

ARTICLE III.

CHINESE BIBLIOGRAPHY.

BY D. J. MACGOWAN, M.D., NINGPO.

Letter to the Secretary, read before the Society March 16th, 1858.

DEAR SIR: I beg to express my thanks for the honor that the Literary and Scientific Society of Shanghai has conferred upon me in placing my name on its list of Corresponding Members. It shall be my aim to discharge the duties which that relation imposes; and I avail myself of this occasion to beg your acceptance of the accompanying works, viz: The 玉山縣志, *Yuh-shan Hien Chi*, Miscellany of the Yuhshan District in Kiangsi; and the 天一閣碑目, *Tien yih Koh Pei muh*, being a Catalogue of the Library of the Fan family in the city of Ningpo.

I perceive that you contemplate the formation of a Library and Museum. Perhaps I cannot now better serve the Society than by calling attention to the vast importance of a good collection of Chinese books. In no way can foreign residents in China do more to command the respect of those who mould the public opinion of this empire, a large body of educated men, than by founding a Chinese Library.

Permit me to commend, as worthy of special regard, that class of works styled 志, *Chi*, of which I send a specimen. These works have hitherto attracted little attention, yet are they of infinite value to almost every class of inquirers. They have been designated Topographies by some, Statistical works by others; the term Miscellany, perhaps, best expresses their comprehensive character. They may be consulted for facts relating to Topography, History, Archæology, Biography, Statistics, Natural History, Religion, Literature, Manners and Customs, and, in fine, on questions bearing in any manner on the localities which they describe. Ancient as well as modern editions should be sought for. Let efforts be made to secure a complete collection of these works—those of every province, department, and district, as well

as those of more &c. With the assistance of a better collection found in this empire, libraries known to contain such works.

The Miscellany of a library of seven volumes cannot number in pamphlet form in the various departments of those of districts and for the same circumstances.

Again, native Natural History, an important department, requires attention.

A reference to some considerable portion of the literature of the country may be made after their large proportions suffered to die as in Hangchau Miscellany beginning with the latter half of the last century and twenty-nine years ago Ningpo, who has eight hundred are not much greater. It may be taken as the measure of the capital, I must have seen the Miscellany, often of District Miscellany of which survived.

The coterminous mortality in those of the capital Hangchau

as those of more limited places—of lakes, mountains, temples, &c. With the assistance of students in Chinese, you may soon obtain a better collection of the *Chí*, or Miscellanies, than is to be found in this empire; for an examination of the catalogues of the libraries known to exist in this country, shows a great paucity of such works.

The Miscellany of this province, Cheh-kiang, would itself make a library of seven hundred volumes. The *Chí* of the whole empire cannot number much less than ten thousand volumes, of the pamphlet form into which Chinese books are divided. Miscellanies of departments are of more value than those of provinces, as those of districts are more valuable than the departmental ones, and for the same reason, namely, their greater fullness and circumstantiality.

Again, native libraries seldom contain works on Medicine, Natural History, the Arts, and the like; so that these several important departments of bibliography must also demand your attention.

A reference to the Miscellany of any place of note will show to some considerable extent, what contributions its scholars have made to the literature of their country; and if at the same time inquiries be made after their productions, it will be seen that wonderfully large proportions are irrecoverably lost. In no land are books suffered to die as willingly as in China. Take, for example, the Hangchau Miscellany. The list of books by authors of that city, beginning with the latter half of the fifth century and extending to the latter half of the eighteenth, shows two thousand four hundred and twenty-nine works: of these, the principal bookseller of Ningpo, who has agencies in various cities, says that only about eight hundred are procurable, and of those extant the number is not much greater. Lest that list, the Hangchau Miscellany, should be taken as the measure of the literary activity of that provincial capital, I must here remark that a *Fu Chí*, or Departmental Miscellany, often omits works which are inserted in the *Hien Chí*, or District Miscellany, while this last only gives those the names of which survived when the Miscellany was compiled.

The coterminous department of Kiahing gives 570, and the ancient department of Shauling, on its south, gives 1991. The mortality in those two departments exceeds that of the provincial capital Hangchau.

