

ORIENTAL DEPARTMENT.

AMERICAN SECTION T. S.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE, 144 MADISON AVE.

NEW YORK, *November 28th, 1893.*

To the Members of the T. S.:

I have at last been able to secure, with the advice and consent of the Executive Committee, the services of a competent Sanscrit scholar in Europe, who is at the same time a devoted member of the Society, for this Department, and desire to notify you of it as also to outline to you the plan for carrying on the Department. The name of this person will not be given out for the present by his own request until later when the work has proceeded to some extent. Of his qualifications there is no doubt, as he has had experience in this field, has also for some time been teaching Sanscrit, and brings to the work a sincere sympathy with Indian thought as well as devotion to the Society which will without question make the matter furnished of value as well as interest. The plan is this:

Readers are not familiar with the books of the East. They should have (*a*) a sound course of the twelve great *Upanishads* until they grow thoroughly familiar with them. Two versions are already out, but the *Upanishads* have never yet been translated in the light of Theosophy. The *Prasna Upanishad* will probably be translated first, so that the translation, while preserving the spirit of the text, will be thoroughly sound and readable English. After each instalment of the text a commentary will be given of sound literary form, combining the Indian tradition of Shankaracharya's commentary with Theosophy, thus letting the two illumine each other. (*b*) The Laws of Manu will be taken up, and also Shankaracharya's great books, whether already translated or not. The Oriental ideal is that the student should know the book by heart; the western is, "Oh I read that before". The readers should know the ideas by heart, not the words: this is the medium course. (*c*) Buddhism will be taken up. Many of the best Pali books are still untranslated; and the Sanscrit books of Nepal on Northern Buddhism, such as Tathagata Guhyakam or Buddha's Secret Teaching can be dealt with. With proper treatment these would be invaluable. Other Eastern religions would follow in due course. (*d*) To give life and actuality to the East some modern work would be used. (*e*) Possibly a fifth element in a series called, "Friends of the East", men not Theosophists who have given up their lives to Oriental research, with a portrait. This would give personal interest and not put the Eastern notion in the background.

All this of course takes time and much labor. I am authorized to spend something on the plan, but our funds at one dollar a year from each member will not permit adequate compensation for the work of the pundit. Indeed all that is done for members by this office is worth more than is paid by them and costs more. Hence if this plan finds favor and if the issues so far of the Department only in the light of a promise have been of service, it is for the members to show whether we will in the future be able to carry on this department in a systematic and proper manner. We cannot raise the rate of dues, as that would exclude many worthy persons. But no member is prevented from paying more per year if his or her means permit, and it is true that many belong to other bodies for various purposes wherein the yearly dues are much higher.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE,
General Secretary.