

DISCOVERIES  
IN  
C H I N E S E

OR THE  
*Symbolism of the Primitive Characters*

OF THE  
CHINESE SYSTEM OF WRITING

AS A CONTRIBUTION TO PHILOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY AND A PRACTICAL  
AID IN THE ACQUISITION OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

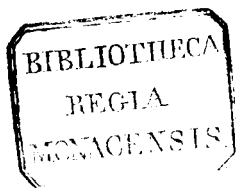
BY  
STEPHEN PEARL ANDREWS

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# INTRODUCTION.



THE following work, though complete in itself, is but a specimen of a larger work, at one time contemplated by me, which should extend to all the Primitive Chinese Characters, including Clefs and Phonetics, and which may be resumed at some future period, should the demand appear to exist. The consideration of the very small number of persons hitherto interested in Chinese Literature, the great expensiveness of the necessary woodcuts to illustrate my views, and chiefly a predominating interest in other branches of philological investigation on my own part, diverted my attention from the original plan.

What is contained in this little treatise was prepared, some five years ago, in the shape of a paper for the American Ethnological Society,

and read by me, by a special arrangement, for the better exhibition of numerous large charts by which it was illustrated, before the New York Historical Society, in the University Rooms. A report of that reading (Nov. 6th, 1849) appeared in an extra of the *New York Tribune*, illustrated by woodcuts, accompanied by a highly appreciative editorial notice. In this ephemeral shape, it reached several distinguished scholars in this country and Europe, from whom I have received urgent requests to prosecute the same inquiries more at large, and to consign them to a more permanent form. I have not, however, until now, found the fitting time to do so much as to prepare the present work for the press.

The cause of this pressure upon my attention and time, and of this seeming neglect of a matter not only interesting but valuable, in the estimation of my friends, and in my own, has been a series of investigations, and I may say discoveries, in other branches of science, which I am now bringing so far to a close

as to be engaged in their preparation for publication.

In the department of philology, I have in a state of some forwardness a work embracing a fundamental analysis of the rootwords of the leading classical and modern European languages, from a point of view entirely novel in this species of study, and which, I think, cannot fail to exercise an important influence upon all subsequent philological views and methods of investigation. The plan is not unlike that which prevails in this work, applied, however, to the phonetic structure of the familiar words of our own family of languages, instead of the graphic structure of a remote and, for us, "barbarian" tongue. The attempt will be to found etymology upon a new science, which I denominate IDEOLOGY—the Philosophical and Historical Evolution of Human Thought, *which has underlaid and inspired the development of human language, and is therefore logically precedent to it.* It will be found that I give to this term, Ideology, an extension not contemplated by Destutt de Tracy, and, perhaps,

others who may have employed it; and that what I *mean* is, in fact, entitled to be considered as a new science.

Such is my apology to the learned world, for an apparent indolence in the cultivation of a field of inquiry which promised such fruitful results as this analysis of the Chinese written symbols. Indeed, my attention was first drawn to the Chinese language with a view to obtaining aid, from the legitimate etymology of the spoken language, in my ideological investigations. In that point of view I could by no means afford, now, to dispense with the evidence which that remarkable language furnishes in support of principles of great importance, in the general treatment of mental and lingual science.

The consideration of the Chinese written system was, therefore, with me, an incident, a sort of scientific *excursus*, rather than a deliberate undertaking; and, although I became so much interested in it as, at the time, to contemplate, as I have mentioned, carrying the same sort of analysis through all the simple

characters, I was the more readily induced to abandon or postpone the design, and shall now feel obliged to any learned and ingenious Sinalogue who will finish the work.

To assure myself of the correctness and value of my labors, such as they are, in this department, I have submitted them to several learned friends, both such as have not and such as have a special knowledge of the Chinese language; and, for a similar assurance to the reader, I take the liberty to insert several of their estimates.

The notice contained in the *New York Tribune* was prepared by a gentleman of very extensive acquaintance with languages, and of considerable familiarity with philological matters generally, though not a Chinese scholar. He has given the impression which the work produced upon him, and it is as follows:—

“The extent of space which we this morning devote to Mr. S. P. ANDREWS’ article on the Chinese Language (which occupies nearly the whole of our supplement) is abundantly justified by the nature of

the article. In this view we opine that all competent persons, who shall peruse it, will agree with us; while every reader will be struck at finding a subject hitherto thought the perfection of all that is complicated and difficult, rendered not only clear and intelligible, but even interesting. In fact, we regard the investigation of Mr. Andrews as the first scientific and satisfactory opening of the Chinese tongue to the Occidental world. Unless we are much mistaken, he has done for that language what the great Champollion did for the Ancient Egyptian—he has discovered the clue which reduces what has heretofore appeared as only a mass of incongruities and confusion, into compact, accessible, and useful order. There is, however, an important difference in the two cases; namely, that the work of M. Champollion was performed upon the monumental inscriptions of a dead and obsolete nation, and could, at best, only serve the purposes of the historian; while that of Mr. Andrews introduces us to the living speech of the most numerous and industrious people upon the globe, with whom we already carry on a valuable trade, which, in the course of a hundred years, will, for America especially, be extended into relations of unknown variety and importance. If, then, we are right in our estimate of the charac-



ter of Mr. Andrews' discoveries, how great their value and how opportunely they are made!

“The gold of California, by expediting the settlement of the western coast of this continent, must expedite the construction of that great national work, the Pacific Railroad. That road, once built, will not only become the main channel of the trade of Europe and the East, but will open up new outlets for our own products, and give a magnificent stimulus to our industry. To the vast grain-growing region of the Mississippi Valley, it will give a constant market for its great staple; to the penurious millions on the other shore of the Pacific Ocean, it will supply cheap food, and thus gradually fling into the long-waiting social stagnation of those ancient kingdoms, the impulses of Western life and progressive energy, bearing with them a purer morality and a divine religion. In the course of events, the knowledge of the Chinese language will be not only useful but necessary, for commercial men and others who come into connection with the Chinese people. That knowledge Mr. Andrews renders easy of acquisition.

“But it is not necessary to dwell on what is so remote, to give weight to Mr. Andrews' discovery. The Chinese are the Yankees of Asia. They are by nature emigrators and adventurers. Every region and island of Eastern and Southern Asia bears wit-

ness to this. In Siam alone, there are three millions of Chinese colonists. They have already begun to make their appearance at San Francisco, and a large part of the future population of our Western shore must inevitably be Chinese. In this view, to facilitate the understanding of their language is to render an important service, aside from all uses previously connected with the matter.

“To those who are not personally acquainted with Mr. Andrews, we will say that he has hitherto been chiefly known to the public as the leading propagator in this country of Pitman’s admirable system of Phonography. Many scientific and literary gentlemen have been aware of his attainments in higher branches of study, but to the public at large he is now for the first time introduced as a profound and learned philologist. We are happy that this introduction takes place through our columns, and by means of so substantial and remarkable a work of genius as the essay we this morning publish.”

The above may be an over-estimate of the importance of the work done. The following communication is from the Rev. E. W. Syle, Missionary of the Protestant Episcopal Church, for many years stationed at Shang-

Hai, China. While liberally appreciating the kind of investigation of the language which I have instituted, Mr. Syle suggests some deductions from the *practical* value of my system, as an aid in the study of the language. He is in a position, from his great familiarity with the language itself, coupled with a decided taste for philological pursuits, to take a more discriminating view of the subject than a merely Occidental scholar. Full force should be given, therefore, to his critical observations. The following letter, of which I have, by permission, made a free use, will explain his views.

53 Broadway, New York,  
28th June, 1854.

MY DEAR SIR,

I regret that the pressure of other occupations has caused me to delay, till now, my reply to your first communication; the second, dated the 26th, came to hand yesterday, and I hasten now to express the great interest with which I have studied over your very interesting paper, entitled "Discoveries in Chinese."

I commenced its perusal with some prepossession

against the view which you favor, as to the *modus formandi* of the Chinese symbols; and I am still at issue with you as regards the probable priority of the radical to the phonetic element, in the compound characters.

[The view here expressed by Mr. Syle, I have transferred to page 37, where it will appear in juxtaposition with my own theory upon the point mooted, and will be far more intelligible to the reader, than it would be here.]

Having thus relieved my mind of the one point of difference between us, I feel the more at liberty to express my conviction, that you have made a very valuable contribution towards promoting the study, amongst ourselves, of the Chinese language. Being engaged, myself, at the present time, in endeavoring to disabuse the minds of some few individuals, with regard to the insurmountable difficulty of acquiring the *spoken* dialects of China, I feel especially interested for the success of this effort of yours, to exhibit the beauty and expressiveness of their *written* forms. Not that I regard your system as calculated to be of much avail, in aiding a young student to learn to read Chinese books *as now written and printed*; for, as you yourself are well aware, it is on the *ancient* rather than on the *modern* form that you rely, for exhibit-

ing the *rationale* of composition in the various characters (\*p. 15). Nevertheless, the line of investigation which you suggest is one which no one, with liberal views of scholarship, would hesitate about approving; and I may add that it is one which, I am convinced (from partial trials made by myself, when in China), would surprise and delight the native Chinese themselves, and would impress them with the peculiar superiority of our method of study. Our peculiarity as students I take to be the free use of analysis. For this, the Chinese have little taste; and as to their skill, we may judge of that from the fact that the parts of speech are thrown by them into only two classes, *solid* and *empty*; that is, nouns and verbs on the one hand, and all the rest on the other. Of the *solid* class, the verbs are called "living," and the nouns "dead"—adjectives being put among the *empty* or unsubstantial particles. If the Chinese language is destined to survive, I expect that it will be indebted to the treatment it will receive at the hands of the missionaries and philologists of Christian lands; and as we missionaries hope for good success in reducing the various provincial dialects (better called languages) into a learnable state, by writing them out alphabetically, so we cannot but rejoice at such attempts as this of yours, to show that the

written style is something better than a "*mélange bizarre de quarante-mille caractères affreux.*"

I trust that the time is not far distant when some one or more of our universities, or large colleges, will emulate Berlin and Paris and King's College, London, and (latest, not least) old Oxford—venerable always, if not always so "wide awake" as some other places; in all these there are, or are about to be, Chinese Professorships established. Why should not Columbia College, or the New York University, prove themselves not behind the age in this matter; unless, indeed, it be reserved for California, to outstrip her elder sisters of the East, and to show how extremes meet, by establishing there, in the remotest Occident, a new and vigorous school for prosecuting Oriental studies?

In regard to the form of the characters, I think your engraver has succeeded remarkably well; I see nothing to call for the cutting over again of any of them. So also as to the spelling; whilst there is a great diversity in the manner of pronunciation among Sinalogues, I think you have made a very good approximation to the "Nankin Mandarin," which is the best standard, though some of the most recent scholars—*e. g.* Meadows—affect the more prolonged, Peking style of utterance. It should be mentioned by you that your vowels are to be pro-

nounced after the Continental method: English readers would be apt to miscall them; and therefore it is best, I think, when writing for our countrymen, to use the spelling of Morrison's Dictionary; but Callery's answers very well.

Your explanations, as to the *rationale* of combination, commend themselves to anyone who will pause to examine them. They furnish their own evidence, like the solution of an enigma. I feel that any thing like an endorsement of your etymologies is uncalled for; those for whom you write are students, and no student would thank another for telling him how the word "alphabet" came to mean what it now does.

I am yours very truly,

E. W. SYLE.

S. P. ANDREWS, Esq.

The force of the above objection—(\*p. 13)—is very much weakened, if not entirely destroyed, by taking into account the fact, that the whole number of *emblems* (like the *tree* herein treated of) is a mere handful—less, even, than the smallest class of Chinese characters, as they are now classified; that the deviation between the ancient and the modern form,

although frequently considerable, is generally uniform; that is, that the same modern shape nearly always answers to the same ancient shape; so that one has only to learn what this deviation is, *in this mere handful of original emblems*, to be prepared to evolve the analogies, and establish or recognize the etymologies of the most complex characters (made up of these emblems), *in the modern script style as readily as in the ancient*.

