and Chamberlain about equally), he desired amity between England and Germany, and had many English friends. He took a vivid interest, too, in our northern antiquities of Roman date. He recognized that our Wall and military inscriptions were most valuable evidences both for the history of the Roman army and for the history of the

imperial frontier defences. In particular he hoped that further comparison of our Wall and the German Limes would illuminate each work. 'Though you won't enter the Triple Alliance (and you are quite right), I hope, regarding the Walls, the two nations will combine their researches and every discovery made on either side of the sea will be an appeal to the other.' So he wrote to me some years ago, *à propos* of excavations on our Wall, and though the recent course of discovery has tended rather to reveal differences than similarities between the two frontiers, it has also shown that a knowledge of the one is a real help to a better understanding of the other.

## 2.—WILFRED JOSEPH CRIPPS, C.B., F.S.A.

BY T. M. FALLOW, F.S.A.

I have been asked to say a few words about my old and valued friend, Mr. Wilfred Cripps, author of 'Old English Plate,' the news of whose decease on October 26th came as a heavy and unexpected shock to his many friends.

Although Mr. Cripps was seriously ill three years ago, and had never recovered his former vigour, the end came with unlooked for suddenness. He had been confined to bed since September, but this was not widely known, and I was myself unaware of it. That there was any imminent danger was only made known to his fellow-townsmen at the evening service in Cirencester church on Sunday, October 25th, when prayers were offered on his behalf. He passed away at three o'clock on the following morning.

Mr. Wilfred Joseph Cripps, C.B., was the head of a very old Cirencester family, members of which began to take a prominent part in the affairs of the town in the reign of queen Elizabeth. As time went on, the family became more and more prosperous and wealthy.

Mr. Cripps's grand-father, Mr. Joseph Cripps, represented Cirencester in parliament from 1806 to 1841. On his death in the latter year he was succeeded in the representation of the borough by his eldest son, Mr. William Cripps, the father of the subject of this memoir. Mr. William Cripps was at one time a Peelite 'whip,' and