The Chinese Educational Exhibit
at St. Louis.
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THE PROJECT.

The Louisiana Purchase Exposition was planned as an educational exposition. It was to show processes, causes and relations, rather than mere results. Partly by virtue of this intent, Education was set down as Department Number I, among the score or so of departments of the great Exposition. It was also partly in view of this central educational idea of the Exposition that China, for the first time in her history, prepared and sent an official exhibit of education.

Everyone knew that China was behind in the educational race. Everyone knew that she had no educational system of the modern type and could make no pretense to measure strength with other great nations on the lines marked out by modern educational thought. But not everyone knew, or, knowing, did not consider, that China was grappling, feebly perhaps as yet, but inevitably, with an educational problem of a very definite character and of unprecedented magnitude—the problem of developing a thought-life that should make the nation fit to survive, and of conserving the admirable elements of the old civilization while nurturing the new. Here was an opportunity, as it seemed, for an object-lesson of the most thorough-going sort, in accordance with the primary purpose of the exposition, and in its great central department.
It was not strange that there should be official hesitation to undertake an educational exhibit. In the catalogue of Chinese exhibits at the Paris Exposition of 1900 there had been occasion to make but one entry under the Department of Education, which was as follows:

"Class 5.—Special Instruction in Agriculture. (Chinese Government—Shanghai.) Two illustrated volumes.—Copies of *K'ing Chih Ch'iao T'u*—on the cultivation of rice, and on silk."

Could more be sent now that was worth the showing? The situation was canvassed, and finally, after a definite project had been brought before the Chinese Exposition Commission by the Executive Committee of the Educational Association of China, a sub-committee, consisting of Dr. Gilbert Reid and the writer, was officially authorized to communicate with teachers throughout China and to collect an exhibit. This was on June 4th, 1903, less than eleven months before the opening of the Exposition, and just as schools were closing for vacation.

The authorities at St. Louis had taken an active interest in the project. The Chief of the Department of Education wrote: "It has been one of my strongest desires to secure from the Orient some adequate exposition of educational methods and standards."

In the same spirit, the committee's first circular letter, presenting the project to the teachers of China, said: "Education in China, in the modern sense, may almost be said to be conspicuous by its absence. For this very reason, paradoxical as it may seem, modern education in China must have its place in the Educational Building at St. Louis. A showing of what China is trying to do and how it is being done, both by native initiative and by foreign agencies, will help in many ways the progress of the work. The general interest of the world in China and her problems, at this time, demands that there be a fair presentation of this, her most urgent problem, to the teachers of the world."

The responses to this circular were generally encouraging, but by no means unanimous. Teachers naturally hesitated to make a display of work
which was still only half developed or barely begun. The Boxer cataclysm in North China had swept away the material part of many leading schools and colleges; their actual work was brand new, with glowing prospects but meagre facts. Assurances of co-operation came, however, from all parts of China and from Hongkong—not only from mission schools but from provincial officials, foreign public schools, and native private schools. A list made up in St. Louis, as the basis of a catalogue of the educational exhibit, to be published by the Chinese Government, contained, if I remember aright, the names of nearly 200 institutions which participated as exhibitors.

