

An Hour with the Editor

THE COURT OF LAST RESORT

In everything pertaining to human existence, except those things which we do automatically or instinctively, reason is the origin of our action and the court of last resort. We may not in the very great majority of cases exercise our own reason, for we may accept the conclusions reached by others. This is the elementary stages of mathematics our own reason tells us that two and two make four. Every person who has taught little children knows how exceedingly difficult it is in some cases to get this elementary fact in the minds of some of them. You may show them that two apples and two apples make four apples, but when the year is satisfied on that point, they are not prepared to admit that two potatoes and two potatoes make four potatoes. By and by reason asserts itself and that four is twice two is recognized as a fixed law. In the higher realms of mathematics we accept the conclusions of others without thinking it necessary to exercise our own reason. Every carpenter's apprentice knows that if he places two pieces of lumber in such a position that if a point on one of the pieces be taken, that it is eight feet from the place where the pieces join and another point on the other piece eight feet from the place of juncture, and the timbers are placed so that the distance between the two points is ten feet, the two pieces will make a square corner, to speak colloquially, that is it will be a right angle. If the apprentice knows this he can lay the sills of a house squarely without knowing that the length of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is the square root of the sum of the squares of the base and perpendicular. He may be able to make his corners square, but he may be quite unable to work out the 47th proposition of the First Book of Euclid.

The foundations of our knowledge are therefore:

Our own observations and experience;
Our own reason;
The acceptance of the conclusions of the reasoning power of others.

We have a natural right to apply the test of our own reason to every proposition; but it would be exceedingly unwise to do this because:

We could not possibly do so for lack of time;

We are not all able to make the necessary observations upon which to base our reasoning;

We are not all intellectually capable of drawing correct conclusions from ascertained facts.

Therefore in all matters relating to physical existence, we accept not only the evidence of our senses, but the conclusions that other people have reached from the evidence of their senses. Either our own reason operating upon our own experience or the reason of others operating upon their experience furnishes us what we regard, and properly so, as sufficient guides of action. To reduce the chances of error to a minimum we must be certain that we are not mistaken as to the facts from which we reason; even this certainty does not safeguard against error, for there is always a chance that, except in the simpler things, our reason may not be trustworthy. We may, however, accept the following as an axiom: Perfect reasoning applied to ascertained facts will lead infallibly to the truth. This is as true in every aspect of life as it is of plane geometry.

The application of these observations is, for the present, to matters of opinion on public questions and matters of acceptance in religious questions. It would be hopeless for anyone in the brief space that can be devoted here to such a subject to deal with it otherwise than suggestively. The most that can be expected is to assist those who may be sincerely desirous of reaching right conclusions. In considering affairs of state the very great majority of persons accept the views expressed by others, without testing them as far as they are able by applying their own reasoning powers to ascertained facts within their own knowledge. Men follow their leaders without seeking to find out for themselves whether those leaders base their claims upon ascertained facts and sound reasoning. Thus the development of a sound public opinion on almost any subject is rendered nearly impossible. The appeal to reason in things political is not discountenanced by leaders, but it is prevented by appeals to prejudice, self interest and a variety of other considerations, and unhappily those who might be disposed to exercise their own reason are unable to get the facts of any case accurately owing to the vast amount of misrepresentation that prevails in connection with public affairs. This is very unfortunate condition of things and the nation has suffered in the past and will continue to suffer in the future because of it.

In the religious world the appeal to reason has been discountenanced and the effect has been prejudicial to the cause of true religion. The Church tells the laity to accept what it teaches and ask no questions; but this men will not do in a very great number of cases. This is not to say that a person who will accept obediently what the Church teaches and shape his life accordingly, will not find happiness in so doing and be able, because he does so, to make the world the better because he has lived in it. To make such a claim would be to go counter to the lesson taught by the whole history of mankind. Yet even the Church must concede that its claims to a right to instruct mankind are founded upon reason based upon facts which the founders of the Church regarded as established beyond all controversy. The Church has no right to say to

