

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION IN CHINA.

BY THE EDITOR.

FAMILY life in China as much as in all other countries is centered in the nursery, and if there is a difference we may say that the interest in education is even higher than in the West. When a child is born it is tended with as much love as in Europe and America, though scientific insight into medical affairs may frequently be lacking.

How similar the affection of the parents of Cathay is to our own appears from their nursery rhymes, the spirit of which may be seen in the following lines which we quote in Isaac Taylor Headland's translation:

"Heh, my baby! Ho, my baby!
See the wild ripe plum,
And if you'd like to eat a few,
I'll buy my baby some."

Another jingle which reminds one of our own children's verse on the lady-bug, runs thus:

"Fire-fly, fire-fly,
Come from the hill,
Your father and mother
Are waiting here still.
They've bought you some sugar,
Some candy and meat,
Come quick or I'll give it
To baby to eat."

What the Saxon says of his home is literally true in China. The typical Chinese residence is a little castle and all its arrangements show that it has been built for family life. It consists of several one-story structures that are shut off from the outside world by a wall. Having entered through the gate, we find three buildings one after another separated by court yards. First, we reach

the reception room; having crossed a second court yard, we come to the main dwelling house; and behind that we will find the apartments for women and children.



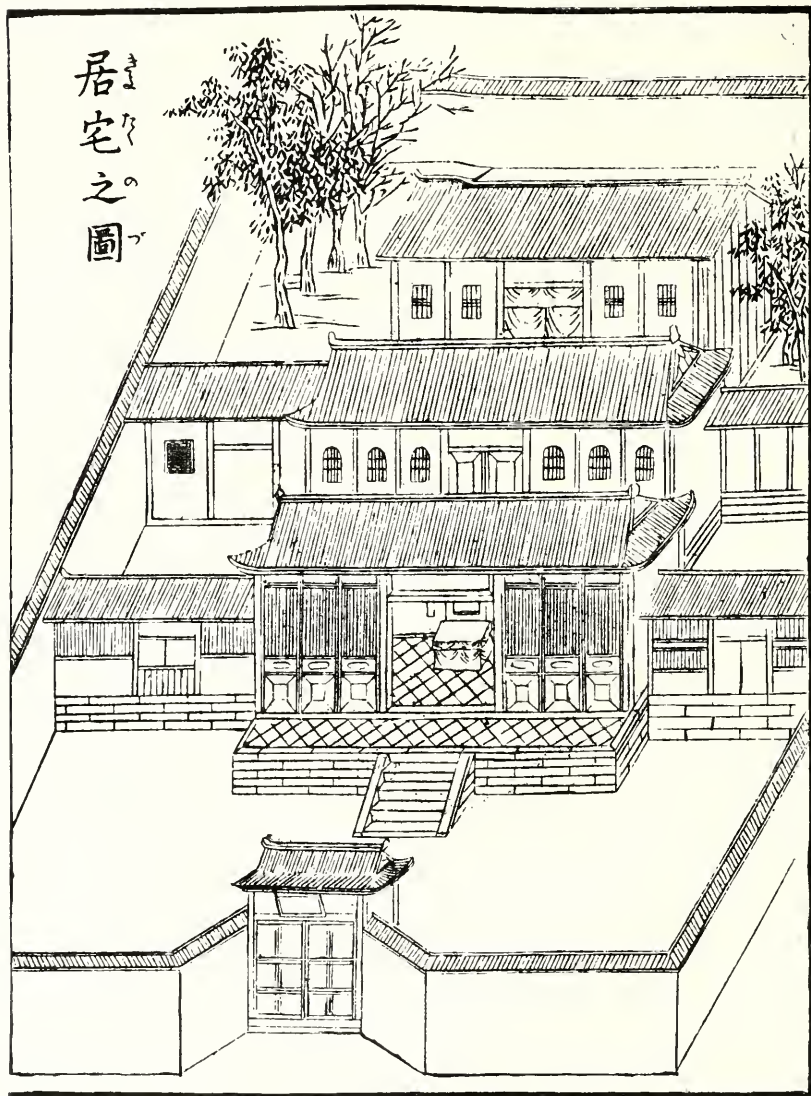
THE BIRTH OF THE BABY.

