

characters of the same kind, and so also is the thickness of the slab, but in the last the characters are different from the others, for some of them are outlandish, and their nature was not known at the time of the discovery.

“No sooner had the Chinese cleaned this notable piece of antiquity and seen what it was, than, with the vivid curiosity which is natural to them, they ran to tell the Governor. He came in all haste to see it, and straightway caused it to be set up on a handsome pedestal under an arch which was closed at the sides and open in front, so that it might at once be protected from the weather, and accessible to eyes capable of enjoying and appreciating an antique of such a venerable kind. The place which he selected for it was also within the enclosure of a Bonze Temple, not far from where the discovery occurred.

“Great numbers of people flocked to see this stone, attracted in part by its antiquity and in part by the novelty of the strange characters that were visible on it. And as the knowledge of our religion has now spread far and wide in China, a certain Pagan who happened to be present, and who was on very friendly terms with a worthy Christian mandarin called Leo, when he discerned the bearing of this mysterious writing, thought he could not do his friend a greater pleasure than by sending him a copy of it. And this he did, although the Mandarin was a six weeks' journey off, residing in the city of Hangcheu, whither most of our fathers had retired on account of the persecution that had occurred, of which we shall speak in its place. He received the transcript with pious joy, and visible demonstrations of delight, seeing the irrefragable testimony of the ancient Christianity of China which it contained (a thing such as had been much desired and sought for), as we shall explain.

“Three years later, in 1628, some of the fathers had an opportunity of visiting the province in question in company with a Christian mandarin called Philip, who had to go thither. A church and a house (of the Society) were erected in that metropolis ; for the Blessed God who had willed the discovery of so fine a monument of the ancient occupation of this country by His Divine Law, was also pleased to facilitate its restitution in the same locality. It was my fortune to be one of the first to go thither, and I thought myself happy in having that post, on account of the opportunity it gave me of seeing the stone ; and on my arrival I could attend to nothing else until I had seen it and read it. And I went back to read it again, and examined it in a leisurely and deliberate manner. Considering its antiquity, I could not but admire that it was so perfect, and exhibited letters sculptured with such clearness and precision.

“Looked at edge-wise there are on it many Chinese characters which contain a number of names of priests and bishops of that age. There are also many other characters which were not then known, for they are