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A "SUNG DYNASTY" PRINTING

MOST significant among recent additions to the library is a specimen of early Chinese printing, for which we are indebted to the generosity of Arthur G. Robinson, '06. For many years the oldest incunabulum in the Colby Library was a Venetian book printed in 1492. Recently, as announced in a previous issue of this *QUARTERLY*, we acquired another product of Venetian printing, dated 1476. Mr. Robinson's gift now pushes the date of our "earliest printing" back more than two hundred and fifty years—well before the time of Gutenberg and the "invention" of printing in Europe.

A few weeks ago a California bookseller offered for sale at \$400 a single leaf of the Gutenberg Bible, together with an essay by A. Edward Newton from which the bookseller's catalogue quoted: "Reader: Pause a while, for you look—and it may be for the first time—upon an actual page of a Gutenberg Bible, the most precious piece of printing in the world; and admittedly the earliest. Truly a noble fragment."

Well, the Colby Library has its own leaf from a Gutenberg Bible, and it *is* a precious piece of printing. But Mr. Newton was wrong in calling it "admittedly the earliest." We now have a much earlier specimen of printing.

What Mr. Robinson has given us is a double-page (i.e., two pages which illustrate the "butterfly-binding" found in many Chinese books) from a historical work of the Sung Dynasty. Since this dynasty had its beginning as far back as 960 A.D. and lasted until 1280, Sung printing might be

186 Colby Library Quarterly

dated anywhere in this stretch of over three hundred years. Thanks, however, to the expert assistance of Professor Cartright Goodrich, of the Department of Chinese in Columbia University, we can be more specific. Dr. Goodrich has identified our specimen as being page 467 (in Chapter Ten) from a book of thirty chapters entitled *Tu Shih Kuan Chien* (a short *Outline of History*) by Hu Yin (1098-1156). This writer had a personal library of several thousand volumes and, about 1121 A.D., he was made what we call a Doctor of Literature. Hu Yin of China died the year before Richard the Lion-hearted of England was born. If Hu Yin saw his own book through the press, we might date it about 1150 A.D.; but Nancy Lee Swann, Curator of the Gest Oriental Library in The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, thinks that Hu Yin did not live to publish his book. She states that the work was not published until about 1215 (the Magna Charta year in England) by a nephew of Hu Yin.

There will, of course, not be many readers in the Colby Library who will share with Mr. Robinson and with Dr. Goodrich and Dr. Swann the ability to read these pages from the Chinese history-book; but their value to us, as an example of printing done centuries before the art made its appearance in Europe, may be made clearer by a quotation from Thomas F. Carter's *The Invention of Printing in China* (New York, Columbia University Press, revised edition, 1931, pp. 23, 24, 55):

China invented movable type . . . [but] . . . the printing . . . of the Sung era . . . is printing from wooden blocks. . . . Feng Tao . . . is usually regarded by Chinese as the inventor of printing, and holds much the same place in Chinese history that Gutenberg holds in that of Europe. From his day printing became a fine art. The books of the Sung Dynasty have never been surpassed in printing skill. Chinese books printed from modern type cannot compare with them. . . . Printed books of the Sung Dynasty (960-1280) can be found in many private libraries of China and Japan and in the leading national libraries of Europe. They are as a rule the most perfect specimens of the block printer's art and have never been surpassed in technique.

Colby Library Quarterly 187

Whatever may have been true of the leading national libraries of Europe, there are extremely few Sung printings in American libraries. There are none at Columbia, although there are *copies* of Sung books there. Dr. A. K. Chiu, librarian of the Chinese-Japanese Library of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University, reports only three Sung printings in his library, and these do not include Hu Yin's *Tu Shih Kuan Chien*. In the Gest Oriental Library at Princeton, where there are 697 fasciculi of Sung Dynasty printing, the copy of Hu Yin's book is a seventeenth-century reprint, an edition by Chang P'u. At the time of writing this report, we have been unable to find in America any copy of Hu Yin's original work, or any page from it as early as this fine specimen now in the Colby Library.



NOTES ON OUTSTANDING GIFTS 1944-1945

BY N. ORWIN RUSH*

ART and English Literature are the two subjects best represented by gifts to the Colby Library this past year. From the library of the late Frederick Morgan Padelford we received a collection of the publications of the Early English Text Society and the New Shakspeare Society. From Mrs. Karl Young we received an excellent collection of reprints in the field of English Literature and several numbers of *Speculum*. Our collection of modern art was increased by gifts from Misses Caroline and Adelaide Wing and Miss Louise Coburn. To Miss Coburn, Mrs. Julius

* For nine out of the ten years during which the Colby Library Associates have flourished, Mr. N. Orwin Rush was the college librarian. Last spring he accepted the librarianship of Clark University and has now taken up his new duties there. Before departing for Worcester, Massachusetts, Mr. Rush prepared this report on gifts to the Colby Library, and all Associates will doubtless share the editor's regret that this will be the last such report that Mr. Rush will prepare for us. Our best wishes go with him to his new post.