2261

When children grow up, the boys are sent to schools, while the girls receive the most of their education at home.

The sexes are separated at the early age of seven, and while

the boys are trained to behave and speak in a straightforward way the girls are taught to be first of all demure. The Chinese language has even a different form of affirmation for them; while the boys



A CHINESE RESIDENCE.

say *wei*, the girls should answer *o*, when they intend to say "yes." The former is an unequivocal and definite declaration that it is so,

while the latter is a submissive assent. Lao Tze who condemns the ceremonialism of China so vigorously insisted upon by the Confucian school, denounces the difference made between *wei* and *o*¹ and calls this zealous clinging to tradition "the mere flower of reason."²

From earliest childhood much time is spent on the formation of character, and attention is paid not only to moral conduct, filial piety, patience, obedience, diligence, thrift, frugality, kindness toward all beings, but also to minute rules of good breeding, relating to behavior toward themselves, as to dress, personal appearance, etc., and toward others, their parents, guests, persons of respect, their elders, their equals, etc.; for a breach of etiquette is deemed more unpardonable in China than in the most punctilious circles elsewhere.

We quote a few passages from the *Hsiao Hsio*, "The Juvenile Instructor," which is the standard book on education. There we read:

"Let children always be taught to speak the truth, to stand erect and in their proper places and listen with respectful attention.

"The way to become a student is, with gentleness and self-abasement, to receive implicitly every word the master utters. The pupil, when he sees virtuous people, must follow them; when he hears good maxims, conform to them. He must cherish no wicked designs, but always act uprightly; whether at home or abroad, he must have a fixed residence, and associate with the benevolent, carefully regulating his personal deportment, and controlling the feelings of the heart. He must keep his clothes in order. Every morning he must learn something new, and rehearse the same every evening."

When a boy is entrusted to a teacher, he is impressed with the significance of the new period of life, upon which he is about to enter by receiving a literary appellation called *shu ming* or book name, by which he will be called for the rest of his life.

The great authority in school affairs is Confucius. His picture is set up in a conspicuous place over an altar, and when the father entrusts his boy to the care of a teacher, the child's first act is to show reverence for the great master of Chinese morality by kneeling before his effigy.

Though the figure of Confucius has not been deified as other religious leaders have been under similar circumstances, he may be

¹ *Tao-Teh-King*, Chapter 20. See the author's translation, p. 106.

² *Ibid.*, Chapter 38. See the author's translation, p. 116.

regarded as a kind of Christ to the Chinese people, and he is looked up to as the ideal of proper behavior.

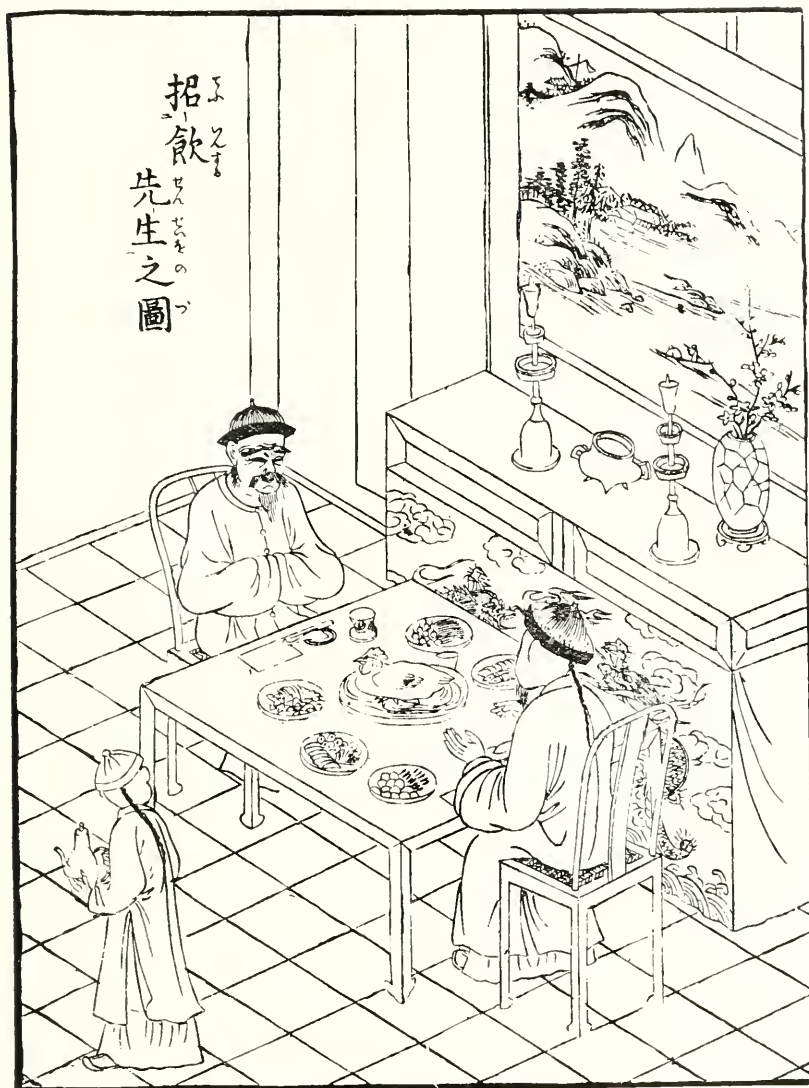
Confucius was not an originator but a preserver. He established the Chinese canon by collecting those writings which he



