

# An Hour with the Editor

## A WORKING HYPOTHESIS

Further pursuing the line of thought which was considered on this page on Sunday last, let us endeavor to apply the test of reason to our duty to ourselves as individuals, because after all the effect of anything upon ourselves is the natural way of determining its wisdom, assuming always that we apply the test intelligently. In physical investigations men accept what they call "working hypotheses," that is when they do not know a certain thing to be absolutely correct, they assume it to be correct if it is found to be trustworthy for the purposes of investigation. For example, we know that the tendency of all bodies on the earth, that are free to move, is to move towards the centre of the earth. We therefore accept the idea that there is some force which is inherent in matter to which this is due; but no one knows that this is the explanation, and the attraction of gravitation is really only a working hypothesis, doubtless an exceedingly satisfactory hypothesis, but only a hypothesis after all; for we cannot say with absolute certainty that the same effects are not produced by some other cause of which we are as yet ignorant. Science has made most of its advance by assuming that there are in nature various elements; we are beginning now to discover evidence that seems to warrant the belief that there is only one elementary substance in all nature. At present that is only a hypothesis, and hardly as yet a "working" one, for we cannot be at all even approximately sure about it.

In treating of subjects bearing upon the religious or spiritual life, the effort in these articles is to deal with them in exactly the same spirit as a question bearing upon physical science would be treated. Hundreds of persons will read this article, who would not read a Psalm or a sermon. They are more than ready to think about religious or spiritual things, but they want to have them presented without any appeal to tradition or what they call superstition. They may not have read Herbert Spencer's sentence: "I find no necessity in nature of the hypothesis of God," but that is the way they feel. To such persons it may be pointed out that they are under no obligation to believe in the existence of Australia, but if they tried to sail a ship across the place where other people say Australia is, they would come to grief. If God is, He is whether or not you believe He is. You are not justified in believing that He is not simply because a lot of wise people have not been able to find Him with a microscope. A very long time ago some one wrote a book about a real or mythical person called Job, and he said that a Being called the Lord spoke to Job in terms of ringing sarcasm. One of the questions He asked Job was: "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Job did not answer; if he did he would have been compelled to say he could not; and our great scientific men, after forty or fifty centuries, have got no further ahead along that line of inquiry than the ancient Patriarch, or whatever he may have been. And so we get the ground for further inquiry cleared a little by showing you that so far from your being up-to-date in questioning the existence of a Deity, you are away back among the ignoramuses of the distant past.

Therefore if you are disposed to consider things that relate to the religious or spiritual life, the first thing to do is to approach them with an open mind. If you are so constituted that you feel you must test everything by referring it to your own knowledge, experience and reason, why do so, but be careful to be honest with yourself in doing it. You would not cheat yourself in money matters, if you knew it; you ought not to want to cheat yourself in dealing with things, which you know, no matter how much you may pretend to ignorance, relate to a side of your nature that is not merely physical.

Let us then regard Christianity simply as a working hypothesis. It must of necessity be this to a very great degree, for it assumes to deal with the operations of infinite wisdom, infinite power and infinite love, and a finite mind cannot hope to grasp such things. The most that the wisest person can do with anything infinite is to endeavor to give some vague idea of it. The Christian Church presents certain theories, doctrines, creeds, or whatever else you may see fit to call them, and all the Church asks of you is that you will give these a trial and see for yourself if they are not a satisfactory working hypothesis for the governing of your religious or spiritual life. The Church will tell you that no one ever yet tried the hypothesis of the possibility of personal salvation through Jesus Christ without finding it to be more than a hypothesis, and an actual fact. It may not be a fact that you can photograph, or weigh, or measure with a tape-line; but we do not have to tell any intelligent person that the best things in the world cannot be proved in that way. You cannot prove patriotism, or honor, or love, or anything else that really counts by applying such tests. You know you are patriotic, but you cannot take your patriotism and put it on the table for yourself and others to contemplate. You would think a man insane if he should say to the girl of his choice that he knew he loved her, because he weighed more since he first looked into her eyes. Speaking of things spiritual, the Apostle Paul said: "These things are spiritually discerned." The Church says to you that, if you will accept her teaching on a single point, namely, that by faith in Christ you may be re-born, that is born into a wider and spiritual world, born into an atmosphere where the importance of

things is not distorted by physical influences, born into an existence wherein you realize that the things of this life are temporal but the things of that life are eternal—a life, be it remembered, that may be lived right here in Victoria or wherever you happen to be. No man has a right to say that this is not the case, until he has honestly tried it for himself.

