

PREFATORY NOTE

The collection of East Asiatic literature, now numbering more than 100,000 volumes, occupies all the shelf area of an entire story (the twelfth) in the new northeast bookstack. These commodious and well-lighted quarters (see floor plan, facing p. 245) include also ample desk space for research work, as well as abundant shelf room for expansion of the collection. (See illustrations facing pp. ii and iii.)

In presenting his report of the year's accessions in this field, Doctor Swingle, to whose enthusiasm and exertions all recent developments of the collection are due, transmitted the following reflections of such pertinent general interest as to warrant their inclusion here in full:

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF CHINESE BOOKS IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE CHINESE PEOPLE AND THEIR CIVILIZATION

At this time, when the Chinese people are going through a very troublous period and when many of the old traditions are rapidly losing force and the newer ideas being taken over from western countries have not yet been sufficiently mastered to give a stable administrative procedure, it is perhaps worth while for thoughtful people the world over to pause for a moment and inquire just what are the qualities of the Chinese people and what have been the methods that have enabled them to maintain for many thousand years, almost uninterruptedly, a very high standard of civilization. Had the Chinese been a barbarous people without printed records they would long ago have been completely studied and thoroughly understood by western peoples, but instead of being barbarous, they are a highly civilized people having a well-developed historical sense and probably the most magnificent set of records to be found in any country in the world. The enormous number and wide scope of these records has operated to keep them practically a sealed book to the western world. Here, indeed, we are in the presence of an embarrassment of riches—a mass of documents and of records so colossal that the