WORSHIP OF THE MASTER.

deemed authoritative, and he characterizes his own development in the *Analects* (II, iv) as follows: "At fifteen, I had my mind bent

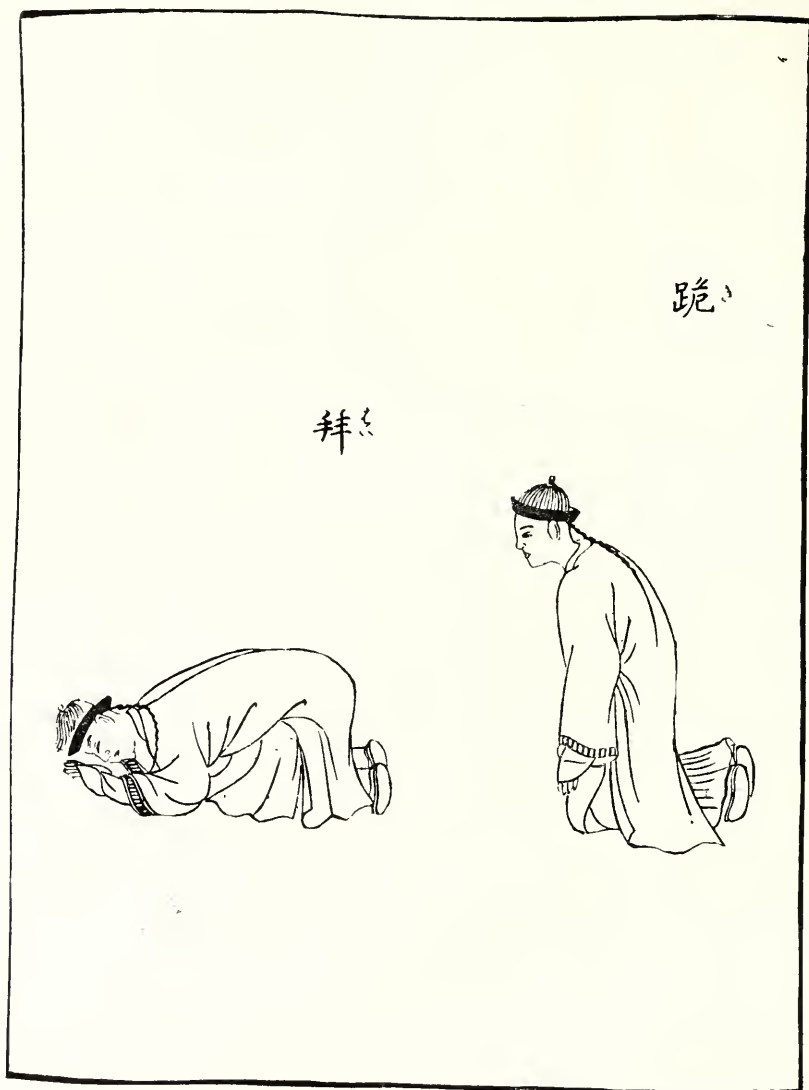
on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right."



