

THE DESCENTS OF CHRIST.

A Meditation.

A group of men gathered in a corner of the court of the great temple at Jerusalem. Earnest, shrewd Jewish faces these; faces of men schooled in all the intricacies of the Rabbinical law. One is speaking rapidly; some nod approvingly; others shake their heads in disagreement. The argument is heated and intense.

Draw nearer; seek the cause of the assembly. A Jewish boy, clad in the simple peasant's garb, with a Galilean accent in his speech, is apparently the center of the group. Eager inquiry, deep understanding, serious purpose, all these come and go in the clear eyes below the pure high forehead. The doctors of the law have found something heretofore unknown—a mere lad who in intelligence is their match.

The crowd parts; two hurrying figures reach the boy; a word or two, and he is gone.

"And he went with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

Down; from Jerusalem, the city of the great king, to the village of the humble carpenter. Down from a combat with keen minds, minds of his own calibre, to eighteen years of hidden, strenuous toil. Down; from his Father's house, to Joseph's bench. Down; from the spot where he first found a revelation of his mission, of God's purpose with him, to a life that apparently had in it nothing of preparation for that ministry. Down; to wait, to work, to suffer temptation, to endure hardness.

A crowd is assembled on a river bank. Up from the river come two men. Above the head of one shines a glory not of earth; out of the glory speaks a voice in words of wonder.

"And Jesus returned from Jordan, . . . into the wilderness, being forty days tempted by the devil."

Down; from his coronation to his testing. Down; from a vision of God to a contest with Satan. Down; from the anointing with the Spirit to a proving of that Spirit's power. Down; from an admiring throng to a lonely vigil. Down from an opportunity to be seen of men to a victory which no man saw.

Three wondering peasants fall on their knees on a mountain summit. Before their eyes is a mist of glory; one whom they knew as a man appears with raiment white as a light, with face shining as the sun. Above him is a cloud; and a voice speaks, calling him Son.

And when they were come down from the mountain, . . . a man from the multitude cried."

Down; from Shekinah to serve. Down; from the glory which he had before the world was, to humanity in its wailing need. Down; from great law-giver and mighty prophet, to faithless disciples and clamoring scribes. Down; from transfiguration to trial. Down; from extraordinary vision to common duty. Down; from his Father's commendation to the cry of a demoniac.

The awful day is done. The scoffs and jeers of the rabble are hushed. The darkness at midday has passed. The Roman soldiers sat down at the foot of the cross to watch. The earthquake that burst open tombs, the invisible hand that rent the Veil of the Temple from top to bottom have done their work. The Nazarene is dead. Night comes slowly down. Then comes Joseph; he of Arimathea, retiring disciple before, open disciple now, and takes down the body of Jesus from the cross and lays it in his own new tomb. The great Dutch painter has put the Descent from the Cross on canvas. The picture is immortal. But the real descent is in our hearts.

"And behold there was a man named

Joseph, a counsellor; a good man, and a just, of Arimathea, a city of the Jews. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down."

Down from the gaze of a hostile world; down from the company of malefactors; down from its place of indignity; down from the spot where the poor spirit had borne the sins of the world; down from the awful hour when the lips whose life message had been love to the world had in agony cried, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Down to the rest of death: to a peace which the world had never given.

Oh, my soul, were these the descents of thy Master; and shalt thou descend? Say not then that any service is too mean; strive not to stay in the temple, or at the river, or on the mountain. Go thou rather with joy to thy strenuous service. Even as the Lord Christ descended, do thou descend, into earth's lowly places, among earth's needy ones, along the path he trod. Even as thy Saviour walked the royal way of the holy cross, do thou so walk. That path leads downward, even to the grave in the garden. Downward—but not forever. At its end stands the hill of Beatitude, whither thou shalt soar on wings of love.—M.D.H. in the Philadelphia Westminster.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has distributed some 350,000 copies of the Scriptures in Russian and Japanese among the soldiers facing each other in Manchuria. These books were given to troops on both sides marching to the front, to the sick and wounded soldiers in the hospitals and to prisoners of war in the camps of the enemy. The Bible Society has expended upwards of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in this work and calls for as much more to continue it. The nations at war are spending their hundreds of millions in the work of destruction. The sorrows and perils of the field make the hearts of men responsive to the message of the Prince of Peace.