And so we come back to our starting point. By all means try everything by reason; but exercise your reason in a common-sense way. Do not think it necessary to ask for proof of such or such a thing told of in the Bible happened. It really makes no difference to you whether it did or not. Believing that the whale swallowed Jonah or that Daniel was ever cast into a den of lions and came out unhurt never did any man any more good than to believe that "Sibow stole the sun, moon and stars from Snòqualm. The spiritual life comes not from credulity, but from experience. The Church says to you that its Founder taught the doctrine of the re-birth, and it tells you how that re-birth can be attained to. It tells you that millions of people have experienced that re-birth. If you wish to experience it, your reason will tell you that you should adopt the means taught by Christ. If you do not wish to experience it, that is your affair; but you must take the consequences. If you think it well to have your life grow up in the dark cavern of selfishness, you may not complain if by and bye you find it lacking in the stamina which only the sunshine of the spiritual world can give it. And this also is simply reason.

## TALES FROM THE CLASSICS

### The Story of Æneus

Æneus, as most of us know, is the hero of Virgil's Æneid, and perhaps that is as far as our knowledge, or maybe we have forgotten his wonderful story if we ever read it. In any case it is worth reading for brave tales never lose their power of inspiration.

"I," says Cassius, in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, "as Æneus, our great ancestor did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder the old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber did I, the tired Caesar."

For Anchises was Æneus father, and he was a very old man living in Troy at the time, when after ten years of siege, the Greeks entered and set fire to the city. Æneus, second in rank to Hector among the Trojan heroes, refused to leave Troy although he had been forewarned and might have taken himself and family and all his possessions away in safety, as long as King Priam lived. And he fought valiantly by the old king, until Priam was killed, and when at last it was either death or flight he took his father upon his back and his children by the hand and escaped from the burning city and the devastating Greeks. Only his wife, Creusa, was lost in the crowds as they passed through the gates and Æneus never saw her again.

The story of Æneus' wanderings after he left Troy would take almost as long in the telling as the story of Ulysses, so we shall confine ourselves to relating his love story only. It was a wild storm which drove him to Carthage, on the coast of Africa, and Dido, the beautiful queen of that country met him and bade him welcome. Perhaps it was because Venus was his mother that Æneus possessed so many personal charms. He was the admiration of all who beheld him, majestic in bearing, of magnificent proportions, and with a face of noble beauty. So the widowed queen Dido, who had fondly loved her first husband, and who upon seeing Æneus, tried to stifle the passion she felt for the handsome stranger, succumbed at last. By day she was with him constantly and by night her thoughts were all of him. "When the guests are gone," writes Virgil, "and the dim moon is hiding her light, and the setting stars invite to slumber, alone she mourns in the empty hall, and presses the couch he has just left; him far away she sees and hears, herself far away; or holds Ascanius long in her lap, spellbound by the father's image." And so though the gods had declared that Æneus should not marry Dido the end came for the unhappy queen.

"Meantime the sky begins to be convulsed with a mighty turmoil, a stormcloud follows of mingled rain and hail. The Tyrian train all in confusion, and the chivalry of Troy, and the hope of Dardania Venus' grandson, have sought shelter in their terror up and down the country, some here, some there. The streams run in torrents down the hills. Dido and the Trojan chief find themselves together in the same cave. Earth, the mother of all, and Juno, give the sign. "Lightnings ablaze and heaven flashes in sympathy with the bridal; and from mountain tops the nymphs give the nuptial shout. That day was the birthday of death, the birthday of woe. Henceforth she has no thought for the common eye, the common tongue; it is not a stolen passion that Dido has now in her mind—no, she calls it marriage; that name is the screen of her sin."

When Æneus had spent only too few joyous days with Queen Dido, Jove sent Mercury with a message telling him that he must leave Carthage and journey at once to Italy, as it has been decreed that a great work could be accomplished by him, the founding of a city and an empire whose power should extend to the ends of the earth.