A little trial upon the *tree* emblem, as here exhibited, will convince the scholar how readily he associates the modern form with the ancient, and that he has to learn that association only for once, in order to avail himself of it everywhere, throughout not only the one hundred and forty-one comparatively simple tree characters here treated of, but equally throughout several thousand more complex characters made up by composition. The modern figure is not, it is true, quite so good a picture of a tree as the ancient; but once learned, as a tree, its uses are just as obvious; and, in doing this, the intermediation of the ancient form is of im-



mense service as a mnemonic aid, while the number of these transitions, to be learned, is so limited as to reduce the labor to a mere trifle. This view of the subject would, I have no doubt, modify the opinion expressed by Mr. Syle. It is true, that a good application of this method to the practical study of the language, requires the preparation of books expressly for the purpose, and that more attention be given to the ancient forms, than has been given by Chinese students heretofore. Such a change, however, involves no serious objections, if the system be really more valuable.

The following letter is from Yung Wing, a young Chinaman of excellent ability, now about graduating from Yale College, to which he was transferred from one of the Mission Schools at Canton. He is nearly, or perhaps quite, the first of his countrymen who has, almost entirely, mastered the English language. This accomplishment, the education he has received, and his native talent, combine to promise for him an important career

in his own country, where passing events of great moment tend to put the external relations of China upon an entirely new basis. Perhaps Mr. Yung (in Chinese the given name comes last), who intends going to China the coming fall, may, at no distant day, return as ambassador of the Imperial Court of Peking near the government of the United States, the first of his nation to assume such duties abroad! He speaks cautiously upon the subject in hand, from the fact, that a critical study of his own language has been less a specialty, with him, than the acquisition of the strange learning which he has been engaged in deriving from us. It is to the written system, *of course*, to which my method, as here developed, applies.

Yale College, New Haven,  
July 8th, 1854.

DEAR SIR,

I was deeply interested in looking over the method you have adopted to facilitate the acquisition of the Chinese written language by missionaries, or by other foreigners. I can only say, that,

if you can take each of all the number of simple elements, and trace every one of them, throughout the whole body of the written language, and at the same time give to each character containing the element or elements, the right, or the most probable signification, I have no doubt, at least with my present view on the subject, that your analytical and comparative method (I mean the comparison of the old with the new form of the same element) will prove a valuable aid to the student of the Chinese language, in mastering the meaning of Chinese characters. Allow me to state here, that it is in mastering the meaning only, that your method, if it prove successful, will be valuable; for, as the written language, in its present state, is not phonetic, neither analysis, nor synthesis, nor both, could aid the student in learning the names of each character. As an illustration of my view, I think it is M. Callery, who, I was told, could decipher the meaning of any Chinese character, without being able to pronounce its name. I therefore repeat, that your method will be valuable in mastering the meaning only of the *written* Chinese language.

I remain, most respectfully yours,

YUNG WING.

TO STEPHEN PEARL ANDREWS.

While, on the one hand, the views of experienced Chinese scholars are entitled to great consideration, I am conscious, on the other, that a full appreciation of the potency of the analytical and comparative system of study, herein inaugurated, can hardly result from a merely theoretical or cursory examination. An actual use of the system, in the acquisition of the language, is the only sufficient test. To this I appeal, with entire confidence that results will exceed the most sanguine expectations.

S. P. ANDREWS.

33 *Cottage Place, N. Y.*

*July, 1854.*

## DISCOVERIES IN CHINESE.

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“It is a just and true remark of the Rev. Mr. Gutzlaff,” observes the learned Mr. Duponceau, “that nothing has so *puzzled* the learned world, in Europe, as the Chinese language;” and, notwithstanding the success which attended the endeavors of Mr. Duponceau to dispel the fanciful and extravagant notions which then prevailed respecting it, the results of more sober investigations have left this remarkable structure, still, as great a puzzle as ever.

The term, “the Chinese Language,” is used, indiscriminately, for *the spoken language* employed by the inhabitants of China as the great national form of speech, and for *the written system* by which the spoken language is represented. Both are equally curious, and alike remote from the ordinary analogies of other languages; while, as between themselves,

they stand at the opposite extremes from each other, in point of development.

The spoken language of China is excessively meager, consisting of no more than four hundred and fifty words—all monosyllables—without composition, and perfectly destitute of inflexions, or grammatical forms of any sort, for number, gender, person, mode, or tense. The written language, on the other hand, though without an alphabet, is abundantly copious, consisting of not less than thirty thousand characters, expressive of nearly as great a variety of idea, as the vocabularies of the most cultivated languages of Europe.

It is a matter of course, that any description, so brief and summary as the preceding, should admit of considerable modification in details. It is not strictly true, for example, that *all* the spoken words of the language are monosyllables; a few having two or three vowel-sounds, pronounced quite distinctly from each other. So, the number of words is rather apparently, than actually, so very limited; there being, in fact what amounts to composition of words, though both the genius of the spoken language and the system of writing have prevented it from appearing as such. Again, by the use of the remarkable system of *intonations*, which

belongs to the Chinese, Cochin Chinese, Siamese, and other languages of that family, the monosyllabic elements themselves are augmented to about twelve hundred. So, also, grammatical phenomena, though not marked by inflexions, are indicated to some extent by the order in which the words succeed each other, and by a system, poorly developed and defined, of auxiliary verbs.

In a similar manner, the number of written characters, which constitute the effective body of the language, admits of various estimation. Including duplicates, obsolete, and variant forms, there are, in all, not less than sixty thousand characters; while, on the other hand, a knowledge of only ten thousand is regarded as making a thorough Chinese scholar, and five thousand will cover all which are necessary for a general course of reading, apart from technical works. Even three thousand are enough for some styles.

The wonderful discrepancy, between the number of the spoken words and that of the written characters by which they are represented, results from the fact that the spoken words being so very few, each one has a great variety of significations, which are distinguished from each other, in speech, by the

connection of the sentence, and by other special contrivances; while, in writing, each distinct signification is represented by a different character. This is illustrated, in English, by the different methods of exhibiting to the eye the written words *rite*, *right*, *wright*, and *write*, all of which represent precisely the same spoken *utterance* or *word*, but in different *significations*.

The Chinese characters vary in complexity from one up to fifty-two distinct strokes of the pencil. The more complex characters are made up of combinations of the more simple characters; so that there are between one and two thousand characters only, out of which all the others are formed, and which may therefore be regarded as the elementary portion of the language.

Among these elementary characters, there are a few, which are obviously pictorial or symbolic of the objects or ideas which they represent, especially as they appear in their more ancient forms. Thus, the characters for the sun and moon, and a few of the most familiar objects, have retained so striking a likeness to their original design, as to be recognized on all hands. But the number of such is extremely small.



The same narrow circle of examples is adduced by each successive writer to elucidate, as matter of curious observation, the manner in which the Chinese written system had its origin; and the subject is then abandoned as fruitless of any practical utility in acquiring or understanding the language. It has become the universally accepted belief, that the great mass of the characters have undergone such radical changes of form, during the immense period of years which has elapsed since their invention, that it is quite hopeless to attempt to recover any satisfactory knowledge of the primitive idea which presided over their formation. The learned world has settled quietly down into the conviction that all who would learn Chinese must submit to the necessity of committing slowly and laboriously to memory successive thousands of purely arbitrary characters, as the Chinese themselves have done for many ages—a task which is truly Herculean, and which it is barely possible to achieve, unless it is begun in infancy and continued through the best period of life.

I think I am now able to demonstrate that

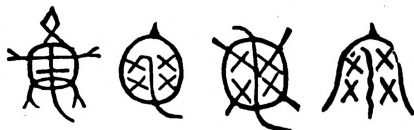
this belief is erroneous, and to furnish a clue which will lead not only to a more philosophical and pleasant, but to a far more rapid and thorough method of acquiring the ability to read the Chinese language.

A few preliminary remarks upon the history, varieties, and characteristics of Chinese writing, in addition to what has been said, will, it is hoped, enable even those least addicted to this kind of inquiry, to understand clearly and intelligently the nature and somewhat of the importance of the discoveries which I believe I have been successful in making in this department of scientific investigation.

It is related in the Chinese traditions of the very earliest times, that the first settlers of the Empire preserved their records of passing events by means of knotted cords,—a habit similar to that which prevailed among the Peruvians. They soon, however, passed to inscriptions of a symbolic or representative nature, beginning in simple pictures of objects. The style of writing which they deem the most ancient, is denominated the *Kú Wen*, or *Ancient Ornaments*, of which specimens are exhibited upon the following page. The tradition of the knotted cords is confirmed by the

emblem of the *cord* contained in some of the characters in the present volume, and which still exhibits the knots or loops. The following pictures are obvious enough in their design.

## A TORTOISE.



## A FISH.



## A BOY.



The several characters in each of the lines above, are varieties of the same word in different forms of representation. The characters of the *Kú Wen*, though called a style of writing, bear so much more analogy to engraving or ordinary pictures for ornamental purposes, as to afford little aid, as I find, in

deciphering the original designs of the characters in use for writing purposes. They are now found in books merely as curious antiquarian monuments, and are said to have been taken from vases, tripods, bells, and other brazen ornaments, which have been carefully preserved in the temples of the idols. They are all extremely elaborate, and varied, apparently according to the taste or whim of each individual artist. It does not appear that any book was ever written in this style of characters, or that they were ever applied to literary purposes; and, inasmuch as they were evidently the production of fancy, rather than the elements of a necessary art, which is known to have originated with the very rise of the Chinese nation, I think there is strong reason to doubt their claim to superior antiquity to that of the next style which I am about to mention. For these reasons, we may for the most part discard them from consideration, for the present purpose.

Of the remaining styles of characters properly called *writing*, there are three principal and important ones. The first of these to be mentioned, is the *Síúo Chuen* or *Ancient*

*Classical Style*, which had its origin in the remotest antiquity of the nation—certainly not less than four thousand years ago—and has been wonderfully preserved as, perhaps, the very earliest monument of the operations of the human intellect, now extant. The first books written in China appeared in this character. In it the great Confucius indited his sage and venerated instructions; and it is still in familiar use for inscriptions, the titles of books, and the like, furnishing a striking illustration of the enduring nature of Chinese habits and institutions.

Of this style of writing there were also almost an infinite number of varieties or bastard imitations, during the centuries that preceded the Christian era, and while China remained a loose and fluctuating assemblage of distinct nationalities. These differences may, however, have been nothing more than the result of that fancy and love of ornament and variety which have given rise to the German Text, the Old English Black Letter, etc., among us. At all events, it appears that the *ancient classical style proper* maintained itself in a distinct and well-defined condition. It is characterized by

circular and curved lines, and was written with a style, upon slips of bamboo, smooth pieces of wood, or leaves, as writing is still done in Southern India.

The *modern classical style*, that in which the great mass of modern books are printed, and which is also used extensively for manuscript purposes, dates back to the third century of the Christian era, and has its origin in the change which naturally resulted from the introduction and invention of paper and ink and the pencil as instruments for writing. It was subsequently somewhat modified also by the process of wood-cutting for printing purposes, and the result has been a style of characters differing, as a general characteristic, from the *ancient classical* in the fact that the strokes are heavy or *fat*, and straight or angular, instead of circular. Beside this, there are, of course, numerous other minor differences, resulting from the mere wear and tear of time.

The *cursive style* is the running hand, corresponding to our manuscript, though not so universally used, as many prefer always to preserve the full classical form of the characters in writing.

The following are specimens of characters in these three styles: —

*Anc. Classical. Mod. Classical. Cursive.*

THE SUN.



THE MOON.



A MAN.



It has been already observed that some few of the Chinese characters, especially those which represent the most common objects and ideas, as *the Sun* and *Moon*, *a Man*, *a Tree*, etc., are so obviously pictures or symbols, that they have always been recognized as such; and I have chosen these words for examples, to illustrate that fact as well.

