

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### THE CHINESE CHAIR AT COLUMBIA.

The foundation of chairs of Chinese language and literature at our universities is a highly significant symptom of the broadening spirit of civilisation. It is to be hoped that the many mistakes made in former years by almost all governments of the white race in their dealings with our yellow brothers (in which of course the latter are by no means blameless either) will be more and more avoided the better we become acquainted with the peculiarities of their civilisation. If we wish them to accept our views and methods in matters of politics, science, ethics, and religion, we must first show them that we appreciate their good qualities. Happily we are making good advances, and the time will come when every great educational institution that makes any pretense of being abreast of the times will have to follow the example of Columbia University.

Professor Hirth proposes to open courses for beginners as well as for advanced students; he will have seminary exercises and also deliver lectures for university students and the general public who do not possess any knowledge of the language.

In his practical study of Chinese characters for beginners Professor Hirth will aim to impress upon the student's memory a stock of ideograms such as are of the most frequent occurrence in the written language. Selected characters collected and arranged according to the frequency of their occurrence will be written on cardboard tablets, on the back of which the sound and meaning of the character is to be noted. By the aid of these tablets the student will be able to practice until he is absolutely familiar with the shape, sound, and meaning of the characters. The structure of these characters, their hieroglyphic origin, grammatical bearing, and any peculiarity of meaning attaching to the words they represent, will be shown as examples occur. So soon as a couple of hundred are mastered, attempts to form short sentences will be made by placing certain tablets side by side, an opportunity being thus afforded to illustrate the rules of position in what may be termed Chinese grammar.

This study will be continued until students are in possession of say about 1,000 characters, after which they will be introduced to the use of Chinese and English dictionaries. Explanations regarding sound and tone will be given, followed by a review of the various systems of transcription. Numerous exercises in the use of the dictionary from every point of view will follow.

In the Seminary for the study of Chinese Government matters, special attention will be paid to the latest development of the Chinese Government in connection with its history since the year 1898. A foundation will also be laid towards

acquiring a good knowledge of the epistolary style and of the running handwriting in which familiar letters are penned.

Other seminary courses will be devoted to research work in the ancient and mediæval history of Central Asia in connection with the discoveries made by modern explorers in Eastern Turkestan, and also based on the Chinese literature regarding the various branches of Chinese culture such as bronzes, stone sculptures, porcelain, pictorial art, and objects of daily life in connection with certain exhibits in the ethnographical department of the American Museum of Natural History and objects borrowed from private collections.

### A NEW FIELD FOR PHILOSOPHY.

*To the Editor of The Open Court :*

The following narrative, while it was in the making, seemed to express a criticism, an account of an experience, a confession of faith, "an insight and a plan of action." Now that it is cold it seems rather a grotesque conglomerate. Nevertheless it may suggest as well as anything I could say, an opportunity, which it seems to me the philosophical world strangely ignores, to do the American people an immense service. I do not see how else the professional world is to come out of its emotional "spree." The workingman naturally follows where the educated lead him. Nothing is to be hoped for from the press so long as advertising rates vary in proportion to circulation—and that condition may be expected to hold. Plenty of business men see plainly that our great new social problems have no real existence but are only a false appearance due to the fact that in recent years that public sentiment for law and order on which everything we have is based, has sadly degenerated. But they would not be listened to.

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION.

A few years ago a friend prevailed upon me to cut business for a bit and make a little excursion with him into the region of philosophy. I learned there, to my surprise, that the traditional firing into the air, for which the inhabitants of that region have acquired some reputation, has had the effect of creating, at last, a small but apparently very promising rain belt. A very direct route, moreover, was open to this promised and promising land, and it came to pass that after my first visit I fell into the way of making little personally conducted excursions of my own into this interesting country. Even the especially arid districts came to have a certain attraction. The remains of the extreme prototype of our statisticians I found there in those deserts; also the limit of stock-jobbing—accounts of a world whose ultimate issue was nothing but water. Airy worlds too, and fiery worlds, had been begun and had ended there before ours of the earth earthy established its present supremacy.

Many an idle hour I spent in the "Bad Lands" of that wilderness, watching the antics and contortions of grave and spectacled gentlemen who endeavored to move things without motion, or construct things out of nothing. And always there was the joy of listening to the skinless and bootstrapless fraternity—those late fit dwellers in that barren land. "Place your hand upon my arm," one of these would say, "Skin? Sure, are you? Well, I'm not. Maybe I have a skin, maybe I haven't. Positive knowledge is impossible. Never thought of that, did you? Tell you how I know—don't know, I should say. It's this way, (here he swung his arms and jumped strenuously, squirmed and twisted). See? Can't jump out of