And this was the manner in which Mercury surprised Æneus: "A sword was at his side starred with yellow jaspers, and a mantle drooped from his shoulders ablaze with Tyrian purple—a costly gift which Dido had made, varying the web with threads of gold. Instantly he assails him: And are you at a

time like this laying the foundations of stately Carthage, and building like a fond husband, your wife's goodly city, forgetting, alas, your own kingdom and the cares that should be yours? It is no less than the ruler of the gods who sends me down from his bright Olympus—he whose nod sways heaven and earth; it is he that bids me carry his commands through the flying air. What are you building? What do you look to in squandering your leisure in Libyan land? If you are fired by no spark of ambition for the greatness in your view, and will not rear a toilsome fabric for your own praise, think of Ascanius rising into youth, think of Iulus, your heir and your hope, to whom you owe the crown of Italy and the realm of Rome."

Divided between shame and sorrow Æneus hesitated only for a moment. His love for Dido was strong but the call to duty was stronger. Quietly as possible he issued his orders, and his fleet so long lying idle with its sails furled, was made ready by his faithful servants.

But Dido's loving intuition told her something was amiss, and she "went raving through the city like a Maenad starting up at the rattle of the sacred emblem, when the triennial orgies lash her with the cry of Bacchus, and Cythæron's yell calls her into the night. Her pleadings with Æneus were very pitiful and moved her lover strongly, though he told her he "never came with a bridegroom's torch in his hand, nor was this the alliance to which I agreed."

And so he left her, her pathetic words in his ears, pathetic words voicing a vain wish, "Had I but borne any offspring of you before your flight; were there some tiny Æneus play in my hall and remind me of you though but in look, I should not then feel so utterly captive and forlorn."

In the dead of night while Dido waited, hoping for a final message from him whom she had so loved, the fleet sped silently away. Then the poor queen maddened with grief, fled to the chamber so full of sweet memories of Æneus, and, taking the Dardan sword thrust it into her heart.

"I have lived my life," she groaned in dying, "I have built a splendid city. I have seen my walls completed."

And so her story ends. She had been a great queen, one of the greatest in ancient history, great in thought, great in deed, and a martyr to a great love.

## THINGS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN

Do you know why the stars twinkle? The twinkling is not very much in evidence in this part of the country. Last night, for example, that is the night before this article was written, only a very few of the stars could be seen to twinkle, and the reason doubtless was that there was a haziness in the sky; but on perfectly clear nights, and especially on frosty nights in higher altitudes, the twinkling is very remarkable. Do not hesitate to answer the above question in the negative, for you do not know, neither does any one else. We shall try to give what may be an explanation of this phenomenon, not because the twinkling of a star is as far as we know a matter of the slightest importance to us, but because in talking about it some other things may be mentioned that are of interest.

It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to mention the distinction between a star and a planet; but it may be as well to say that the planets do not twinkle. The planets with which most of us are familiar are Venus, Jupiter and Mars. Not many of us have ever seen any of the others with the naked eye or even with a telescope. The planets shine by reflected light, that is light reflected from the sun; the stars shine by their own light. Sometimes it is possible to see Venus as a crescent, that is without the use of any glass. The occasions are very rare. If a person has seen it once he can hardly hope to see it again. With a glass it can always be seen as a crescent, never as a disc, for Venus never turns its illuminated side fully to the earth, except at a time when it is lost in the glare of the sun. Jupiter and Mars never look like anything but very bright points to the unassisted eye. With a telescope they are seen as discs. But the stars are never anything else than points of light. The most powerful telescope that ever was made only makes a star look brighter. The photographic camera, which discovers so many things unseen by us, never makes the star anything else than a point. This is because of the inconceivable distance of the stars. It was pointed out on this page a week or so ago that if we could get upon the moon and look at the earth the Dominion of Canada would look about as big as a half-moon does to us. The moon is less than a quarter of a million miles away; so it is easy to understand that, when we think of objects millions of millions of miles distant, it is impossible for us to see them at all except as shining points, if they happen to be luminous. Let us take an illustration from something of everyday occurrence.

