

These posts are usually assigned to the widows and orphans of railway servants, preference being always given to such applicants.

In many trades in England a woman must underbid the men to obtain employment, and by doing this she becomes the enemy of the male worker, who quite rightly refuses to work in company with those who depreciate the value of the work. But on the woman's side it must be remembered that could she get work at men's wages, she would gladly do so, and that she works for less than men do simply as an alternative to starvation. The policy of workingmen who refuse to admit women as co-operators is surely as shortsighted as it is cruel, not only because it forces them to undersell their labour, but because it opens to foreign men posts which might otherwise be filled by Englishwomen. It is surely better for the English workman that his competitors should be the women of his own household than foreigners who will work quite as cheaply and from whose employment he reaps no advantage. The influx of German commercial clerks, the employment of Belgian artisans, has already had an effect upon English wages, and as facilities increase for intercommunication it will become more and more impossible for the workmen of one country to sell their labour for a much higher price than that at which the labour of their neighbours can be bought.

BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON.*

THE frequent recurrence of new editions of old and already much-edited works is a sign of the undiminished literary activity of the present day. That a work may be edited once too often is none the less true, though this is not the case of Birkbeck Hill's wonderfully complete compilation, which will be eagerly welcomed by all students of Johnsoniana. There can be no doubt that the mere pleasure—a superficial one of course—of reading this marvellous book is a little marred by the copiousness of the footnotes, and the frequency with which the mind and attention of the reader are drawn off to examine it may be the history of a single phrase or the accuracy of a single date. But it is just this labyrinth of detail that has made the "Life of Johnson" what it is, probably the finest biography in all literature. We owe more to two mediocre, if not insignificant, writers like Samuel Pepys and James Boswell than we are half the time aware of. In both their books such pictures are sown broadcast of life and etiquette, manners and morals, religion and politics, as we should probably never have received from any other source, the vanities and faults of the writers themselves being clearly discernible all the while. Certain it is, that in this nineteenth century it is good to occasionally look back upon the strange life of that London world in the crooked, crabbed, partially unenlightened eighteenth, which produced such different characters as Newton and Jonathan Swift, Thomson and Tobias Smollett, Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson. The Grub Street hack, the Grub Street poet, the hanger-on at coffee houses and palaces, the ill-paid translator at work for ten hours a day in a sordid garret up four pair of stairs, the playwright pursued by bailiffs from attic to cellar, and from cellar to streets, and from streets to fields, the actor enjoying one day a comfortable, perhaps a luxurious, meal at the *Mitre*, the next sinking under an accumulation of horrible diseases in a neighbouring hospital—these were some of the companions that Johnson made his own after he first went up to London, and glimpses of these much-tried and suffering folk appear in Boswell's famous book. With regard to what Johnson has said and what he has written, no one—except Boswell—has ever claimed that he was infallible. He was a notoriously unfair critic, his "Lives of the Poets" being a most uneven and incomplete work, and his speeches often seem to fall very flat upon our modern ears. A concordance of his sayings arranged by Mr. Birkbeck Hill at the close of the "Life," contains all those that are worth anything, and a good many that are worth nothing at all; still, in so far as they serve to reveal the man, they are to be treasured. And that the very inmost nature of the man is so revealed we all know. There are seasons when it could be wished that it had been a greater than Johnson who was so carefully watched, written down and annotated by the fussy little disciple. To know about his cat, Hodge, and his negro servant, Francis Barber, his stores of orange-peel, his thirst for tea, his love of a good dinner, including a bottle of port, fish-sauce, and plums, his marks of king's evil, his portentous frown, his little shrivelled wig, too small for his head, his slovenly deportment, his childish credulity, his leanings to superstitious beliefs, his narrowness, his bigotry, his rough yet genuine goodness, his contempt for foreigners, his dislike of the country, his singular ignorance of many important phases of life and kinds of people,—is all doubtless of great interest and value, but we would give much to know all this about greater men, the Shakespeare or Voltaire of his century. Of the present editor it is clear that he brings to his work an enthusiasm equal to that of Boswell himself, and we may assume that some of this enthusiasm is as much for Boswell as for his great superior. Eighteen years ago, he tells us, he came across a second-hand copy of the "Life," in an old book-shop under the shadow of a great cathedral, and as time went on, and he became more familiar with the five entertaining volumes, having been called upon to review in some leading publications works that bore both upon Boswell and Johnson, he offered himself as editor of a new edition of the "Life" to a certain publisher who, fortunately for him, rejected his offer. Nevertheless, his resolve once taken never faltered, and in the midst of suffering and much ill-health the present edition has been compiled. Previous to the appearance of the "Life," Mr. Hill edited the curious and impudent correspond-

ence that existed between Boswell and the Hon. Andrew Erskine, and he had also written a "Life" of his uncle, Sir Rowland Hill, edited his "History of the Penny Postage," and prepared "Colonel Gordon in Central Africa."

