

THE TIMES. 6 JAN. 1914.

THE CHINESE ENCYCLOPEDIA.

VOLUME LENT TO THE LONDON
LIBRARY.

Mr. Wilfred Merton is lending to the London Library for a few weeks from to-day a volume containing two sections of the famous Chinese Encyclopedia, which he was fortunate enough to pick up for a small sum in the shop of a London firm of booksellers.

The volume, which has been carefully bound by Miss Katherine Adams, of the Radburgha Bindery, Broadway, Worcestershire, comprises sections 19,865 and 19,866, and chiefly deals with the subject of bamboos. The "Yung Lo Ta Tien," or "Great Dictionary of Yung Lo," comprises, as pointed out by Professor Herbert A. Giles in the *Nineteenth Century* of April, 1901, 22,877 separate sections bound up into 11,100 volumes, "each half an inch in thickness; so that, were all the volumes laid flat one upon another, the column thus formed would reach a height of 450ft., or nearly 46ft. higher than the top of St. Paul's."

A large portion of this famous Encyclopedia was destroyed when the Han-lin College was set on fire in the Boxer riots in June, 1900. A portion, rather over 200 volumes, of the Encyclopedia soon after found its way to the Chinese Secretary's office of the British Legation, where the pile was noticed on the floor by an old Han-lin scholar, Hu Yu-fên, whose delight at the discovery was almost boundless, and who was apparently the first person to recognize the supreme national importance of the discovery. In the spring of 1902, by the instructions of Sir E. Satow and at the suggestion of his Chinese secretary, Mr. C. W. Campbell, C.M.G., the volumes were handed over to the old Han-lin scholar, who was a personal friend of Mr. Campbell, to be restored to the Chinese Government.

It has apparently not yet been made known how many of the volumes have been recovered by the Chinese Government. Soon after the siege of Peking nine of the sections found their way to England; and a *résumé* of these volumes, with their sectional numbers, is given by Professor Giles in the article above-mentioned. How many other sections found their way out of China cannot be stated. Mr. Merton's volume adds two more sections to the nine described by Professor Giles. As stated in *The Times* of December 2 last, in a notice of Mr. Edmund Backhouse's munificent donation of Chinese books to the Bodleian, five volumes of the Great Encyclopedia are now in the British Museum; whilst, through Mr. Backhouse's gift of six volumes, seven are at the Bodleian, where one of them is now on exhibition.

The Great Encyclopedia of China easily ranks as the biggest literary undertaking in the world, having had over 2,000 scholars engaged in its compilation, a total of 917,480 pages, and 366,992,000 characters.