The first European Sinalogues, carried away by this observation, and astonished to find the same system of writing prevailing over a vast portion of the earth where it appeared that different languages were spoken, ran into the

most extravagant conceptions of its structure and properties. They supposed that it consisted of a wonderful collection of ideographic symbols, so perfectly devised as to be quite intelligible when addressed to the eye of a person who understood nothing of the spoken language to which they related ; or rather that they related to no spoken language whatsoever, and that in some magical way, a Chinese, a Cochin-Chinese, and a Japanese, who had never seen each other before, and who could not understand a word of each other's conversation, were able to communicate intelligibly with each other as soon as writing was resorted to. Notwithstanding the contradiction of their own senses, and their inability to understand these so-called intelligible symbols, they promulgated this theory to the world ; and the delusion was never entirely dispelled until our distinguished countryman, Mr. Duponceau, devoted an elaborate treatise to demonstrating its absurdity, showing that the Chinese written language is only intelligible to the people of different nations, in the same manner and degree as the Latin is intelligible to the learned of different countries in Europe, when written or printed, while their



differences of pronunciation would prevent them from understanding each other if they were to speak it. Since then, the learned world has leaned quite to an opposite extreme, called the phonetic theory, contended for by Mr. Duponceau, and since made the basis, by M. Callery, a French Catholic missionary at Macao, of his great work called *Systema Phonicum Scripturæ Sinicæ*.

This theory asserts that the great body of the characters of the Chinese system of writing are not ideographic, or that they are so in part only, while they are also phonetic; that is, that they have been formed upon the plan of denoting the sound of the spoken words which they represent, in a manner somewhat similar to that which the Egyptologists demonstrate to be the basis of the ancient Egyptian writing, and allied to the usual phonetic writing of the Occidental nations.

It is certain that the phonetic principle has found a representation in the language along with the symbolic, in a way which is extremely curious, and which may be illustrated as follows :

Let us suppose that the writing of our language had been begun on the ideographic or

symbolic plan, and that to denote the idea of the word WRIGHT—*an artisan, especially in wood*—the rude picture of *a man and a broad-ax, or hewing instrument*, had, in the earliest times, been adopted. Let us further suppose, that in the process of time the outline of the picture becomes abridged and obscured by use, and that it is reduced practically to a mere arbitrary sign for the word *wright*, and intimately associated with that *sound* or *utterance*. Suppose, in the next place, when this has come to be the case, a character is wanted to signify the idea of RITE, *a religious ceremony*; and that for this purpose the picture of *a man and an altar* is adopted; but that, in order to *fix* and render more *definite* the idea intended, the inventor of the new character joins to it the old picture of the *man with the broad-ax*—which has now become a proper representation of the *sound* of the word which he is wishing to denote—to serve in that capacity, and that only. So again, when a character is needed for the abstract idea of RIGHT—*that which is straight and accurate*—a picture is made of *a compass and rule, a plummet and line*, as symbols suggestive of the *idea*; but, that there may be no mistake, *the man with the broad-ax* is

added, to give the sound of the word by which it is denoted. For WRITE (ING)—*the making of letters on paper*—the picture of a man and a pen is adopted; and *the man with a broad-ax* is again added for *sound*; and so on of as many different significations as this vocal syllable may chance to have.

Now, this process is precisely what has taken place to some extent in the Chinese language; and the proper point of investigation is the limit which divides the symbolic from the phonetic development of the system—a point which can only be determined satisfactorily by re-discovering the original emblems of which the whole written language was composed, and tracing each through all its combinations with all the rest; and a point which can only be *approximated* in proportion as this is done. The intrinsic difficulty of this undertaking; the prevalent opinion that it is absolutely hopeless, in consequence of the degree of corruption in form which it is supposed those emblems have undergone; and the sedative influence of the *phonetic theory*—which, as it accounts for some things, has been indolently accepted as a solution of the whole difficulty—have turned aside the atten-

tion of the learned from all radical investigation of the subject, such as was begun, in one of its branches, by the learned Dr. Marshman, and which has been brought into positive disrepute. M. Callery ridicules every undertaking of the sort as visionary; and Mr. Williams, the author of several valuable works on China and the Chinese Language, after referring to Mr. Marshman and Mr. Lay, dismisses the whole subject by saying that "these writers have probably said nearly all that is worth saying on the subject."

It seems to have escaped attention that whatever the phonetic principle may have done for the Chinese system of writing, it has only operated upon the material already in existence, that it accounts for the origin and primary signification of nothing, and affects the whole of the elementary structure of the system in no manner whatsoever. To borrow an illustration from western languages, it relates to the composition of words, and not to the root words themselves, which form the staple and basis of the language.

Fully aware of the temerity of the undertaking, and chargeable, perhaps, with contumacy, in dissenting from such distinguished

authorities, I have ventured to institute some original investigations into the primary symbolic structure of the Chinese system of writing, the results of which I could wish to present in a more enlarged form than the present occasion permits, but the nature of which I hope to render intelligible by a sufficiently copious illustration for that purpose.

[It is to the preceding statement of the probable origin of the Chinese system of writing, that Mr. Syle objects in his letter, contained in the Introduction to this work. I have extracted that portion of the letter which relates to the subject, and introduce it here for the greater convenience of comparison. It is as follows:

“My view is, that all the words were *first* spoken, and that they had a spoken existence of some duration prior to the time when they were reduced to writing. Then (according to my supposition) all homophonous words were probably written down by the same character; leaving, of course, much ambiguity as to the meaning in the mind of the reader: it was to get rid of this ambiguity that I suppose the radical part (better called, the *clef*) was *added*, and the result was that large class of written words in which the clef and the phonetic are the evident ele-

ments. To complete the outline of my theory, I must add that when Chinese scholars began to *classify* the words of their language, and to compile dictionaries, they found that these *added* parts furnished the most convenient method of arrangement, and they adopted them accordingly.

“How far this suggestion of mine would modify the views you advocate in your preliminary treatise, and how much confirmation it would receive from applying it to the elucidation of your one hundred and forty-one “tree” characters, but especially to the “pei” class, at the end of your treatise, I leave it with yourself to determine.”

In reply, it is certainly true that the words of the language “had a spoken existence of some duration prior to the time when they were reduced to writing.” “Then,” (according to the supposition of my friendly critic) “*all homophonous words were probably written down by the same character.*” It is precisely upon the point of the way in which this *first character* originated that we have to direct our attention, in order to go back to the origin of this system. Upon this point the supposition of Mr. Syle presents no theory and offers no solution. His supposition begins at some point in time after the system itself has begun, and does not, therefore, relieve us of any difficulty

in relation to the beginning of the latter. He seems to me to have overlooked the point of my criticism upon the phonetic school of Sinologues, and to have subjected himself to the same. In my previous remarks I have said that "whatever the phonetic principle may have done for the Chinese system of writing, it has only operated upon the material already in existence, that it accounts for the origin and primary signification of nothing, and affects the whole of the elementary structure of the system in no manner whatsoever. To borrow an illustration from western languages, it relates to the composition of words, and not to the root words themselves, which form the staple and basis of the language."

If the first character invented, and thus supposed to stand for a whole class of words (or different senses) having the same sound, were invented upon the principle of representing that particular *sound* as such, and irrespective of any particular one of its *senses*, then the very origin of the system was phonetic instead of symbolic, which no one pretends; or, if symbolic at all, symbolic of *sounds* instead of *things*, a species of symbolism most difficult to be effected, and wholly above the effort of a

primitive people making their first essay at the representation of thought, and which, had it occurred, would have given us some sort of an alphabetic system. If, on the contrary, this first character was a picture or a symbol of some one of the many *senses* attached to the given *sound*, and not of the *sound* as such; and if, afterwards, the character so brought into use became allied to the *sound*, and so generalized as to be applicable to any *sense* pertaining to that *sound*, and if it were afterwards joined to other characters symbolizing other *senses* of the same *sound*, for the sake of its acquired power of representing that *sound*,—then this is precisely my theory, and the apparent difference between us upon this point disappears.

There is this remaining objection to my statement, on the part of Mr. Syle. The first character, originally invented upon the symbolic or picture principle, afterwards generalized to represent a group of different *senses* attached to the same *sound* and so to represent the *sound* itself,—was, as we both agree, united subsequently to another character, also symbolic of an idea; and that union produced the compound character. Mr. Syle understands me to affirm that this first-invented character,



become phonetic, was *added to other subsequently invented characters* to communicate the *sound*. He intends to affirm, contrariwise, that the newly invented symbolic character was *added to the phonetic* to restrict its meaning. I do not know that I should care to contest this point, as it is perhaps neither very important nor very susceptible of being definitely settled. The opposite theory seems to me, however, to be liable to several improbabilities and objections which do not affect my own. It seems probable that a first-invented character should become so far associated with the *sound* of the name of the object represented by it as to be serviceable in fixing the meaning of a second character representing an object having the same name, much before it should completely have lost its own symbolic meaning and have become the mere representative of *sound*, or the general representative of whatsoever *sense* allied to the same *sound*. I cannot think, therefore, that the so-called *phonetic* ever existed independently as a *mere phonetic*, or as a vague representative of whatsoever *sense* might attach to the given *sound*. On the contrary, it seems to me that it dropped its primitive function as an actual picture or symbol, and re-

tained only its secondary, phonetic function, *by virtue of its junction with another symbolic character, and not until that occurred.*

In the next place, the supposition I am reviewing would make the *clefs*, which are the simplest forms in the language, to be of later origin than the more complex parts of the compounds, called *phonetics*; whereas, I do not think, whatever my language may have implied, that such was the case. It is more natural to suppose that the simplest forms were certainly among the earliest in use.

What I do suppose is, that what are now called the two classes of characters were synchronous or indiscriminate in origin: that is, that their priority was governed by no regulating principle. After they were formed, side by side, as parts of the same system, some, from the frequency of their use as associated with the same sound, tended to become phonetic in function; a handful of others, representing such common objects as entered most extensively into the scheme of symbolism, passed so frequently in use beyond the limits of identity of sound that they were unfitted for representatives of sound, for the very reason that they were so broadly symbolic of

idea. These last became *clefs*, or means of searching up, in the arrangement of the dictionary, other words into which they enter by composition, and were selected for that purpose, as suggested by Mr. Syle, upon no other ground than their greater frequency and convenience. It would probably not be interesting to the reader to pursue so recondite a subject farther into detail. Definitions of some of the terms employed in it will be found in the following paragraph.]

The compound characters of the Chinese language consist of two parts, one of which is called *the radical or clef*, which is confessedly ideographic, both in its origin and use. The other was formerly called *the primitive*; but more recently *the phonetic*, from the belief that its uniform or general use in the combination is to denote the sound of the word, as in the case supposed above, of *the man with the broad-ax*. Of the so-called Radicals there are but 214. The Radicals and Primitives (or Phonetics) together make up the elementary characters of the language, out of which all the Compound Characters are formed. They amount jointly, according to the estimate of Marshman, to 1,689. The number is reduced,

however, by Callery, by excluding such as are of unfrequent use (and the few radicals which do not occur as primitives) to 1,040.

Now, the tendency of *the phonetic theory* is to assert, that the symbolic development of the language is confined to the 214 radicals, or, at most, to the elementary characters, amounting to a little more than 1,000—while the symbolism even here is left wholly unexplained; and that the remaining characters, amounting to say 29,000, have all been formed upon the phonetic principle; and further, to assume that having rendered an account of so large a numerical majority of the characters, the remainder may be dismissed as unimportant;—while the fact is, that little valuable aid can be drawn from the phonetic principle itself in acquiring the language, until its real limits are understood, by discovering first the extent and meaning of the symbolical development. This last is the principal point of interest, in my view, whether regarded as a matter of ethnological science or of immediate, practical application.

Let us admit the *phonetic theory* for what it is worth, but avoid assigning to it a solution of that which was prior to it, historically,

and to which it does not apply; while we avoid, on the other hand, the easy credulity of the early students of the language, some of whom discovered in the composition of the characters a symbolical account of the creation and the flood, and, indeed, a compendium of all the Scripture history and theology. Let us adopt in science, as elsewhere, the classical monition, "*In medio tutissimus ibis.*" Let us submit the primary emblems of the language to a cautious and comparative study, endeavoring to educe from their forms—especially in the most ancient style of writing them—and from their several uses where they re-appear in primitive characters in different combinations, their original outlines and design, the principle or *general current of habit* which presided over such combinations, and the cast of mind and the set of circumstances in connection with which this curious growth of the human intellect had its development. I claim to have discovered that an investigation conducted in this manner is not fruitless of results; but that, on the other hand, it is competent to conduct to an almost entire restoration of the lost history of the Chinese graphic art, and, as I believe, to reduce im-

mensely the labor of acquiring that most difficult and hitherto repulsive language.