any man that because some individuals, who lived several centuries ago chose to reach certain conclusions, he is bound to accept the same conclusions. Its duty is to furnish evidence so that those who may be inclined to doubt the truth of what it teaches may be convinced in their reasoning, and those who do accept its teaching may be confirmed in their faith. Let it be supposed that there is some part of the world where men of high intelligence live, who have never heard of Christianity, and let us further suppose that some branch of the Christian Church should establish itself there, and without reference to tradition, sacred literature or anything whatever, except the actual daily life of its members, it would endeavor to make out such a case as would convince the community that it had a right to speak with an authority that would prevent intelligent men from exercising their reasoning faculties. Would it succeed? We know it would not; we know it is only by teaching the theory first that the Church seeks to establish its authority. Therefore it is that so many people simply disregard the Church and all it stands for. How this condition should influence us all individually must be left to be treated in another article.

THE ROMAN EMPERORS

Severus reigned nearly eighteen years. As a soldier and an administrator he undoubtedly ranks very high among the emperors. Some historians have classed him with Julius Caesar and others with Augustus; but comparisons of this kind are always unsatisfactory, because there is no standard by which greatness can be tested. Severus gave peace to his people at home and success to the army abroad. His reign was momentous and its influence is felt even to this day. Three of what seem from the standpoint of history to have been the most important not only in his reign but in the epoch in which he lived, although at the time they possibly did not attract attention in keeping with their portentous character, may be mentioned.

One of these was the destruction of Byzantium. Byzantium was a city standing where Constantinople now does. It was the great trade centre of the East, and through it passed the richly-laden caravans from Persia, India, and possibly even far-off China. It was a great and proud city, claiming to have as potent a voice in the affairs of the Empire as even Rome herself. We saw in the last preceding article that Prescennius Niger had been proclaimed Emperor by his troops when they heard of the death of Pertinax, and that Severus overcame his forces after a prolonged struggle. Much of the fighting centred around Byzantium, the inhabitants of which threw up strong fortifications, and made a stout resistance extending over three years. In the end the garrison was starved into surrender, and the victorious generals proceeded, with or without the sanction of Severus is unknown, to destroy the city utterly. This was a fatal error, for at that very time the Goths had reached the shores of the Black Sea, and with Byzantium destroyed the way was left open for the advance of their fleets into the Mediterranean.

The second act of policy which carried with it disastrous effects was the reconstruction of the Praetorian Guards. We have seen that Severus before entering Rome as emperor had disarmed the Guards and sentenced them to perpetual banishment; but he was no sooner firmly seated on the throne than he determined to have his own Guard. Instead of recruiting this from Roman citizens, he sent to the confines of the Empire for picked men, and thus Rome saw the Emperor surrounded by fierce soldiers of strange aspect and stranger speech. It may be said in defence of this course that the Roman youth had through luxury and licentiousness become unfit for the manly profession of arms, and that this was no fault of Severus, but only the result of years of social decay. Nevertheless, the presence of this semi-barbarous force in Rome, a force knowing nothing of the Roman traditions of citizenship and acknowledging no allegiance except to the Emperor who paid them, was calculated to destroy the last fibre of the true Roman spirit that had survived the vicious practices of the preceding two centuries.

The third serious act, or rather policy, of Severus was his attitude towards the Empire. Previous emperors had preserved the fiction that they represented the Senate and derived their powers from it. As a matter of fact, the Senate had grown grossly servile. The rapacious cruelty of such men as Nero, Caligula and Commodus, and especially the latter, had annihilated many of the noblest families of Rome. The intermarriage between Roman youth and the licentious beauties of the East, who had been brought to the capital in the train of conquering soldiers, resulted in a progeny that was skilled in little else save the arts of sensual gratification. The great mass of the people had lost all belief in religion of any kind. "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," was the ruling motto of the representatives of that splendid race which had made the words "I am a Roman citizen" a passport and a safeguard over all the then known world. Severus, born in Africa of humble origin, and inspired with inordinate ambition and a strange superstitious fatalism, despised the people to whose mastership he had advanced, treating them as if they were his slaves and holding the Empire as if it were his private property. He filled the Senate with men whose distinguishing characteristics were their wealth and their pliancy, and he surrounded himself with men learned in the law and skilled in the art of "making the worse

