In order to give a better idea of the real meaning of the documents I intend to translate, I think it best, first to give an epitome of the nuptial rites, as they are observed in Amoy.

I have seen myself a most interesting part of a chinese wedding, namely the bride wearing her wedding dress.

According to Chinese custom, some few days after the wedding, the newly married woman, still called "bride", receives visitors in her nuptial room. This is the only occasion, on which a Chinese woman is allowed to be visited by other men than her relatives.

Arrayed in her splendid garments, on her head wearing the ornamental crown, she stood like an idol. Quiet and with downcast eyes, she seemed not to notice the foreign guest.

On this occasion I have admired also many marriage presents, and have sat down in the richly decorated hall, drinking the ceremonial tea, and congratulating the father in law.
I have not been able to witness the other ceremonies, but I have heard a good deal about them, especially from my Amoy teacher.

The ceremonies, which constitute a regular marriage in China, are six in number.

Already in the Li-ki 1) we find the rites divided in six formalities, viz. 納采 “Choosing”, 閏名 “Asking the names”, 納吉 “Securing the auspiciousness”, 納徵 “Giving presents as a proof”, 請期 “Appointing the date”, and 親迎 “Personally going out to escort”.

In course of time these ceremonies, though remaining the same in number, underwent some modifications in the different parts of China. So that we now have found the ceremonies of marriage, as followed by the well-to-do-people in Amoy, to consist of the following:

I. 閏名 To ask the names.

The family of the young man 2) sends a go-between to the family of the girl, with a card containing his name, surname and profession. If this family is willing, the father of the girl, through the agency of the same go-between, sends a card containing his daughter’s name, surname and age.

After these preliminaries, both parties reciprocally take informations. The family of the man then sends the go-between with a card, containing his eight characters of nativity, (viz. two for year, month, day and hour). The other party invites a fortune-teller to take the horoscope of the couple, and see whether they agree; and when this is the case, sends back the eight characters of the couple.

This card is placed before the shrine of the idol, set up in the hall of the young man’s house, and remains there for three days.