Chinese Classics.

(*Continued.*)

CONFUCIUS AND MENCIUS.

SAYINGS OF MENCIUS.

(*Quotations and comments prepared for the* P. C. ADVERTISER.)

THE PRACTISE OF GOODNESS.

Mencius, in the book "Le Low," speaking of theory and practise, says :—

"The power of vision of Le Low (a clear and quick-sighted man), and the skill of the hand of Kung Shoo (a great mechanician) without the compass and square could not form squares and circles. The acute ear of the music master Kwang, without the pitch-tubes could not determine correctly the five notes. The principles of Yaou and Shun (two virtuous and sage princes) could not secure the tranquil order of the empire without a benevolent administration of government."

"There are many princes who have benevolent hearts, and a reputation for virtue, while yet their people derive no benefit from their government; nor will they leave any example to future ages, because they do not put into practise their benevolence in their administration of Government."

"Hence we have the saying :—'Virtue alone is not sufficient for the exercise of government; laws alone cannot carry themselves into practise.'"

We have often seen this idea expressed in the works of modern writers, and have uttered it ourselves; but only recently did we know that it had been said in China 2400 years ago.

This saying of Mencius is a fundamental truth, calling for earnest consideration and application, at this time, in this Hawaiian Kingdom.

PRINCIPLES OF MASONRY.

Mencius, in many of his sayings, sets forth the leading principles of Masonry; and this goes to show the very great antiquity of the mystic rite, whose origin is lost in the ancient unrecorded annals of Chinese history. Mencius refers to an antiquity far beyond his own day, when he says:

"The ancient men of wisdom called in to their aid the compass, the square, the level, and the line, to shape and construct all things exactly. Thus the human relations are perfectly exhibited. And thus the ancient men applied practical benevolence in the affairs of men, in order to promote good conduct and good government."

PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT.

The following remarkable words, uttered two thousand four hundred years ago, have a deep significance for all rulers in our day and generation :—

"When the Prince has no principles or standard of virtue for his government, and his Ministers have no laws by which they keep themselves in the discharge of their duties;—then in the Court obedience is not paid to principle; and in the office obedience is not paid to rule. Superiors violate the laws of righteousness, and inferiors violate the penal laws. It is only by a fortunate chance that a kingdom in such a case is preserved."

In this connection Mencius proceeds to demonstrate that the welfare of a kingdom is not so much promoted "by the cultivable area being extended," or by "the accumulation of wealth," as it is by the fact of "rulers being guided by principle of right and justice."

Mencius, throughout his works, utters many profound sayings on the principles of government. He manifested the stern uncompromising spirit of a Hebrew prophet in his relations to rulers. Thus he counsels a Minister in one place :—"To urge one's sovereign to difficult virtuous achievements is showing respect for him. To set before him what is good, and repress his perversities, is manifesting reverence for him. He who does not do these things, saying to himself: 'My sovereign is incompetent, or unfit for this, may be said to play the thief, or false with his King." "If a Minister will try to please everybody, he will find the days not sufficient for his work."

Mencius, in considering the subject of personal influence, said: "If a man serve others, and no responsive regard is shown to him, let him look within himself and examine the motive of his benevolence. If he is trying to rule others, and his government is unsuccessful, let him look into his heart and examine his principle of government."

"When we do not realize by what we do, what we desire, we must examine ourselves in every point. When a man's principle of action is good and patriotic, the whole nation will turn to him with recognition and submission."

Let such ponder these words who, animated only by policy, show courtesies to a man in order to gain some selfish object, and complain of the ingratitude of a man whom they tried to hoodwink.

Mencius said: "The root of the State is in the family. The root of the family is in the person of its head." This idea is often repeated in our day in the pulpit and elsewhere; but how many know that it was uttered so long ago.

Mencius advised the Princes Kee and Chow how to win empire: "Get the people, and the empire is got. There is a way to get the people,—get their hearts, and the people are got. The way to get their hearts is simply to do right, and to strive to help and relieve them in their labors and sufferings." Would that all rulers would take these pregnant truths to heart, and act upon them.

And thus spoke Mencius to his disciples :—

"Benevolence is the tranquil habitation of man; and righteousness is his straight path."

"Never has there been one possessed of complete sincerity who did not move others. And never has there been one without sincerity who was able to move others."

"A great man does not think beforehand of his words that they may be sincere; nor of his actions that they may be correct. He simply speaks and does what is right."

And here we wish to set forth the declaration of Mencius as to what constitutes a great man. These are the words of the Chinese sage :—

"THE GREAT MAN IS HE WHO DOES NOT LOSE HIS CHILD-HEART."

These words are uttered simply, and differ not from the rest of the text in the book "Le Low;" but we capitalize them, and ponder with reverence on the words of a sage who anticipated, in some sense, by four hundred years the words of Jesus of Nazareth, who said that whoever became like a little child in heart, "the same was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." Confucius and Mencius were, we feel, men like many others, inspired by Divine wisdom. There were prophets many ages anterior to Jesus, who yet, as it is said, "saw his day," or anticipated His Divine Spirit and work on earth. And such were the Chinese sages, whose sayings we have quoted. But it is sad to reflect upon the unavailing effect of words of wisdom—even of Divine inspiration. The words of the Sermon on the Mount have been in the mouths of men called Christians for nearly nineteen hundred years, and still they repeat in their lives the hardness, narrowness, and uncharitableness which Christ so strongly denounced. And also the words of the Chinese sages have been repeated by myriads of Chinese for twenty-four hundred years, and yet still the myriads of the same race repeat in their lives in this age the meanness and cunning, and cruelty, which their great teachers so earnestly denounced.

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