THE TEACHER INVITED.

His moral maxims are tersely characterized in one of his sayings which is preserved in the same place and reads as follows (*loc.*

cit. I, vi): "A youth, when at home, should be filial, and abroad respectful to his elders. He should be earnest and truthful. He should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the



good. When he has time and opportunity, after the performance of these things, he should employ them in polite studies."

Teachers are highly respected in the community and are frequently invited by the parents of their pupils.

Instruction should not be limited to words, but must be given



KNEELING, CLASPING HANDS, BOWING.

2313

mainly by example. Confucius pointed out that Heaven's teaching is done in silence as we read in the *Analects* (XVII, 19):

"Once said he, 'Would that I could dispense with speech!'

"'Sir,' said Tsz-kung, 'if you were never to speak, what should your pupils have to hand down from you?'

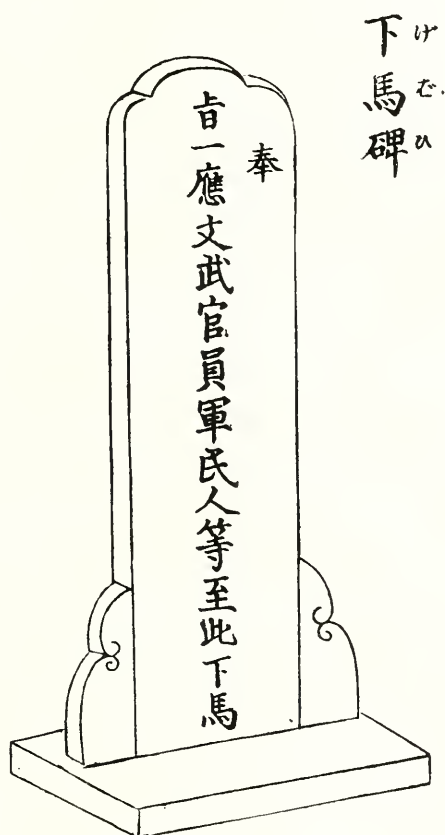


A LESSON IN EDUCATION HALL.

2333

"'Does Heaven ever speak?' said the Master. 'The four seasons come and go, and all creatures live and grow. Does Heaven indeed speak?'"

There are four kinds of obeisance: one is simply a bow, *hsing*;³ the next is the clasping of hands, *kung shou*⁴ or *i*⁵; the third one is kneeling, *kwei*,⁶ and the most reverential attitude is prostration,



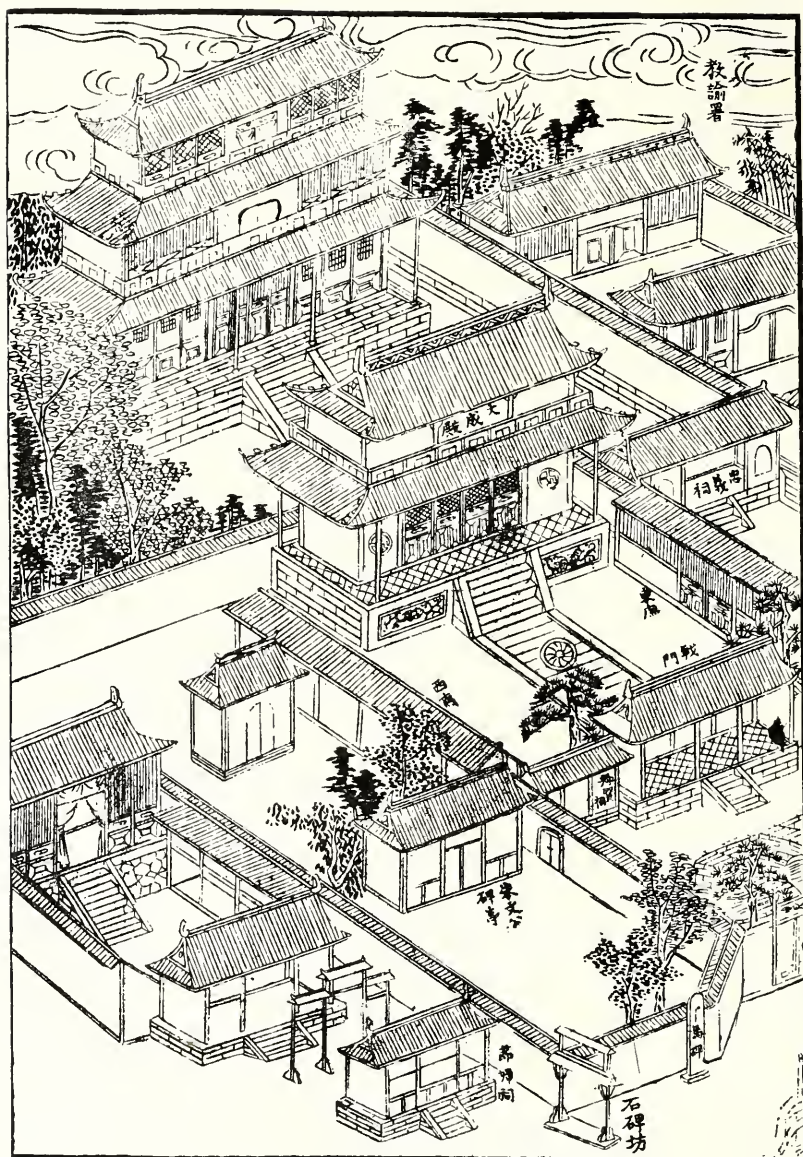
THE ENTRANCE TABLET.