The disestablishment of the French Church will soon be an accomplished fact. The French Chamber of Deputies has adopted clause 24 of the Bill for the Separation of Church and State.

Twenty-four of the leaders in the Odessa disturbances were hanged, and the same fate is in readiness for 17 others; 67 mutineers are to be taken to Sebastopol for trial by court martial.

Viscount Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief in India, was 53 years of age on the 24th ult. It is 34 years since he entered the Royal Engineers. The heir presumptive to the family honours is Colonel Henry E. C. Kitchener, the Viscount's brother, who distinguished himself in Burma and with the Manipur field force 14 years ago.

Scotland has always been considered the home of Sabbath keeping, yet in a popular vote of nearly 100,000 ballots Glasgow recently determined by a majority of 8,000 to open its parks and museums for the public for a part of every Sunday.

A Russian village is so vividly sketched in a St. Petersburg journal that we quote a few lines. It is a miserable picture: "All is sombre and grey; the peasant huts are leaning outward; the roofs are half rotted. In the huts there is darkness, and an oppressive tainted atmosphere. . . . People move about in their huts, near the huts, and work in the fields. On their sodden, yellowish dark faces there is the stamp of deep, dumb sorrow and of resignation. The herd-like life destroys in them everything living."

If we would take more time to pray we would have more time to work.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN.

It is now proposed to have a training college for teachers at Inverness.

There is a movement on foot in Melbourne to put a stop to Sunday funerals.

Paris has the biggest debt of any city in the world. It amounts to \$400,000,000.

The most costly tomb in existence is that erected to the memory of Mohammed.

Rev. D. Ross, Edinburgh, was inducted on the 30th ult. in Rosebank U.F. Church, Nairn.

Rev. D. Williamson, assistant, Edinburgh, has been elected minister of Edzell Parish Church.

Mrs. Mawat, Townhead, Bervie, aged 94 years (the oldest inhabitant), was buried on the 4th inst.

It is definitely known that the Donegal gold mine is located in Inishowen, on the estate of the Earl of Shaftesbury.

Dr. William Spurgeon, of Cardiff, Wales, cousin of the famous London preacher, officiated at Chicago University last week.

A century ago English was spoken by only 20,000,000 human beings. Today it is spoken by 150,000,000. That tells the story.

Charles W. Alexander, the singing evangelist, who, with R. A. Torrey, held a revival in London, is now at Northfield, Mass.

There are only 22,000,000 horses in European Russia. No other country in the world has so many horses as Russia.

Cape Town authorities are extending the conveyance of mails by camels, which has experimentally proved very successful.

In Germany the number of servant girls who have savings bank accounts is nearly three times as large as that of shop girls who have them.

The last London Gaelic service was conducted in the Presbyterian Church, Regent Square, by the Rev. John Macrury, Snizort, Skye, on 9th July.

New Zealand's scenery is so beautiful and so varied that has been termed a combination of Switzerland, Southern France, Norway, the Tyrol and North Italy.

The War Office has issued orders as to the rigid inspection of Volunteers. Even their teeth are to be examined, just as if they were to be fed on biltong and biscuit.

The house in which Harriet Beecher Stowe lived for a number of years in Hartford is now being torn down to make room for the advancing factories.

Illinois has become alarmed over the fact that last year its courts outside of Chicago had to deal with 6,000 divorce cases, 2,200 of which were granted.

The combined salaries of the Presidents of the 14 leading Universities in the United States do not equal the amount paid to the head of one Life Insurance Society.

There are nearly 27,000,000 sheep in Great Britain, and the weight of one year's clip of their wool is about 140,000,000 pounds, of which one-sixth is sent away in the raw state.

It is said that the establishment of a large book-shop in the west end of London, as well as a system of lending books, is contemplated by the Times.

There is no falling off in the number of letters sent through the General Post Office, London. The number circulated last year was 18,000,000 more than in the previous year.

The crop conditions in several of the governments of Russia recently became worse owing to dry, hot winds, which burn up the crops almost in a day. The most deplorable situation is in the Bogoroditsk district.

The discovery that an Irishman naturalized in America would be an alien, and perhaps an undesirable alien, under the Bill, if he returned as a steerage passenger to his own country roused great indignation on the Irish benches.

Absence of occupation is not rest;