At the same time, every investigation of this sort, from the very nature of the case, involves much which is in some measure conjectural; and it is, besides, the disadvantage of any *partial* exhibition of results, that many things may appear fanciful when seen in that manner, which would be abundantly confirmed if all the concurrent testimonies were adduced. Regarded in their worst light, however, I may put in as a defense, that even a plausible fancy is better than no theory in relation to the structure of a character which has to be learned, inasmuch as it serves as a mnemonic aid to recall its present application and meaning. It may also be added, that this is a road which is likely to become much more level and beaten as it is traveled over by a greater number, and that what I now offer should be considered as only a first rude attempt to open a passage through what has been regarded as an impenetrable wilderness. I submit it for the criticisms and emendations of those who may come after.

Before proceeding to my illustrations, I should observe that something of the kind

which I am undertaking has been attempted by some of the Chinese scholars themselves. They have divided the characters into classes, giving so many to the pictorial, so many to the symbolic, so many to the phonetic class, etc., the great body of the language being, by them, also, assigned to this last—the phonetic class. Their speculations upon the subject are, however, modern, conducted with few, if any, advantages which are not now equally possessed by us; and from their whimsical and extravagant character they seem to have commanded as little of the respect of European and American scholars as Chinese science in general has done. The Chinese are a people who have perfected the arts to a high degree, apparently almost without the aid of science. This classification is cited by Callery as one sufficiently famous in China, but one which is entitled to little or no consideration, and is characterized by him as “consisting of vague and obscure divisions, relating more to silly fictions than to the genuine nature of the language.” It is spoken of with equal disparagement by Mr. Williams, in his work called “The Middle Kingdom,” and by others; while the examples adduced by Morrison, Ré-

musat, and others, bear out the judgment they have pronounced upon it.

One thing is certain, that neither in China nor among American and European scholars of the language, has there been, as yet, any analysis of the elementary characters, sufficiently extended or valuable to be adopted as the basis of a system of study for the acquisition of the language—nothing, in fact, which can be regarded as any thing more than a handful of curious but random observations, fit only to be abandoned, for all practical purposes, as soon as made. Nothing exhaustive or comprehensive has been attempted. The field of exploration lies open and unoccupied before us, and whatever of either curious or valuable materials we may find in it will be fairly ours by right of discovery.

M. Callery, while constructing his *Phonetic System*, has done an invaluable service to the kind of investigation which I propose, by collating the ancient and modern classical characters side by side throughout the elementary portion of the language; and I have freely availed myself of his labors, selecting and bringing together such as are proper for my present purpose.



It will be observed, that I use the term *emblem* to denote the picture or symbol of any particular and single thing or idea; and that several of these emblems frequently enter into the composition of what is still only one of the *elementary characters* of the language, which is then liable, afterward, to enter into still further composition *in the compound characters*.

Confined as I am, by the nature of the present occasion, to the selection of some portion of the elementary characters, as illustrations of the kind of discoveries in question, I have thought it would be the most satisfactory course to choose some one emblem of frequent occurrence, and trace it throughout all its combinations, whenever it appears as a component part of an elementary character. If a satisfactory account can be given of it, in these different positions, and one emblem thus treated *exhaustively*, such an exhibition cannot fail, it seems to me, to be far more indicative, to those under whose observation these investigations may come, of the possibility of recovering a knowledge of the primitive structure of all the elementary characters of the language, than if I were to take up and analyze

an equal number of characters quite at random.

I have selected, therefore, for this purpose, the emblem for a *tree*, which, when standing alone, is a character having that signification, but which likewise enters extensively into the composition of other elementary characters.

A distinctive characteristic of my method, besides its analytical procedure, is the comparison of the ancient and modern styles of the characters, with a view of going back to their primitive meaning. M. Callery has prepared the way for this use of the two, by bringing them into juxtaposition. The use made of them is, so far as I am aware, entirely my own. The reader is requested to direct his attention, in the first instance, chiefly to the ancient form; which, although not what he wishes to learn, for practically mastering the current Chinese language, is the medium through which that, by this system, is to be acquired. The modification which has taken place will then be easily observed, and the ancient and modern forms associated, in the mind, with each other.

## 1.

The word for tree is "Mú," signifying *wood, a tree, one of the five elements*. The forms of the characters, ancient and modern, are as follows:—

*Ancient.**Modern.*

In the ancient form, the outline of the *tree* is quite obvious.

The upper line, curving upward, represents the branches; and the lower line, curving downward, the roots. Let us assume this, then, as the general representation of a *tree, wood, shrub, or vegetable stalk*, and trace it through its various combinations, in the *elementary characters* of the language.

It must be observed of this, as of all the parts of the Chinese characters, however, that it undergoes very great modifications of shape in its several reappearances. The general change, from curved lines to thick, straight, or angular strokes, in passing from the ancient to the modern style, and the deviations resulting from the carelessness or the fancy of tran-

scribers, during a long succession of centuries, are not now referred to; but that modification which results from the position of the object in combination, and the number of objects which are united in the same character. It is the attempt of Chinese writing to bring every character into about the same space; and, as they differ so greatly in the number of strokes and emblems, the same object is sometimes a mammoth and sometimes a pigmy. It is condensed or prolonged, widened or narrowed, according to the circumstances of its position; and those variations help to obscure the original design. It must also be observed, that the important characteristic strokes of a symbol are sometimes the least prominent ones, just as, among us, while the flourishes made by a penman are nothing more than mere appendages, the letters themselves preserve, in the midst of all, the same general outlines by which the accustomed eye distinguishes them from their ornamental attachments.

It must still further be observed, that, while in general the ancient character is far more reliable, as an indication of the original design, the modern form sometimes presents some

testimonial of that design, which the ancient one does not. This results, doubtless, from the fact, that what we here call the ancient character, is not the most ancient, having undergone some modification before the period to which we are able to trace it back; and that the present modern character has in many instances descended from some different modification of the original, of which there were varieties in early times.

The ancient form in the following couples is, in every instance, placed first, or on the left hand, and the modern last, or on the right.

## 2.

The next character below is "Lín," *a forest, a wood.*



This is made of the repetition of *the tree*, and the design is so obvious as always to have been recognized. The addition of another tree at the top makes a character, not represented here, which signifies *a thicket*. A plurality of trees is clearly *a forest, a wood*; and a numerous plurality is *a thicket*.

## 3.

The next is "Fán," *a hedge, to surround with a hedge.*



This is a row of *trees* or shrubs, with brush or branches stuffed between, to fill up the interstices. Trees interwoven with bamboos, the primitive form of a fence or hedge to guard the fields, or ward off the incursions of animals.

## 4.

The next is "Kín," *to prohibit, to forbid, a prohibition.*



This has the addition of a figure below, which is regarded as an imitation of the descending rays of the sun, and which is the regular emblem for whatever proceeds from the heavens, of a religious nature,—*omens, commands, sanctions, and prohibitions.* The *trees* I take to represent the hedge, notwith-

standing the contraction made by leaving out the branches. The design is, then, to indicate the use of *the hedge*, which is to guard, ward off or *prohibit* the intrusion of animals into an inclosure; while the lower character is to be taken, in this case, to signify *prohibition*. It is a usual device, in the composition of this system of symbolism, to repeat the same idea by different emblems,—that is, to multiply in the same character distinct symbols of the same idea, to secure greater certainty in the right understanding of it.

## 5.

The next character, below, is “Tó,” *hanging branches*.



This is the emblem of *the tree*, with a curving line thrown over the top of it, to represent the direction of pendent branches, as of the weeping willow.

Remember to observe the ancient or left-hand character. The modern or right-hand one is a corruption of the other.

## 6.

The next is "Chá," *a tablet for writing, a document.*



This is the *tree*, the emblem of *wood*, and an *iron style* or *point*; the instrument used for writing on slips of bamboo, before the use of ink and the pencil. This indicates the act of writing, and hence, *the thing written, a document, or the object written upon, a tablet.*

## 7.

The next is "Má," *hemp, flax.*



This represents two *trees*, as the emblem of a plurality or collection of vegetable stalks, covered up; and alludes, possibly, to the process of *sweating* or *rotting* flax and hemp, by covering it up in heaps, to separate the fiber from the woody parts. The upper portion of the character is extensively used elsewhere, as an emblem for *covering, canopy, shed, etc.*;



and the idea may be the more simple one of vegetable stalks housed or put under cover.

## 8.

The following are the two forms, ancient and modern, for "Pan," meaning *a root, origin, nature, disposition, essential*.

𣎵      本

This is the same rude outline of *a tree*, with the addition of a stroke across the principal or tap-root, to direct attention to it as the part intended—*the root of the tree*. Compare radical, from *radix, a root*, with *fundamental, principal, essential*, to illustrate the connection between the different senses of this word—*root* with *origin*, and with the *essential nature* of a thing.

## 9.

The following is "Mò," *an end, extremity, branches, little, in fine*.

末      末

This is the same as the preceding, with the signaling stroke now drawn across the *top*,

*end*, or *extremity* of the tree, to point that out as the part intended. The connection between the ideas of *extremity* and *branches* is shown by the fact that we sometimes speak of the *arms*, *fingers*, *toes*, etc. as the *extremities*, and sometimes as the *limbs* (branches) of the body.

## 10.

The next character is "Wéi," *not*, *neither*, *not yet*.



This was probably the same character, originally, in form, as the preceding (as it still is, substantially, in the modern style), though intended to symbolize a different idea. Perhaps it was the desire to mark this difference, which has modified the ancient form by curving the upper transverse stroke, and in the modern form by slightly shortening it. The idea is that of *cutting off the top of the tree*, as in pruning or lopping off its branches, as an emblem of *negation* or *privation*. *Negation* is the cutting off of a *statement* or *supposition*; hence the etymological relationship of *nec* (nor, not), *nego* (to deny), and *neco* (to cut

off, kill), in Latin. It would take us too far aside, here, to go extensively into etymological proofs of the natural analogies of this abstract conception. Those who do not perceive, instinctively, the natural relation of these ideas, must accept the assertion on trust, or pass to other illustrations where the design is more obvious.

## 11.

The other principal negative word of the language is "Pa," *no, by no means*. This is represented likewise by a modification of *the tree with the top cut off*—thus:—



The modern form is much distorted, but the ancient one is distinct. This and the preceding character are, therefore, probably modifications of what was originally the same design.

## 12.

The next is the interrogative negative "Feu?" *is it not?* (L. *anne, nonne*), and is represented by the same character, with the

addition below of the emblem for a *mouth*, to denote the idea of a *question*, thus:—



The supposition that such is the meaning of the emblem for the mouth, is confirmed by the fact that *mouth*, placed within a *door*, forms the character for *asking*. “Kio,” to *refuse* or *deny*, is also represented by a *mouth*, a *knife*, and the *tree* character (*the emblem of wood*, the substance usually cut by a knife). The idea, in that case, is *cutting off by the mouth*.

## 13.

The next character is “Péi,” *big*.



This is the tree cut off *at both ends*; hence, a *log*, which, being the trunk or *big* part of the tree, is an appropriate symbol for the idea *big*, *large*, of which idea it becomes the general emblem, as will appear by tracing it in numerous combinations.

## 14.

The next character below is "Chú," *red*.



I think I am not mistaken here when I take the design to be *a tree girdled*, the bark cut around for the purpose of deadening the tree, as is done in the first settlement or clearing of wooded lands, in new countries, and the first result of which is to turn the foliage from green to *red*. The transverse line here, it will be perceived, is in the middle, between the limbs and root of the tree.

Compare, for confirmation, No. 15.

## 15.

The girdling of trees is the *establishment of a settlement or permanent residence*; hence, "Yé," *a beginning, a patrimony*, is represented by the following character.



This is the same *girdled tree*, with the addition of some more foliage at the top. "Tsá,"

omitted here, which means to *bind about*, to *encircle with a girdle*, is represented likewise by what I take to be the same character abridged.

