# NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS

## AND LITERARY INTELLIGENCE.

*Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan.* Vol. XV. Part I. Yokohama, June, 1887.

There are quite a number of interesting articles in this issue of the Japan Asiatic Society's Journal, some dealing with purely Japanese subjects and others with the relations of Japan with kindred nations and languages. To begin with the purely Japanese subjects, there is an article by Mr. B. H. Chamberlain on the house signs, Yajiruschi, of Japan, which appear to be formed partly by symbols borrowed from the Kana syllabaries, partly by the introduction of well-known Chinese characters, whilst the remainder consists of rude pictorial symbols invented for the occasion and freely developed by the popular mind. Mr. Chamberlain points out several curious points connected with this subject, as for instance the fact, evident from the circular shape given to the symbol for stars, that the Japanese mind is more especially struck by the star's round shape and not, as we would expect, by its twinkling rays. Again, it is very remarkable that the Japanese, whilst on other occasions habitually using the Chinese character for 'mountain,' should, for the purpose of house signs, invent a new symbol for the same. It is, further, very puzzling that the number 'four' should not appear in any house sign, when the other numbers are all commonly met with.

Under the heading 'the Gakushikain' 學士會院 Mr. W. Dening gives an account of the Japanese Education Society, established in 1878, a list of the papers published from time to time in the Journal of that Society, and an abstract of an essay by Shigeno An-eki. This essay of a Japanese independent thinker is specially noteworthy, as exhibiting the influence which a European education exercises upon a mind trained in Asiatic modes of thought. Mr. Shigeno An-eki deals here with the subjects of abdication, as practised in Japan since A.D. 644, in the case of emperors and nobles, and with the popular practice of primogeniture and adoption. He shows historically that abdication, whether based on voluntary preference for monastic life, or compulsory, has been productive in Japan of many manifest evils. With the other two subjects he deals not historically but argumentatively and with refreshing independence of thought, such as we have never observed yet in Chinese writers on similar subjects. With regard to the plea that adoption is necessary to ensure the perpetuity of the ancestral sacrifices, he pertinently argues that 'the gods receive no alien,' and the hollowness of the other argument, in favour of adoption, viz. that it is conducive to keeping property in the family, he exposes in these words, 'to boast about property remaining in the same family under such circumstances, is like a man boasting that his name is affixed to a bond which has become the property of another man.' Mr. Shigeno An-eki holds evidently advanced views on sociology. 'View-

ed rationally,' he says,' the extinction of certain families is no subject for regret, for the fall of some houses involves the rise of others.' The same opposition to legal fiction and the same preparedness to let things take their natural course, he brings to the consideration of primogeniture, with reference to which he has the boldness to say that it is calculated to do more harm than good, because 'it puts an unnatural limit to things which ought to be bounded only by those events and circumstances over which we have no control.' The perpetuity of people's houses, he says, must be made to depend on their own individual efforts and virtues.' Considering that Europe even is not yet ripe for such advanced views, we fear that Shigeno An-eki finds few sympathisers in Japan with such revolutionary ideas. But the ferment of old and new thoughts which characterizes intellectual life of modern Japan is evidently well exemplified in the publications of this Japanese Education Society.

Mr. Chamberlain contributes a specimen of a short Aino recitation on the subject of a bear hunt, and Mr. Bonar gives a few brief notes on the history of commercial ship and boat building in Japan, illustrated by numerous rough sketches of the various classes of boats in common use.

As to the ethnological and philological relations of Japan with neighbouring countries, Mr. Parker and Dr. Edkins contribute to this number several articles on subjects frequently dealt with in the pages of the *China Review*. It must suffice here to note but one or two points referred to in those articles. Mr. Parker details some of the marks by which modern Japanese words may be traced back to pre-historic Chinese, i.e. previous to B.C. 800, and thinks he can prove, almost beyond doubt, that a great part of the modern Japanese language may be traced back to a language common with that language from which the modern dialects of China have all been derived. He also endeavours to show that, before any Chinese elements were imported into the Japanese language, directly and indirectly through Corea, say before A.D. 1, the Japanese spoke a language, the great majority of words in which came from the same language stock as Chinese.

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*Journal of the Peking Oriental Society*, Vol. I, No. 4. Peking, Pei-t'ang Press, 1886.

