

Practical Papers.

EASTERTIDE; OR, THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

BY THE EDITOR.

INTRODUCTORY.



IDWAY in the history of the ages, there stands, in silent and solitary grandeur, the most wonderful fact yet recorded in the annals of the universe. For four thousand years the world had been unconsciously preparing for its advent. Successive empires had waxed and waned, but only to make way for the kingdom that should never end; conquering armies had swept onward in their desolating course, but only to prepare the way for that army whose conquests, though bloodless, should be the most glorious the world had ever seen; prophets had strung the sacred lyre, and sung in rapturous strains of the glory that was yet to be, but only as a prelude to the swelling anthem of the angels,—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men:”—That fact is the birth of the world’s Redeemer,—the advent of “God manifest in the flesh.”

That advent, so ardently desired, so long delayed, came “not with observation.” No angelic retinue thronged the chariot-wheels of the coming king; no armed and embattled seraphim stood with flaming swords to guard his throne. As a helpless babe he slumbered in a manger, while the only acclaim that greeted his appearing was the soft hosannah of the angel-messengers over the plains of Bethlehem, heard by watching shepherds in the silence of the midnight hour. Yet were there circumstances connected with the birth at Bethlehem which gave rise to grave questionings in many hearts. The announcement to the Virgin Mother concerning the exalted character of the Holy Child, the descent of the prophetic spirit upon Mary, the appearance of the angels to the shepherds, with the announcement that a Saviour was born, the mysterious star that guided the wanderings of the Wise Men, as they sought for Him who was “born king of the Jews,”—all these indicated that the birth of Jesus was no ordinary event, and inspired in pious hearts a hope that the “Consolation of Israel” had come.

This birth, with its attendant circumstances of deep humiliation, scarcely relieved by the transient flashes of glory, was followed by a life equally mysterious and perplexing. First, the long and patient waiting at Nazareth, as the reputed son of a humble artizan; then the baptism at Jordan with its startling accompaniments; the mysterious struggle in the wilderness; the teaching so wise and pure that many said “We know that thou art a teacher come from God,” while even his enemies were constrained to confess—“Never man spake like this man;” the deep poverty so touchingly portrayed in his own words,—“Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head,” contrasted with those infinite