A first settlement in a new country is called an *opening* or a *clearing*, which is a *beginning* of an estate or property by the founder of a family, and which, as it descends to his heirs, becomes a *patrimony*. The method of such beginning is by *girdling*, and so killing the trees, which are then left to decay and the limbs to fall off; which falling limbs may be indicated by the additions at the top of this character. The appropriateness of this symbol will be appreciated by all who are familiar with the new settlements or *beginnings* of future *patrimonies* in the wooded regions of our Western American States. Remember, still, to observe the ancient form of the character first, and to associate it afterwards with the modern form. The middle line, across the body of the tree, denotes the line around the trunk, which is made by the process of *girdling*. The same peculiarity will be observed in several other characters as we proceed, and confirmation deduced from them of its original significance.

## 16.

The next character below is "Féi," *no, not; false, erroneous, bad.*



This is the *log split apart*, as another device for expressing the notion of *negation, the severance of an idea propounded*. "Mí," *not, without*, another negative, omitted here, is likewise represented by a character which includes this one. The fire-log here bears the mark of *girdling*, still keeping up the reference to the incidents of a country in the first stages of settlement.

## 17.

The next character is "Tsién," *thin, delicate; leeks.*



Here the split log or stick of wood is augmented by *a knife*, the instrument for *splitting*, or *rendering thin*, and by bamboo characters

above, probably meaning *leaves* as another emblem of thinness. "Yá," *bad, corrupt*, seems also to belong here. The idea may be *broken, split*; as *wrong* means *wrung, twisted*. When applied to cloths, it means *torn*.

This character becomes the general emblem for onions and leeks, from the *thin laminae* of which they are composed.

## 18.

The next character is "Hiái," *strong, strenuous*.



This I understand to be an attempt to indicate the splitting of a log by main strength, the figures above being two hands applied to the crack in the log, into which we may imagine the fingers inserted—a tolerably good design to signify *strong, strenuous*. Hands and branches are indicated by the same emblem—the arm, hand, and fingers being a *limb, branch, extremity*—the one at the top, on the right, in this character, is a good specimen.



## 19.

We come now to another modification of the tree-sign. The next character is "Sha," *error, fault, to fail, to lose.*

The design here is that of *an old and crooked tree, declining from the perpendicular*: hence the opposite of *upright*, which in English means *irreproachable*, without *fault* or *error* of conduct. Attend only to the ancient form.

## 20.

The next is "Láo," *an old man, a man seventy years old, venerable.*

This is the same *old tree*, toppling toward its final downfall, with something beneath, which was probably intended as a fallen limb—an appropriate emblem for *old age*.

21.

// The next character is "Káo," *dead, ancestors.*

This is a modification of the same. The relation between *old persons* and *ancestors* is obvious.

22.

The next is "Sién," *anciently, formerly, heretofore.*

The idea and the emblem are here still the same, with slight modifications. The tree is girdled, and has less foliage.

23.

The next is "Kí," *prolonged life, an old man of sixty, a master, or teacher.*

This is the same emblem for an old man as No. 20, with the addition of *a mouth*, to indi-

cate the magisterial character of the instructor; and of a bamboo, as the instrument, perhaps, of disciplining the youth under his instruction, the badge of his profession.

## 24.

The next is "Hiáo," *filial piety, to venerate, respect towards superiors.*

孝

This word is in great use, and expresses what the Chinese regard as the highest of virtues. It is composed of the *old, inclined tree*, to signify *old person, or parent, or ancestor*, and of a small figure, beneath, which is the character for a *son or child*. The last has been supposed to be a modification of a character which appears among the examples, above, of the *Kú Wen*, or ancient *ornamental characters*, with two additional lower lines bending downwards, as a rude delineation of a child. I am satisfied, however, from pretty extensive comparisons, that this character, which means *son*, was originally, as it appears here in the ancient classic form, the representative of *fruit growing upon a branch*, and that

the ordinary character for "Fú," a father, was the delineation of a *branch* or *limb of a tree*—thus :—

## A FATHER.



## A SON.



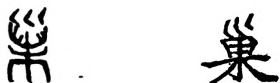
*The branch and its fruit* were thus the highly appropriate emblems of father and son, while the *ancestor* is *the old, decaying tree*. This view is especially strengthened by a comparison with "Kie," the character for an *orphan*, which is the same as that for *son*, but with one of the limbs of the branch stripped off, thus :—



In the character now before us, the emblem of *the son* or *youth*, and that of *the venerable ancestor*, are appropriately united, for the idea of *filial piety*.

## 25.

The next character is "Cháo," a *bird's nest*, a *little house*, a *lodge*.



No one can fail to perceive the design here, notwithstanding the disproportion between the huge nest and the tree upon which it is lodged. The three small characters above, are birds flying over the nest, or the young birds stretching up their necks. I think "kin," *birds, flying things*, not represented here, is an obscure form of this character.

## 26.

The next is "Hwéi," *to break, to destroy, to throw down*.



This I take to be composed of a *tree, a bird's nest, a hand*, and a *stone* or other missile, the appropriate instruments, active and passive, for *breaking* or *destroying*, as any truant schoolboy, even of our day, can testify.

27.

The next is "Sáo," *the song of birds.*



This is composed of a tree and three mouths above it. Perhaps it would be difficult to do better in devising a symbol for the noisy chattering of the feathered inhabitants of the woods.

28.

The next is "Sáng," *a mulberry tree.*



This is simply the tree sign, with a profusion of branches above it. The mulberry is distinguished especially for its leafiness.

29.

The next is "Súng," *a pine tree, a fir tree.*



This is the emblem of a tree, and the picture of the pine burr, or cone, falling from it.

## 30.

The next is "Chá," the *tea-plant, or tree*.



This is a tree beneath, with a *cover* or *shed* character over it, and small vegetable stalks, probably the *tea-leaves*, upon it. The tree may be here merely to indicate the material of the shed or the posts by which it is supported. The design is not altogether obvious; but relates, doubtless, to some process of curing the plant by spreading the leaves on a roof.

It has been observed that the tree sign is employed as the emblem of any species of vegetable stalk. Hence, it is used for *grain*; but in that sense it has a slight bend at the top of the main perpendicular stroke, in the ancient form, apparently representing the bending head or spike of the full or ripe grain. This slight modification cannot be too critically observed. It illustrates what was said of the greater importance, in some instances, of minor lines and variations of form.

## 31.

The following character is "Hó," *harvest, grain, cereal plants.*



## 32.

The next is "Lí," *profit, gain, happiness, sharp.*



This is the tree-sign, as the emblem of grain (with the peculiar bend at the top), together with the symbol of a *cutting instrument*. The idea is that of grain reaped from the fields, as the representative of wealth or *gain*.

## 33

The next is "Hiáng," *fragrance, sweet smell.*



This is *grain*, with a character beneath, which denotes *the sun*. The design is to inti-



mate the fragrance arising from the ripening process of grain-fields or of fruits.

## 34.

The next is "Chá," *to beat, to husk grain by pounding it.*



The design here is that of *grain*, and a *mortar*, within which the emblem of grain is placed.

## 35.

The next is "Wéi," *injustice ; to delegate.*



This is composed of the character for *grain* and that for *a woman*. The design is, possibly, an allusion to the *injustice* and oppression of delegating the field-labor, as the cultivation of *grain*, to females, and so of shirking it on the part of the man ; or, with perhaps equal probability, to the hardship of a woman's bearing heavy burdens, as sacks of grain.

36.

The next is "Kiün," a granary.



The design is as obvious here as in the preceding case of a mortar. It is the emblem of grain in an inclosure.

37.

The next is "Tsieu," autumn, harvest time.



This is the emblem for grain and that for fire, alluding to the heat of the sun in ripening fruits and grain, or to their ruddy look at that season of the year.

38.

The next character is "Pin," to present a petition, to make a communication to a superior.



This I take to be grain, cleaned, heaped up, and covered, ready for use. The lower part

is *grain*, the circles above it are the pyramidal *pile*, and the character at the top is a *cover*. The symbolic allusion is to the necessity of making a present of valuables, as of the fruits of the earth to a great man, when asking a favor of him.

This character, as Callery observes, became quite celebrated, a few years since, in the quarrels between the English and the Chinese Empire, the English firmly refusing to use it, as implying too much submission.

## 39.

The next character is "Tsá," *thorns, thorny*.



This is the *tree-sign* with spikes extending out at the sides to represent the *thorns*. The drawing is a little disproportioned, but the arts, doubtless, had not advanced to their present stage of perfection when this character was invented.

40.

The next is "Tsui," *to reprehend, to punish.*

責 責

This is the thorny tree, emblem of the switch, over the back of a person—or perhaps the emblem for a child—represented by the lower part of the character. This is a tolerably strong intimation of the idea of punishment.

41.

The next character is "Hieu," *to leave off, to finish, to rest.*

休 休

This is the representation of a man resting, as I take it, under a tree, and is a beautiful emblem for the idea intended.

The Biblical idea of rest is, likewise, that of a state in which every man shall "sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree." It is interesting to observe the similarity in the figures by which thought is illustrated by different primitive peoples, no matter how remote from each other.

## 42.

The next is "Tseu," *to go, to proceed, to travel.*

This is the tree character in combination with another (abridged) which denotes *the human foot*, the emblem of *walking*. The tree-sign here is, I presume, the emblem of a staff or walking-cane. It is somewhat corrupted in form, but can still be recognized.

## 43.

The next is "Ching," *a four-horse carriage, a car.*

The design here appears to be *the tree* as the emblem of the wooden material of a carriage, with a covering or canopy over head, and the figures of two men under it. The characters for *men* and those for bamboos are very similar when made small. See that for a man made larger, No. 41.

## 44.

The next is "Kiū," *a canal, an aqueduct.*



This is composed of *a tree, water, and an inclosure.* The emblem of water, as is seen in the ancient form here, and much more clearly when placed at the side of the compound characters, where it is larger, is *a flowing stream.* The design is quite obvious.

## 45.

The next character is "Chá," *wood floating upon water.*



The lower part of this character represents the sun rising above the line of the horizon, and is used for the morning sun. It seems to be transferred, here, to the representation of an *object* rising above the *line* of the surface of the water, and the *tree* is added as an emblem of the floating material intended, namely, *wood.*

46.

The next is "Sì," *anciently, formerly, the past time.*



The design here I presume to be *a tree, fruit on the ground fallen from it, and four men gathering it.* This alludes to harvest time, the completeness of a period. If any one thinks he can invent a better symbol to express so abstract an idea as *past time*, let him suit himself.

47.

The next character is "Léi," *a plow.*



This is the tree, with the emblem above which denotes *land, a field, the soil.* The *land-wood* is appropriately a plow, with a primitive people, who always use the wooden instrument.

48.

The next is "Tsi," *to cultivate the earth, land cultivated by the Emperor himself.*

耜 耜

This is composed of *the plow* (No. 47), *fruit*, and *men in the field*. The plow character itself, being analyzed, as under the preceding number, gives a *tree* and a *field*. This is a good illustration of the way in which the simple characters reappear in composition.

49.

The next is "Mán," *plain, equal, level.*

𡗗 𡗗

This may be two men at the root of a tree, to denote *on a level with the ground*; or, more probably, as the top of the tree is cut off by a line, the small figures below are branches, which have fallen down in the act of *cropping* or *cutting to a level*, as is done in hedges and elsewhere.



50.

The next is "Kien," *a visiting card, to distinguish.*



This is the *tree*, as the emblem of *wood*, with marks or engravings of some sort upon its surface. It is the tree "blazed," as it is called in the new countries of the West; that is, a chip taken off the side of it, so as to leave a flat, white surface. Marks are then inscribed upon the ground so obtained, to indicate *engraving*. An engraved or ornamented chip or bark is *the visiting card*, and the lining out of an engraving is the act of *distinguishing* or demarkation.

51.

The next is "Swéi," *a broom, heat, a comet.*



This is the tree character, representing brush or faggots, repeated, and *a hand* beneath. In

4\*

the ancient form there is also a heart below this, which may have some relation to *heat*, the heart being the furnace of the body. The branchy emblems, both the *tree* and the *hand*, intimate *radiation*, divergence from a common center, as the twigs from the limb, and the fingers from the palm. *A comet* and *a broom* have the same name, obviously from the appearance of the tail of the former and their common property of radiating or diverging.