If you stand at the intersection of Government street and the Gorge road and look down the former, you will notice that when a street car comes round the turn by Pandora at night, its head light looks to be not much more than a point. Yet you know it is at least a foot in diameter, that is the illuminated surface is. The distance is very nearly a mile. If the car were two miles distant the headlight would simply be a point. From this it may be inferred that at a distance of 10,000 feet a lighted surface a foot in diameter would only show as a point. The earth is approximately 8,000 miles in diameter; therefore at 10,000 times

8,000 miles distance the earth, being luminous by reflected light, would appear like a point of light. We know this is true, for when Venus is 80,000,000 miles distant it only appears like a point, and Venus and the earth are not very much different in magnitude. Take a more interesting illustration of the appearance of light at a distance. When one of the Empresses is coming in or going out at night, she first appears as a shining object. All the points of light from her ports, decks and masts reach the eye at once, but so closely together, because of the smallness of the angle between their rays, that they blend as "one light." If the steamship's lights were sufficiently powerful to be seen 50 miles away, she would appear simply as a shining point against the star.

Now the light from a distant object comes to us in the form of a cone, or a pyramid, depending upon the shape of the object. Light from a star comes in the shape of a cone, and our eyes are the apex of the cone. It is a cone, the base of which may be a million or more miles in diameter and its height may be a million million miles. Into that cone is converged the light from the vast surface of the star. Light is due, it is supposed, to undulations or vibrations of the ether. Consequently within this cone we have compressed, as it were, these undulations or vibrations, which out in the realms of space occupy an enormous area. It is as if a huge disc of vibrating or undulating ether were being carried away from us. When the disc was near us we could not see the movement of the ether due to or causing light, whichever may be the fact of the case; but as the disc was removed further and further from us and we began to see the whole of it, although as a very much smaller object than it appeared at first, it is possible that the movements of the ether being compressed into a smaller visual area might become visible. This is not known to be the case, but it is the only solution of the twinkling of the stars that seems to be tenable, and we have to take a good many things for granted in order to regard it as at all probable.

We have learned enough about the stars to be able to tell the little child who wonders what they are, something about them. We can tell that they are composed of very much the same sort of stuff as the world is made of. We can tell that sometimes they seem to have huge dark companions. We can tell them in some cases what seems to be one star is really a group of stars, and that some of the stars may not be nearer the others of the group than they are to the earth. Take another familiar example. If we go far enough away from a cluster street lamp it will look one light; when we come nearer we will see there are several lights; but they are all parts of a group. But if we look at a row of single lamps, we may be in such a position that we will only see one of them, or we may be able to see several. They may look as if they formed a group, but in point of fact they are not a group at all, but only a number of lamps in a line. So what appear to the naked eye like single stars, and to the telescope like groups of stars, may be in point of fact a number of stars very nearly in the same line when viewed from the earth. There are other things which we can tell the child who wonders what the stars are; but when we are asked why they twinkle the best we can say with certainty is that it is one of the things that "you, nor I, nor nobody knows," but that it may be explained possible to use a scientific term, by the concentration into a point of the movements of the ether originating over a disc of vast proportions at an inconceivably vast distance. This may not be a very satisfactory explanation, but it will have to do until some one can suggest a better one.

## THE ROMAN EMPERORS

Severus had two sons, Caracalla and Geta. They were as much unlike their father as Commodus was unlike his father, the celebrated Marcus Aurelius. They were vain, indolent, cruel and cowardly and seemed from their earliest infancy to be inspired by hatred of each other. Severus associated them both with himself in the government of Rome, Caracalla in 198 and Geta ten years later. Thus Rome had three emperors at the same time, for although Severus held the highest position, and Caracalla the second, Geta was superior over Geta, they were all three invested with the title of Augustus, which was recognized as the highest that could be bestowed upon a Roman. The father beheld the course of his sons with dismay. He foretold that the stronger would slay the weaker and would in his own turn fall a victim to his own vices.

Severus' last expedition was for the purpose of subduing the Caledonians, and the story of the war is told in the poems of Ossian. But Scottish war would have availed nothing if death had not intervened and taken away the great soldier. As soon as Severus was dead the soldiers in accordance with his dying injunction proclaimed his sons joint emperors. They forthwith abandoned the campaign in Scotland and set out for Rome. Their journey furnished fresh evidence of their hatred of each other, for they never slept in the same camp nor ate at the same table, each being surrounded by his own guard and both alike, fearful of the designs of the other. On reaching Rome, they proceeded to divide the imperial palace between them. By the term palace a single building is not to be understood. Herodian says that the palace was equal in extent to all the rest of Rome, and if the brothers chose residences in the opposite extremes of