appear the better reason." These men made haste to wipe out all the traditions of democracy, and began to teach the doctrine of prerogative, something which up to that day was unthought of. Emperors before Severus had never claimed that there were any powers inherent to them in the imperatorship, but that the tenant of that office only possessed such powers as the Senate might see fit to delegate to him, namely, those that attached to the commander-in-chief of the army, the position of first consul and the dignity of pontifex maximus. Theoretically the emperors held these powers only at the will of the Senate; but Severus had no intention of being governed by traditions that had long since lost all vitality. He was absolutely in charge of the Empire and he not only determined that every one should know it, but also that every one should accept the principle that the titles Emperor and Augustus carried with them supreme authority over the lives and property of the people and over the whole state. Three principles were advocated by the coterie of eminent jurists whom Severus called into his councils. One was that what had hitherto been regarded as the power of the people was really the prerogative of the sovereign, and that instead of the people themselves being the fountain of authority, the emperor was its source. As we owe our system of jurisprudence largely to the Romans we will on a little thought realize how great a part has been played in the formation of the British Constitution by the principles laid down by the civil lawyers by order of Severus. The ideas which British people find so difficult to assent to when propounded from time to time by the German Kaiser are only modernized repetitions of the opinions of the Roman tyrant. The second principle, for which these lawyers successfully contend, was that liberty was essentially wrong and dangerous. However wrong liberty might have been, it certainly was dangerous to attempt to exercise it in a city garrisoned by semi-savage warriors from the outskirts of civilization. This was a new idea in Rome, but it has been held ever since, and there are men today in this city who advocate it. Men are unfit to govern themselves, said such men as Papinian, Paulus and Ulpian who served their master with all their powerful intellects, and therefore they must be governed. Here we have a principle that has survived the Empire in which it was first promulgated. The third new doctrine was that of passive obedience. We have a survival of this even in our crowned democracy. The King does not make requests in his official capacity; he commands. For seventeen hundred years—Severus died in 211—the world has been struggling to escape from the chains which this able emperor laid upon Rome. He was the first of the emperors, who was really a king in the ancient Roman sense of the word, and this was recognized by contemporary historians.

THINGS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN

Last week we dealt with some things not generally known, or as was then said, not generally thought of, and the discussion may with possible advantage be carried a little further. Most persons who read the newspapers are familiar in a general way with what is known as the nebular theory. Perhaps some of them have paid so very little attention to it that they hardly appreciate what it is, and so a word or two of explanation may be given. According to this theory the earth, the sun, the moon, the planets and all the stars once existed in a nebulous state. Nebula is the Latin for cloud, and from that fact any one can infer what the nebulous condition of matter was as well as from columns of description. In the instance of the Earth this nebulous matter in the course of ages became condensed first into fluid and then into solid matter, although much of it yet remains fluid, as in the case of the sea, and some of it gaseous, as in the case of the atmosphere. There are nebulae which have not yet reached the fluid state. Astronomers divide these into two classes, the green and the white. Most of the green nebulae are in or near the Milky Way, which itself consists largely of nebulae furnishing a background for innumerable stars. It is popularly supposed that with a strong enough telescope the Milky Way can be resolved into stars, which are so very remote that their light blends together to form a cloudy mass, but this is not quite true. There are many more stars in the Milky Way than can be seen with the unassisted eye, but a large portion of the faintly glowing mass which we see overhead at night is composed of nebulae. Possibly you know the constellation of Orion. It is the most beautiful group of stars in the sky and is easily distinguishable by reason of the three bright stars which constitute the Belt. In this group of stars there is a vast spiral nebula, although it cannot be seen by the naked eye. What are now known as Magellan's Clouds are nebulae. There is a large green nebula in the constellation known as the Great Bear, or more commonly spoken of as the Dipper, which really forms only a part of the constellation. This nebula was known as the Owl, from the fact that there were two bright spots in it resembling the eyes of that bird. First one of these disappeared and then the other, and now the nebula shows a nucleus in its exact centre. In this instance astronomers have been able to watch the progress of the formation of what may in the course of ages be a central sun and an attending system of worlds.