## 52.

The next is "Kien," to *join together, together, with.*

This is composed of a *hand* clasping and uniting two of the *tree* characters, or a bundle of reeds, a good symbol for the idea. The modern form has the character of a *man* at the top, which is wanting in the ancient; or, more probably, a corruption of the top branches of the trees, which are otherwise wanting.

## 53.

The next is "Lien," *economy, parsimonious, an angle, angular things, honest, poor.*

廉 廉

This is the same as the preceding, with the addition of a *cover*, as the emblem of a house. The idea seems to be *snug or narrow quarters, res angusta domi.*

## 54.

The next is "Kwáng," *to reform, to make straight, to assist.*

匡 匡

This is a tree inclosed and protected, and consequently growing tall and straight.

## 55.

The next is "Shú," *to bind, to tie.*

束 束

This is a tree with a loop around it; a tree encircled.

56.

The next is "Fúng," to oppose each other, to meet.



The design here is that of a tree, or other vegetable growth, growing up under, and coming in contact with, an overhanging object, which it meets, and the two are opposed to each other. This is confirmed by the following:

57.

This is "Kiiü," to curve, to bend, to succumb.



The character above is a shed, house, or covering, and that below represents a vegetable. The idea is the same as the above. Nothing could be better to indicate the collision of a motive body and a stationary resistance, with the consequent necessity of turning out of the way. Compare *ob-stacle*, *ob-struct*, *ob-vious*. The modern character is the more distinct.

58.

The next is "Cha," *an obstacle, an impediment.*

This is a *tree* at the top, *an inclosure* or *field* next, and the character for a *foot* at the bottom. I conceive the design to be a tree fallen across the pathway in a field, and forming an *obstacle* or *impediment* to *progression*.

The following is an exceedingly interesting group of words, involving the *tree* sign as an emblem of the tongue.

59.

This character is "Shui" the *tongue, speech.*

An examination of the ancient form of this character will show the design to be *a tree* and *the mouth*. The tree is placed above the mouth, as if growing out of it—*a tree growing out of the mouth*, emblematic of *the tongue*. This is confirmed by the following characters :

60.

The next is "Cha," *will, determination, project*:



This is *the tree that grows out of the heart*—an emblem of the *determination or designs of the will*. The lower part is the uniform emblem for the *heart and mind*.

61.

The next number is "Yén," *a word, to speak*:



The augmentation at the top of the tree here, seems always to indicate the fruit, bud, flowers, or central clump of foliage of a tree. The design is *the fruit of the tree that grows out of the mouth—the product of the tongue—words, speech*.

## 62.

The next is "I," *intention, signification, opinion:*

意 意

This adds to *the tree* both *the mouth* and *the heart*. The design is, *the fruit of the heart or mind*; that is, the *will* or *determination*, expressed by *the mouth*; and hence *an opinion uttered*, a sense or meaning. This is quite the poetry of etymology. Nothing could be better imagined to express so recondite an idea. It is the outgrowth of the heart, or mind, expressed through the mouth.

## 63.

The next is "Chin," *to talk a great deal:*

詹 詹

Here is *the mouth, the tree*, and various appendages above, which must in some way have signified *abundance, excess*.

64.

The next is "In," *the sound of a musical instrument, voice, accent, pronunciation* :

This is the same character, in the ancient form, as that for "Yen," *a word*, No. 56, except the addition of the line in the mouth, which represents the voice.

65.

The next is "Feu," *to spit* :

This is a modification of the tongue and mouth.

66.

The next is "Kao," *to teach, to accuse* :

This is, in the ancient form, nearly identical with "Shui," *the tongue*, No. 59. *To teach*



is to use the tongue. To *accuse* violently is called, by us, to give a *tongue-lashing*.

67.

The next is "Sin," *bitter, a pungent taste* :



This is the tree—emblem of the tongue—abridged of the mouth-sign. There is nothing very distinctive in it.

68.

The next is "Hung," *noise, fracas* :



This is "Yen," *words, inclosed—sound shut up and reverberating—hence noise*.

69.

The next is "Si," *quiet, a space of time* :



This is the emblem for *a cover at the top, and a tongue below*. The tongue under cover

is significant of *the mouth shut*, equal to *quiet*, or *cessation*.

## 70.

The next character is "Si," *to cleave, to separate*.

The figure to the right of *the tree* is the usual emblem of *an ax*. Wood and an ax are appropriate to the idea of *dividing, cutting asunder*.

## 71.

The next is "Pié," *to divide, to distinguish, another*.

The left half of the character here in the ancient form is still a modification of *the tree*, and the right is another, well-known emblem of *a cutting instrument* of some sort. In some cases, the entire uniformity of the meaning of an emblem fixes with *certainty* its primitive character, although the pictorial resemblance is doubtful.

72.

The next is "Li," *to strike, to split.*

This is *a hand*, a small *tree character*, and something beneath, which may have been also intended for a *rod* or *stick*, the whole constituting the emblem for *striking*.

73.

The next is "La," *cruel, inhuman.*

This is *the tree* hacked or *blazed* by a cutting instrument, and the instrument itself.

74.

The next is "Chang," *to dispute, to quarrel.*

This is composed of a hand and a club, with another form of the character for a hand,

above, denoting a "hand-to-hand" fight, or "*fisticuff*."

75.

The next is "Cha," *to put limits, a rule, law.*

制 制

This is a cutting instrument, *a tree*, and a line across it to denote a hack or *blaze*, such as is made in running lines in a forest *to fix the limits* of a tract of land, or, rather, a line around the tree, as in girdling; probably in use with them instead of the blaze, though not so good, for permanency, since it kills the tree.

76.

The next is "Lài," *to come, to arrive.*

來 來

This denotes *two men at a tree*—probably a rendezvous, or a tree in the plain, which marks a stage or *stopping-place* on a journey. The men are the small figures at the sides of the tree.

77.

The next is "Siang," *mutually, by turns.*

This character is composed of *a tree*, and a character for *the eye*. The design seems to be to indicate the necessity for an *object* and an *agent* in the act of seeing—the tree and the eye *mutually* related. The mind looking out upon nature through the eye, is the *subjective* and the *objective*, the *me* and the *not-me*, the grand *mutuality* or *reciprocity* of existence. The Chinese are prone to abstract generalizations of the broadest cast. Hence *yin* and *yang*, the female and male principles of the universe.

78.

The next is "Shwang," *frozen dew, white frost, ice.*

This is the same as the preceding, augmented by the part above, which is composed of *a tree*

with drops falling from it, and is hence the standard emblem for the *weather* and its various conditions.

Under the preceding character, No. 77, it is shown that the idea of *mutuality* is indicated by bringing into contrast the *active* and the *passive* principle of nature, and their mutual action and reaction. *Incidence* and *reflection*, as of light, is another instance of a similar relation; hence the *eye* and the *tree* (or *landscape*), emblematic of *the mind* and of *external nature as contemplated by it*, are again emblematic of the falling of light upon a brilliant object, and of its being thrown back or reflected by that object. *Frost* or *ice* is that brilliant object; hence, the *eye* and the *tree*, and *the general character for meteorological phenomena*, composed itself of *drops falling from a tree*, constitute a highly philosophical and ingenious picture of the thing intended—a product or phenomenon of the weather, which causes the reflection of light.

This may be viewed as the philosophy of Chinese etymology, as we had the poetry above. It cannot but be interesting to trace these struggles of the human mind to express itself by the aid of an imperfect instrument.

79.

The next is "Kang," *to correct, change, repair.*

更 更

In the ancient form, here, we still detect the *tree*, the upper transverse line being now made straight on account of space, the tree being here the upper half. The lower part is a *branch cut off*, and fallen down. The design is that of *pruning a tree, to correct, change, and improve it—training it into shape.*

80.

The next is "Tsié," *a concubine ; to graft, to engraft.*

妻 妻

This character, united with that of *the tree*, signifies a *graft, to engraft* ; and a close examination of it will suggest the stump of an old tree, or limb in the lower part of the character, into which the upper part, which is the top of a tree, is inserted. The relation of a

concubine to a graft or branch inserted into the regular stock of a family, is clear, and the illustration apt. A concubine introduced into a family, is delicately called a graft, and represented in this character accordingly.

## 81.

The next character below is "Shan," which has now no distinct signification alone; but united with the symbol for water, it means *deep*.



The design here is that of *the tree*, placed under a character which denotes *a cover*—emblematical, probably, of a pole submerged by being plunged under *deep* water.

## 82.

The next character is "Kwan," *tired, fatigued, weary, poverty*.



This is a *tree*, as emblematical of *a vegetable growth*, inclosed from the light and air, and consequently debilitated, *weakened*.



83.

The next is "Ko," *fruit, effect.*



This is the tree surmounted by a ball representing *fruit*. An *effect* is the *fruit* or product of a cause.

84.

The next is "Li," *a chestnut.*



Here is an attempt to distinguish the *burr* by a variety of cross-lines, the best, perhaps, that could be done.

85.

The next is "Pao," *to protect, to watch over; a tutor, a guardian.*



This is a beautiful and poetic emblem for fostering care. It consists of a *man* watching over, and cultivating *fruit* growing upon a *tree*.

## 86.

The next is "Yén," *an office, a duty, a charge.*

任 任

This is the character for a man, along with that for a *king, a kingdom, to reign.* The design is, then, to be inferred of an *overseer, officer, or governor,* and of his function as such, that is, of a *superior, or supereminent person.* I suspect that this character for a *king* is a modification of the *tree* character, and that the original design was to indicate *a very tall tree.* I shall not go further in introducing this form here. See Nos. 91 and 92, and especially No. 93, for confirmation of this idea.

## 87.

The next is "Tsin," *relatives, kindred, to love.*

親 親

I think this is composed of *the old girdle tree* on the left, as the emblem of *old age, ancestry,* and of a form of the character for *a child* on the right, indicating the relations of the old to the young in the family.

88.

The next character is "Cha," *the summit, the apex, up to, chiefly, supremely.*

This is a tree with a cone at the top, to denote the apex or end. Up to (Fr. *jusqu' à*), means *to an end*. *Chiefly, supremely*, means that which is *highest*, which pertains to the *summit*.

89.

The next is "Tao," *to arrive at, to reach, up to.*

This is the same as the preceding, meaning *an end*,—to arrive or reach, is to come to the *end of*,—with the addition of the emblem of *a cutting instrument* to intimate the cutting off of an object, which makes *an end* or terminus. For *up to*, see the preceding explanation. The emblem is ingenious and appropriate.

90.

The next is "Cha," *to cause that, to reach, to arrive at, to go to, to visit.*



This is the same tree and cone for the idea of *end*, with a figure on the right, which from its appearance in the old form, may have been intended to represent *a sling* for projecting a stone, and causing it *to go to, to reach, or to arrive at* an object.

91.

The next character is "Ti," *an emperor, king, genius of heaven.*



The design here is to signalize *the topmost bough or apex of the tree*, as emblematic of the *chief man*, the man occupying the highest position. (Compare Fr. *souverain* and *souverainement*, L. *summus* and *summe*.)

92.

The next is "Tsái," *to govern, to rule, a lord.*

This is the same character, with the addition of *a cover* as the emblem of *protection*, the appropriate duty of reigning or *governing*. The lower transverse line of *the tree* is here straight, to save space, as it often is, when the figure is necessarily small.

93.

The character below is "Chui," *a king, a lord, a governor, a chief.*

It is composed of the character for *germinating, being born*, see No. 136, which is a *tree shooting up out of the soil*, surmounted by a point, to indicate the apex or highest branch. It means highest by birth, or chief. Compare this with No. 86. The lower line of this tree character is probably the line of the surface of the earth, and the middle line is that which would, otherwise, be curved downwards, as the roots.

94.

The next is "Pi," *a king, a model.*

This is the tree on the right, with the clump at the top to denote the *apex*, the *topmost bough*—a prince, and on the left *a cover*, as the emblem of a residence, and *a mouth* below, which is the usual sign of *authority, power to command*. A *model* is a guide or leader, as a *king* is.

