

**THE SACRED EDICT; WITH
A TRANSLATION OF THE
COLLOQUIAL RENDERING**

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The Sacred Edict; With a Translation of the Colloquial Rendering by F. W. Baller

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SACRED EDICT

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BY

F. W. BALLER

SECOND EDITION

Revised

PREPARED FOR THE USE OF JUNIOR MEMBERS OF THE CHINA ISLAND MISSION

SHANGHAI:
AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSION PRESS

1907

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PREFACE.

THE Student of Chinese whose aim is to acquire a good knowledge of colloquial, is speedily confronted by two difficulties. On the one hand, few teachers will talk to their pupils as they talk to their fellow-countrymen; while on the other, there is a great scarcity of suitable books, such as works of travel, history, adventure, etc., written in everyday language. The consequence is, that in many cases the beginner falls into a style of language, which though intelligible is not by any means "a well of Chinese undefiled."

Value of the book
to the Student.

Novels and moral treatises written from a Buddhist standpoint do indeed abound, but the former are, as a rule, loaded with all manner of indecency both of thought and expression, and the latter soon become very tedious reading. And even in books, to whose subject matter no one can take exception, a page or two of colloquial is commonly followed by several pages written in the *Uen-li* (文理), i.e., literary style.

In the Sacred Edict the Student will find a thesaurus of everyday words, phrases, and idioms; and he who has it at his tongue's end and knows how to use it, may safely count upon being "well understood of the common people."

In its original form, the Sacred Edict consisted merely in the sixteen Maxims of the Emperor *K'ang-hsi*, each containing seven words, and written in the highest literary style. These were issued as a Hortatory Edict in 1670, and were hung up in prominent positions in the law courts of the Empire.

Origin and style.

In 1724 *Tong-cheng* (*K'ang-hsi's* son and successor) republished the Edict in an enlarged form, superadding a series of ample expositions of his father's texts, written in a simple literary style. A high official named *Uang-iu-p'uh* (王又樸), holding the position of Salt Commissioner in Shensi, feeling that the style was still too abstruse for ordinary people to understand, rendered this exposition into colloquial, dilating upon and illustrating the thoughts contained

in it, and interspersing it with proverbs and homely sayings. Classical quotations too, that have passed into current use, are occasionally introduced, and here and there are to be found parts written in a very simple literary style. The latter are few, but from a Chinese point of view, redeem the book from being *too* simple—an unpardonable fault in the eyes of many Chinese scholars. It is this Colloquial Rendering which is above referred to as containing a store-house of everyday words, phrases and idioms.

The beginner will do well to beware of the very common mistake of trying to translate word for word. This is to attempt the impossible. At the same time he ought certainly to acquire a knowledge of each individual word and phrase. Then, with the aid of a teacher, he should grasp the general drift of the passage and make as good a translation as possible; and finally, he should compare the result with the translation in the book and with the notes.

In the translation, style has sometimes been sacrificed to literalness—some parts being overtranslated for the benefit of the beginner. In many cases it is an idea rather than a word that has to be expressed, and the best rendering is the one which most idiomatically expresses the shade of meaning of the original. To study the translation with the text right away will perhaps seem to the student to be a great saving of time. At first it may be so; but the greatest and most lasting benefit will result from independent and painstaking effort on the lines indicated above. With a view to lighten labour, the text has been punctuated and divided into paragraphs.

He who studies this work with a view to becoming a good speaker of colloquial, must learn phrases and sentences off by heart. And in acquiring them he should commit them to memory with both tones and aspirates, regarding these as integral parts of the language. This may seem tedious at first, but the after results will more than compensate for all the extra work. The Chinese think in quotations; and he who can quote their ready-made expressions, will add a vivacity to his style, which will be greatly to his advantage in his intercourse with the people. He will do well to put the question to his teacher, "Is this sentence in constant use here?" (*Chae-kü hua tsai-chae-li Ah'ang iong ma* 這句話在這裏常用嗎) in order to get any local equivalents.

The Sacred Edict is useful as giving a comprehensive view of Chinese life and character, and shewing the value of mere moral teaching. In every chapter may be seen the importance attached by this people to respect to parents and seniors, and deference to rulers—principles which probably have done much towards securing that long continuance as a nation, of which China is justly proud: but the only true source of right action, the recognition of man's responsibility to God, is unknown—almost unhinted at.

It also illustrates the extremes of Chinese character. On the one hand, may be seen a shrewdness, and a knowledge of human nature difficult to equal, and on the other, a credulity and childishness, which are pitiable in the extreme.

And lastly, it well exemplifies both the strength and weakness of mere morality. There is high thinking, but the outcome is low living. These moral maxims have no life-giving power in them. They are as sterile as a schoolboy's copybook headings. However brilliant these "Lights of Asia" may appear through the richly tinted medium of poetic imagery borrowed from Western culture, the people of China who have followed them for generations are still enveloped in a darkness which may be felt. Nothing but Divine motive power can raise fallen humanity.

"Thou bleeding Lamb,
Thou maker of new morals for mankind,
The best morality is love of Thee."

The edition used is one published in Wuchang (武昌) by the *Hupei Kuan-shu Ch'u* (湖北官書處). It is issued with the sanction of the Provincial Authorities, and differs from the ordinary editions in having extracts from the Penal Code printed in full in many of the chapters. The wording too, is slightly different from that of the original edition.

The Chinese text
adopted.

The *Uen-li* text of *Iong-cheng* is printed together with the original Preface at the end of the book. They are not translated: to have translated them would have been foreign to the object in view.

The work is intended to serve as a supplement to the "Mandarin Primer";* and is published to enable those who are beginning to preach the gospel, to acquire such a knowledge of Chinese thought and expression as will give them power to put Truth clearly and forcibly before the people.

Object of the work,
etc.

* MANDARIN PRIMER. Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press.

Warmest thanks are due to F. Howard Taylor, M.D., F.R.C.S., (Lond.), etc., and H. N. Lachlan, Esq., M.A., for much valuable help, and many most useful suggestions.

F. W. BALLER.

GANKING,

October, 1892.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION,

The demand for a second edition, indicates, to some extent, the value of the Sacred Edict to the student of Chinese literature. The common duties of life, to which it gives emphasis, are in danger of being looked upon lightly by the rising generation of Chinese. The New Learning is supposed to be the panacea for all woes, and to contain in it all that is needed to make a nation great and prosperous. But it will be found, in the East as in the West, that learning divorced from morality and virtue, is a menace to society, and works out disastrously both for the individual and for the State. It will be a bad day for China when respect for the cardinal virtues ebbs away. In any case the foreigner who wishes to know Chinese thought, and to see things from the orthodox standpoint, cannot safely afford to be ignorant of the contents of this book. He will be wise if he masters it, and makes it his own.

F. W. BALLER.

CHEFOO,

June, 1907.

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