

CHINESE EDUCATION.¹

Communicated.

THE philosophers of China form a succession of thinkers reaching from the invention of writing to our own day. Through five thousand years these men have been the guides of the nation, and their systems are in a measure of national attainment made from time to time in the explanation of the universe. A philosopher is a man who gathers disciples, instructs them in the secrets of nature and makes original investigations in the realm of thought. His results he forms into a system and commits to the care of his followers, who shape their mode of thinking in accordance with the ideas of their master.

The first philosophers of China occupied themselves with agriculture, the art of writing, the management of lakes and rivers, astronomy, and moral and political philosophy. We have the results in the earlier classics. In the Chow dynasty there was a remarkable stirring of the native mind, first in the eleventh century before Christ and then in the sixth century. Chowkung and Confucius led the van. Such was their influence that their position has been ever since undisputed.

No one probably but Professor Legge ever said Confucius was not a great man, and Professor Legge in his second edition of the Four Books recanted.

In the first edition of the Four Books we read at page 113 of the Prolegomena :

"After long study of his character and opinions I am unable to regard him as a great man."

In the Oxford edition of 1893, thirty-two years later, the words are :

"I hope I have not done him injustice ; the more I have studied his character and opinions the more highly I have come to regard him. He was a very great-man."


¹From *The Shanghai Mercury* of Wednesday, January 17, 1900.

His rationality, his firm adherence to a moral standard in politics and philosophy, his sympathetic maintenance of the teaching



天明癸卯暮春寫
應舉□□

CHOW-KUNG.

(Died B. C. 1105.) The great statesman of the Chow dynasty. Idealised by  Confucius. (After Ôkyo, Japanese artist of the eighteenth century.)

of the great men of the past, his success in giving to his countrymen a set of text-books which they have studied ever since and

are still studying, show that he was a great man. Philosophy is incomplete without history, and the proper study of mankind is man. This Confucius knew, and he made it a principle. The study of physical nature he left to others.



CHWANG-TZE.

(*Cir.* B. C. 350.) Most prominent of Taoist philosophers. (After Ôkyo, Japanese artist of the eighteenth century.)

It was the same with Lau-tsz, Chwang-tsz, and Mencius. But there is a great contrast between the teaching of the Taoists and that of the Confucianists. Quiet contemplation is a very different thing from the teaching which makes it the duty of a man to serve

his country. The Tauists resemble the Quakers, who cannot serve the State in any public office because their principles forbid them to take an oath. The Confucianists resemble the Puritans, who



訥
古
曰
曰
古玩
畫
繪
圖

MENCIUS.

(B. C. 372-289.) Greatest leader of Confucianism. (After Totsugen, Japanese artist of the eighteenth century.)

will fight for their doctrines if need be. Age after age there have been Confucianist critics of public affairs who would risk death

rather than not speak their mind on the faults of sovereigns. As in the case of Charles the First, death is in China the punishment awarded to unfaithful princes. This punishment is inflicted, not by law, but by rebellions which have often ended either in the beheading of sovereigns as a sacrifice to popular indignation, or in suicide as a preferable mode of resigning life when death was inevitable.

The fact is patent to every one that the Chow dynasty philosophers were the founders of national education. This is true of the orthodox school. They made government the occupation of their life. Their ideas of the scholar's duty were practical, and the good of the people was their aim. They undertook to govern the State and to educate the people.

The services of Confucius deserved recognition, and we may regard Chinese education as being chiefly his work. For five hundred years, down to the year 1900, Chinese education has been conservative. The Four Books have been the text-books, and these books rest upon the Five Classics. The idea of the distribution of office to scholars as the result of examination is of native origin. It takes the place of university education in Europe. Every Chinese prefect and magistrate is also an examiner. He promotes education in his own district by holding examinations at certain times. The literary chancellor on his annual rounds in each province confers the degree of *Siu-ts'ai* on successful candidates after an examination conducted by himself.

In addition to the literary chancellor there are two Masters of Arts, Examiners sent down from Peking every third year. These confer the rank of Master. The examination is held in the capital of each province.

All *Siu-ts'ai* are eligible and may by the success of their essays become *Kü-jen*. Afterwards they may attain the rank of Doctor of Literature or *Tsin-shih* at the final examination in Peking. The crown is the fountain of honor. The sovereign confers degrees, and examiners are in every case deputed by the sovereign to discharge his duties for him.

This system must inevitably change, and admit science, history, and geography to the curriculum of ordinary schools. The influence of foreign thought is tending to force Chinese ideas on education to become modified. The world changes and the Four Books begin to be antiquated. But they will not be abandoned because the *Ta hio* makes sincerity the basis of virtue, and teaches that kindness and justice promote happiness.

"The sincerity of the ruler diffuses contented feelings among the people he governs. Instruction proceeds step by step and every point is to be made plain to the learner. The communication of knowledge is preceded by investigation. Nature must be investigated."

In saying this the *Ta hio* rises in fact to the sphere of philosophy, and opens the way for all the sciences. This one sentence in this ancient book justifies the foreign education list in a claim to be allowed to point out to the Chinese the improvements they need to make in the programme of studies.

The Chinese have taught Europe the use of the mariner's compass, the art of printing, the cultivation of tea, and the manufacture of silk. Now Europe may impart to China an improved curriculum in education and give them knowledge which will prove of inestimable value. Their education may be amalgamated with that of the West. They need not clash with each other, because ethical precepts are of universal validity. Moral principles are never out of harmony with science and philosophy. The form that this new education should take is that of advanced science, history, politics, and religion. China is an old nation with great historical experience, and the education given should be high in proportion, when the learners are advanced in the special studies of their own country. But for the untaught multitude the education they receive should be like that given to children, line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.