95.

The next is "Tsái," *to choose, beautiful.*

The design is that of a *hand* having hold of a *tree-sign*, perhaps as the emblem of a cane, or limb selected from the forest—that which is select, *chosen out*, and *beautiful*. The fact that the small figure above denotes the hand, or the claw of an animal, is proven by numerous comparisons with other characters, in the ancient style, in which it appears.

96.

The next is "Tsin," *to grow*.

This is simply a combination of the *sun*, as the great source of life and *growth*, with *trees* growing and producing fruit.

97.

The next is "Sha," *an affair, a thing, a charge*.

This character appears, by the ancient form, to be composed of *a tree* above and *fruit upon a branch below*. The idea is that of a *product*—a thing brought forth or produced.

98.

The next is "Máng," *luxuriant herbage, a bushy place*:

The middle figure is that of a tree somewhat

distorted, and surrounded by the tops of trees or bushes in profusion.

99.

The next character is "Pú," *trees, plants, place full of shrubs* :



This character is composed of the *tree* with an abundance of foliage, and several figures of *branches* beneath. Exuberance of vegetation was regarded by the inventors of the Chinese system of writing as a proper emblem for the idea of what is estimable, either for beauty or goodness, as will appear from the following examples.

100.

The next is "Shin," *excellent, good, goodness, to perfect* :



This is simply a *tree*, apparently growing from a *mouth*, and so related to the tongue



character—perhaps polite, or “well spoken,”—with abundant foliage.

101.

The next is “Ing,” *excellent, flourishing, beautiful*:

英 英

This is the same design, differently executed. The English word flourishing means *flowering*, and refers to the ornamental part of vegetation.

102.

The next is “Yáo,” *excellent, goodness, illustrious*:

堯 堯

I suspect this to represent the stump of an old tree, putting forth new shoots; the whole is then surmounted by a *tree* character.

In all of this series of words, from 98 to 104 inclusive, the idea of exuberance is indicated by the abundance of the foliage, the repetition of the *tree* or parts of the *tree*. See also No. 135.

5\*

## 103.

The next is "Hwá," *beautiful, elegant, flourishing*:



The figure of the *tree* can still be discerned in this character, ornamented as in the above characters of similar meaning, with extra foliage.

## 104.

The next is "Fúng," *abundant, copious, rich, full*.



The small figures above, in this character, are *trees* inserted in a figure which is the emblem of a *mountain*. The part below is the emblem for *peas* or *pulse, leguminous plants*, and has allusion, probably, to their prolific nature as producing *abundantly*. The repetition of trees on a mountain has reference to the *abundant* forests in mountainous regions.

105.

The next character is "Mí," *rice in the grain, not yet cooked.*

米 米

This is a modification of the tree or vegetable stalk, which always occurs in this sense.

106.

The next is "Mí," *to disturb, to trouble.*

迷 迷

This is the emblem of *walking*, united with that for *rice*, and relates to the trampling down of grain, or disturbing it by walking through it in the fields—a good emblem for the idea.

107.

The next is "Kü," *a fist, a handful.*

米 米

This is the emblem for *rice*, within that for

an *inclosure*. It represents as much rice as can be inclosed in the hand—a good method of denoting the closed hand or *fiſt*.

108.

The next is “Si,” to *examine minutely, minutely*.

The character below is *the heart*, and relates either to the operations of the heart, or of the *mind* or *intellect*. It occurs as often and extensively in one sense as the other. The emblem of rice is here used to represent that which is *minute, small*, and the heart for the mental operation.

109.

The next is “Kí,” *air, breath, spirit, look, appearance*.

The upper character here is the emblem of the *air*; and put here in combination with *rice*, it refers to the operation of winnowing

grain to separate the chaff, making a fine symbol for the idea intended.

110.

The next character is "Hó," *to measure*.

I take the middle and principal portion of this character to be a *pile of wood*, cut and corded up. The small *tops of trees* above it, in the ancient form, indicate the material—wood, and the branch beneath, the *pole* by which it is *measured*. This rendering is confirmed by what follows.

111.

The next is "Tsié," *to cut, to intercept (to cut off)*.

This is the *pile of logs*, the small *tree* character above, to denote the material, and an *ax* or *cutting instrument* on the right.

## 112.

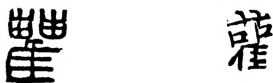
The next is "Ti," a *pheasant*."



The *wings* above indicate a *bird*, so that the character may be translated a *wood-pile bird*, as we say a *barn-yard fowl*. By contraction, leaving off the wings, the lower part of the character, supposed to be the picture of a *wood-pile*, then becomes the generic emblem for *gallinaceous* or "*short-tailed*" birds, the *domestic fowls*, those that stray around the wood-pile, as distinguished from birds in general.

## 113.

The next is "Kwán," a *swan*."



This is another modification of the same sign, and from the appearance of the characters above, in the ancient form, I think it may be rendered the *flower-pot bird*.

## 114.

The next is "Tsá," *to mix, mixed, of all sorts.*

雜 雜

This character, beside the emblem for *gallinaceous birds or fowls*, on the right, has on the left *a tree*, with what plainly appears in the ancient form to be birds hovering over it, thus bringing into one view barnyard fowls and flying or soaring birds—in other words, birds of *all sorts*.

## 115.

The next is "Lo," *a net for catching birds.*

羅 羅

This has the same emblem for *fowl*, with the picture of a *net* above, and of a *cord* or *rope* on the left. The emblem on the left, uniformly employed for a cord, has in it the succession of *loops* which indicates the *knotted cords*, originally used as *records*. At the end it is divided into three strands.

116.

The next is "Hó," *quick, to hasten.*

霍 霍

This is *rain* above, and a *fowl* below. Any one who has observed the sudden flight of hens and chickens betaking themselves to shelter at the commencement of a shower, will perceive the aptness of this emblem of *quickness*.

117.

The next is "Nán," *laborious, pains, trouble.*

難 難

Here on the right, is the character for *the fowl*, and on the left something which I take to be a modification of *the sun rising through the trees*, and the emblem for *country* below. See No. 131. The allusion may be to *cock-crowing* and *sunrise*, as emblematic of *laborious* habits in field labor; or the *wood-pile* may be used in its proper meaning, as the result of hard labor.



118.

The next is "Kiiü," *to examine, to observe, a frightened look.*

This character unites two *eyes*, for a "bright look-out," with the emblem for a *fowl*, an animal almost as renowned for its fearfulness as the hare—hence we speak of a person as *chicken-hearted*. The staring look of a hen when frightened, is very observable.

119.

The next is "Kó," *to fear, to be frightened, to look about.*

This is the same character, with a slight addition at the bottom, which is either a *hand* or a *bough*, perhaps as the object which inspires the fear.

120.

The next is "Tsiên," *a fat bird*.



This is the emblem for a *bird* or *fowl*, with that for a *low* as the instrument for hunting. It refers, probably, to game.

121.

The next is "Hí," *a species of swallow*.



This is the same character with the preceding, with the exception of the addition of the emblem of a *mountain*, probably as the place where this particular kind of bird is apt to haunt, and where it has to be hunted.

It is obvious that, in relation to so minute a matter as the habits of a particular kind of bird, there is much room for mere conjecture, and, perhaps, for mistake, in restoring the primitive idea.

122.

The next is "Hò," *a bird flying up high.*

This is the emblem of a *fowl*, and that of a *cover* or *shed*. The allusion may be to a fowl flying up on a shed or house.

123.

The next character is "Siü," *that which is necessary.*

The lower part of this character is *the tree*, and the upper part the regular emblem for *rain or state of the weather*. (See No. 78.) The allusion is to the necessity of moisture from the heavens to vegetation.

124.

The next is "Leú," *to flow drop by drop, to drop from the eaves.*

The lower part is the emblem of *a state of*

*the weather*, and the upper part that of a *shed* or *house*.

125.

The next is "Kié," *to measure, to fix limits*.



The lower part of the character is the regular emblem for *cord, rope, string*. The part on the right is an emblem for a *knife or sharp instrument*, and that on the left is *the tree*, with a middle stroke for a *blaze or cut as a land mark*. (See Nos. 14, 15, 73.) The design is that of *measuring land and affixing limits*.

126.

The next is "Kíng," *limits, boundaries, infirm*.



This, it will be perceived by a comparison with Nos. 14, 15, 73, 125, is an old tree *blazed or marked*, to denote a *land-mark* or boundary. The form is somewhat corrupted.

127.

The character below is "U," *an edifice, a house, a chamber.*

The upper part of this character denotes a *shelter* or *covering*, as the emblem of a *house*; the lower part, the *tree* with the topmost branch signalized, denotes *lord* or *master*; the two combined serving as a signal for a house or residence.

A man's house is his castle, or *dominion*—that over which he is lord and master. (Compare L. *domus* and *dom-inus*.) No symbol could be better than this.

128.

The next is "Shang," *holy, saint.*

The *tree* below, denotes here, also, that which is high, elevated, *lordly*. The characters above are *a mouth* and *an ear*, denoting both *command* and the *readiness* to listen,—justice and mercy,—the character of a *saint*.

129.

The next is "Tái," *a tower, a terrace, an elevated place, an altar, your lordship.*

This is formed of the *tree*, with the *topmost bough* signalized, and a *cover*, to denote an *edifice* (see No. 127), with a *mouth*, and another *tree* above for *dignity and height*. The *mouth* gives *lordly authority*, and one of the *significations* is *your lordship*.

130.

The next is "Tsín," *to saturate, to penetrate.*

The middle part of this character, in the ancient form, is obviously *the tree*, with the limbs hanging down. The other parts seem to be the branches. The design is not very clear, but probably relates to the pendent position of the branches of a shrub when saturated and dripping with rain.

## 131.

The next character is "Túng," *the east, the eastern regions, orient.*

This is *the sun seen rising through the trees, or behind a tree, and therefore in the horizon, —a proper emblem for the east.*

## 132.

The next is "Shó," *to suck, to absorb, to aspire.*

This is composed of the former character to denote *the morning, the rising sun, and a branch* to denote *vegetation, from which the morning sun absorbs the dew in exhalations—*a beautiful emblem.

## 133.

The next is "Tsáo," *order :*

This is *the morning sun repeated, with the*

addition of *the sun* singly, to denote the regular succession of days caused by the successive reappearance of the king of day—an ingenious emblem of *order* or regularity. The character for “Kin,” *weather, air*, omitted here, seems to be a modification of the rising-sun sign.

## 134.

The next is “Chí,” *order, to arrange* :



This is a row of trees, to denote regularity, *order*, with the addition of a character for the human foot, probably to denote progression.

## 135.

The next is “Shuí,” *to scatter, prodigality, great luxury* :



By consulting the ancient form, it will be perceived that the design here again is that of a tree with a profusion of branches above, and with something lying below, which is proba-



bly a representation of fruit, as the emblem of that which lies *scattered* over the ground.

136.

The following character is "Shang," *to be born ; life ; to beget, to produce, to germinate :*

生 生

By examining the ancient form, it will be readily conceived that the design here is that of a *tree* growing or pushing up out of the *ground*, a good emblem of *production, germination*.

137.

The next is "Chán," *to give birth to a child, to produce ; house, family*.

產 產

This is the same as the preceding, with the addition of a *cover*, for the emblem of a *house*, and something at the top which I take to be a corrupted form of the character for a *woman*. The design is obvious.

## 138.

The next is "Tsáo," *to give rise to, to invent, to build, to create, to go.*

The character at top is that for *birth, production* (see No. 136); below is *a mouth*, and at the bottom *the man and tracks*, the emblem of progression. The design seems to be *production*, and putting into *progression by word of mouth*, as when one *invents* and *promulgates*, or *commands* and *causes to be done*. It will be seen that I have followed the modern form here, rather than the ancient; although by the aid of the modern, the ancient becomes distinct.

## 139.


The next is "Yúng," *the young or budding horns of a deer; young plants.*

The lower part of the character here is the emblem for *an ear*; the upper part *young*

*shoots.* This describes *ear-sprouts*, young shoots growing out by the ear.

