FROM TWO BLOCK PRINTED BOOKS: 1, Chinese; 2, Japanese. The former (the narrow leaf) is from a 17th Century Buddhist work known as the Sutra of the Multitude of Silent Souls. Wood-block printing, of which this is a good if not a distinguished example, has been practised by the Chinese for at least twelve centuries; first by the Buddhist monks for the reproduction of little charms on single sheets of paper, and later for books by Buddhists, Taoists and Confucians alike. And although movable type was in use in China long before the time of Gutenberg, it never supplanted the solid block, made now as it always has been, from seasoned pear- or plum-wood. ¶ The Japanese example (the broader leaf) is from a four volume collection of Buddhist texts, printed in pure Chinese characters and dated Genroku 16 (A.D. 1703). On the reverse of the page of text is a wood-block illustration, of highly symbolized character, and between each double sheet is a bit of lotus leaf just as it was placed there by some devout soul perhaps a century or more ago. ¶ While printing and paper making originated in China, and the earliest printed book in existence is Chinese (the Diamond Sutra, dated A.D. 868), it happens that the earliest authentic block print upon paper is Japanese, a little Buddhist charm, dating from A.D. 770. Despite this early beginning, however, little or no definite progress seems to have been made, and for six hundred years printing in Japan was almost wholly Buddhist. The art was revived in the 14th Century, but the true renaissance did not set in till the end of the 16th Century. From that period Japan began to print her own literature, beginning with the Nihongi, and has ever since ranked among the foremost publishing nations of the world. The use of movable types had been adopted from the Koreans, only to be dropped in favor of the wood-block, until revived with the advent of the newspaper.

Notes.—The Chinese manuscript from which our example is taken has long been in the possession of a Japanese monastery, and on certain of the pages it will be found that annotations have been added by the monks in Kana characters. These must not be confused with the Chinese printed characters.
易得成故也彼佛等者明如来不思议变现大小
随意皆助可弥陀者疏云宿愿缘重誓同捨恶
等至菩提影响相随愿方化益
後明下边即有九品亦经正宗分也准善导疏名
之散善世戒行
初上品上生二
初变相