

IESAT NASSAR: THE HISTORICAL JESUS.

Almost unannounced and unheralded, in a truly remarkable manner for these days of advertisement and publicity, there has been issued a volume which, if it ever gets into the hands of the reading public, or of those who are at all capable of realizing its true weight and significance, must have the very profoundest effect upon what is called the orthodox thought of the day. The character of Jesus the Christ has been treated from almost every conceivable point of view, by all shades and grades of believers and sceptics; by believers of other faiths; by mystics; by poets and philosophers; by exponents like Farrar, and deponents like Talmage; but it has remained to be the task of a family group, well qualified for the purpose by birth, training and sympathy, to give the world a strictly historical view of Him, who, however considered, forms the most prominent public figure in the annals of Christendom.

One reads "Iesat Nassar" with astonishment, with doubt, with admiration, with extreme satisfaction in the solution of age-old enigmas; one reads with the most strangely mingled sensations of transferred ideals, of accomplished possibilities, of the resurrection and realization of intuitions slaughtered at the altar of dogmatic sectarianism. One recognizes that here is the complement of that work which the mystics and occultists have been pushing to completion in the esoteric exposition of the Gospel narrative, and that here are the historical occurrences from which were woven and upon which were based those spiritual allegories, the history of the soul, over the interpretation of the letter of which Christianity is to-day split into hundreds of warring clans.

Great works need great preparation, and one is not surprised to learn that the labour of two generations is embodied in this new history of Jesus. The writers, Peter, Anna, and B. A. F. Mamreov, are the children of an influential Russian who, under a charter granted in 1840 by the Sultan of Turkey, was enabled to pursue his historical researches among eastern Christians and Moslems and Jews. The rabbinical literature and tradition has been thoroughly investigated

and every possible clue followed up, with a result which, when the *viva voce* methods in vogue in the East for the preservation of lore of all kinds is remembered, must claim the attention of the most conservative. An appendix of 200 pages gives the fullest references to existing sources of information and this in itself must constitute a strong appeal to the student; but, for the average reader, probably the careful preservation of the unities which the whole book displays will form quite unconsciously its greatest attraction. If the reader admits the evidence or even the position of the authors in any degree, their argument must prove of great force.

It is an entirely new conception of Jesus which the book presents. A scion of the royal Persian line, son of the Lady Marya and of her cousin Youseph Pandar, and related to the reigning families of various petty kingdoms adjacent to Judea, one understands why he was looked upon as a possible king, and what his renunciation was in declining the crown offered him by the nobles of the court. His voluntary resignation of rank and social degree, and his devotion to the cause of the poor and ignorant, appeals to us as truly inspired. It is in the delineation of the infamous plotting and conspiracies of the Jewish priests that the narrative becomes of marvellous interest, and through the repeated escapes from the clutches of the ecclesiastical authorities one follows the adventurous career of the philanthropic and benevolent Nazarene with sympathetic excitement. The whole power of the Jewish hierarchy is, however, finally brought to bear upon him who is recognized as the very type and embodiment of opposition to their system, and who must be crushed if that system is to survive. The church must be upheld before truth, or righteousness, or principle, or freedom, either in thought or speech, or any other consideration; and in this struggle for the Rights of Man the gentle reformer is, in the tragic conclusion, cruelly done to death.

The book must be read to be at all adequately appreciated. Those who have been repelled by ordinary church teaching will here find a presentment of the character of the Divine Teacher which cannot fail to inspire them with love and devotion. The supernatural element, in