2335

pai,⁷ known as "kowtowing," i. e., touching the floor with the forehead.

³ 興⁴ 拱手⁵ 揖⁶ 跪⁷ 拜

Rich families build a special education-hall in their homes and

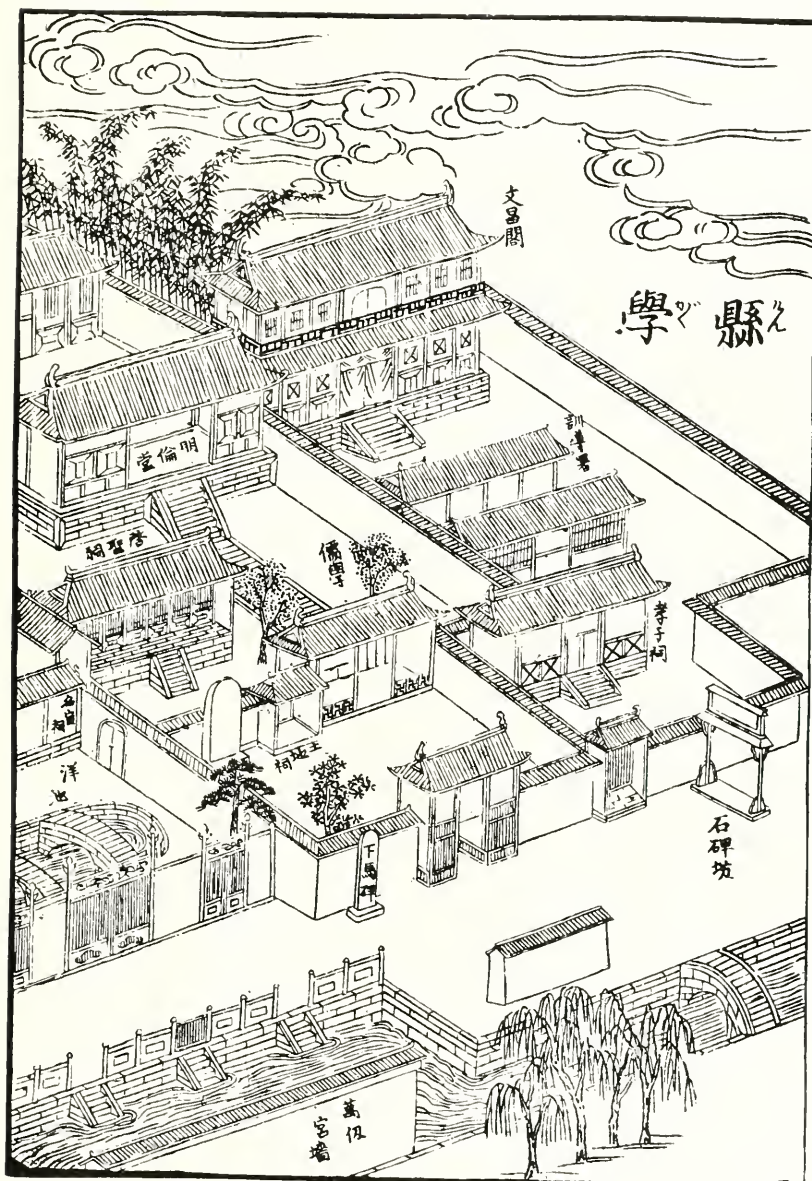


THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL: WEST GATE.