Successive circulars and unnumbered letters were sent out, in the effort to get an exhibit as complete and systematic as possible. The daily press, English, Chinese and French, gave generous support to the movement. The committee made a hard try at getting the Government to send to St. Louis a few advanced students or graduates of Anglo-Chinese Colleges; these would have been the best interpreters of the exhibit and would have topped it out, besides gaining a great schooling for themselves; but this was not done. Most devoted assistance was given by educational leaders at various centres, in organizing co-operative exhibits from schools in their respective localities, especially by the Rev. (now Bishop) L. H. Roots, of Hankow; the Rev. D. L. Anderson, of Soochow; Miss Harriet Osborne of Foochow; Mr. W. Drew Braidwood, of the Ellis-Kadoorie Schools; the Rev. J. H. Judson, of Hangchow; Prof. H. E. King, of Peking, and many others. Valuable service was also rendered in collecting exhibits of special character, as, for instance, the work of native private schools in Shanghai, by Mr. Theodore Wong; musical instruments, by Miss Laura M. White; girls' industrial work, by Miss Mathews of Hangchow, and Mrs. A. P. Parker of Shanghai; and tabulation of school statistics, by the Rev. Geo. W. Hinman. The peculiar significance of books and other printed matter in Chinese education was emphasized in an extensive collection which attempted to comprise the whole field of our educational literature, in twelve groups, as follows, the selections being made by the following specialists at Shanghai: modern text-books in Chinese, Dr. A. P. Parker; text-books for teaching Chinese to the Chinese, Rev. E. Box; books for teaching foreign languages to the Chinese, Dr. J. C. Ferguson; systems of "Romanization," Rev. J. A. Silsby; books in Chinese for general reading, Rev. D. MacGillivray; books produced by native publishing houses, Rev. J. Darroch; Scriptures, Dr. J. R. Hykes and Mr. T. D. Begg; general religious books, Mr. D. Willard Lyon; Chinese textbooks of the old type, Rev. S. I. Woodbridge; books for foreigners learning Chinese, Dr. G. F. Fitch; newspapers and periodicals (chiefly his own private collection), Rev. E. Box; selected books concerning China, Dr. T.
Richard. Finally, with a view to getting expert interpretation of the present educational situation in China, a series of monographs were secured, prepared by leading educationists and others, and these were published as a special educational number of the East of Asia.

THE EXHIBIT.

The section assigned to China in the Palace of Education was excellently situated on one of the main aisles, and comprised a rectangle, 60 x 30 feet, with wall space extending indefinitely upward toward the lofty roof-arches. Half the long front was closed in with a partition whose outer face was tastefully hung with Chinese art scrolls. The view, looking in through the open half, was very attractive, the eye being caught at once with brilliant scrolls in Chinese character, and other Oriental adornments, high on the wall at the rear. Entering the enclosure, however, the visitor was wont to find himself in a maze of ambiguity—for the peculiar characteristic of the exhibit was its mingling of the symbols of culture of East and West. Immediately in front, occupying the middle of the floor-space, loomed a large model of the Hall of the Classics at Peking. On the right of this stood a model of the very modern Nanyang College of Shanghai, showing the whole campus in a ground plan about 10 x 12 feet in size—the buildings executed with perfect accuracy of form in Ningpo white-wood, the top of the clock-tower having an elevation of about twelve inches. Opposite the Nanyang College, a model prefectural examination hall, of traditional Chinese type, filled a large space—with its crow's nest masts, in front, three or four feet high. Beyond this, again, the side spaces were taken up with models of the International Institute to be built at Shanghai, and the Gotch-Robinson Memorial College and Museum at Chingchowfu.

Around the central area, a continuous line of tables occupied the space adjacent to the walls. On these tables were displayed specimens of pupils' work, chiefly bound volumes of exercises and photographs, but including also some industrial-school products. Most of the tables were built like show-cases, with hinged lids of glass, under which were arranged the great groups of educational literature collected by the special committee. A few additional show-cases, in the open area, were devoted to the display of fine embroideries and drawn work from girls' industrial schools, and a remarkable collection of dolls, illustrating Chinese costumes and social ceremonies; others were occupied with special exhibits from schools for the blind and schools for the deaf, and with musical instruments. The wall-space immediately above the tables was chiefly taken up with photographs, of large size, of which there was a great profusion. These, as well as the various specimens of pupils' work, defied classification by grades and were accordingly
grouped on a geographical basis, beginning with North China on the left. Here Mukden College was the outpost, followed by all Chihli, Taiyuenfu and Shantung. The Yangtze Valley began with a modest contribution from Szechuan and a large exhibit from Wu-han, including a rich array of military school photographs and other material sent by the Viceroy. Exhibits from girls' schools were particularly notable in the case of Kiukiang, Nanking and Chinkiang. Soochow's collection included the girls' industrial work and an elaborate outfit of insignia of official literary degrees, contributed by the Governor. In the extensive section assigned to Shanghai, the photographic display had a life-size likeness of the late Y. Ching-chong as its central feature. Several prefectures of Chekiang were well represented. The various schools and colleges at Foochow sent carefully-prepared exhibits, including kindergarten work and products of the "romanized" press. Passing on down the coast, and including the schools of Amoy and Swatow, the circuit was finished with a particularly imposing display from Canton and Hongkong, whose contributions showed more co-operative system than probably those of any other section.

