

# An Hour with the Editor

## THE GREATEST OF MYSTERIES

We read in one of the psalms these words: "When I consider thy heaven the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him and the son of man that thou visited him. Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honor." What is man? This is undoubtedly the greatest of mysteries. We are not to understand the author of this psalm as propounding a question. He is uttering an exclamation of wonder. The physical littleness of man as compared with the Universe had been borne in upon him by contemplation of the night sky, as it must be borne in upon all of us, but feeling a consciousness of the mindfulness of God, he finds himself lost in wonder at the mystery of humanity.

The authorship of this psalm is attributed to David, King of Israel. Whether he actually wrote it or it was the composition of some one else is immaterial. The important thing about it is that it is a very ancient composition. Here just a word or two as to the Bible. There is no volume more widely circulated or less understood than this. It is commonly spoken of as a book written by divine inspiration, and doubtless millions of people believe that it was all written at the same time. Not long ago a writer for young people spoke of David as a "Bible-reading youth," forgetful altogether of the fact that the greater part of the things told of in the Bible happened long after his death. The composition of the several books that go to make up the Bible extended over a period of perhaps two thousand years, possibly, indeed, even over a longer period. It is generally understood that Ezra made a compilation of the sacred books of the Jews after the return of the people from Babylon, and between that time and the writing of the most modern of the books of the New Testament more than five hundred years elapsed. Whatever may have been the authorship of the several books of the Bible, it must be conceded that they were all more or less colored by the environment of the writers, in which we include their knowledge of things and their intellectual development. Let no one, who is disposed to make light of these books, lay the flattering unction to his soul that the authors were ignorant men as compared with him. In our boastfulness we are apt in this Twentieth Century after Christ to assume that we know vastly more than the people who lived for 40 centuries ago. That is one of the things that is very much open to doubt. We may know some things that they did not know; but evidence is constantly multiplying to the effect that they knew many things that we do not know, and it is by no means certain that if a comparison could be made of the things that really count, we would have very much, if any, the best of it. The mixture of the savagery of our Teutonic ancestors with the licentiousness of decaying Rome made a thick cloud of intellectual darkness from which we have not fully emerged, and which obscures many things that would add to our wisdom, though they might lessen our self-admiration, if we knew them.

The opinion expressed by David was therefore not that of an ignorant man upon whom designing ecclesiastics had imposed certain ideas, which so-called red-blooded men of this day can afford to disregard; but that of a man who had achieved much and who lived in an age when much had been accomplished. He found himself face to face with a mystery about which wise men in all ages have concerned themselves. The question may be thus stated: What is man's place in the Universe? The infant, who has just opened its eyes to the light, is as much a part of the Universe as the most gigantic stellar system that swings with an eternal rhythm through the ether. So also is the day-fly, that is born in the morning and dies when the sun goes down. But we know there is something in the infant that is not in the mightiest of the celestial orbs or in the insect whose life is measured by a few hours. There is the capacity of self-improvement; there is also the capacity of communicating to others new ideas, new rules of action, new thoughts. Star never speaks to star with words of counsel; insect the hands down no traditions to coming generations. But David's thought went further than this. He felt a consciousness of the mindfulness of God to him as an individual. It is said of the Creator that he "upholdeth all things by the word of his power," by which is meant that all created things are governed by fixed laws; but the man who has ever given himself to serious contemplation is conscious that between him and the Infinite there is a bond of some kind. This bond is not imaginary. As a matter of fact every person admits its existence, although not every person is willing to call it "the mindfulness of God." Such an expression has a sort of effeminate sound to some; it seems to antagonize what they are pleased to look upon as the demonstrations of science; they think it must be the survival of an ancient fallacy. But no matter what they may refuse to call it, no matter how incompatible it may seem with their assumed wisdom, every honest man must admit, if he thinks about the matter at all, that there is something within him, which is not his body, which is to a greater or less degree in sympathy with something external to himself, and is not physical.

This sense of sympathy with the Unseen is undoubtedly one of the most potent factors in humanity. It is at the basis of all religions; it is the ultimate conclusion of every system of philosophy, even the most materialistic. By or through it many wonderful things have been accomplished. It seems to be the one factor in the Universe of which only man is the possessor. Therefore one would suppose that its investigation and its utilization would commend themselves to everyone; we would not suppose that it would ever come to be regarded as a mark of superiority to disregard it and pride ourselves upon our independence of it. If a man should undertake the erection of an edifice and declare his intention of disregarding the laws of gravitation, we would think him insane. What ought we to think of the man, who setting out to build the only enduring thing in his nature, namely, his character, should disregard so great a factor, the existence of which he could not deny? David thought about this a little at another time, for he said: "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" There are tens of thousands of us who have never said this or anything like it in our hearts or in any other way, and yet govern our lives entirely regardless of the mindfulness of God. Are we not making a very serious mistake in this? Are we wise if we devote ourselves to things purely physical to the neglect of things that are spiritual? Do not understand that this is a suggestion that you should engage in ceremonials, which have no real meaning to you; or that you should adopt certain forms of expression which have no special significance to you; or that you should cultivate an ecstatic frame of mind. We only ask if you are satisfied that you are turning to best use all your possibilities, and if you may not be failing to make use of that which is the best of all your powers, namely, that which "crowns you with glory and honor?"

