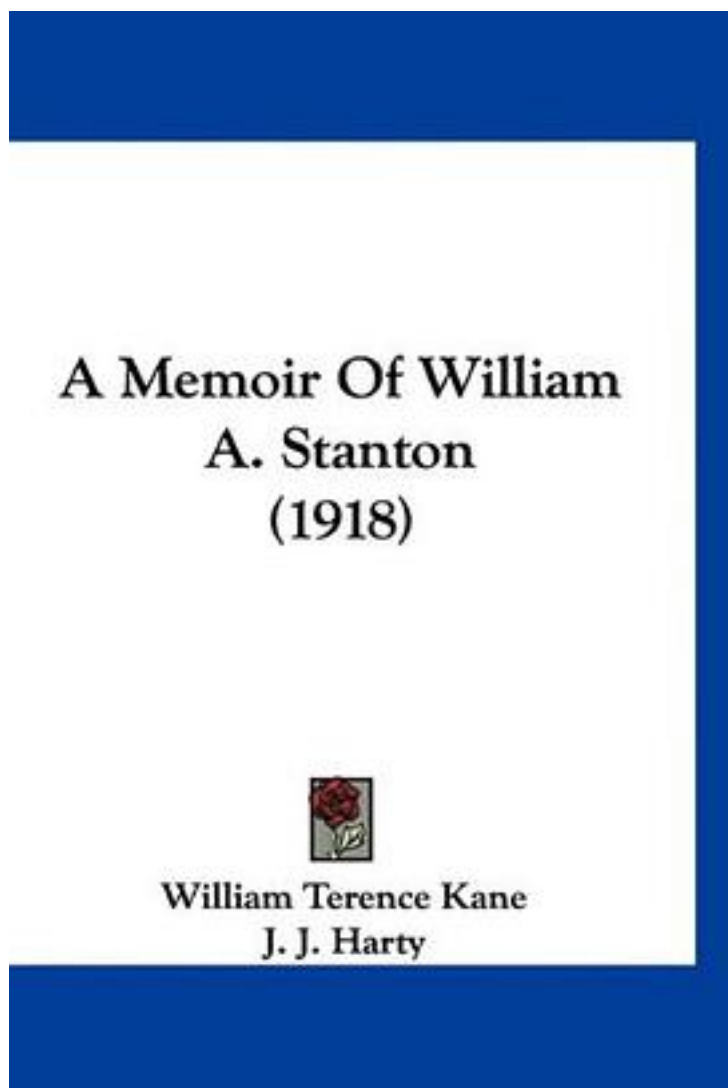


A Memoir Of William A. Stanton (1918)



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We come now to speak of Stanton's vocation to the Society of Jesus and of the beginnings of his life in that Society. His vocation is of a sort that is really astonishing, though by no means uncommon. The boy simply thought all along, from an early day which even he himself could not mark, that he was to be a Jesuit. If you had put him to it, with his back to the wall, he would have admitted it at any time from his thirteenth or fourteenth year. But he never said much about it. It was one of those fixed things, to be tucked away in a corner of the soul, sacred from prying eyes, not even to be much discussed or reflected on by its owner: but which you knew always was there, almost as a part of yourself. That sort of vocation is, I say, astonishing. God's finger is most appreciably in it. It is an interior grace so strong and clear as to leave no room for doubts in the mind of him who has it. It seems due to no external circumstance, to owe little or nothing directly to suggestion or even to training. It comes into the soul, one knows not just when, like a gentle breath of air, without violence, without noise, without apparent effort: and once in, it enters almost into the very substance of a man, and will urge him even when he kicks against the goad. Yet because of its nature we can say little of it beyond a brief chronicling of the fact, and the remark that, with all its awesome strangeness, it is wonderfully common as a type of vocation. Those who have experienced its like will recognize it even in these halting words: those who have not, might find it incomprehensible after a folio volume upon it. Though there was little talk at home of Stanton's vocation, it was an accepted fact, and to the quiet, sweet-tempered mother a cause of private joy. Her health, for years frail, was failing mo...

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