You have doubtless observed the planet Jupiter. It is the largest of the orbs which circle around the sun in company with our own world. Jupiter is not a solid body like our earth. It seems to be a glowing liquid

mass somewhat lighter than water. Its surface is not uniform in color nor are the different colors distributed with unvarying regularity. While there are several fairly well defined belts, there are vast masses which move on the surface of the planet, and the border line between the belts constantly varies in shape. Of late the attention of astronomers, who are studying this great planet, has been much turned to a dark mass that seems to be floating upon its surface. Jupiter is very much larger than the earth, and this dark mass bears about the same relation to the size of the whole planet as Australia bears to the whole earth. It moves about with more or less regularity and it is explained by supposing that it is a portion of the planetary body that has cooled sufficiently to be solid and yet is not so dense as not to be floatable by the planetary liquid. A somewhat fanciful writer has assumed that this may be a continent in the process of formation, but what seems more probable is that it is the result of the solidification of the fluid mass, and that in the course of time it will become so much heavier than the liquid on which it floats that it will sink to the centre, there to join other masses that may have been so sinking for millions of years. By and by these masses will become so great that they will reach to the surface of the liquid and then the actual formation of continents will begin.

Thus we see in the nebulae and in Jupiter the various stages of the process by which worlds are formed. In some of the nebulae of the Milky Way there are no signs of regular formation. They are "without form and void." In others, as in the case of the nebula of Orion, we see an advanced stage where regular motions is established. In the Owl we see the formation of the solar centre of a new planetary system. In Jupiter we see a planet, which was once part of a nebula, slowly solidifying to form a globe like our own. Such are some of the things which the stars tell us, and they are able to tell us these things because we now watch them not simply with the unaided eye, as did the astronomers of olden times, nor even with the telescope alone as the great men of a century ago were compelled to do; but with the aid of the photographic lens combined with the telescope. The photographic lens tells us things that we could not otherwise hope to know, and the spectroscopic interpreters its story so that we can tell what is going on in those far-off masses of star-dust almost as well as if they were close at hand.

THE SIKHS

Something of Their History and Religion

IV.
Before concluding the articles on the Sikhs, we will give a short resume of what has been written already.

The home of this branch of the Hindu race is the Punjab, or "The Land of the Five Rivers," and this distinctive appellation of Sikh, which means disciple, originated with Guru Nanak, who was their first religious teacher, and who was born in the Thirteenth Century.

We have seen what brave soldiers the Sikhs have proved themselves to be doing the centuries past; how they battled for their faith against the Mohammedans, and endured persecution and martyrdom rather than renounce their religion; how under Sovind Singh they became so strongly organized and fought so valiantly that the whole of the Punjab came into their hands; how desperately they struggled against the British forces to retain possession of that land, they had given their life's blood to gain; and how, having finally surrendered to the British, they became our most loyal allies, and fought side by side with our soldiers through the dark days of the Mutiny. And now, having learned a little of the brave history of these people, it remains only to gain a further insight into their religion. Fundamentally it is identical with Christianity. It is only in ritual that it differs. It is monotheistic, and its teaching may be summed up, "Love God and thy neighbor as thyself."

According to Guru Gobind Singh, who lived in the Sixteenth Century, and was the tenth Guru prophet from Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, the "Muknama," or means of salvation, is as follows, and we take the quotation from the life of Gugu Gobind Singh:

"O Sikhs, borrow not, but if you are compelled to borrow, faithfully restore the debt. Speak not falsely and associate not with the untruthful. Associating with holy men, practice truth, love truth, and clasp it to your hearts. Live by honest labor and deceive no one. Let not a Sikh be covetous. Look not on a naked woman. Let not your thoughts turn towards that sex. Cohabit not with another's wife. Deem another's property as filth. Keep your bodies clean. Have dealings with every one, but consider yourselves distinct. Your faith and daily duties are different from theirs. Bathe every morning before repast. If your bodies endure not cold water, then heat it. Ever abstain from tobacco. Remember the one immortal God. Repeat the Rahriras in the evening and the Sohila at bedtime. Receive the baptism and teaching of the Guru, and act according to the Grand Sahib. Cling to the boat in which thou hast embarked. Wander not in search of another religion. Repeat the Guru's hymn day and

night. Marry only into the house of a Sikh. Reserve thy wife and thy children from evil company. Covet not money offered for religious purposes. Habitually attend a Sikh temple and eat a little sacred food therefrom. He who distributeth sacred food should do so in equal quantities, whether the recipients be high or low, old or young. Eat not food offered to gods or goddesses. Despise not any Sikh, and never address him without the appellation Singh. Eat regardless of caste with all Sikhs who have been baptised, and deem them your brethren. Abandon at once the company of Brahmans and Mullas who cheat men out of their wealth, or ritualists who lead Sikhs astray, and of those who give women in marriage with concealed physical defects, and thus deceive the hopes of offspring.

