

THE CHURCH FASTS.

A few words on the history of the fasts observed by the Church of England will not be out of place as an appendix to this treatise. They consist, according to the Canons, of Lent, including Ash-Wednesday and Good Friday, the Ember-Days, the three Rogation-Days, all the Fridays in the year, except Christmas Day, and the Eves or Vigils of certain festivals, making together more than one hundred fasts in the course of the year.

The Spring Fast, called in English, Lent, from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, spring, can lay claim to neither scriptural nor apostolical authority, although it has been erroneously traced to the time of the Apostles from being mentioned in the sixth Apostolical Canon, but it is now well known that the so-called Apostolical Canons are forgeries, chiefly compiled during the second and third centuries, although a modern critic supposes them not to have attained their present form until as late as the fifth century.

The primitive Christians, however, according to the best authorities, only fasted about forty hours, or less than two days, beginning from the afternoon of the Friday on which they commemorated the crucifixion until the morning of the Sunday of the