

NOTES
ON
CHINESE LITERATURE:
WITH
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
ON THE
PROGRESSIVE ADVANCEMENT OF THE ART;
AND A
LIST OF TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE
INTO VARIOUS EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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NOTES

ON

CHINESE LITERATURE.

THE Chinese are accustomed to arrange their literary productions under four divisions: viz. 1. Classics. 2. Histories. 3. Philosophers. 4. Belles-lettres.

I. CLASSICS.

As the first of these divisions, the Classical, forms the stem from which the others are said to spring, a few remarks are given here on the several works included under this head.

1. The 易經 *Yih king*, "Book of Changes" is regarded with almost universal reverence, both on account of its antiquity and also the unfathomable wisdom which is supposed to lie concealed under its mysterious symbols. The authorship of the symbols (卦 *kwa*), which form the nucleus of the works, is with great confidence attributed to the ancient sage 伏犧 *Fūh He*.* These consisted originally of eight trigrams, but they were subsequently, by combining them in pairs, augmented to the number of sixty-four hexagrams. This second process has also been attributed to *Fūh He* by some, while others ascribe it to a later hand. These form the only portion of the now-existing work, which claims to be older than the Chow. 文王 *Wān Wāng*, the ancestor of that dynasty, made a study of these symbols, while in prison for a state offence, and appended a short text to each, indicative of the character of the hexagram, which text is termed 彖 *Tsuan*. This is followed by observations in detail on the several strokes in the figure, termed 象 *Sāang*, which are said to be from the hand of 周公 *Chow Kung*, the son of *Wān Wāng*. The remaining portions of the work, comprising ten sections; termed 十翼 *Shih yih*, "Ten wings," are said to have been added by Confucius. The first, named 彖傳 *Tsuan chuen*, consists of a paragraph to each of the texts of *Wān Wāng*, in which he further dilates on the hidden meaning. After this, the texts of *Chow Kung* are expanded under the name of 象傳 *Sāang chuen*. A section annexed to the two first diagrams 乾 *K'ien*, "Heaven," and 坤 *K'wān*, "Earth," entitled 文言 *Hān yēn*, "Sense of the Text," enlarges on the preceding

* Also written 包犧 *Paou He*.

observations. The 繫辭傳 *E szê chuen* is a "Memoir on the Philosophy of the Text," in two sections. 說卦傳 *Shwō kwa chuen* is a "Discussion of the Diagrams." 序卦傳 *Seu kwa chuen* is "The Order of the Diagrams"; and 雜卦傳 *Tsā kwa chuen*, "Promiscuous Discourses on the Diagrams." Such is the structure of the book as it has been handed down to the present time, known as the 周易 *Chow yih*, "Chow Changes," a name applied to it in reference to the texts by Wān Wāng and Chow Kung. There are traces of the same doctrine having been promulgated prior to the Chow dynasty; on some modifications of system, however, now unknown. It appears from the Chow Ritual that, during that dynasty, there were still three systems of Changes in use by the 太卜 *T'āē pō*, "Chief Diviner." One was designated the 連山 *Lēn shan*, "United Hills;" which was the system employed during the Hsia, the name being adopted from the first hexagram in that scheme ䷋, formed by a reduplication of the ䷁ *K'an* diagram, which is the symbol for a hill. The other termed 歸藏 *K'wei chwang*, "Reverting Deposit," was that in use during the Shang, in which the first symbol was ䷁ *K'wān*, "Earth," representing the depository of all things. There is no evidence of the existence of these two systems so late as the Han dynasty. The Chow Book of Changes is said to have escaped destruction at the time of the Burning of the Books, B.C. 220, by Che Hwang-te, in consequence of its application to purposes of divination; books of that class having been exempted. Tradition relates, however, that the three last sections by Confucius were lost about that time, and were afterwards found by a girl at the Yellow River. A long list of scholars are recorded as having distinguished themselves as expounders of the *Yih-king*, some by oral instruction, and others by their writings.

2. The second of the Classics is the 書經 *Shoo king*, "Book of Government," originally compiled by Confucius, from the historical remains of the Yu,* Hsia, Shang, and Chow dynasties, and consisted of 100 chapters, the period it embraced being from the middle of the 24th century, B.C., down to 平王 *Ping Wang* of the Chow, B.C. 721. At the time of the bibliothecal conflagration, the existing copies of this work were diligently sought for and committed to the flames. When the revival of literature took place in the Han, B.C. 178, a careful search was made for any copies that might have escaped destruction, but the only portion which could be recovered, was derived from an aged scholar who bore the designation 伏生 *Fuh Säng*, an inhabitant of 濟南 *Tsie-*

*The Yu dynasty of Chinese books, is the period generally denominated that of Yao and Shun in foreign books.