2334

engage a private tutor for their children, but there are also public schools which might be compared to our high schools and colleges.

They form a large complex of many edifices built and maintained by the government.

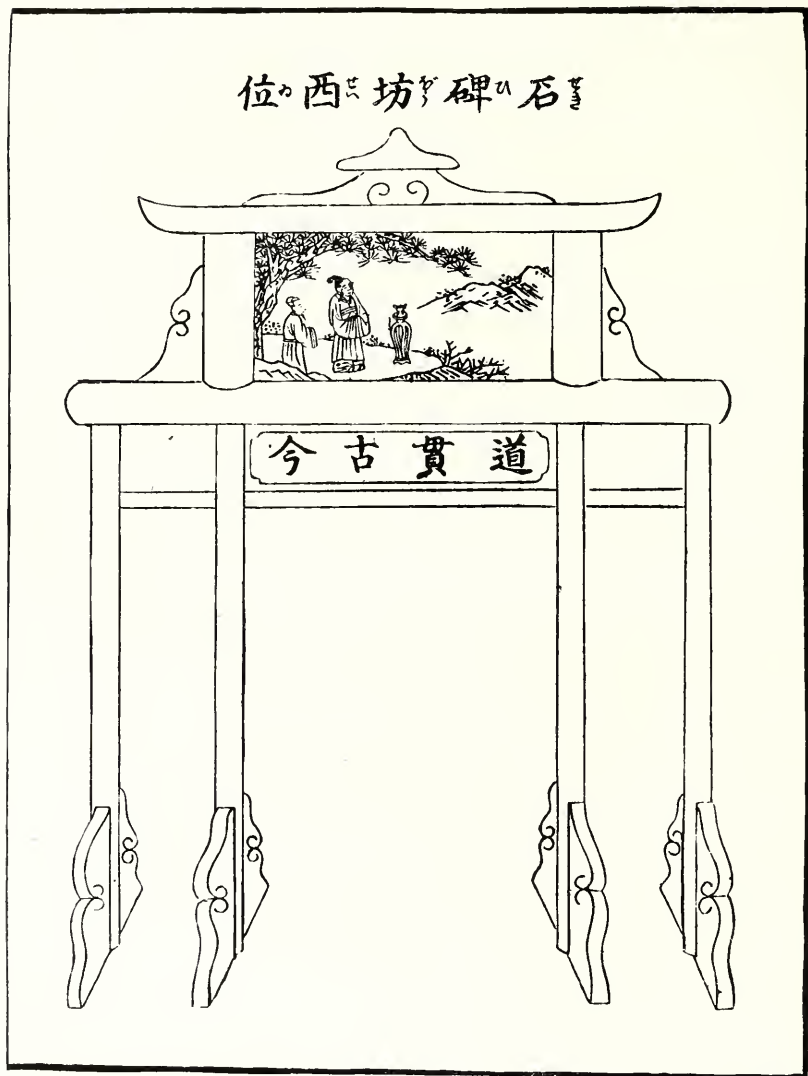


THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL: EAST GATE.