Still above the line of photographs, and covering the higher reaches of the walls, were hung large-lettered charts of "romanization" systems, which were represented here in unexpected variety of dialects; music-charts adapted
to Chinese airs; and some very interesting maps, specially prepared, showing the distribution of schools in particular provinces, such as the new government secondary schools in prefectural cities in Chihli, the day-schools of the Methodist Mission in Fuukien, etc. Here were also maps of China, in native character, and numerous general maps made especially for use in Chinese schools.

As showing that China actually has institutions carrying on regular courses of college grade, the full exhibits of work from such institutions as the Shansi University at Taiyuenfu, the Peking University of the Methodist Mission, and St. John's College, Shanghai, were especially

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impressive. As a type of native school doing practical work, the Canton Guild School of Shanghai, with its elaborate collections of students' exercises, was worthy of note. A series of bound volumes, showing actual kindergarten work done in the American Board Mission School at Foochow, was peculiarly interesting. One of the remarkable incidents of the exhibit was the bringing together of several different systems of teaching the blind, as practised by teachers in different parts of China, some of whom had not known of systems used by some of their fellow-workers. In general, one great benefit of the exhibit ought to be the opportunity afforded to teachers in China to see what their colleagues are doing.
LESSONS TO BE LEARNED.

We have remarked that the ensemble of the exhibit, at first glance, was striking and attractive. But little closer examination was needed to discern its defects. The visitor's second impression, on looking about, was likely to be this: "Here is a rich variety of interesting work, from kindergarten to college, from music to basketry, from essays on Confucius to paraphrases of Sherlock Holmes; it has been shown with great pains, by models, photographs, charts, text-books, written work, handiwork—a wonderful display in its content, but quite lacking in method as a whole"—and it would be a just judgment. Our exhibit, as a whole, failed in the chief object of the Exposition—the orderly showing of processes. It had no unity.

Considering the short period afforded for preparation, and the crude materials which most schools had to use, the exhibit was highly creditable to individual institutions. But it had been impossible for any central authority to prescribe forms of plans and details of execution early enough to give the various institutions uniform standards to observe in preparing exhibits. Nobody knew what could be done—nor even, at first, whether anything could be done; it was a new and untried field. Moreover, there was not even the opportunity to arrange the varied contributions in a semblance of logical order before shipment; and when it came to St. Louis, no one officially connected with the exhibit had any particular acquaintance with educational work in China. But, had these circumstances been otherwise, the essential conditions of educational work in China would not have been changed. If the exhibit was a jumble, it was, in being so, all the more truly a representative exhibit. Had it shown an orderly system it would have shown what does not exist in China.

What modern education in China most needs is modern organization—not schemes which remain on paper, but practical plans carried out under expert and sympathetic leadership. To attain such a result requires decision and persistence. It is a singular coincidence that the year 1871, in which Yung Wing secured Imperial approval of his scheme for a Chinese Educational Mission to America, was the very same year in which Japan inaugurated her system of modern schools and established an Imperial department of education. Japan persisted steadily in her educational advance—and the world knows the results. China started, hesitated, then halted, and stood still for twenty years; and to-day she would fain have Japan for her teacher. Japan's exhibits at St. Louis were the perfection of organization; and organization is the greatest lesson that Japan can teach China.
To two classes of people who visited the Exposition the Chinese Educational Exhibit was doubtless a rare delight: to the curiosity hunters who were charmed with its novelties; and to the sinologues—for a few famous old China hands were there—who could look beneath the surface and see progress and promise in it all. But there were also in attendance a great body of Western thinkers—especially during the World-Congress of Arts and Science—many of whom are keenly interested in China and would gladly have seen more proofs of the quickened thought-life of her people than this exhibit revealed. The number of such sympathetic students will be still greater when another international exposition finds China, as we trust it may, with an organized system of education, in orderly process of development. When all is said and done, the fact that shines with brightest promise for China is the fact that nations are contending less for military aggrandizement, and meet now rather in strenuous strife for the trophies of intelligence and righteousness; for out of such strife come helpfulness and brotherly kindness and the beauty of complete living.