

Rev. William Belden,
Clifton Springs, N.Y.

Dear Bro. Belden: Your little daughters asked me to write some Chinese sentiment in their autograph albums and when I saw them in the tabernacle yesterday morning I sat down and very hastily wrote a quotation from Mencius in one and attempted one from Confucius in the other. This latter I intended to be a much quoted saying from the Four Books; "Death and life are in the decrees; happiness and honor are from Heaven". While I was facing the R. R. station at Liverpool late in the night the original of this saying came ringing in my ears and all at once I remembered that I had not written "in the decrees" but "in the proprieties". It is to be explained, I suppose, by the fact that "in the proprieties" or "in accordance with propriety" is a phrase in constant use in Chinese conversation. Now it may make little difference to the little girls, but I am sure it will make a great deal to Confucius. And then some heartless Chinese missionary might come along and injure himself laughing at me and I might be sued for damages by some mission board. It may be true that "death and life are in the proprieties", for too much

propriety seems to be the death of some people and we know that the real disservice of genuine propriety is life to others, but for all that it is what Confucius said and I shouldn't like to make the old man responsible for a proverb of my own manufacture, so I'll ask you please, to hand the inclosed slip to your daughter and request her to cut out the quotation and paste it over the one marked "Confucius". This blunder illustrates the wisdom of a friend of mine in China who calls the collection from which the quotation is made the "Confucius Classics".

I shall be greatly obliged by your attention to this matter though it may seem to you a very trivial one.

We had a grand meeting and I was greatly blessed by it.

Columbus, O.

June 16th 1892

Sincerely
E. Williams