2318

Our illustration shows a county high school such as we may find in many Chinese townships. We approach it on a high road,

along which a small river runs. When we come from the west we see a gateway bearing a tablet, which is called the tablet of the west. A picture above the tablet shows a teacher with his pupil under a

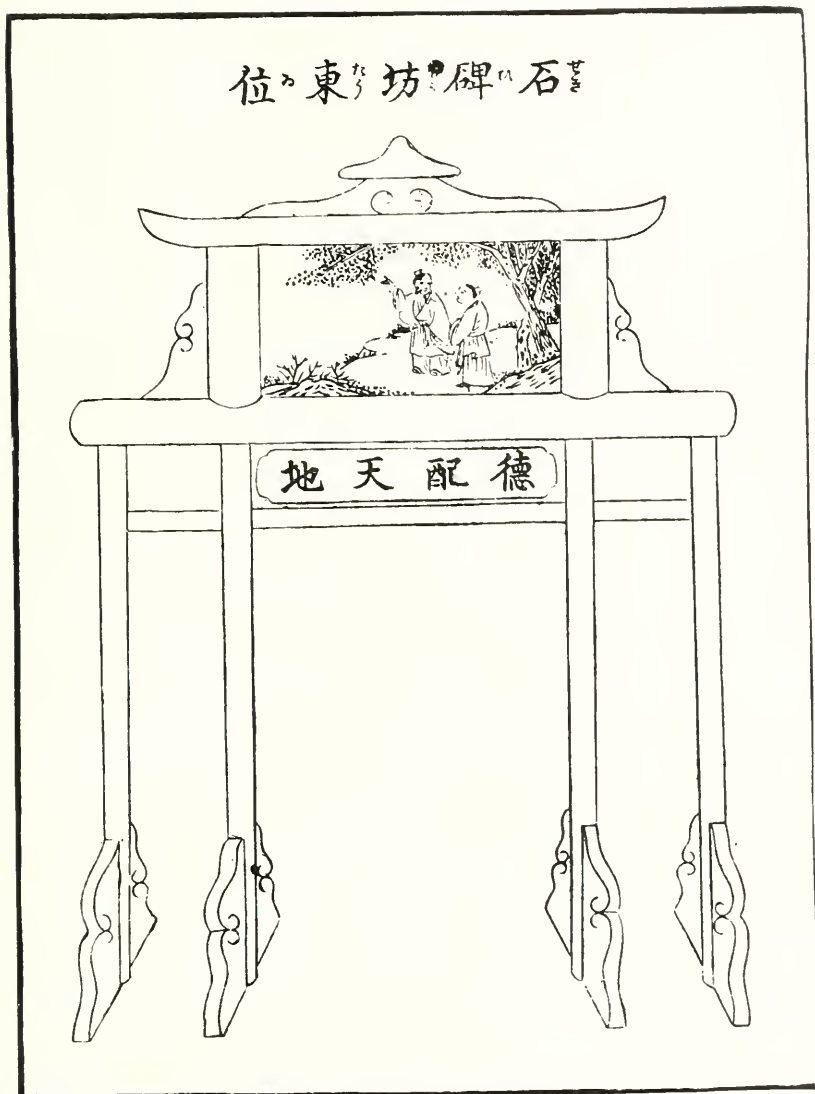


TABLET OF THE WEST GATE.

2324

pine tree and the inscription reads: "The *tao* (i. e., the heavenly reason) penetrates the past and the present," which means it is eternal. This saying is proverbial in China and reflects the spirit

of the Chinese canonical books. A few steps beyond the gate we see a stone tablet, standing against the wall, which warns us to "dismount from our horse," for it would be highly disrespectful



TABLET OF THE EAST GATE.

