

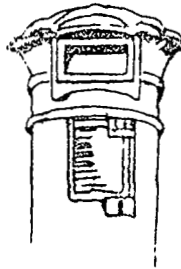
Of "Sterne," Mr. Birrell writes, that "he robbed other men's orchards with both hands; and yet, no more original writer than he ever went to press in these Isles." Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" and Rabelais were the orchards from which he stole the finest apples, yet who will dare to say that Tristram Shandy is not a unique creation, and will for ever rival even Pickwick as a book that has provoked our nation to more laughter than, perhaps, any other; albeit, that it is not, and never can be, a work that will be greatly appreciated by ladies. I should like this volume, by the clever author of "Obiter Dicta," for the Essay on Dr. Johnson, if for nothing else. Mr. Birrell suggests that it is a good thing now and then to get rid of "Boswell," in which I heartily agree, though it may be ungrateful of us. It is not a good thing to be ever looking at a great man's personality through a little man's eyes. Mr. Birrell has been at some pains to construct the "Noble Gospel according to Dr. Johnson" from the pages of his letters collected by Dr. Birkbeck Hill, and lately published by the Clarendon Press. This summary of a great man's faith and ideal of duty in this world is most interesting. Its simplicity and entire absence of humbug, united to its wit and unadulterated common-sense, make it profitable as well as entertaining reading. One question strikes me, as it always does when reading any of Dr. Johnson's writings. Why did this great and good man suffer from such a horrible fear of death?

I wish Mr. Birrell had written an essay entirely about Thomas de Quincey, instead of lumping him up with Alexander Knox, because the remark that it is a red-letter day in a young life, when the discovery is made that de Quincey wrote something else beside the "Confession of an Opium-eater," is so suggestive to our imaginations of how interesting it would be to read some printed appreciations of "The Twelve Cæsars," the "Essenes and Secret Societies," and divers others of those writings of Thomas de Quincey, which the present short paper tells us "will always be above criticism, and belong to the realm of rapture."

The Essay on "Hannah More" is exceedingly amusing, for it gives us such a quaint picture of the sententious, narrow-minded old dame. Yet I feel as if the criticism was not a fair one, for she must surely have possessed a small gift of humour, for when she was taken all over some great person's nursery and shown all the new educational books and appliances, she said, "I don't think, Madam, that your children require anything so much as a *little judicious letting alone*" (or words to that effect—the quotation may very possibly be inaccurate, as I have not the book to verify it.) I rather envy Mr. Birrell for acquiring Hannah More's works in nineteen volumes, neatly bound for 8/6; and after all his depreciation of her, he frankly owns that they were worth the money!

I do not care for the Essay on "Marie Bashkintseff." The biting criticism of the *Saturday Reviewer*, who baldly announced at the end of a paragraph, "We regret to hear that Miss Blind has translated the 'Memories of a Mongolian Minx,' summed up this famous autobiography far more pithily than Mr. Birrell does in several pages of analysis. The end of the little volume is filled up with Essays—on books and their bindings, authors and their critics, and sundry remarks upon "Parliamentary Candidates" and "Bonafide Travellers." None of the observations are very

profound, but they are exceedingly pleasant "Birrelling," and are eminently readable, which is more than can be said for eight-tenths of the books that are written, printed and published now-a-days.



Letters to the Editor.

(Notes, Queries, &c.)

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

WOMEN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—All true women must agree with the admirable remarks of Sir Dyce Duckworth as shewn in the extracts that appeared in your issue of the 27th. In this nineteenth century, when a portion of our sex are in eminent peril of losing much of their charm by an attempted rivalry of man, whose equals they can never become, it is well to sound a warning note. Those who know Sir Dyce can never doubt the just appreciation he has formed of all that concerns the best interests of woman, but his conclusions are too severely logical to find favour in the eyes of that strange paradox, the "emancipated female." In the present day, it is obvious that hundreds of women must fight the battle of life alone—must, in fact, be self-supporting; but is that any reason why woman should descend into the arena with man, and, leaving her own wide sphere of labour, engage in pursuits for which she is fitted neither by nature or custom. The result must inevitably end in failure, and cover with ridicule the ambitious usurper. It will ever remain a mystery why some women object so much to being considered of the weaker sex. Weakness does not necessarily imply inferiority; on the contrary, it is in a woman's weakness that her chief strength lies, and she rules, paradoxical as it may appear, because she has vowed "to obey." She was designed to be man's "help," not his rival; and it will be a bad day for her when she ceases to be the first and declares herself the latter. Of this I am very certain; no good and no sensible man would ever wish to tyrannize over a woman, and Sir Dyce Duckworth has only echoed the sentiments of the vast majority of reasonable people.—Yours, &c.,

MATRON.

NURSING EDUCATION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—Just now when so much is being said and done for Probationers, to ensure their training being as perfect as possible, both theoretically and practically, may I put in a plea for some of us older Nurses who have been through our training not so very long ago, without similar advantages of lectures and examinations.

The Hospital in London, where I received my training, had lectures, but, at that time, no examinations. They have both now. Subsequently I went for special training to a Children's Hospital in Edinburgh, where I had the privilege of attending the excellent lectures and examinations, held at the Royal Infirmary, during one year; but for that, I should have had no examinations at all. In a little Colonial Hospital like this, where, nevertheless, there is much re-

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