"Let not a Sikh have intercourse with a strange woman unless married to her according to the Sikh rites. Let him contribute a tenth part of his earnings for religious purposes. Let him bow down at the conclusion of prayer. When a Sikh dieth, let sacred food be prepared. After his cremation, let the So-hila be read and prayer offered for his soul and for the consolation of his relations. Then sacred food may be distributed. Let not the family of the deceased indulge in much mourning, or be vies of women join in lamentation. On such occasions let the Guru's hymns be read and sung and let all listen to them.

As, when rain falleth to the earth, the fields yield excellent and pleasant fruit, so he who listeneth to the Guru and attendeth all these injunctions shall assuredly receive the reward thereof. Whoever accepteth the Guru's words, and these rules which he hath given, shall have his sins pardoned; he shall be saved from transmigration through eighty-four lakhs of animals, and after death shall enter the Gurur's abode. If any very worldly man devoted to pleasure tells you to the contrary, listen not to him, but ever follow the Guru's instruction."

The Guru was very fond of speaking in parables, and the following citation is an example:

"While in their neighborhood the Guru heard the cry of a partridge and pursued it. The partridge gave chase and tired out men and horses. At last the Guru caught it, plucked it, and threw it before his hawk, which, after some hesitation, began to devour it. The Guru, when asked the cause of this strange proceeding, told the following anecdote: 'In a previous birth the partridge had been an agriculturist, and the hawk a money-lender. The agriculturist had borrowed from the money-lender, squandered the money, and then went to live in another village. The money-lender followed him and insisted on payment. The agriculturist begged for time, and promised to discharge the debt. The money-lender demanded a surety. The agriculturist said he had no surety but the Guru. The money-lender was then satisfied and went home. The agriculturist, however, ultimately failed to pay the money. Both died soon after, upon which the agriculturist became this partridge, and the money-lender my hawk. The hawk at first refused to touch the partridge as the latter had given me as surety. I have now fulfilled my suretyship by bestowing the partridge on the hawk. If any one give me again as surety and discharge not his debt, I will treat him as the hawk hath done the partridge.'

When the Guru came to die, he spoke these words to comfort his disciples:

"He who is born must assuredly die. Guru Arjan hath said, 'Everything we behold shall perish.' Night and day are merely expressions of time. It is the immortal God alone who ever abideth. All other being, however holy and exalted, must depart when the last moment allotted them arriveth, for none can escape the primordial law of corporeal dissolution. All this world, composed of the five elements, is Death's prey. When the materials perish, how can the fabric remain? God the Creator and Cherisher of all is alone immortal. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiv, and the other gods of the Hindus, perished at their appointed time. Of what account is man? Wherefore, O my friends, it is not good to be unduly enamored of this fragile body. Know that the light of the imperishable God whose attributes are permanence, consciousness and happiness, shineth ever in you. Wherefore always abide in cheerfulness, and never give way to mourning. God is ever the same. He is neither young nor old. He is not born, neither doth he die. He feeleth not pain or poverty. Know that the true Guru abideth in He."

BULK

The curious person had opened a conversation with the fat woman in the sideshow. Are your parents living?" he asked. "Yes, sir."

"Have they a large family?"

"Rather large, sir," answered the fat woman; "I'm the family."—Chicago Tribune.

THAT SETTLED IT

At a cricket match in Yorkshire an appeal was made against a batsman for "obstructing the field." The out side were not quite clear which umpire should be asked, so some asked one and some the other. Umpire No. 1 said "Out," Umpire No. 2 said "Not out," and consequently a dispute ensued. At last Umpire No. 1 stalked up to No. 2.

"'Ave you shook 'ands with Lord 'Awke?'" he demanded, imperiously.

"No," said No. 2.

"Well, I 'ave—Hout!"

That settled it, and the batsman had to go.