## THE ROMAN EMPERORS

### VI.

Marcus Aurelius was one of the most remarkable men of his own or any other age. It is said of him that his thirst for knowledge was insatiable and his ethical conceptions were of the most exalted character. He was not a Christian, but on the contrary was greatly opposed to the new religion, the professors of which he persecuted, or at least permitted to be persecuted, with terrible vigor. His objection to Christianity was wholly to its doctrinal side. He refused to accept the belief that God could be crucified and hence opposed a religion based upon such an idea, for he held it to strike at the very base of society, which he held to be the existence of a Supreme Deity above the influence or acts of mankind. There is no doubt at all that he was perfectly conscientious in hostility to Christianity, and here it may be well to say that much of the opposition to this religion at the outset was not because the lives of Christians were a standing protest against the excesses of the times, but because the tenets of the new faith appeared abhorrent and the movement was looked upon as more or less political in its nature. The expectation of many of the early Christians that Christ would speedily return and set up a universal kingdom were freely expressed, and we may well believe, were not calculated to secure them the sympathy of those in authority. Consideration of these things will show why even such an enlightened man as Marcus Aurelius might readily lend his countenance to the persecution of the new sect.

From his earliest youth Marcus was a deep and industrious student and he had the advantage of the best teachers of the day. He accepted the principles of the Stoic philosophy, the chief principles of which may be outlined as follows: They held that the Universe is governed by one good and wise God, who is the author of everything except wickedness. They believed in subordinate deities and held that God himself did not deal with the minutiae of life. They believed the efforts of men ought to be to merge themselves into universal law, or in other words, to get into harmony with God. They did not disbelieve in immortality, but left it rather an open question for each individual to decide for himself, but the fact that they taught that the finite was ultimately absorbed in the infinite, it seems as if of necessity they must have contemplated an extinction of individuality. On this point their teachings were very similar to those of Buddhism. The controlling power in man is, they claimed, reason, which is said to be a combination of intelligence and will, not very different from what Christian teachers call the conscience. Marcus Aurelius held that by the cultivation of reason, as thus understood, man might get himself in a state of perfect harmony with God. The Stoics held that goodness and happiness were identical and that pain was an evil over which the mind could triumph, by cultivating apathy or indifference. Nowadays we hear believers in the efficacy of Faith Cure say very much the same thing. They held to the idea of a Creator, who was to be understood by the contemplation of the created Universe. They taught the brotherhood of man, claiming that it logically followed from the fact that we are all children of a common Father.

Such was the cult of which it is said that Marcus Aurelius was the flower. In him it is generally conceded Stoical philosophy found its best expression, historically speaking, and

this not so much because he was a better man than any who preceded him or abler, for many of the greatest men of all time were Stoics, but because the eminence of his position, the manner in which he trusted to his theories under all circumstances and his wonderfully lucid manner of expressing his views combined to render him conspicuous even among the most eminent. The single blot upon the career of this extraordinary man was his hostility to Christianity. Many efforts have been made to explain this, but none seems to be any more tenable than that suggested in the opening part of this article. He evidently looked upon the new faith not as a religion but as a dangerous political conspiracy based upon a delusion. It is to be remembered that more than a hundred years had passed away since such men as Peter and Paul had passed off the stage of action, and that in all probability the great majority of the Christians conducted themselves in a manner that justified a belief in the political objects of the sect.

The studies of Marcus Aurelius embraced almost every line of human activity. Morals engaged his attention but so also did mathematics; law was one of his favorite studies, but so also was music. He sounded the depths of metaphysics, and occupied a part of his leisure with painting. He cultivated poetry and mastered the art of war. He has been called the culmination of all that was good in paganism, meaning by that term that aspect of moral and intellectual development which does not take into account the fundamental truth of Christianity. Not only did he cultivate the graces of life and intellectual development in himself, but he encouraged them in others. His personal life was above reproach, and the people regarded him as Christians in later times came to regard saints. For a hundred years after his death his image was kept among the household gods in all parts of the Roman Empire, and it was said of him that he appeared to people in dreams to counsel them. While it is doubtless true that of recent years the estimation in which this great emperor and philosopher is held has been greatly augmented, it is also true that perhaps no man was ever held in higher estimation by his contemporaries than he.

