

CONFUCIUS AND CONFUCIANISM

In the province or State of Shantung, and county of Yinchow, Khoung-tsen was born, B. C. 551. His disciples called him Kung-fut, "Teacher Kung;" and the Jesuit missionaries latinized the title. He was born of the traditional "poor but honest parents." He early became famous for wisdom, and was drawn into politics. Finding, however, the air of court usefulness to his tastes, he gave himself to travel and instruction, in the hope of reforming current evils. Thoroughly honest, and free from superstition, he claimed no divine affluents, and contented himself with the known and attainable. He never prescribed a quick nostrum as a panacea for the ills of life. His wondrous genius was applied to the study of the ancients, and of institutions political and social. His contempt for the vague, inferential and hypothetical, "frae monie a blunder" freed him and foolish notion. With all his thoroughness, his teachings were far from being satisfying to human inquiry. "What in the new nothing about, he said nothing about. Questioning touching death, the riddle of all the ages, his answer was: "Imperfectly acquainted with life, how can I know of death?"

Confucius was not a speculative philosopher like Plato or Bacon, the founder of a religion like Jesus or Mahomet, a law-giver like Solon or Justinian, a reformer like Luther or Howard. He was like, yet unlike these. Nothing in the whole realm of the actual was foreign to his thoughts; nothing in the whole realm of the imaginary entered at all into his intellectual calculus. Here he stands upon an insulation from all the other great and good men of the race, and herein we have an explanation of the fact that Chinese character is to be studied through a study of Confucianism.

The Confucian literature is extensive, and its range of inquiry, as we have seen, is wide beyond precedent; but we have in five words the index to the whole system. It is summed up in what are called the "five virtues," such as the commandments of Moses and the beatitudes of Jesus epitomize their respective systems. These virtues are: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge and faith. It will be observed that, so far as they go, these virtues bear a close resemblance to the beatitudes of Christianity. There is this noticeable difference, however: the doctrine of returning good for evil Confucius did not indorse. Upon one occasion he fell in with Lao-tz, the founder of the Taoist sect, and the dialogue between them is preserved in a volume that has recently been rendered into English. Lao-tz said: "Confucius, what think you of the doctrine of the ancients, 'Thou shalt love thine enemy?'" To this the sage replied: "If I love mine enemy, what have I left for my friend? Be just to all."

This is noticeable as one of the very few instances in which Confucius deviated from the ethics of the Chinese fathers.—Western, Monthly for September.

STAGNANT WATER.

Stagnant or foul water is injurious to all animals. It causes blood poisoning and thus leads to many febrile complaints. It brings on abortion in other animals as well as in cows. Two winters ago three valuable mares, belonging to a some that resides nearby farmer, slipped their colts very shortly after Christmas. These mares had been tolerably well kept and not too hardily worked, but had been watered several weeks at a pool, by the side of which a large manure heap had been foolishly placed, and into which the highly colored organic matter found its way. Some ewes watered at the same pool, cast their lambs; whilst another lot of ewes, kept two fields distant, managed in exactly the same way, but enjoying a purer supply of water, carried their lambs to the full period. Since better care has been taken to prevent the water supply being contaminated by the manure heap, neither mares nor ewes have suffered from abortion. Similar cases have doubtless occurred in the experience of our readers.—Vet. Ed. North British Agricultural.

CUNNING OF THE FOX.—A certain jaguar, who was one morning keeping watch in the forest, saw a fox cautiously making his approach towards the stump of an old tree. When sufficiently near he took a high and determined jump on to the top of it, and after looking round while hopped to the ground again. After Reynard had repeated this knightly exercise several times, he went his way, but presently returned to the spot bearing a pretty large and heavy piece of dry oak in his mouth, and thus burdened, and as it would seem for the purpose of testing his vaulting powers, he renewed his leaps on the stump. After a time, however, and when he found that, weighted as he was, he could make the ascent with facility, he desisted from further efforts, dropped the piece of wood from his mouth, and coiling himself on the top of the stump, remained motionless as if dead. At the close of evening an old sow and her progeny, five or six in number, issued from a neighboring thicket and pursuing their usual track, passed near to the stump in question. Two of her sucklings followed somewhat behind the rest, and, just as they neared his ambush, Michel, with the rapidity of thought, darted down from his perch upon one of them, and in the twinkling of an eye, bore it in triumph on to the fastness he had so providentially prepared beforehand. Confounded at the strokes of her offspring, the old sow returned in fury to the spot, and until late in the night made repeated desperate attempts to alarm the murderer's stronghold; but the fox took the matter coolly, and devoured the pig under the very nose of its mother.—Naturalists in Norway.

After a horse is nine years old a wrinkle comes on the eye lid at the upper corner of the lower lid, and every year thereafter he has one defined wrinkle for each year over nine. If he has three wrinkles, he is twelve; if four wrinkles, he is thirteen; add the number of wrinkles to nine, and you get his correct age.

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