

the least foundation. Not one of the sacred historians gives the slightest hint that his absence was in any way criminal, or even improper; nor does our Lord make any allusion to it. As well might all the Apostles be considered reprehensible because they were not present when Jesus revealed himself to the women at the sepulchre, or the nine with the two who went to Emmaus; while it may be observed that those same two would have been absent from this occasion, had not Jesus revealed himself to them there.

But though Thomas was absent, he had not abandoned the apostleship. He was soon found with his fellows: "The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John xx. 25.) And what had they to object to Thomas's demand? They had all refused to believe until inevitably convinced by the same species of evidence, which he required. "Why," we may suppose him to ask, "why did you not believe the women who said they saw him at the sepulchre? Why did their words seem like idle tales? And why did not you eight believe the testimony of the two who went to Emmaus? You had no more reason to think that they would deceive you than I have to suppose you would deceive me. As far as I am concerned, it is but hearsay evidence still. I think you must be mistaken: yet I do not say it is false; but unless I have the same evidence which convinced you, and without which you would not believe, neither will I." They could find no reply to his address which would not have equally condemned themselves. As far as we know, they made none.

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he unto Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." (Verses 26, 27.) And did he continue faithless and unbelieving? No; the evidence which had convinced the others convinced him also. What words could so simply and forcibly express the faith and devotedness of Thomas as these, "And Thomas said, My Lord and my God?"

St. John adds:—"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (Verse 29.) These words have been generally taken as a reproof to Thomas in particular: but if a reproof at all, it would certainly apply as much to the other disciples as to Thomas; not one of whom believed without more than the evidence of sight. Mark, who was present on the occasion, says, "He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them" (the eleven) "with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." (xvi. 14.) Away, then, from henceforth with the ungracious epithet; and if the thinkers "of no evil" will still have it so, for consistency's sake, let it also be "unbelieving" Peter, and John, and Matthew, and so of the rest.

Having rescued the character of Thomas from the common aspersion, or at least placed him on even ground with his ten brethren, I proceed briefly to show the use to be made of the fact as recorded by St. John.

The truth of Christianity and the resurrection depending wholly upon the question, "Whether Christ be risen from the dead or not," the evidence by which that fact was to be attested became of the most essential importance to mankind. If it was sufficiently attested, Christianity was to be received as true; if not, it was to be discarded as an imposture, its Au-

thor rejected as a "deceiver," and the world left "without hope." The discussion of that question affords a most delightful theme, but one too extensive to be entered upon here. The riches of this mine of evidence has never yet been adequately worked out. Suffice it to say for the present, that no one has ever been able to suggest a single fact or circumstance which, if added, could have made the proof more cogent or conclusive than it is. This satisfies the first and most important rule of evidence universally admitted and laid down among all civilized nations; namely, that the best possible proof the subject admits of must be adduced, and, being adduced, such proof shall be deemed sufficient.

To compare this rule with the circumstances of the present one, would be a task at once delightful and satisfactory. Let one circumstance be mentioned by way of illustration. It is recorded by St. Paul, that Jesus, after his resurrection "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." (1 Cor. xv. 6.) Now, supposing the truth of the resurrection had rested solely upon the testimony of these five hundred, and there had been no evidence of his having been seen by his intimate companions and chosen Apostles, the evidence of the fact would clearly have been less conclusive than the testimony of the Apostles now is, leaving the five hundred entirely out of the question; because of the previous presumption,—all but conclusive in itself,—that if he really was alive and had appeared at all, it would be to those whom he had chosen to be the witnesses of his former miracles; whom he had carefully instructed in his doctrines; whom he had chosen to be Apostles, commissioned to preach the Gospel to the world; and, above all, to whom he expressly said, "After I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee." (Matt. xxvi. 32.) These facts and declarations being given to the world, if he had appeared to ten thousand other persons, and not made the eleven—the whole eleven—the witnesses of his resurrection, the moral evidence (I speak with reverence) would have been incomplete and unsatisfactory.

Equally important, therefore, was it that the evidence afforded to the Apostles should be unimpeachable in its nature. And here again we apply the rule as the best evidence. The best evidence to those who have not seen Jesus, and from the nature of things cannot see him with their bodily eyes, is the witness of his Holy Spirit in their hearts, applying to their minds the truth of "that which is written concerning him." This is a spiritual and not a physical testimony. But the best possible evidence which could be afforded to his Apostles of the resurrection of his body was, that they should handle and see that he was not a mere spirit, but "flesh and bones," and that it was the same identical body which had been crucified,—proved by its actually having the very prints of the nails in his hands and his feet, and the very wound in his side, into which they were invited to put their fingers and thrust their hand, that they might be certain of his presence and his identity. This was physical evidence, exactly adapted to the case. There could be no mistake about it.

But what, if instead of this absolute proof, Peter and John had implicitly received the relation of the women; and the other Apostles had rested in the second-hand declaration of those two? The amount of the evidence would have been, that two women, (whom the world would not have forgotten to call credulous,) having been early at the sepulchre, had said that they had seen Jesus alive. Nor would this in any way have fulfilled his declaration, that, after he was risen, they (all of them) should see him. Upon the same principles, there was an equal necessity, and there were as cogent reasons, why each individual of the Apostles should have the same degree of evidence; and, in mercy to the world, that the mouth of the gain-sayer might for ever be stopped, it was afforded to each. Suppose it had been with-