

## TYPE-SETTING IN CHINESE

### Some Misconceptions of the Black Art Corrected and Explained

The message from our correspondent in Washington on the subject of typesetting machines for Japanese and Chinese, published in Wednesday's "North China Daily News," is interesting from several points of view.

In his book "The Development of Japanese Journalism" Mr. Kanetsada Hanazono says:—

"Early in 1867, the year before the Meiji Restoration, foreigners began to see that intercourse between themselves and the Japanese was so far improved, that it was possible to enlarge it to a greater extent than had ever been done before. In these circumstances, it had been more than once proposed by gentlemen competent to carry the plan through, to establish a newspaper in the Japanese language, which would give the news of foreign countries by each mail. It was thought that it would gradually and imperceptibly cultivate the Japanese people into familiarity with foreigners and their doings; and "be a good means towards removing the barriers, which ignorance more than anything else, opposed to them."

It is clearly indicated by the above that the growth of Japan to its present position as a great Power amongst the nations of the world was at the beginning hampered by ignorance of the conditions prevailing in other countries. The development of the press in Japan has had an enormous effect, probably more so than any other factor, in so rapidly lifting the nation from a position of obscurity and ignorance to its present greatness. Within a period of sixty years Japan has become the third largest consumer of newsprint in the world. The circulations of several of the Japanese newspapers are over a million copies daily and it is said that only about two per cent. of the people are illiterate.

#### The Problem of Setting

At the present time it is quite possible that the general public of Japan is better informed, in many ways, of the conditions and affairs of other countries than the people of other countries are informed, through the medium of their newspapers about Japan. The reason for this is that the Japanese newspaper correspondents in Europe and America can read the papers of the countries published where they are stationed whereas very few, if any, of the foreign newspaper correspondents stationed in Japan read the Japanese newspapers.

This all goes to show the importance to a nation of any improvement in the means for conveying information through the medium of the printing press. The greatest problem which confronts those whose aim it is to give to the Chinese and Japanese people the same facilities for the production of printed matter as enjoyed by other nations is the large number of characters necessary. A visit to a Japanese or Chinese type-composing room with its huge cases full of type and thousands of little pigeon holes, each containing types of a different character cannot fail to impress one, not only with the difficulty of producing a typesetting machine to do the work but also with the slowness and cumbersome nature of the present methods. As one journalist put it "a Chinese compositor has to walk a mile to set a paragraph," and whilst this is an obvious exaggeration it is true in part. Also it should not be forgotten that after the types have been printed from, they all have to be returned to their original places in the "case."

#### What Our Machines Can Do

Our Washington correspondent, we think, was mistaken in several points covered by his message which we published last Wednesday. For instance, he says that "the largest keyboard on any typesetting machine at the present time is the No. 12 Model of the Linograph Company and has 90 characters." We may mention that we have typesetting machines in the "North-China Daily News" Office with keyboards having considerably more than 200 keys. Also the Model 24 Linotype with 155 keybuttons on the keyboard has over 800 characters instantly available by means of a system of shift keys and levers similar to a typewriter. The experts at the Lino-

type Company's works have been studying the question of a composing machine for Japanese and Chinese for some time and they are of opinion that the production of such a machine is practical. It would, of course, be an expensive matter to produce the first machine as the engraving of such a large number of characters would alone be a work of considerable magnitude as will readily be understood when it is realized that each matrix, as the little brass letter moulds in the machine are termed, goes through no less than 57 operations in process of manufacture and measurements of the ten-thousandth part of an inch are involved.

### China's Unrest Once More

The production of a Chinese Linotype making the setting of Chinese type as simple as working a typewriter would be of almost incalculable value to the cause of education since it would put the production of books and newspapers on an entirely new and enormously improved basis. In fact, it is likely that the benefits would be relatively greater than those derived by the introduction of typesetting machinery into countries where the more simple nature of the written language has already enabled this to be done.

We understand that it is mainly on account of the generally unsettled state of China that the Linotype Company has not been willing to sink the large sum necessary to place the Chinese Linotype on the market.

If the visit of Mr. Murayama of the Osaka and Tokyo "Asahi" to America, as reported by our correspondent, results in a quicker realization of the desire for mechanical typesetting in Japanese and Chinese he will earn the thanks of a large number of people.

### One Extreme to the Other

While our Washington correspondent appears to have under-estimated some of the possibilities of composing or typesetting machines of to-day, an article entitled "The Trend of the Modern Press," appearing in a trade publication recently received, goes to the other extreme in its anxiety to show what wonderful progress the East has made in its linguistic problems. It says, "China, having led the world in founding the 'Peking Gazette,' which became a daily paper in 1351, appeared content to drop behind again, for it was not until 1922 that it became possible to set a Chinese newspaper in linotype from an alphabet of 39 characters." We should like to see the difference between those 39 characters and the English alphabet.