A further evidence of the mortality of books in China, is afforded by the unavailing efforts that have been made, at the instigation of Prof. Julien, to discover works that have been written on the countries north and west of China, between the 9th and 18th centuries.—Vid. Chinese Repository, vol. XVII. p. 575.

These losses have been the greater owing to the want of libraries. A Public Library, as we understand the term, can hardly be said to exist in China; and private libraries are guarded with so much jealousy that they are of little use, even to their possessors; while the few collections that belong to government are so difficult of access as to be of no value. Of the collections which exist, there are but a few that can be called ancient. The impoverishment of families, civil wars and dynastic revolutions, have been very fatal to libraries in this country.

One of the most celebrated private libraries in the empire is that of the Fan family, whose catalogue is herewith transmitted, as specified above; it is often referred to in the 四庫館提要書目, *Sze Ku kwan Ti yau Shu nuh*, of the Emperor Kienlung. The dwelling of that family is in the southern part of this city. The Gallery, or Library, is in the midst of their garden, which is beautifully diversified by grove and grotto, miniature mountain, glen and lake, such as Chinamen of wealth and taste delight in. The library was commenced by the Yung family, among whom were numbers of scholars and statesmen. On their decay the rising Fans purchased it; one of whom, a provincial treasurer, was given to bibliolatry. Thus it happened that when Kienlung, in 1774, undertook to enlarge the imperial library, the Fans were able to render him signal assistance. The particulars of this remarkable undertaking are recorded in a succession of documents forming part of the Preface of the Catalogue.

That enlightened monarch issued a proclamation requesting copies of all books not already existing in the Imperial Library, catalogues of which were extensively distributed. The books were to be sent to the provincial governors. Such works as were sent on loan were to be returned to the owners. Rewards were to be bestowed on persons who distinguished themselves by sending large numbers of rare books. So little success attended the attempt, that in the following year another proclamation was issued, calling the attention of booksellers to the subject, and

directing them to send them to the imperial library.

Four families of no less than three of whom belong to the Fans of Ningpo, who were rewarded by the literary monarch. The Catalogue of the 古今圖書集成 Complete Collection of Ancient and Modern Books presented or sent up to the emperor as gifts of the *Pei-wan* were thus rewarded, the others to the Che

The Catalogue of the works, comprising 53 volumes, can be inferred from the member of the clan who can be opened only by the emperor. The large private libraries are opened only once a year, at the close of the year, in any regard for books of the provincial candidate of the district candidate induced to open the library. On that occasion they are examined about which there are sheets are said to be the thing which foreigners have merited; but a scarce showed the sheets to whom they were engaged Kalmucks in 1756.

There is another library that of the Loo family, but at the same time a copy of the Complete Collection purchased at Peking

On two visits which I made to the chau, I took a look at

directing them to search for and purchase suitable books for the imperial library.

Four families of note distinguished themselves in this enterprize, three of whom belonged to this province, the foremost being the Fans of Ningpo, who sent up 696 works not possessed by the literary monarch. To each of these the emperor presented a copy of the 古今圖書集成 *Ku kin Tu Shu Tsih ching*, Complete Collection of Ancient and Modern Books. Persons who presented or sent up a hundred, and upwards, were rewarded by gifts of the *Pei-wan Yuen-fu*, or Great Thesaurus. Five officers were thus rewarded, two of whom belonged to Suchau in Kiangsu, the others to Chehkiang.

The Catalogue of the Fan library contains the names of 4,094 works, comprising 53,799 kiuen. The inutility of this library may be inferred from the jealousy with which it is guarded. Each member of the clan keeps a key to his own lock, so that the place can be opened only by consent of all, and the rule is that it shall be opened only in presence of all. This is a rule that obtains in large private libraries generally. The rooms are opened but once a year, at the close of the damp season, when those who have any regard for books expose them to the sun. One of the duties of the provincial chancellor, when he visits Ningpo to examine the district candidates, is to inspect this library. The family was induced to open the building by Sir J. Bowring, a few years ago. On that occasion they displayed with much pride some engravings about which there are various exaggerated rumors. Those prized sheets are said to be masterpieces of Chinese art, equalling anything which foreigners exhibit. The praise was not wholly unmerited; but a scarcely perceptible inscription, in one corner, showed the sheets to be a gift from Louis XVI. to Kienlung, for whom they were engraved to illustrate the campaign against the Kalmucks in 1756.

