

BOOK OF THE MONTH.

TALES OF TIRAH AND LESSER TIBET.*

The heroic deed of Mrs. Starr in rescuing Mollie Ellis from the brigands is world-wide knowledge. The fact that Mrs. Starr is a member of the nursing profession is the proud boast of her professional colleagues.

It is, therefore, quite unhesitatingly that we suggest to our readers that the book under review this month is of unique interest to them.

The "Foreword," by Lord Rawlinson, intimates that money accruing from the sale of the book is to be devoted to the Peshawar Mission Hospital, to which the author is attached, thus giving an added stimulus to its acquisition.

Lilian was the daughter of Mr. Russell Wade, whose life work was in Peshawar, and her mother was a missionary of the Zenana Medical Missionary Society. She was born in the hill-station of Dalhousie, and shared with her sister the careful home-training of an English governess. At the age of eighteen, on her return to India after an absence in England, she for the first time watched the people, and felt their needs. A vocation for nursing quickened in her, and she wished to prepare herself by a thorough training for the work of a missionary sister, which she received for the most part at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

At the Hospital at Peshawar she first met Dr. Vernon Harold Starr, whom she subsequently married, and who in less than two years was brutally murdered before her eyes. The murder was from motives of revenge, but Lilian Starr, after an interval, again took up work at the Hospital where her husband had laid down his life, and "by the daily work of serving with skilled and gentle hands the wild, untamed folk of the turbulent frontier tribes, showed them in the quiet courage and mercy of the hospital wards a more excellent way."

Mrs. Starr tells the reader that she has no desire to write her doings, and says the book has no pretensions to be more than a diary.

Revenge for wrongs, real or imaginary, is, she tells, the highest ideal of an Afridi, and she gives some striking illustrations among her patients of the depth and length of this passion.

An old man with white hair and beard, and eyes filmy with cataract. He came into the out-patients' hall, and when his turn came to see the doctor he said: "I am old, but give me sight that I may use a gun again." To the doctor's query he replied in quite a placid manner: "I have not taken exchange (revenge) for my son's death sixteen years ago."

*(Hodder & Stoughton.)

She goes on to describe the condition of a fifteen-year-old girl brought to the hospital shot from the same motive.

"Her condition baffled description. She had been shot through the shoulder and arm; over the wound had been firmly tied a cock cut in half, feathers and all, and over the body of the girl had been tightly drawn the skin of a goat killed and flayed for the purpose, raw and evil smelling, and making the wound so thoroughly septic that had she been other than an Afridi she must have died.

"It is the feud system that brings in additional work to Government and mission hospitals alike, which are seldom without bullet-wound cases from across the border."

Some are grateful cases, says Mrs. Starr.

"I have known a rough, burly Pathan taking his small son out of hospital say, 'I will see we do not fight you English any more.'"

The trek into Lesser Tibet from Peshawar to Leh, its capital, and the description of the scenery, peoples, and their habits and customs, carries one right away from Tirah, that strip of land between the North-West Frontier of British India and Afghanistan, to a land lying to the north-east of our Indian Empire, between Kashmir and the great ranges of the Himalayas, and the greater Tibet still farther beyond forming the very heart of Asia. The description of this wonder journey, requiring untiring energy, is full of exquisite pictures, which make one long to pass beyond modern civilisation, over Passes 13,000 feet high, and see the splendours and desolate places of the earth.

Surely it was worth the discomforts just to see the flowers.

"The sides of the grass slopes were full of early summer flowers, changing as we went. Above Batal, wild wallflower, blue forget-me-not, wild rose, then the deep purple orchid, the anemone, single, or the tall bunch Japanese anemone

nearer the snow-line. The peaks beyond were glistening and beautiful in fresh snow. Beyond the tree level, nothing to be seen but rock peaks, snow patches, grass slopes, and the flowers. Alpine flowers, which spring with the melting of the snow. A blue sheen of forget-me-nots gave colour—sky-blue—to the valley slopes."

Fascinating and seductive as are these pictures of other lands, we must reserve space to quote from what we suspect will be the chief point of interest to our readers—the rescue of Miss Ellis.

Mrs. Starr was busy with the usual hospital routine, when a letter was handed to her from the Chief Commissioner asking her to go up to Government House in the motor that was waiting.

"It was four days since the awful tragedy at Kohat (the murder of Mrs. Ellis), and during those days forty-four



LILIAN A. STARR
of Peshawar

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