

provinces, but it is probable that there are more than one hundred. In the province of Fuh Kian there are at least five, each one unintelligible in all other districts.

There was a time when the European languages were deemed unfit for the use of learned men, and when all books were written in Latin, so that a man who could not read Latin was shut off from all the literature of the age. Whatever then might be a man's native language, it was necessary for him to learn to read Latin. This is the case in China at the present day. No books are to be found in one's mother tongue; the language of books must be acquired by long and patient study. But, unlike the Latin, the written language of China can neither be read aloud intelligibly, nor spoken. There are so few sounds in this monosyllabic language, that the name and sound of a character give no certain clue to its meaning. By the people of the different provinces the names of the characters are uttered so differently that they are unintelligible to each other. The literati of China have therefore no spoken language adapted to their use in conversation on elevated subjects. The Chinese scholar gives and receives instruction solely from the printed page. If conversation on topics of science or literature be attempted, the defects of the spoken language are supplemented by the introduction and interpolation of well known and trite citations from the books. Some "book-phrases" have thus become a part of the ordinary colloquial language of the common people and are perfectly understood by all. Other phrases, less frequently cited among the uneducated, are in constant use among the literary, and serve to make up for the meagre vocabulary of the colloquial dialect. Chinese pedants employ so many of these "book-phrases" in their ordinary conversation that they are not understood by men of considerable literary culture.

*The Mandarin or Court Dialect, the only common language throughout China.*

For many centuries Nankin was the capital of China, and its spoken language has maintained to the present day its position as the court dialect of the whole Empire. A Chinese, who can read the books with the Nankin pronunciation of the characters, and can speak the Nankin colloquial, may converse freely on any subject with men of like training from any part of the Empire. The Chinese officers, and indeed those seeking official positions, all speak this dialect, without