

**THE SACRED EDICT, CONTAINING
SIXTEEN MAXIMS OF THE EMPEROR
KANG-HI, AMPLIFIED BY HIS
SON, THE EMPEROR YOONG-CHING;
TOGETHER WITH A PARAPHRASE ON THE
WHOLE, BY A MANDARIN**

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The Sacred Edict, Containing Sixteen Maxims of the Emperor Kang-Hi, Amplified by His Son, the Emperor Yoong-Ching; Together with a Paraphrase on the Whole, by a Mandarin by Kang-Hi & Yoong-Ching

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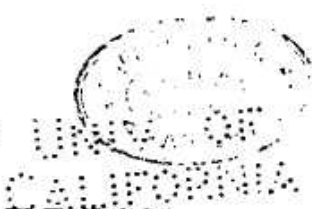
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KANG-HI & YOONG-CHING

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K'ang Hsi

THE



SACRED EDICT,

CONTAINING

SIXTEEN MAXIMS

OF

THE EMPEROR KANG-HI,

AMPLIFIED BY

HIS SON, THE EMPEROR YOONG-CHING;

TOGETHER WITH

A PARAPHRASE ON THE WHOLE,

BY

A MANDARIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE ORIGINAL, AND
ILLUSTRATED WITH NOTES,

By THE REV. WILLIAM MILNE,

Protestant Missionary at Malacca.

SECOND EDITION.

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TO
SIR THOMAS STAMFORD RAFFLES,
Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen ;
Late Lieutenant-Governor of the Island of Java
and its Dependencies, and
President of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences ;
&c. &c. &c.

THE FOLLOWING TRANSLATION,

WITH

THE MOST GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
HIS KIND ATTENTION TO THE TRANSLATOR,

AND OF THE

FACILITIES AFFORDED IN THE PROPAGATION
OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
AMONG THE CHINESE SETTLERS,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY
HIS VERY OBEDIENT SERVENT,

THE TRANSLATOR.

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THE
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

SHORTLY after arriving in China, the Translator's attention was directed to the following work, by his most faithful and revered friend, the Reverend Robert Morrison, under whose care some part of the original was first read, and to whose indefatigable attention, and high attainments in Chinese literature, he owes his acquaintance with the radical principles of the language of China.

The Sixteen Maxims, which form the ground work of this book, were delivered, in an edict, by the Emperor *Kang-he*, the second of the present dynasty, in the latter part of his life; the same Emperor by whose authority the Chinese Imperial Dictionary was compiled.

These maxims, each of which, in the original, contains seven characters, or words, were neatly written out on small slips of wood, and placed in the public offices, where they are to be seen at the present day.

The Emperor *Yoong-Ching*, the son and successor of *Kang-he*, wisely considering that the conciseness of these maxims would necessarily prevent their general utility, wrote an *Amplification* of them, which he published in the second year of his reign; and ordered it to be read

publicly to the people, on the first and fifteenth of each month.

The style of *Yoong-Ching's* publication, though not so concise as that of the ancient Chinese books, is yet considered classical; but, from its artificial structure and the length of the paragraphs or periods, it is above the capacities of most of those who have had but a common education. Hence, though classically written, the work was not calculated to produce all the benefit intended; in as much as the lower classes of people, even in countries the most enlightened, both by religion and science, do not generally profit by books of high classical taste. Under the influence of this conviction, *Wang-yew-po*, superintendant of the salt revenue in the province of *Shen-See*, wrote a paraphrase on the whole book and simplified the style. By numerous proverbs, quaint sayings, colloquial phrases, and provincialisms, he rendered the sense easy, and the style acceptable, to the people; for in every country we find, that these qualities though not approved by the learned, take much with others; and have a certain point and force which would, in some measure, be lost, were the same ideas expressed in a more elegant and finished style.

The practice of publicly explaining the laws to the people of China, commenced in the dynasty *Chou*; at which time part of the first day of the month only was devoted to that purpose. At present the law is read, or should be read, twice a month, *viz.* on the first and fifteenth. The manner of it is as follows. Early on the first and fifteenth of every moon, the civil and military officers, dressed in their uniform, meet in a clean, spacious, public hall. The superintendant who is called *Lee-Sang*, calls aloud, "stand forth in files." They do

so, according to their rank: he then says, "kneel thrice, and bow the head nine times." They kneel, and bow to the ground, with their faces towards a platform, on which is placed a board with the Emperor's name. He next calls aloud, "rise and retire." They rise, and all go to a hall, or kind of chapel, where the law is usually read; and where military and people are assembled standing round in silence.

The *Lee-Sang* then says, "Respectfully commence." The *Sze-kiang-Sang*, or orator, advancing towards an incense-altar, *kneels*; reverently takes up the board on which the maxim appointed for the day is written, and ascends a stage with it. An old man receives the board, and puts it down on the stage, fronting the people. Then, commanding silence with a wooden rattle which he carries in his hand, he kneels, and reads it. When he has finished, the *Lee-Sang* calls out, "Explain such a section, or maxim, of the sacred edict." The orator stands up, and gives the sense. In reading and expounding other parts of the law, the same forms are also observed.*

Of the sentiments diffused through this book, readers will no doubt form different opinions and draw different inferences. The *Deist* and *Sceptic*, will probably think themselves happy in finding among so ancient a people, an additional prop to their baseless fabric; but will not have much cause to rejoice in the acquisition. It will prove like the other props. The *partially informed Christian* will probably regret that such things should be made known in Europe, where they may furnish infidelity with weapons against the gospel. But he should