Among the reforms for which he was responsible are the following: The settlement upon a solid foundation of the civil law; the founding of schools for the education of poor children; the endowment of hospitals; the establishment of homes for orphans; the creation of trust companies to hold and manage legacies and endowments; the alleviation of the methods of collecting taxes; greater leniency in the administration of the criminal law; the deprivation of parents of absolute power over their children and of masters over their slaves; the admission of women to the right of succession to the property of their children; the adoption of the principle of promotion by merit in the civil service and the regulation of gladiatorial exhibitions. Perhaps no better illustration can be given of the attitude of the people towards him than is afforded by the belief that he did not die, but only returned to his place among the gods, and the fact that, as his body was borne through the streets, thousands of people fell upon their knees and invoked his blessing.

## "A SCRAP OF PAPER."

If you were asked to name the most potent achievement of Occidental civilization, you might very naturally hesitate a little, but if in the end you should conclude that perhaps all things considered, the invention of paper, or more correctly speaking, the art of making paper cheaply and yet strong is entitled to the premier place, you might not be very wrong. A scrap of paper seems to be, and in fact is, a very insignificant thing. It is among the cheapest of things. But think for a moment about what its very cheapness has made possible. Perhaps we cannot do better this morning than say a few words about this little regarded but exceedingly important material.

We do not know who invented paper. Like a good many other so-called modern appliances the Chinese seem to have known how to make a kind of paper in very ancient days. There is no doubt about its having been in common use for certain purposes in China more than two thousand years ago. The Mayans, that ancient civilized race which lived in Yucatan, and whose degenerate descendants are there today, made a species of paper. The best we can say with certainty about it is that paper was manufactured in Eastern Asia and Central America a long time ago. Western Asia and Europe knew nothing about it until A. D. 704, when the Arabs captured Samarkand and found it in common use in that city. They brought artisans skilled in its manufacture to Damascus and paper at once came into very general use in Mohammedan countries. It was at once adopted for literary purposes, and many Arabic MSS. written on paper and dating from that period are still extant. What is supposed to be the oldest paper document in the world is in the University Library at Leyden. It is a treatise on the rare and unusual words employed by Mohammed, and some of his companions, and was written in the year 866. The oldest paper manuscript in the British Museum was written in 960. There are in the Museum many Syriac manuscripts written on paper made from cotton about the year 1050.

Europe was slow in adopting the use of paper and as a matter of fact it has only been in anything like common use for about seven hundred years, and by common we do not mean general use, but only that it was looked upon as a convenient material to be used in writing. Parchment was then and long after considered to be only proper material to write on. But parchment was rare, and hence the same sheets were often used more than once. Manuscript written on parchment from which previous writing has been erased are called "palimpsest," a term that is frequently met with in reading of ancient records. The Moors set up paper factories in Spain about two hundred years before the discovery of America, previous to which time all paper used in Europe had been imported from Asia. From Spain the industry spread northward and later linen began to be substituted for cotton in its manufacture. In the year 1231 the use of paper for official purposes was becoming quite common, and the Emperor, Frederick II, either fearing that charters written upon it might prove perishable, or for the sake of preserving the industry of parchment making, made a decree forbidding its use by officials in public business. It is interesting to know that letters written to Edward I. of England by the king of Castile in 1279 were on paper. Italy took up the manufacture not long after its introduction into Spain, and about the year 1400 its production became very general in many places in continental Europe. The first paper factory in England, so far as known, was established about 1520, but there seems to be reason for thinking that it was manufactured in that country at an earlier date. For a long time cotton and linen were the chief materials from which paper was made, the use of wood pulp being a very recent invention.

Two minor matters in connection with paper may be of passing interest. The use of blue paper in legal purposes is thought by some persons to have official sanction. The expansion of its use was very simple. Formerly all paper was made by hand and paper-makers carried on their work in their own homes. One day one of them had just completed a fine boiling of linen pulp, when his wife was unfortunate enough to drop a bag of blueing into it. He thought the material was ruined, but her ingenuity was superior to her carelessness. She suggested that he should make up the paper and sell it to lawyers. He did so and set a fashion which has lasted unto this day. Previous to the war of Secession in the United States, it was regarded as bad form to write a letter on a single sheet of paper. The paper was always folded and no matter how brief the note was the full sheet had to be sent, just as is the case now in social correspondence. But with the blockade of the Southern States the supply of cotton was cut off and cotton rags became scarce. Thereupon business men, to save paper, adopted the use of half-sheets, and from that came the use in business of single sheets of letter paper. Hundreds of people can remember when the calls of the "rag man" were regular, and every particle of waste cotton was saved up against his coming.

