

THE CONSTANCE BARNICOAT PRIZE ESSAY.

By ARTHUR FAIR.

The following Essay won the Prize at the inaugural Competition held last December. It will be remembered that, in order to encourage the study of contemporary world-history, Miss Constance Barnicoat offers an Annual Prize of Three Pounds to the students of Nelson College over the age of fifteen for the best Essay on the man or woman who the writer thinks has made the best use of his or her life during the past year. By special request from Miss Barnicoat the Essay is published in this Magazine.

TO any person scanning the events of the year and judging the most important proposals on foot and their originators, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain would stand conspicuously apart from all other politicians by reason of his energy and enthusiasm. He has declared a policy which has stirred not only England and the British Empire, but also the whole world. The contrast, however, lies here. While his proposals are hailed with delight by all the colonies and by the majority of Englishmen, they are received with exceeding great bitterness by all the other great commercial states, such as Germany, the United States of America and Russia. In fact, there is no better testimony as to the efficiency of Mr. Chamberlain's proposals than the hatred and bitterness with which our rivals greet them. Most of them recognise that the adoption of preferential trade is justified, but all agree in declaring it prejudicial to their own welfare.

"From their deeds shall ye know them!" Yes! from the Colonial Secretary's deeds is he known, and for his deeds is he honoured. By all his works is he known to be a great politician. Sprung from the sturdy, industrious "middle-class," he is a descendant of a hard-working, independent line. Its priceless heritage of manliness and integrity, and also that firm self-reliance, without self-

conceit, which is, undoubtedly, so necessary to a statesman, have descended on him. Following out the traditions of his fathers he himself worked in his mills alongside the poorest artisan. He busied himself with their work and saw their life. This information being certain and reliable was invaluable to him in later years and served to give him that knowledge which is necessary to a proper treatment of workmen's difficulties.

Rising step by step, he became first Councillor, then Mayor of Birmingham. There his public spirit was so prominent that he was requested to stand for Parliament, and was elected member in 1876. He proved himself a zealous, painstaking and reliable member, and soon was elected leader of the Liberal Unionists' party in the House of Commons. In 1895 he accepted the post of Colonial Secretary much to the surprise of many of his supporters; for this post had been an unimportant one. But Mr. Chamberlain had reasons for accepting it as he told his constituents.

Hitherto, the position of Colonial Secretary had been anything but an important one. For a great number of the inhabitants of England were ignorant of the resources and extent of the colonies. Many imagined them to be still in a primitive state. None saw the vast possibilities that lay before them. They could not acknowledge their power