## 140.

The next character is "Jé," *a leaf, thin, subtle, fine.*



This is a *tree* with a *hand* for the *branch* or *leaf*, or perhaps the rude delineation of a *leaf* on a large scale. A leaf is a proper emblem of what is *thin*.

## 141.

The next is "Yew," *bland, soft, obedient, supple.*



This is also a *tree*, with long limbs, slender and intertwined, to denote *suppleness*.

The number of characters which I have now exhibited, and attempted to analyze, is 141, embracing substantially all of the elementary characters into which the tree emblem seems

to enter. A few may have escaped my observation ; and there are, perhaps, half a dozen, of the symbolical signification of which I do not yet feel sufficiently confident to venture a conjecture on the subject. If the solutions which I have offered, prove in any good degree satisfactory to the learned, then I have to state that I am certain I should be able to give an equally satisfactory account of most of the remaining emblems of the language, throughout their composition in the elementary characters. Each successive day of study, carried on in the spirit of this kind of investigation, reveals new facts and new beauties for the admiration of the enthusiastic scholar. To my mind, this method of inquiry raises the Chinese written language from the condition of a huge inanimate mass, having to be lifted and carried, to the dignity and interest of a living creature, instinct with reason, which breathes and moves by your side, as you journey on, imparting its own stock of observations and ideas, to enliven and beguile the weariness of the way.

Let us endeavor to gain a neat and precise idea of how much we have already accomplished. At first view, it might seem that we have rendered an account of only 141 charac-

ters out of 30,000, the whole body of the language. But it must be observed that all the characters which I have exhibited as yet, complicated as some of them are, are components or elements of other characters still more complicated. Of these elementary characters, the whole number does not exceed one thousand, and at most a few hundreds. When this number of characters is once learned, the student will never meet with any thing more than new *combinations*, never with *forms* or *shapes* which are absolutely new to him. In examining a compound character, seen for the first time, he will be able to perceive either the appropriateness of the combination to express the new shade of idea denoted by it, or the whimsical want of appropriateness which may have resulted from the *phonetic* plan of forming new characters, which has been already explained, and which has certainly prevailed among the compounds to a considerable extent; the memory finding substantial assistance in either case,—from the association, or else, so to speak, from the disassociation of ideas.

Now, the 141 characters just analyzed, form, say *one-eighth* of the whole number of the elementary characters of the language. If, by

acquiring only eight times as much as has been exhibited in this slight exposition, of matter similar in kind and in the interest which attends the observation of the design which dictated the forms of these early monuments of human thought, the student of the Chinese were to find himself at a point of advancement beyond which he would never meet with any new materials in the structure, but only new adjustments of the old ones,—it will be readily perceived, I think, that the labor of acquiring the Chinese language would be reduced immensely. Though all this anticipation may not be realized, I am already certain that a close approximation of it may be attained.

It is again to be observed, that all those characters which I have called *elementary*, and which were clearly constructed upon the *ideographic*, and not on the *phonetic principle*, while they are the oldest, are at the same time the most common and the most useful characters in the language. They correspond in this respect precisely to the *root-words* of the Sanscrit, the Greek, the German, the English, or other primitive languages, so that by acquiring them the learner has acquired the words of *more frequent occurrence* in the lan-

guage, with almost as much relative certainty as could be obtained by elaborate calculations. They are those words which express the first wants and observations of mankind, and recur continually in all styles. They constitute the nucleus of the language, and, when acquired, the learner may feel that he has already possessed himself of the main citadel of the country which he is endeavoring to conquer.

In the next place, it is only by this preliminary knowledge of the real ideographic power and significance of each primitive symbol and elementary character of the language, that the remaining question can be settled—viz. How many of the compound characters, formed out of them, have been constructed upon the same principle, and how many upon the more modern phonetic contrivance? In other words, it is only by this means that the limits between the ideographic and phonetic developement of the language can be determined.

It has been assumed, as I have already observed, that all the compound characters of the language were constructed upon the phonetic principle, while the construction of the elementary characters was left unaccounted for. This theory disappears at once, however, before a more definite knowledge of the struc-

ture and symbolic significance of the elementary characters. Column after column of the definitions of the compound characters stand out, at once, as obvious and legitimate deductions from the combinations of the symbols of which they consist. These compound characters thus picture forth the idea which attaches to the word they represent, with an aptness and fidelity which could never have resulted from a mere chance aggregation of the parts, such as results necessarily from the phonetic contrivance.

The space to which I feel compelled to confine myself, forbids my going extensively into this branch of the investigation. The following cases, however, will be sufficient to establish the correctness of these positions, though not to indicate the extent to which they hold good; and with them I will close the present essay.

“Hung,” composed of the emblem of *words* within that for an *inclosure* (see No. 68), means *noise, fracas*, from a reference to the reverberation of confused sound.

Combined then with the character for a *stone*, it means *the rushing noise of stones*, as in a stream of water.

Combined with the character for *metal*, it means *the noise of a bell or brazen drum*.

Combined with the character for *leather*, as



the emblem, I presume, of a strap, which the Chinese magistrates are in the habit of using rather liberally, it means *to interrogate a culprit, inquisition, or investigation*, and has reference, probably, to punishment for the purpose of forcing a confession, and the howling or cries of the victim.

Now, all these several different senses, *except the last*, are signified in the spoken language by the same vocal syllable; and, hence, the composition of the characters *might* be accounted for on the phonetic theory, if all symbolic appropriateness were wanting. But how account for a generic meaning running through the composition of the written characters, precisely similar in kind to that which attaches to the vocal syllable, otherwise than by admitting that symbolization presided over their formation? No one can reasonably doubt that it was the idea, and not the sound merely, which dictated the composition of the characters in such a case,—in other words, that the compound characters were made up upon the same plan as the so-called simple or elementary characters which we have previously examined. It is time enough to resort to the phonetic solution

when we fail to trace an ideographic reason for the combinations under examination. I will add a few other illustrations:

“Tsà,” the emblem of a thorny tree, signifies *thorns* or *thorny*. (See No. 39.)

Combined with the character for *water*, it signifies in one pronunciation *fine rain*, and in another *to spot*, as by sprinkling a liquid. The connection between the idea of a *sharp point*, as of a *thorn* or *pin*, and that which is *minute*, as *fine drops* or *small specks*, is obvious. *To dot* is nearly the same as *to prick*, while *dot*, *spot*, *speck*, are the same.

Combined with the character for *words*, it means a *biting reproach*, a *satire*. The French call this *piquoterie*, from *piquer*, to prick; and the Germans say *stechelwort*, for a sarcastic expression, from *stechen*, to prick.

Combined with the character for *a knife*, it means *to prick*, *to wound*; an idea intimately associated with that of a sharp point, as a thorn.

Combined with the character for *the heart*, it denotes *to complain*; that is, to be pricked or pained in the heart.

Combined with the character for *sickness*

or *disease*, it signifies the *chills of fever*, which may not inaptly be regarded as a piercing or prickling sensation of cold.

Combined with the character for *traveling*, viz. *a man astride*, and *tracks*, it means to *hasten, quick*; the idea being pretty evidently that of *spurring on* and quickening the motion of the traveler.

Combined with the character for a *bamboo*, it also signifies to *stimulate, to prick*, the bamboo being a *stick* or instrument for *thrusting, punching, or goading*.


Combined with the character for *plants, herbage, grass*, it means also the same thing, to *prick, to wound, thorns*. The relation of idea here is testified to by the English word a *spear* of grass, referring rather, perhaps, to its shape than to its actual ability to *pierce*.

Combined with the character for a *hand*, it signifies to *elect, to choose*, that is to *pick out*. This idea is quite cognate to that of *pricking*. Thus, the French verb *piquer* is related in form to the English verb to *pick*, but in meaning to the verb to *prick*. The original idea of selecting or *picking* is that of thrusting forth the hand, and *hitting* a particular object, by way of designating it as that upon which the choice falls.

Let us, in the next place, take up "Péi," a character which I have expounded as denoting a log of wood, the tree cut off at both ends (see No. 13). Considered as an emblem, it denotes the meaning of the spoken word which it represents, which is *big*. By way of illustrating the mode of forming the compound characters, I will also give all those into which this simple character enters.


## 1.

The first is "péi," to fear, fearing, thus:

 The right hand half is "péi," the log of wood, meaning *big* (see No. 13), which we may assume as a general emblem for the idea of *big, fat, swelling*; and the left hand part is the contracted form of the emblem for the *heart*, such as it always appears when it comes on the *side* of the primitive or main part of a compound character. The *heart* is here what is called the *radical, modifier, or key* of the character; and the *log of wood* the *primitive*, or so-called *phonetic*. The combination may be interpreted *big heart*, an allusion to the swelling sensation at the heart caused by *fear*, which is sometimes described as "the heart coming up into the mouth."


## 2.

The next is "péi," *obstruction of the intestines*, thus:

 The character to the left and above, is the emblem for *sickness, disease*. The compound may be interpreted *big belly*, in allusion to the swelling caused by obstruction.


## 3.

The next is "péi," a *broad face*, thus:

 The primitive is here on the left. The character on the right is the emblem for the *human head or face*. The symbolization is completely descriptive.


## 4.

The next is "péi," *the name of a city*, thus:

 The character on the right is the emblem of a *city or inclosure*. This is equivalent to *Big Town*.


## 5.

The next is "péi," *a ferocious animal, with its hair standing on end from rage, hair erect*, thus:

 The primitive is here below; the character above is the emblem of *long hair, mane*. The composition is sufficiently descriptive—a big creature with long or erected hair.


## 6.

The next is “péi,” *a red horse, a swift horse, greatly*, thus:

 The character on the left is the emblem for a *horse*. Perhaps it would not be taking too great a liberty to render this symbol by the phrase “very much of a horse.”


## 7.

The next is “péi,” *drunk, satiated*, thus:

 The character on the left is the emblem for *wine*. It is the rude imitation of a wine-press. The idea is evidently that of *much wine, rather more than a moderate charge*. The North American Indians in speaking English, say “big drunk.”


## 8.

The next is “péi,” *to desire ardently, to be annoyed that one cannot obtain what he desires*, thus:

 The character on the left here is the *tree*. Probably it is here the emblem of *fuel*, and alludes in that manner to *burning desire*; or some change may have taken place, the character for *fire* not being very dissimilar. In one case, it would be the *fire-wood*, as suggestive of fire and heat; and the other, *wood* and *fire*, as still more descriptive of the same idea.


## 9.

The next is “*péi*,” *a kind of wheat, the grain of which splits or divides*, thus:

 The character on the left is the emblem of *wheat*. The whole may be rendered *big* or *double wheat*.


## 10.

The next is “*péi*,” *pottery not yet baked*, thus:

 The character on the left is the emblem for *earth*. We have all heard of the “*big-bellied bottle*;” and as pottery most frequently assumes the bulbous shape, and is made of earth or clay, perhaps it could not be more appropriately symbolized.

## 11.

The next is "péi," *a young wolf*, thus:

The character on the left is inter-  
 changed with the radical, which  
 means *a dog*. A small or young  
 wolf might properly enough be symbolized  
 as a *big dog*, or, more probably, the dog-  
 emblem is applicable to all canine animals, of  
 which the wolf is a *big* specimen.

## 12.

The next two compounds are "péi," both  
 meaning *fetus, recent pregnancy, to be preg-*  
*nant.*





The character on the left of the first of these  
 compounds is the emblem of a *woman*; that  
 on the left of the second is the emblem of  
*flesh* or *meat*. The primitive signifying *big*,  
 the symbolization is descriptive and obvious.




## 13.

The next is "péi," *strong, robust, courageous.*

 This is the emblem for *big*, united with that for a *man*—a good symbol for the idea.


## 14.

The next is "péi," *the noise of spitting, dispute, quarrel.*

 This is *big* and a *mouth*—quite a suggestion of the idea.

## 15.

The last is "Wái," *lame, crooked, oblique.*

 The character below (reckoning the middle stroke as belonging to it) is the emblem for the *human foot* (leaving the upper part contracted in a manner in which it often appears to be). The symbolization is, therefore, almost identical with the English *club-foot*.