

Practical Papers.

EASTERTIDE; OR, THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

BY THE EDITOR.

I.—THE WITNESSES.

“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”—PETER.



FOREMOST among the witnesses who have testified concerning the resurrection of Jesus stand the four Evangelists, whose names have ever since been borne by the histories which they wrote. It is not my purpose to enter into a minute biography of these men, nor yet to adduce all the arguments which bear upon the reliability of their testimony: suffice it to shew that, as regards integrity of character, and knowledge of the facts, the Evangelists were fully competent for the task which they undertook. The way will then be clear for presenting a harmony of the several Gospel histories, so far as they relate to the subject before us.

The value we attach to any given testimony depends upon a variety of considerations. We *first* take into account the character of the witnesses; *secondly*, their knowledge of the facts; and, *thirdly*, the motives by which they may possibly have been influenced in giving their testimony. Viewed from each of these stand-points, the testimony of the Evangelists to the fact of the resurrection possesses a peculiar value. Their character for veracity must have been unimpeachable; for while the enemies of the cross spake all manner of evil of them in regard to other points of character, we do not find that they ever accused them of wilful falsehood. Mistaken, in popular estimation, the disciples might be; enthusiasts—nay, even madmen—they might be; but it was evident to all that what these men testified they fully believed. And, besides all this, the facts were so well attested from other sources, that even the bitterest foes of Jesus could not call them in question.

As regards their knowledge of the facts, the testimony of the Evangelists is equally reliable. True, they were not present at the sepulchre when the great event took place. They did not see the stone rolled away, nor did they behold Jesus as he emerged from death's gloomy portals; but on these points they had the unimpeachable testimony of the Roman soldiers, who had fled in utter consternation from the sepulchre when they beheld the descending angel and the rising Lord. They did not see the angels in the empty tomb, nor did Jesus appear and speak to them while yet he lingered within the precincts of the garden; but these things they heard from the women who had been early at the sepulchre, and the testimony was soon after confirmed by