THE ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS and printed books represented in this portfolio have been gathered from many sources, as will presently be shown, and are fairly representative of the progress of the art of writing, and to a lesser degree of printing, throughout Asia. In my comments attached to these examples there has been an attempt to describe the development of the various languages represented, but it would be a thankless task to arrange these examples under arbitrary language groupings or to assign a chronological order or too definite a pedigree to the languages themselves. For if there is anything positive to be stated on the origins of the languages and alphabets of Asia, living or dead, it is that most of the theories of the philologists of a generation ago are today discredited and have been replaced at best by cautious suppositions. The conjectures so plausibly elaborated by Lacouperie fifty years ago, for example, have entirely gone by the board, and so far as the Chinese language is concerned, the most that the modern Sinologist can say is that it seems to be of indigent origin. And there is equal uncertainty about the native tongue of the Japanese, as distinguished from their written language. Greater progress, perhaps, has been made with the languages of the Near East, but here again the scholar becomes less assertive the farther he probes into the past.

Of course, were it not for the advent of written speech, either by means of picturegraphs, ideographs, or by the use of the alphabet, there would be no such science as comparative philology. Fortunately, however, inscriptions on stone and brick, particularly in India and throughout the Near East, and the perfection of writing materials in the Far East, make it probable that the early written languages of all the Asiatic peoples will eventually be restored to us. Whether, on the other hand, we will ever be able to determine the beginnings of writing, and assign primitive inscriptions to exact periods, remains to be seen. Certainly no more fascinating field of research lies before the palaeographer than the early records of these cradle lands of civilization.

As FOLIOPHILES is frequently asked how and where the diverse materials used in its collections have been acquired, the following details regarding some of the examples contained in this portfolio may prove interesting: The Syriac Manuscript was purchased on our premises from an eloquent Armenian who tried to hasten the sale by swearing, with a brave disregard of anachronism, that it was Eighth Century Coptic. The Syriac printed Bible and the Armenian printed Ritual came from the library of the late Professor Yohanan of Columbia University. The Armenian Manuscript, the Algerian Koran and the illuminated Sanskrit manuscript turned up in bookshops respectively in New York, Southampton (England), and our Crystal Palace way in London. The Egyptian Koran and the Persian manuscript containing the lives of the Sufis were acquired for us by a discerning agent respectively in Cairo and Constantinople. The Persian "Gulistan" of Sa'di was left with us seven years ago by a young lady whom we have utterly failed to trace, so we have appropriated her manuscript, and stand ready to make amends. The plain Sanskrit manuscript and the Sinhalese Pali Taliput leaves came from the collection of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, while the Burmese Pali Taliput leaves were purchased from an old gentleman who informed us that this manuscript had been presented to his family by a missionary in Burma, more than fifty years ago. The Javanese manuscript was sent to us from Batavia by our own representative, who also procured the Japanese and Chinese books and manuscripts, with many similar treasures, at Kyoto, Tôko, Shanghai, and various other places in the Far East.

An interesting chapter might be written on the history and peregrinations of these books as indicated by names, places and dates on fly leaves and margins. The Persian Sufi manuscript, for instance, bears a seal and a note declaring that it was purchased in Kandahar in 1475, while the "Gulistan," written in 1563, has a note in Persian at the end which proved to be the poet's comments of a recent owner, dated Chicago, 1901.

While space does not permit listing the numerous works consulted in the preparation of my descriptive notes. And special acknowledgment must be made to the following authorities in their respective fields: Herbert A. Giles (Chinese), Basil Hall Chamberlain (Japanese), Thomas Francis Carter (Printing in Asia), Bernhard Karlgen (Chinese), A. A. Macdonell (Sanskrit) and E. G. Browne (Persian). I also wish to thank the many scholars and experts to whom I have applied personally for advice and criticism. Without their assistance, and the hearty cooperation of my staff, this long-delayed collection might never have taken final shape.

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G. M. L. BROWN.