nan in Shan-tuung, who had retained 29 chapters. Tradition adds, that the chapter 泰誓 *T'ae shé*, "The address at 'Tae," was recovered from a girl in Honan. During the reign of 武帝 Woo Te, about B.C. 140, the dwelling house of Confucius being pulled down by order of 恭王 Kung Wang, prince of Loo, a copy of the *Shoo king* was found, with several other books, all written in the seal character, enclosed in the wall, said to have been deposited there by one of the late descendants of the sage. A member of the same family, 孔安國 Kung Gan-kwō, set about deciphering this document with the aid of Fūh Säug's text, and thus managed to get 25 complete chapters out of it. The *T'ae-shé* chapter was different from the one of the same name discovered by the Honan girl. Five of the chapters only agreed with those repeated by Fūh Säug. Gan-kwō arranged the whole work in accordance with the ancient text he had found, and wrote it out in the 隸 *Le*, or character used during the Han dynasty, making altogether 58 chapters; the remaining portions of the ancient book were so confused and obliterated that he could make nothing of them. The compilation of Gan-kwō was received with various degrees of consideration for several hundred years, till about the 4th century, when all traces of its existence disappear. During the Eastern Tsin, a work was brought to light by one 梅賾 Mei Tsih, professing to be that of Gan-kwō. This seems, after a time, to have been received with confidence by the literati, and was adopted in the National College at the end of the 5th century; down to the end of the Tang, we do not find suspicions raised as to its genuineness. During the Sung, however, 朱熹 Choo He, in his severely critical investigation of the Classics, was first led to doubt the authority, but did not live to write a commentary on the work; that being afterwards executed by his pupil 蔡沈 Tsae Ch'in. During the Ming, and more especially the present dynasty, the work has passed through tests of the most searching character, the result of which shews that the portion now termed the 古文 *Koo-wān*, "Ancient text," is not the work of Gan-kwō, but the fabrication of Mei Tsih, while the evidence tends to confirm the genuineness of that of Fūh Säug, known as the 今文 *Kin-wān*, "Modern text," which had been handed down as a separate work till the Tang. The two texts, however, are now generally published in one work, numbering 58 chapters in all, only 33 of which belong to the Modern text.

3. The third Classic is the 詩經 *She king*, "Book of Odes," consisting of a collection of ballads used by the people of the various petty states of China in ancient times, selected and arranged by Confucius, to the number of 311. This work suffered the general fate of

tone" in the southern songs. It is written in the form of question and answer.

The same author has penned several small works on questions nearly allied to this, one of which is entitled 韻問 *Yün wăn*, being a discussion of the final sounds, also in the dialogue form.

The 製曲枝語 *Ché k'ëih che yü* is a short summary of defects in the modern system of song, by 黃周星 *Hwāng Chow-sing* of the Manchu dynasty.

By extension of meaning the term *K'ëih* has come to signify not merely the choral part, but is now a conventional name for dramatic compositions. A good deal has been written on this class of works by Bazin, Davis, and others, whose essays may be consulted with profit; but as dramatic works do not find a place in the native book-catalogues, it is unnecessary to enlarge on the subject here. Most foreigners who have read at all regarding this matter, know, at least by name, the collection of Yuen dynasty plays with the title 元人百種曲 *Yuên jên pih chüng k'ëih*, several of which have been translated into the French or English languages. Another well-known compilation of more recent date is the 綴白裘 *Chuy pih k'ew*, numbering several tens of comedies, tragedies, and other varieties of the histrionic art, some of which have also been transferred into the English language.

Some of the dictionaries noticed above (see p. 13, supra) are included in this division by native bibliographers.

APPENDIX.

A large portion of the bulk of Chinese literature is only preserved now in a class of publications termed 叢書 *Ts'ung shoo*, which may be designated "Collections of Reprints"; for although some few original productions occasionally find their way into these repositories, they are almost entirely made up of works, which have already appeared before the public in a detached form. This custom has tended to the preservation of numerous writings of all ages, which otherwise would have been known only by name, from incidental quotations in more permanent authors. These collections are analogous in some respects to Constable's Miscellany, Bohn's Series, and others of the kind in England, but differ from them in that, instead of being published periodically, the complete series is issued at once as an indivisible whole, and it is only rarely that any of the separate works can be obtained second-hand, from an already imperfect series.

The contents of a few such collections are here given, to furnish an idea of their variety and enable the young student to know where to find many of the productions of the past which he might possibly have much difficulty in discovering elsewhere. The *Wuy k'ih shoo mūh hō peen*, noticed on p. 76, supra, gives the contents of 269 such publications, and may be consulted with advantage by those interested in the subject.

I. 武英殿聚珍版書 *Wò ying t'een tseū chin pàn shoo*.

The font of copper types which was employed in printing the huge collection known as the 古今圖書集成 *Kòd kin t'òo shoo tseih ching*, having been for the greater part purloined by untrustworthy officials, and the remaining portion melted up to make cash, a proposal was set on foot in 1773, to make a set of movable wooden types, as the most economical method of printing the recently-formed imperial collection known as the 四庫全書 *Sze k'òo tseuèn shoo*. This received the imperial sanction, and resulted in the publication here given.

周易口訣義 *Chow yih k'òw keüé é.*

易說 *Yih shwò.*

吳闈易解 *Wò yuen yih keaè.*

郭氏等家易說 *Kò shé chuen kèa yih shwo.*

易象意言 *Yih séang é yèn.*

易原 *Yih yuen.*

易學濼觴 *Yih hëò lán shang.*

易緯 *Yih wei.*