When a critic of Archdeacon Farrar's capacity and freedom holds that there are no discrepancies, most teachers will be content.

Following St. Luke's narrative, then, we receive a clear and most interesting impression of the earliest events of this first Lord's Day.

It was very early in the morning when Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and other women came to the sepulchre in Joseph's garden to anoint with spiccs the body of Jesus. Discussing as they came what they should do about the great stone which closed the entrance of the sepulchre, they were surprised, on arriving, to find it rolled away. But this was nothing to the surprise they got when they entered the tomb, for they "found not the body" there.

This is the first great fact in any proof of the resurrection of Jesus; and it is the more valuable that, as Dr. Farrar notices, it is admitted as a fact by the most rationalistic critics, the most advanced sceptics. The body of Jesus was gone from the sepulchre. The most ingenious theories have been
designed to account for it; and, it must also be said, the most absurd. There could be no better illustration than we have here of the wisdom of letting one sceptic answer another; for the first thing that each new theorist does, before stating his own theory of how the body could be gone without admitting a resurrection, is to demolish the theory of his predecessor.

The first thought of the women was of the loss they had sustained. Some one had removed, perhaps stolen away, the body. Then the angels appeared. It was a time of much moment for angels as well as men, and heaven and earth had got very close together. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” The sepulchre is the place of the dead. Jesus has a divine life which cannot die. He is not merely alive, He is always living. The angels do not merely state the fact that He is alive from the dead, but that it was not possible He could be holden of the grave.

“Remember how He spake unto you.” Thus the angels began the office which is specially that of the Spirit—they brought things to remembrance, whatsoever Jesus had said. And no doubt with a power of conviction which the Spirit only possesses, which human words cannot have; so that, though the women were convinced, they could not convince the disciples.

But Peter—reader, opener, and perhaps only more impulsive—arose and ran unto the sepulchre, whereupon we have an important addition made to the proof of the resurrection. The linen cloths were carefully laid by themselves. This removal of the body was not the work of a hasty friend or terrified foe. Everything has been done decently and in order. He that believeth does not make haste. He that is the object of faith does nothing to require it.

II.


The Walk to Emmaus.

1. “Two of them.” The name of the one was Cleopas (ver. 18), the name of the other we know not. They were disciples, but not of the eleven Apostles.

2. “Three score furlongs.” Six and a half miles.

3. “O fools” (ver. 25). The expression in the original is not nearly so strong as this. "Ye foolish ones" might do.

4. “Ought not Christ to have suffered.” Put the emphasis on “ought.” Christ had to fulfill the prophets, who prophesied that He would suffer and rise again.

5. “Beginning at Moses.” The earliest promise and prophecy is Genesis iii. 15.

This incident occurred on the same day as our Lord had risen. Thus it was one of the earliest of his manifestations. We cannot but wonder, therefore, at the grace of it. Who were these two so highly favoured? We know nothing about them beyond the single item that the name of one of them was Cleopas. There had not occurred an event so momentous as this in the whole history of Israel, but the angels are not sent to make the announcement to the High Priest, nor does Jesus Himself appear first to the reigning monarch. Two men had the heart to miss Him, the wondering hope of again finding Him, and that was enough. As they walked, “Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.”

We recognise thus that He is the same Jesus. There are signs of a difference in His bodily appearance. The eyes of these two were holden that they did not recognise Him. Neither did Mary Magdalene recognise Him, nor the disciples on the lake. But whatever change may have taken place in His body, we see that He is Himself unchanged.

Still is He the same in heaven. We wonder how He had time to attend to these two ignorant, unknown men. We wonder still, can He attend to us? Let us not forget that after His ascension to heaven, He found time to meet another traveller by the way, a traveller in no ways greatly distinguished then—Saul the Pharisee, as he journeyed to Damascus—

“Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother's eye.”

But notice, as a further lesson, the way He led the two to know Him. He did not disdain evidences, but they were the very simplest. He ran over the prophecies of His death and resurrection and final glory, as the books of the Old Testament contain them. For how shall we believe except we hear? Then when they knew the truth about Him, He opened their eyes, and they knew Himself.

It was the sight of Himself that converted them.

III.

December 14.—Luke xxiv. 28-43.

Jesus made known.

He made Himself known (1) to the two who went to Emmaus, (2) to Simon, (3) to the Apostles and others. These are the three appearings recorded in this lesson.

(1) To the two disciples who went to Emmaus. Already we have followed their walk till they arrived at the village. Jesus made as if He would have gone further, but they pressed Him to stay. They did not know it was their Lord; but His voice was strangely familiar, and His words were powerful to search the conscience, so that their hearts burned within them. They would hear more, and at their entreaty He stayed, for already He is the hearer of prayer. Then, “as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed, and brake and gave to them; and their eyes were opened and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight.”

It is like a celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Word is preached, and preached in its direct bearing upon the Supper, the text being the necessity of His suffering. There is also the breaking of the bread, the blessing, and the distribution. But one most significant thing must be observed. The blessing does not bring His bodily presence, neither does the faith of the men; rather it is just then when He had blessed, and when their eyes were opened that they knew Him, that “He vanished out of their sight.” To partake of His body and blood, all we need is His presence in the Spirit.
(2) To Simon. St. Paul mentions this appearance also (1 Cor. xv. 5), but we know nothing of the details of it. We can only remember that Simon had shown a readiness to listen to the words of the women (ver. 12). We can believe that, notwithstanding the great denial, he understood Jesus as well as any, and was as prepared to know of His resurrection. And, lastly, we can easily admit the likelihood (I Cor. xv. 5), but we know nothing of the details of it.

And this is the reason why.

He appealed to what they knew, to that authority which they admitted—the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In every one of us, in the youngest child, there is something to appeal to, and to build out from that is the only true education. St. Paul had sometimes only the conscience—the crude, covered conscience of a heathen—to which to make his appeal. How much more have we!

He made the “doing” follow upon the “doctrine,” the hand upon the head. Understanding the Scriptures, they must preach.

But here we come upon the great matter and mystery of the lesson. “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued (literally, clothed upon) with power from on high.” The hand must follow the head; knowing the doctrine, we must do it; but between the two there must come the endowment. What does it mean to the children? These simple truths may be mentioned and easily illustrated.

1. We can do nothing for God until we know His will. The Bible contains His will.

2. We may know the Bible well, but we must understand it.

3. It is God who opens the understanding. We must read with prayer.

4. To know is to serve. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

5. But the most active service may do no good. God’s presence is needed in the Spirit, and we may have to wait a long time before we are conscious of His presence and help.

6. God does not need our work. It is the greatest of all lessons to learn that He can do without us.

Life’s Phases.

By the Rev. James Stark, Belmont Street Congregational Church, Aberdeen. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson, & Ferrier. 1890. 2s. 6d.

The Scotch Evangelical pulpit has no better all-round representative than Mr. Stark, and this book is worthy of him. Strong, sensible, well-digested thought, healthy and brotherly sympathy, an eye wide-awake to the signs of the times, a genial and cultured style, brightened with illustrations and allusions which show the catholicity of the preacher’s reading,—these, together with outspoken loyalty to the old central truths, are the marks which Mr. Stark’s admirers will look for, and which they will find. Some may think the concatenation of “Phases” a little arbitrary, and the title itself rather indefinite and commonplace; but there is so much point and power in the substance of this little volume that we do not care to find fault with the form.

William A. Gray.