

LITERARY NOTES

LETTERS FROM INDIA.

DURING last summer there was issued a book, "Letters from India, by Alfred Wm. Stratton," which appealed to all who had known the writer, one of Canada's most scholarly sons, whose life labours ended in India in 1902. This journal published last summer a review of the work, but the meeting in Canada this week of the American Philological Association renders appropriate the following tribute from a Toronto professor to the peculiar gifts of Alfred William Stratton:

Few books of Canadian origin lay such claim to our notice as this. If, like the Hon. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, we would "think imperially" to read the title is enough to lead us farther. If we follow the advice given by Mr. Carnegie to the Canadian Club of Toronto, "to think racially," then these letters from a Canadian professor who taught Indian pundits Sanskrit, are bound to attract our attention. Or if, like the late laureate, we believe, "that man's the best cosmopolite who loves his native country best," then we must be keenly interested in the life of Alfred William Stratton, the Toronto boy who became principal in the Oriental College of Lahore, in the North-Western Province of India.

To take the last point first, this book is both a reminder and a revelation. It reminds us again of the remarkable record recently made by Canada in the domain of scholarship. We find, as we read, that A. W. Stratton was the classmate and intimate friend of Professor F. H. Sykes, the head of the English Department in the Teachers' College of Columbia University, New York. He was also, when teaching at Hamilton, the colleague of Professor W. H. Schofield, the Dean of the Faculty of Comparative literature in Harvard University, who won first laurels as the representative of that institution in Berlin last winter. Not less brilliant, while it lasted, was the career of young Stratton, as it is detailed for us in the biography which is so skilfully interwoven with the letters in this volume. We follow him from the Wellesley Public School through Jarvis Street Collegiate Institute to University College, where he began the study of Sanskrit in Dr. McCurdy's class in 1886, the only one that ever met in the University of Toronto up to the present year.

The book, we have said, is a revelation. It reveals in the writer of the letters a character which unites in a rare manner the qualities of sweetness and light. Everywhere he went he made new friends, and he never lost an old one. After leaving the university with a high reputation as a classical scholar of unusually wide reading, he taught in Hamilton, and there fell under the influence of Mr. Henry Witton, a self-taught Sanskritist, with whom he read a great part of the *Hito-padesa* — the Aesop's Fables of India. It was the natural result of the bent thus acquired that he devoted himself with especial zeal to the study of Sanskrit when pursuing a post-graduate course at Johns Hopkins University, in 1892-95. While there he assisted Professor Bloomfield with his Sanskrit classes, and afterwards became Docent in Sanskrit in the University of Chicago. Yet, with all this preparation, it was a great surprise to him when he heard that he had been recommended by Professor Bloomfield for the double position of Registrar of the Punjab University and Principal of the Oriental College at Lahore.

The success of his work during the

three years that were left to him justified his choice. It is as the record of these years that the letters have been published, and at a time when Indian affairs are in so critical a condition this view of the country by one so well fitted to discover the feelings of "the native born," has a very special interest. His birth as a Canadian, his training in the old classic language of India, which he learned so thoroughly that during two years he lectured in Sanskrit to his Indian pupils, his exceptional opportunity of dealing with all manner of representatives of the native races, who flock to "the only university in India which, recognising the traditional lines of study in India, seeks to raise the standard," his rare personal charm and sympathy—all these factors combine to make his utterances on Indian affairs very valuable.

To him who thinks imperially, these letters will have the greatest interest, both as descriptive of life in India and as giving an example of the way in which the colonial administrator of scholarly training can take up the task of the learned German and pursue it with success. This last phrase must be qualified. Dr. Stratton's success was but temporary. One sees too clearly that the strain of working as the Registrar of a university larger than that of Toronto and Principal of a college larger than University College and professor of the most difficult of all the ancient languages, was too great for even his tireless energy and brilliant intellectual ability. In the holiday season of his third summer he fell a prey to the low Indian fever, and in spite of the most faithful nursing, his strength failed him, and he died on the 23rd of August, 1902, in Gulnarg, "the meadow of roses," in the vale of Cashmir. His Indian pupils called him "Devata," the saint. It is by such men's work that the true empire over India will be won. Every Imperialist should carefully read this book.

D. R. K.

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AN IRISH NOVEL.

THE announcement by Mr. Stanley Weyman that "The Wild Geese" is to be his last novel will be received with protest by all who care for real romance.

This latest romance, "The Wild Geese," concerns itself with Ireland in the early years of the reign of George I. and introduces the reader to a Kerry district, as picturesque as it is turbulent. Colonel John Sullivan, the hero, is an Irishman who has been abroad for many years in varied service and who has finally come to hold Quaker-like ideas on the subject of war. One entirely agrees with Captain Augustin who wonders what such a man will be doing in Kerry, "what with Sullivans, and Mahonies, and O'Beirnes, that wear coats only for a gentleman to tread upon." Colonel Sullivan, indeed, has a stern task ahead of him but finally holds that windswept corner of Kerry with a firm hand. The girl who flouts and hates him is as high-spirited an Irish girl as ever danced in Kerry and, of course, the hatred turns to the opposite passion in the end.

The story is told with all the vigour and distinction which made the author's early narratives of France so inspiring. There is a sympathetic and yet judicial attitude towards Ireland and her wrongs which represents the best historic temper. The melancholy beauty of the wild land and the tragedy of her anarchy are depicted by a master of romance. (Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company.)

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