

LITERARY NOTES

LETTERS FROM INDIA.

SINCE the August of 1902, when Alfred William Stratton, one of Canada's most ardent and sincere scholars, passed away at Gulmarg, India, it has been felt by his friends and by those acquainted with his career that a volume permeated by his gentle and earnest personality should be given to the world. Therefore those who knew Mr. Stratton welcome with peculiar satisfaction the book, "Letters from India," by Alfred William Stratton, with a memoir by his wife, Anna Booth Stratton, and an introductory note by Professor Bloomfield. It is easy for the reader to find whose delicate and affectionate touch has arranged these fragments of a life's correspondence in order that the fine nature and arduous toil of the departed scholar might be revealed more intimately than by conventional chronicle.

Mr. Stratton was born in Toronto in that troubled year, 1866, a time and place justly referred to as not especially favourable to young students. Wellesley School and Jarvis Street Collegiate Institute proved only preparatory to a university course for the young lad who had, according to Mr. MacMurchy, the rector of the Collegiate, "taken to languages as a cat takes to milk." In 1887 he graduated from the University of Toronto with first-class honours in Classics, having already shown such an enthusiastic devotion to what many of his class considered the dreary details of Philology that his vocation was evident. Between taking his bachelor's degree and proceeding to his doctorate there was an interval of five years, during which Mr. Stratton taught in the Caledonia High School and later in the Hamilton Collegiate Institute.

During his undergraduate course Mr. Stratton had joined a Saturday class in Sanskrit which was organised by Professor McCurdy and met for only three months. In Hamilton, "he came under an influence which strongly biased his subsequent career. Once when one asked him what had originally attracted him towards Sanskrit, he named first in his answer the peculiar interest in things Eastern which had been excited in him by Mr. Henry Witton of Hamilton. Mr. Witton is one of those men—rarer in Canada than in England—who, between business hours, have found time for scholarly work. He is a self-taught Sanskritist, and has an enthusiastic interest in the many phases of Orientalism. His relations with Mr. Stratton came about through the son, Gay Witton, who had been a college class-mate of Stratton's. Through this intimacy the latter had access to the Witton library, and soon found that he had tastes in common with his friend's father. They eventually settled into one of those beautiful attachments which are of the eternal fields, 'where youth and age is not.'"

In 1892 Mr. Stratton went to Baltimore for post-graduate study at the Johns Hopkins University, where he remained for three years under the direction of Professor Gildersleeve in the Greek Department and Professor Bloomfield in that of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology. In his last year at Baltimore he was made Fellow in Sanskrit, Greek and English. In the spring of 1893, at the suggestion of Professor Bloomfield, he began to collect material for a complete history of Greek noun-formations. This laborious work was carried on during his last two years in Baltimore and was continued in Chicago.

In 1895 he went to the University of Chicago where he gave two courses

in Sanskrit and in 1898 was advanced to an Associate Professorship in the Department of Sanskrit and Indo-European Philology. In 1899 Mr. Stratton received the double appointment of Principal of the Oriental College in Lahore and Registrar of the Panjab University. It was a long road from the small school in Toronto to the university in the Orient and every step forward had been the result of laborious days. The life of the Canadian scholar in India was not to be long. Less than three years had passed when, after a severe attack of fever, one of the "old boys of Wellesley School" was laid to rest far from his childhood's home, in the cemetery of Gulmarg.

The letters in the present volume show how readily the young "Principal" had settled down in the life of Lahore. There can be little doubt that Mr. Stratton found the atmosphere of an Oriental college congenial and soothing, in a sense impossible in the cities of Western America. Yet there is a touch of *heimweh* in the questions: "Can you walk in the park now, or is winter lingering? Tell me about the waves breaking along the shore and the long line of spray."

The writer makes shrewd comments on the English attitude towards a foreign residence: "The English here (at Lahore) are surprisingly healthy but they earn their good health, riding a good deal, and playing tennis or badminton almost every day, both men and women. Some English women hate Lahore and all India. Away from their old friends, uninterested in the people about them (the 'natives' as they call them), separated from their children—no wonder they have little good to say of the place. . . And after all when they leave India it is said that they cannot cease praising it by way of contrast with England, and often show their real feelings by returning to spend their old age here."

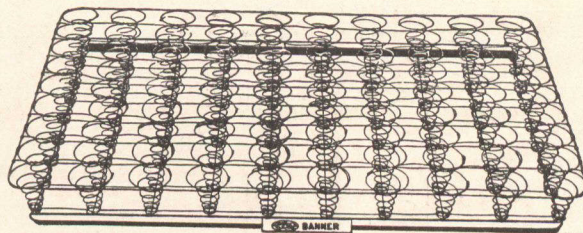
Many of the letters are addressed to A. B. S., Miss Anna Booth Simms whom Mr. Stratton had met at the University of Chicago and who became his wife on November 6th, 1900, the wedding taking place at the Free Church of Scotland, Bombay.

The letters descriptive of Kashmir are especially interesting, such a vignette as this being worthy of remembrance: "The great charm of Kashmir is the varied natural beauty of the valley; water everywhere, little stream or lake or river, green everywhere in grass and trees and waving corn and the rich-coloured rice-fields, and on all sides the mountains with a never-failing variety of green, brown, deep red, blue, and purple peaks, snow-capped, while the clouds gather round most of them."

The conclusion of the preface is in the reader's thought as the volume closes: "Slight, alas! too slight and fragmentary, they yet hold something imperishably his—something of his bright spirit, his sweetness of temper, his singular simplicity, and something of that devotion to science which cost him an early grave in a far country." Toronto: William Tyrrell and Company.

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THE present disturbances in India will render unusually significant an article, *India's Coming Greatness from a Constructive View-point*, which recently appeared in the *Arena*. The writer, Mr. Saint Nihal Sing, visited Canada last year and contributed to several Canadian publications. Naturally Mr. Sing takes the side in favour of that National Congress, discussed so poignantly by Mr. Kipling in *The Enlightenment of Pagett, M.P.*



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