There is another library, smaller and also private, in this city, that of the Loo family. It is guarded with the same jealousy, but at the same time is greatly neglected, and is said to possess a copy of the Complete Collection of Ancient and Modern Books, purchased at Peking.

On two visits which I paid to the provincial capital, Hangchau, I took a look at the *Wan-lau Koh*, or Library in the Palace

of Kienlung. It contains all the works named in the accompanying catalogue and many more besides. That library was designed for use and for the public. Indeed it is accessible to those who apply for the privilege to the local authorities. Facilities are afforded by which the student may procure lodging and food at the establishment, but from some cause or other the library is rarely or never consulted.

Having named the *Kú hin Tu Shú Tsih ching*, Complete Collection of Ancient and Modern Books, it may be proper to call attention to it, as it may be new to some whom I address. It is a library in itself. It was projected by one of the most enlightened rulers of his age. Completed just at the close of Kanghi's reign, it was not presented for imperial approbation until Yungching ascended the throne. The undertaking is without a parallel in the history of literature. It was printed with a font of moveable copper types prepared on purpose. The ten thousand *kiuen* of which it is composed, are usually bound into 5,000 volumes, exclusive of one hundred and eight volumes of indices. The whole Complete Collection is about equal to eight hundred New Testaments.

This Great Collection is divided into six general Departments or *Pien*, comprising works on Astronomy, Geography, Society, Science, Classical Literature and Government. The Scientific department probably contains a larger proportion of otherwise inaccessible information than any of the other grand divisions. It is subdivided into works on the Arts, 824 *kiuen*; Animated nature, 192 *kiuen*; and Botany, 320 *kiuen*; works on the Arts of Music, 136 *kiuen*; and War, 300 *kiuen*. The subdivisions of the Geographical department, including as it does works on foreign countries known to the Chinese, must be of great value.

The *Bibliothèque Impériale* at Paris is so fortunate as to possess some important portions of this magnificent work, respecting which Julien has said, that for "elegance of form and beauty of impression, it rivals the finest works published in Europe." It is also a rare work, as the entire font consisting of two hundred and thirty thousand types was melted after only about thirty impressions were struck off. A portion, consisting of eight-tenths of the whole, was lately brought to this city from Hwuichau by an impoverished family and sold for about four thousand dollars to an officer from Kweichau.

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To the Rev. J. EDK
Secretary of
Literary a

It is impossible perhaps to obtain a complete set at any price. That however need not be deplored, as with some exceptions the Collection is continued in the 聚珍板 *Chü Tsun Pan*, Pearl Type Collection, also printed at the imperial office, but with earthen or wooden types, while the wanting portion and more is contained in the 文苑英華 *Wan yuen Ying hwa*, 冊府元龜 *Tsah foo Yuen kwei*, and the 太平御覽 *Tai ping Yü lan*, the whole of which can be purchased for a few hundred dollars.

With our mercantile fellow-countrymen for patrons you may soon be able to lay broad the foundations of your Library by procuring this valuable Collection of ancient and modern authors and a set of the above named Topographical Miscellanies, forming in themselves a library of no small worth. As in our native lands we are accustomed to see munificent donations and bequests made to Institutions of Learning, so we may expect, when the claims of your Library and Museum are fairly exhibited, to see the liberal affluent availing themselves on quitting China of this channel to leave marks of their denizenship, which shall contribute to the enlightenment of this land and to the honor of that to which they belong, aiding at the same time in the diffusion of knowledge among mankind generally.

By such a Library and a Museum, exhibiting the natural productions of this empire, you may expect to see men from the mountains of Yunnan and the deserts of Kansuh repairing to you for information on the land of their birth, rendering Shanghai as much an object of interest to the native scholar as it already is to the merchant.

Your corresponding members, enjoying as they do the honors and some of the privileges of your Society without cost, will I hope consider it a privilege to promote the undertaking to which I have ventured to call attention.

Yours respectfully,

D. J. MACGOWAN.

To the Rev. J. EDKINS,
*Secretary of the Shanghai
Literary and Scientific Society.*

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