The use of paper has had a profound effect upon the development of civilization by making the diffusion of knowledge possible. Without it the printing press would have been of slight advantage to humanity. Coming into general use at the time of the Renaissance paper made the new learning accessible to everyone. It brought the thoughts of scholars into the houses of the people; it made study possible to the masses; it introduced the people of the whole world to each other. Think of how we would have to manage if we had to write our records in clay tablets or on the skins of animals and then, perhaps, you will form some adequate idea of the part that paper has played in developing modern civilization.

## Stories of the Classics

### THE NIBELUNGENLEID

#### IV.

After Kriemhild shows Brunhild the ring and the girdle, tokens that the Northern queen had submitted to Siegfried before she had married Gunther, the tragedy of the Nibelungenleid begins. Hagen, grim and covetous, is Brunhild's willing tool to work for her, her evil and vengeful designs. For the man who has robbed the queen of the North of her virginity, death can be the only punishment, and Siegfried, joyous, sunny, dauntless Siegfried, is doomed.

Kriemhild has kept secret her quarrel with the other queen, and when she learns that her lord is about to depart for the chase though she does not tell her husband the reason for her fears, she endeavors to keep him by her side feeling that Brunhild will seek a quick revenge for the wrong that has been done her, and that some evil will befall Siegfried as soon as he has left her sight.

She thus bespake her husband "Give up that chase of thine. I dreamt last night of evil, how two fierce forest swine. Over the heath pursued thee; the flowers turned bloody red.

I cannot help thus weeping, I'm chilled with mortal dread. I fear some secret treason, and cannot lose thee hence. Lest malice should be borne thee for misconceived offense. Stay, my beloved Siegfried, take not my words amiss. 'Tis true love I bear thee that bids me counsel this."

"Back shall I be shortly, my own beloved mate, Not a soul in Rhineland know I who bears me hate.

I'm well with all thy kinsmen, they're all my firm allies; Nor have I from any e'er deserved otherwise."

"Nay! do not, dearest Siegfried, 'tis e'en thy death I dread. Last night I dreamt two mountains fell thundering on thy head, And I no more beheld thee; if thou from me wilt go.

My heart will sure be breaking with bitterness of woe."

Round her peerless body his clasping arms he threw; Lovingly he kissed her, that faithful wife and true.

Then took his leave, and parted, in a moment all was o'er, Living, alas poor lady, she saw him nevermore."

And noble Siegfried's end is very pitiful. He has so befriended King Gunther endangering his life to woo Brunhild for him, that the Burgundian prince might have shown a more gracious spirit, even though his queen worked on his feelings by the recital of her own wrongs. It was for his sake that Siegfried had subdued Brunhild, but that fact did not count with Gunther now, and he is jealous moreover of his sister's husband's grace and beauty, his courage and his loveliness. He falls in therefore, very readily with Hagen's base designs.

All day the prince had hunted, and many a forest beast tokens of their skill had been lifted to the waiting wains when Hagen suggests with an ulterior motive in view that he and Siegfried and Gunther shall have a foot-race. Siegfried is always, is amiable, and the three make a test of fleet-footedness. Siegfried very readily leaves the first two behind, and it is after the race is run and they stop at the brook to drink that the evil blow is struck which lays noble Siegfried low. Hagen ruins and brings his ashen spear, while the prince is taking a draught of water.

"Then, as to drink Sir Siegfried down kneeling there he found,

He pierced him through the corslet, that sudden from the wound

Forth the life-blood spouted e'en o'er his murderer's weed

Nevermore will warrior dare so foul a deed. Between his shoulders sticking he left the deadly spear.

Never before Sir Hagen so fled for ghastly fear, As from the matchless champion whom he had butchered there."

"So the lord of Kriemhild among the flowerlets fell;

From the wound fresh gushing his heart's blood fast did well.

Then thus amidst his tortures, e'en with his failing breath,

The false friends he upbraided who had contrived his death.

Thus spake the deadly wounded, "Ay! cowards, false as hell!

To you I still was faithful; I served you long and well.

But what boots all? for guerdon, treason and death I've won;

By your friends, vile traitors, foully have you done."

Whoever shall hereafter from your loins be born

Shall take from such vile fathers a heritage of scorn.

On me you have wreaked malice where gratitude was due,

With shame shall you be banished, by all good knights and true."

Then further spake the dying, and speaking sighed full deep;

"Oh king, if thou a promise with any one will keep.

Let me in this last moment thy grace and favor find,

For my dear love and lady, the wife I leave behind.

"Remember, she's thy sister; yield her a sister's right;

Guard her with faith and honor, as thou'rt a king and knight.

My father and my followers for me they long must wait,

Comrade ne'er found from comrade so sorrowful a fate."

"In this mortal anguish he writhed him to and fro,

And then said, deadly groaning, "This foul and murderous blow

Deep will yet rue hereafter, this for sure truth retain,

That is slaying Siegfried, you yourselves have slain."

And Siegfried's words were prophetic, as will be seen.