2263

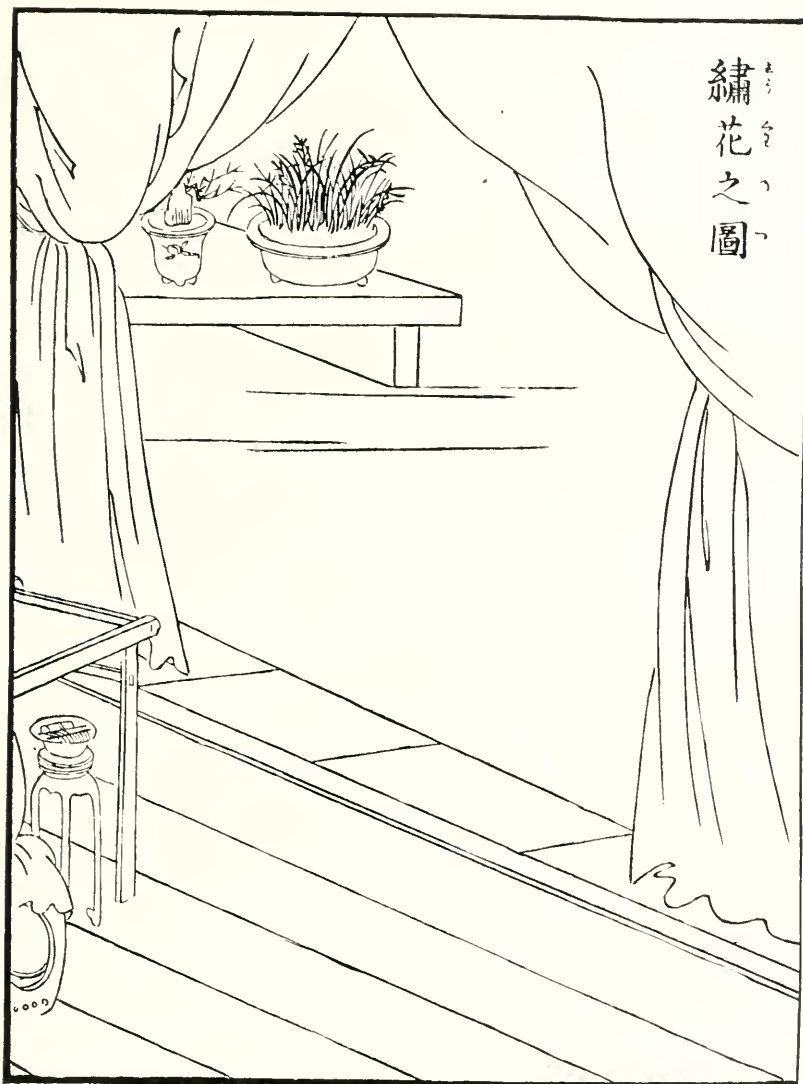
to enter the premises of the school on horseback or in a carriage. The character which stands out by itself on the right side of the entrance tablet means "have respect," and then the sentence con-

tinues in the inscription which reads from the top down: "Ordinance for every one, civil and military officers, soldiers, men of the people, etc., coming here: Dismount from your horse!"



The eastern gateway on the high road bears a similar picture of a teacher under a tree pointing heavenward. The inscription reads: "Virtue takes rank with heaven and earth."

The building on the extreme east is "Literary Hall," as we may translate its inscription, and is dedicated to the patron god of literature known as *Wen Chang*, which means "Scripture Glory."



EMBROIDERY WORK.

2336

Other buildings serve for class rooms, and, on the extreme north, the largest building is called "Hall of Great Perfection," and is probably used for what we would call commencement exercises.

The girls are educated in needlework which is considered one of the greatest accomplishments of their sex. Rich and poor endeavor to excel in it, and Western trade knows that Chinese ladies can do most remarkable embroidery.

The idea prevails generally that the education of woman is much neglected in China, but we find in Chinese history many educated ladies praised for their talents as well as for their learning. In fact, there are in Chinese literature not a few poems of great beauty recorded as the productions of princesses and noble women. If the poorer classes do not furnish similar instances of brilliant women, it is not due to a prejudice against the education of women but solely to lack of opportunity and inability to imitate their betters. It is true, however, that the emancipated woman who would have all considerations of a difference in sex abolished does not exist in China, for domestic virtues are deemed indispensable even for women that have become famous.

In China all people without exception from the emperor down to the poorest beggar show an unbounded respect for education, and this spirit is well set forth in an ancient poem put into the mouth of King Ch'ing who ascended the throne as a child. His prayer reads thus:

"Reverent, reverent I will be,
For the will of Heaven I see.
Oh, how great my duties are!
Will not say that Heaven is far,
Since we're compassed by its light^s
And live always in its sight.
I'm a little child, and hence
Still unskilled in reverence;
But I'm daily growing fast
And will wisdom gain at last.
Help me bear the burden mine,
Teach me Virtue's path divine."

^s The context of this passage suggests that it speaks of the close connection which obtains between Heaven and us. The words however are obscure. A literal translation would be as follows: "Lifting up | letting down | its | scholars," which, if the text is not corrupt, may mean that Heaven is in constant communication with us, it lifts up the scholars (i. e., the young king's counselors or teachers) and sends them down again.