

# Methodist Magazine and Review.

DECEMBER, 1902.

DR. JOHNSON ONCE MORE.

1709-1784.

BY PASTOR FELIX.



JOHNSON'S MONUMENT, LICHFIELD.

A RECENT number of *The Outlook* prints an address by the accomplished essayist, Augustine Birrell, delivered in the presence of the Johnson Club, at Lichfield, proposing the question—"Do we really know Dr. Johnson?" On the platform, with other members of the Club, was the venerable Dr. Birkbeck Hill, the peer of Johnsonian scholars.

The illustrations will engage the reader's attention. There is a rare engraving of Johnson, in his prime, showing his rugged, honest, powerful features, and his massive head in outline, without the traditional wig. There is the great moralist's birthplace, recently set apart as a

VOL. LVI. No. 6.

museum of relics; and there is the cathedral at Lichfield, where the wondering child listened to the periods of Sacheverel, Queen Anne's offending clergyman, with as much intelligence," Macaulay thinks, "as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation."

Surely his plain bluntness not even Carlyle could have surpassed, since we are told that at a later time he assured one of his townsmen, who had complimented what he thought a good sermon, "That may be so, sir, but it is impossible for you to know it." Then, there sits Dr. Birkbeck Hill, in arbour'd content; and there goes Ursa Major, feeling his way along Fleet Street. Again he is beheld, the pensive philosopher, seated in recumbent calm on his pedestal at Lichfield, as if "reveling the sad vicissitude of things."

Mr. Birrell is a trifle quizzical on our knowledge of the real Johnson, and suggests how remote may lie a biographer's impressions from the truth. But if we do not know the real Johnson, as we think we do, it may be prudent to question our knowledge of any other character who ever appeared on earth. In this age everything goes under the microscope; we cannot get along, to know anything, without our microscope. But we have the Boswell mammoth microscope, and several smaller ones; so—to affect words the lexicographer would