It is but a compliment to Mr. Hill to observe that in his utter abnegation of self, in his grave enthusiasm, in his absolute devotion to his work, to his notes and revision of proof, he bears a strong resemblance to the incomparable Boswell himself. Among new matter in this most recent "Life," are found fifteen hitherto unpublished letters by Johnson, a college composition in Latin prose; several passages in his "Journey to the Western Islands," hitherto suppressed; letters from Boswell on the subject of foreign correspondence; and a record of a conversation with Johnson on Greek metres. Mr. Hill condemns part of Macaulay's celebrated essay on the "Life" as "wild and wanton rhetoric," a charge which is so commonly made against the brilliant historian that it will soon be in order for some one to bring out a new edition of the "Essays," and the "History of England," and look into the matter with that calm dispassionateness which a lapse of forty-five or fifty years must surely bring. Certain it is, that Macaulay's denunciation of Croker still holds good. Croker never would see how really great Boswell was in his small, but inimitably small way. He fussed and worried about some unimportant date or person which Boswell himself had let alone, and was always endeavouring to make out a case against the latter, and hoping to prove him a fool. As the great Doctor has himself remarked, the triumphs of one critic over another only fatigue and disgust the reader, and though Croker's edition may have had some good points, the faults Macaulay found with it are still there, the narratives frequently interrupted with unnecessary and misplaced interpolations, and many facts incorrectly stated. As if the reflections of Johnson were not enough, his biographer, the little Scotch advocate, was occasionally guilty of making many of his own, and was fond of dissertations on any subject that came along, from the slave-trade to surgery, and as if this were not enough, Croker filled up his already bristling pages with remarks of his own, comments chiefly upon the thoughts of the other two. Happily Mr. Birkbeck Hill has spared us this greatest infliction of all, and given us little of his own personality except in the preface, where his singular candour and earnestness proclaim him a heaven-born scholar, in truth a man of one idea. It will be well for readers, and readers only, of the "Life of Johnson," to confine themselves to pre-Crokerian editions, and to follow Johnson's own advice about Shakespeare. "Read every play," he says, "from the first scene to the last with utter negligence of all his commentators." But for students and scholars, the present handsome edition, enriched with *fac-simile* letters, documents, and notes, and containing excellent portraits of the ponderous Doctor, will be found intensely interesting and accurate, and very useful will be found an accompanying chart of Dr. Johnson's contemporaries drawn up on the model of a chart in Mr. Ruskin's "Ariadne Florentina."

Whatever may have been the faults of Johnson's nature, or the shortcomings of his scholarship, one thing is certain—that his mind was an unaffectedly English one. His sayings, which are couched in plainer Saxon than his writings, have a direct honest bluntness about them which proclaim a rugged but original and powerful English train of thought. The concordance of his sayings shows little trace of classic moulding or European gilding of those spontaneous observations which reveal the man and the philosopher. Great common sense, considerable insight into certain types and phases, and a freedom from affectation characterise these reflections, though there were times, no doubt, when he was known to take the trouble to translate some simple Saxon phrase into heavier Latin and speak *viva voce*, and there is little trace of influence either from at home or abroad upon his unique and powerful individuality. He seems to have been self-existent and self-sufficient, and obstinate and opinionated, as we know—but at all times a fascinating and typical specimen of the characters produced by the eighteenth century.

M. CHAUVEAU'S LIFE OF OZANAM.*

No student's bibliography of Dante and Dantesque literature is complete without the great work of Frédéric Ozanam on "Dante and the Catholic Philosophy in the Thirteenth Century." And whoever has learned to know and prize that masterpiece of criticism will be sure to seek a closer acquaintance with the mind that produced it. He will, indeed, be constrained by the character of that work itself and by the enlightened curiosity which its perusal must awake to consult the same oracle concerning the ages that preceded Dante's and their share in developing the movement of which Dante was the chief representative. For, though a poet or philosopher may be in advance of his time, he is also its offspring as it in turn is the offspring of what went before. No man is ever really born out of season, and Dante, like other men of genius, appeared on the world's stage just when the hour for his appearance was ripe. One of Ozanam's greatest services is his having verified the chain of literary and philosophical tradition and closed the seeming gap between ancient and modern culture. What the late D. G. Rossetti did for Dante's circle and immediate predecessors, M. Ozanam has accomplished, and much more thoroughly, for the Franciscan poets of Italy. But he did not stop there. He traced the great Florentine's inspiration back through successive cycles of civilisation to its very ultimate sources. No one has, moreover, brought out with greater lucidity the strength, moral and intellectual, of that Teutonic race which became so largely the heir of the Roman Empire

* *Boswell's Life of Johnson, including Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, and Johnson's Diary of a Journey into North Wales.* Edited by George Birkbeck Hill, D.C.L., Pembroke College, Oxford. In six volumes. Oxford: The Clarendon Press; New York: Macmillan and Company; Toronto: Williamson and Company.

* *Frédéric Ozanam: Sa Vie et Ses Œuvres.* Par M. Pierre Chauveau, Fils. Avec une introduction par M. Chauveau, Membre de la Société Royale du Canada. Montreal: C. O. Beauchemin et Fils.