the imperial residence, they would be several miles apart, the space between them being occupied by vast gardens and subordinate palaces, wherein lived the favorites of the rulers. Shortly afterwards they carried out the principle of division so as to embrace the whole empire, Caracalla taking Europe and western Africa, and Geta Asia and Egypt. It was agreed that large armies should be continually stationed on both sides of the Bosphorus to prevent one emperor from invading the territory of the other, and the senators of European extraction were ordered to acknowledge Caracalla as their lord, all the others being directed to obey Geta. The Roman populace protested against this division of the mighty realms of the Caesars, and Julia, the able and devoted mother of the emperors, joined her supplications and tears to the protests of the people. But Caracalla was of even a more ignoble mind than any one had supposed. On the entreaty of his mother he agreed to meet Geta and see if a reconciliation between them could not be effected. While the brothers were conversing, some centurions, whom Caracalla had hidden behind curtains, rushed upon Geta and slew him. Julia threw her arms around her young son to protect him and was herself wounded, but worse than all she saw her elder son with his own hands take part in the killing of his brother. The soldiers, with whom Geta had been a favorite, were indignant at his death, but Caracalla appeased them by distributing among them the whole of the enormous fortune left by Severus.

But while Caracalla thus became sole ruler of Rome, he could not escape the tortures of his own mind, and he has left a confession stating that often in broad daylight he could see the forms of his father and brother before him reproaching him for his crime. From such visitations he could not hope to escape, but he could and did endeavor to remove every other thing that could remind him of his guilt. He threatened his mother with death if she showed any signs of mourning for her son; he actually caused the execution of more than 20,000 men and women for no other reason than that he suspected them of grieving for his brother, or of holding to the doctrine of personal liberty. One splendid figure stands out against this background of dishonor, that of Papius, one of the trusted counsellors of Severus and a lawyer of eminence. Caracalla commanded him to write a justification of the murder of Geta, but the noble Roman replied: "It is easier to commit than to justify a fratricide," a reply that immediately cost him his life.

The only reasonable explanation of the subsequent conduct of Caracalla is that he was insane. About a year after the murder of Geta he left Rome and never returned to it, but spent the remaining years of his reign wandering with a great retinue from one eastern province to another. He would order wealthy men to prepare banquets for him and when the time came to partake of them, he would often send his soldiers to destroy them and everything pertaining to them, and at other times order the soldiers to be the guests. His progress was marked by senseless destruction and wholesale bloodshed. To possess his favor was almost as dangerous as to incur his enmity. No man's life or property was safe from this rapacious monster. During one of his visits to Alexandria, without even the shadow of a reason, he ordered the massacre of the whole population of the city, including all strangers. He himself from a secure post watched the bloody work. How many persons were slain no one ever knew, for the killing was indiscriminate, Caracalla having decreed that every person in the city was alike deserving of death.

The monster hoped that he had secured the lasting friendship of the army, for he had endeavored to purchase it by vast gifts. Whatever wisdom there may have been in this, there certainly was none in the familiarity which he permitted his troops to extend to him. This led them to despise him, and proved the foundation of personal jealousies. Prominent among the Praetorians was a man named Opilius Macrinus, who had charge of the civil affairs of the Guard. An African soothsayer foretold that Macrinus and his son would be emperors of Rome. Word of this reached Caracalla, who was at that time in Syria. A friend of Macrinus having apprized him of this, that astute individual determined to anticipate events by meting out to Caracalla the fate that would surely be his own, if he waited for the ordinary course of things. He accordingly despatched Martialis, a common soldier of exceptional valor and daring, with instructions to slay the emperor. Martialis was able to secure admission to the presence of Caracalla, and immediately stabbed him to the heart, being himself instantly slain by one of the Imperial Guard.

"I see you mail your son all the baseball  
"I don't want him to forget his native language while fooling around that coronation."  
—Exchange.

"I never judge a woman by her clothes,"  
observed Bilkins.

"No," put in Mrs. B. sarcastically, "a man who gets to as many burlesque shows as you do wouldn't!"  
—Milwaukee News.

"So you have adopted a baby to raise?"  
we ask of our friend. "Well, it may turn out all right, but don't you think you are taking chances?"

"Not a chance," he answers. "No matter how many bad habits the child may develop, my wife can't say he inherits any of them from my side of the house."  
—Life

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