This comparatively new Journal continues to give pleasant and interesting contributions to our general knowledge of Chinese subjects. In an article headed 'Modern theatricals in Turkey,' an anonymous diplomat contributes some personal reminiscences of an effort made by an intellectual Turkish Pasha, some years ago, to introduce to popular notice in Constantinople Turkish translations of French dramas and independent imitations of French comedies. In giving these pleasantly written reminiscences, the author of the article makes a few brief allusions to the Chinese theatre and indirectly points out the absence of any influence exercised thereon as yet by Shakspeare's classical dramas. We shall not be surprised if this article induces some of our Peking Sinologues to seek to bring before the Chinese public some translations or adaptations of Shakespeare's best works. In an article on the 'local value in Chinese arithmetical notation,' Dr. Edkins labours hard to prove, in spite of the most signal divergences which he honestly admits, the identity of the Babylonian and Chinese arithmetical notation. The odds are here very much against Dr. Edkins' enthusiastic determination to prove everything archaic in China to have been derived from Babylonia. From his own shewing it seems perfectly clear that, as he himself puts it, 'in this Babylonian system as thus described we have the principle of local value *as in our Arabic numerals*.' That being so, the difference between the Chinese system and the Babylonian is just as great as that existing between the Chinese and European

systems. Nevertheless Dr. Edkins comforts himself by an 'if' and a 'might,' and says, 'if we knew the commercial writing used by Babylonian merchants, it *might* be found to resemble the Chinese more closely.' Dr. Edkins, thus encouraged, then proceeds to give five 'reasons for assigning the origin of the principle of local value to the Babylonians,' and, having given these five reasons, he quietly adds, 'these five arguments suffice as proof presumptive that the Chinese numeration of this kind came from the Babylonians.' We expect Dr. Edkins will, in course of time, either improve or modify this line of argument, which at present is not convincing. Mr. J. Rhein gives a very readable account of 'a journey to Si-yu-sz,' a temple famous for its possessing a (more or less complete) edition of the Buddhist canon engraved on thousands of stone slabs deposited in caverns or buried in the ground for safe keeping. Mr. Rhein adds, in an appendix, a most valuable abstract of a record inscribed on the pagoda erected (over the spot where most of those stone tablets are buried) in A.D. 1118. The present number of the Peking Journal concludes with an address on 'the past and future of the Peking Oriental Society,' delivered by Dr. Martin on retiring from the office of President. This address augurs well for the future of the Society as a flourishing and fruit-bearing concern, for its members appear to be happily free from all petty literary jealousies and evidently work together with a determination to keep up in this Peking Oriental Society the laudable spirit of a mutual admiration society.

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**儒釋道三教** *The Dragon, Image and Demon*, or three religions of China, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, giving an account of the mythology, idolatry and demonolatry of the Chinese. By Rev. H. C. Du Bose, fourteen years a Missionary at Soochow. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son. 1887.

This book is a handsome volume of 463 pages, enlivened by numerous wood cuts. The author states in the preface that 'many of the best thoughts in this volume are obtained from the writings of Edkins, Eitel, Legge and Beal,' but that he has drawn his water largely from native wells, the facts being mostly gathered from Chinese sources, and he adds, with evidently perfect truth, 'the pen is not held by one seated in a professor's study but by a plain man who daily walks to and fro among idolaters and testifies of what he has seen and heard.' The value of this book lies, in our opinion, exclusively in the personal observations made by the author. Wherever he details what he has actually seen and heard, he becomes intensely interesting, but wherever he gives what he humbly calls his 'best thoughts' borrowed from other publications, he becomes rather shaky. For instance, when he compares Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and declares the first as based on morality, the second on idolatry and the third on superstition, or when he characterizes Confucianism as an ethical, Buddhism as a physical and Tauism as a metaphysical system, he may have 'Edkins or Eitel or Legge or Beal' for his authority, but he certainly has not hit the mark there. We think the author would have done better, either by reading up his authorities a little more fully and by adding especially a study of Faber's, Watters' and Doolittle's publications on the very subjects of his work, or by leaving all authorities, with the exception of translations from native works, aside and confining himself to a systematic digest of his own personal observations and translations. However, the author generally makes it easy for the reader to perceive where he draws upon his own resources and gives his own thoughts, which, we confess, we generally found to be better than his 'best thoughts' culled from other books.

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*Excursions et Reconnaisances*, Cochinchine Française, XII. No. 28, Julliet-Aout, 1886. Saigon, 1886.

The number of this official periodical before us, which occasionally gives most instructive information on Chinese subjects, devotes in the present instance its attention to exclusively non-Chinese questions. M. Landes contributes a French translation of the first part of an original Annamite comedy. M. Azemor continues his interesting account of the semi-savage mountain tribe called Stieng, or rather of that branch of this predatory tribe which is known as the Stiengs of Brolâm. The author's description of the manners and customs of these savages, who may possibly be descendants of a tribe of aborigines of South China driven south by advancing Chinese civilization, are based on several years' of actual living in the midst of their settlements. M. Azemar enhances the value of his labours as a Catholic missionary by adding to his vivid descriptions of this tribe a full vocabulary of their language.

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