

appear, that the frame of mind indicated by one of them this same day, was common to them all: "We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." Their past following of Jesus must have seemed to them a mistake, of which they were now ashamed. We know how it is with ourselves, when some long-cherished scheme, wrought out with sanguine expectation, has been broken in upon by stern reality, and has passed out of the region of our earnest thoughts. What convinced us before, convinces no longer now. The sunlight colours have faded away; the combinations of words which called up enthusiasm have lost their power; we try to silence self-reproach in forgetfulness, and count ourselves happy if other men betray not their knowledge how deeply we stood committed. Even so had the dread realities of the cross and the sepulchre broken down the fair fabric of the disciples' hopes. What would they not now give never to have made the sad admission, "We believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" How would they wish to conceal from themselves that they had once spoken the words! All His sayings, all His deeds of power—better bury them in His grave, and let the mysteries which must surround them rest unmoved; all that is now uppermost in their minds is, the bitter confession that they had been deceived, and the determination to return to their common life, made sadder and wiser. We can hardly conceive that had the cross and the sepulchre been the end of the course of Jesus, His followers would have held together many months. It was possible, and has not been without example in analogous cases, that the more ardent among them might have waited long for Him to rise again, or to come from Heaven; and that some, like baffled interpreters of prophecy, might have shifted on the fulfilment of His words from each disappointment to another and another future chance. But of these resources of deferred hope we do not find any even anticipatory indication. The rumours of the resurrection were idle tales; the words of promise on which they rested, were idle words. He, who had uttered them, though His memory might still be fondly cherished, had been proved, by the sternest of all proofs to have been at least weak and self-deceived. Their confidence was utterly gone; their hearts had fainted; their spirits were prostrate. That such men should knit up again their ravelled and scattered expectations; that these disciples, being what we know them to have been, should have recovered heart, as the narrative tells us, and as the world's history show us they did, is simply inconceivable, supposing that nothing more happened after the deposition in the tomb. We cannot imagine them, crushed, disappointed, deceived men, standing up before the victorious enemies of their disgraced Master, and proclaiming Him a Prince and a Saviour. Mere strength of love for Him would not suffice for this. They had all declared themselves ready to go with Him to prison and to death, and had failed and fled away in the hour of His trial. That which they would not do when He

was present and suffering before their eyes, would they be likely to do, now that He was dead, and fading out of their memories day by day? What they dared not face when they were still buoyed up with hopes that He might achieve supernatural victory, were they likely to stand against now that defeat had branded Him an impostor and a criminal? Can men like these, without any intervening change of circumstances, persuade themselves in good faith to proclaim Him as the Son of God? It surely is not in human nature to operate on itself such a change, as we must suppose to have passed upon them before this could be the case. And if it be said that they counselled together, and put before the world the concerted fiction of His resurrection, then is the matter, if possible, still more difficult to conceive. Up to the very moment of His betrayal, their expectations had all tended one way—to the establishment of an outward earthly kingdom, in which they were to reign as His assessors. Those expectations are baffled; and, according to this hypothesis, in the midst of the bewilderment of their disappointment, they came forward, asserting facts to have happened to Him of a nature far surpassing all that they had ever conceived before, and preaching a kingdom, the very mention of the character of which would before have been to them gall and bitterness. It were, indeed, a strange way of dishonestly conspiring on behalf of their Master and themselves, to change ambition into self-denial, proud hopes into the loss of all things, the carnal into the spiritual. Against these insufficient solutions, let us set the facts of the history. At one great feast of the Jews, when Jerusalem was crowded with strangers from all parts, Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, and the hopes of His followers were crushed. At the next great festival, six weeks after, we find those same followers standing together in a body, with one who had denied Jesus in the hour of His trial acting as their spokesman, and proclaiming, as in the second of my texts, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses;" we find them maintaining this in spite of prohibitions, in spite of stripes, in spite of threatenings. They say they cannot but speak the things which they have seen and heard. The presence of the council which had condemned their Master does not deter them from thus testifying of Him. The very servants of the high priest terrified Peter before; but the high priest himself, and the assembled Sanhedrim, have no terrors for him now. How are we to account for these things, my brethren? Here are cowards become brave men; dis-owners of a persecuted Friend when He was in danger, become His witnesses and upholders now that He is crushed beneath contempt. And this they carry on not one nor two years, not against threats and stripes only, but through long lives spent in this testimony, and even unto death, sealing their witness with their blood. These last words may, perhaps, remind you of a well-known argument regarding one portion of Christian evidence. But I am not at present on common ground with that argument. What I am aiming at is, not the con-

clusion that credit is due to them as honest men, but the supplying of something between their two recorded states of mind, which shall reconcile the change with probability, and make the whole into a connected history. And I submit to you, my brethren, that there is one way, and but one way, of accounting for this change; and that one way is, that the Resurrection really took place as we are told it did. I submit to you that, unless Jesus actually rose from the dead, the history of Christianity would have been impossible; that could not have happened which has happened, and the results of which we see at this day. Considering the story of the life and death of Jesus, its progress from pretension to defeat, from popularity to rejection, from glory to shame—the only solution of the question, how comes it that there is a Christian in the world at the present day, that "we are witnesses of His resurrection."—*Dean Alford.*

ROME ABANDONED.

(Continued from Last Week).

Every one knows that Rome teaches that the marriage bond cannot be dissolved except by death. Why, then, does the Pope claim the right to dissolve valid marriages within two months after their celebration, if they be not consummated, in order to give the husband the right of making solemn vows of religion? Trent teaches this doctrine. The Roman canon of Scripture, and the disputes among the leading divines as to the interpretation of the councils and the rules for interpreting Scripture, prove sore difficulties to an inquisitive mind. I could not help thinking that assertion too frequently passed for proof. Is it not arguing in a circle to take the Scriptures to prove the claims of the Roman councils and Popes, and then to take the Popes and councils to prove the Scriptures and the canon of them? It does not save the logic to say that the Scriptures may be taken as historical writings. In the concrete the Scriptures are inspired, and their authority is because of their inspiration, without which they would not have been written. The disputes about general councils, their number, their opposition to Popes, the contradictions of Popes, and the unhistoric and unreasonable doctrines of Rome, forced me to think that something was radically wrong. By Rome's own tests, Scripture, history and reason, she could not prove her claims. What should I do? The time for my ordination was at hand. My confessor said I was over-scrupulous, while I believed my faith in Rome had failed. He recommended me to be ordained. After ordination I continued my studies in college. The operations of my mind continued to lead me further and further from Rome. Gradually I altogether ceased to believe in some of her doctrines, while my mind was in a negative state as to others. I looked around me in dismay. Could others see that I was a heretic? I prayed for faith and tried to believe. After a time I rose to a higher plane. I thought Christ's religion should be brought more home to the masses of the people than it is in the Roman Church. Very