

**BOOK OF  
ODES (SHI-KING)**

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Book of Odes (Shi-King) by L. Cranmer -Byng

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**L. CRANMER -BYNG**

**BOOK OF  
ODES (SHI-KING)**



° THE CLASSICS OF CONFUCIUS

**BOOK OF ODES**  
(SHI-KING)

BY L. CRANMER-BYNG

AUTHOR OF "THE NEVER-ENDING WRONG"  
AND OTHER RENDERINGS FROM THE CHINESE



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1918



## EDITORIAL NOTE

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THE object of the editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour. Finally, in thanking press and public for the very cordial reception given to the "Wisdom of the East" series, they wish to state that no pains have been spared to secure the best specialists for the treatment of the various subjects at hand.

L. CRANMER-BYNG,  
S. A. KAPADIA,

NOTTINGHAM SOCIETY,  
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## INTRODUCTION

"WHILE reading the works of Confucius, I have always fancied I could see the man as he was in life, and, when I went to Shantung, I actually beheld his carriage, his robes, and the material parts of his ceremonial usages. There were his descendants practising the old rites in their ancestral home ; and I lingered on, unable to tear myself away. Many are the princes and prophets that the world has seen in its time ; glorious in life, forgotten in death. But Confucius, though only a humble member of the cotton-clothed masses, remains among us after many generations. He is the model for such as would be wise. By all, from the Son of Heaven down to the meanest student, the supremacy of his principles is fully and freely admitted. He may, indeed, be pronounced the divinest of men." \*

This is the tribute of Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, the author of the first great History of China, who lived in the first century before Christ. Many centuries have gone since the old historian, out of the fulness of his heart, sang the praises of the Master and the supremacy of his principles. To-day, as a thousand years ago, the school children take their first serious instruction from the five books, or *King* as they are called in Chinese :—

\* "Gems of Chinese Literature," by Herbert Giles (Quaritch).

The Shu King, or Book of History ; The I King, or Book of Changes ; The Shi King, or Book of Poetry ; The Li Chi, or Book of Rites ; The Ch'un Ch'in, or Annals of Spring and Autumn.

The Shi King, or Book of Poetry, from which these poems are rendered through the prose translations of Professor Legge in his great series of Chinese classics, was compiled by Confucius about 500 B.C. from earlier collections which had been long existent, two of which, we know from an ode written about 780 B.C., were called *Ya* and *Nan* respectively. The oldest of these odes belong to the Shang dynasty, 1765-1122 B.C. ; the latest to the time of King Ting, 605-585 B.C. The odes may be roughly divided into two classes :—(1) The Songs of the People ; (2) The Official Odes. Professor Giles, in his "History of Chinese Literature" (Heinemann), divides the latter into three classes :—(a) Odes sung at ordinary entertainments given by the suzerain ; (b) Odes sung on grand occasions when the feudal nobles were gathered together ; (c) Panegyrics and sacrificial odes.

The great importance that Confucius placed upon the Book of Poetry may be gathered from the following anecdote :—One day his son Le was passing hurriedly through the Court, when he met his father standing alone lost in thought. Confucius, on seeing his son, addressed him thus—

"Have you read the Odes?"

He replied, "Not yet."

"Then," said Confucius, "if you do not learn the Odes, you will not be fit to converse with."\*

\* "Confucianism and Taoism," by Sir Robert Douglas (S.K.C.K.)

To understand this, we must know something of the character and teachings of Confucius. William Morris was to some extent the Confucius of his age. Both men dreamt of a golden past—a past brilliant with heroic deeds, mellowed with peace, and serene beneath the first clear dawn of ancient wisdom. Both drew inspiration from the unstained springs of poetry. Morris went back to the sagas of the North and the tales and tragedies of the early Greeks; Confucius to the odes and ballads of his own country. For Morris, "the idle singer of an empty day," the world had grown old and careworn and unheroic. Confucius, too, was born out of his due time. The world—his world of petty princelings and court intriguers and oppression—was not ripe for the great gospel of humanity he had come to preach. Each failed lamentably in politics, and succeeded elsewhere; Confucius as the transmitter of the wisdom of the ages, the revealer of human goodness through conduct and knowledge; William Morris as the inspired prophet of beauty, the teacher of good taste to the hideous Victorian age in which he was born. When the dogmas and economics of his socialism are forgotten, this influence will remain.

Lastly, and perhaps greatest parallel of all, both passionately loved the people. Confucius, when asked how the superior man attained his position, said: "He cultivates himself so as to bring rest unto the people." Again he said: "To govern a country of a thousand chariots, there must be reverent attention to business, and faithfulness,