

no elaborate proof. The Founder of Christianity pointed out the necessity of its observance as one of the principal duties to be practiced by His followers, fasting being numbered with the notable duties of prayer and almsgiving in the Sermon on the Mount. Besides the teaching of Christ on this subject, there is the fact of His practice which fills up the measure of Christian evidence in its favor. Further, as a matter of common experience, they alone enjoy this world who have first abstained from it. They alone can truly feast who have first fasted; they alone are able to use this world who have learned not to abuse it. *c*

The private opinions and personal rules of life of various divines are frequently put forward as if they were the judgments of the Church, and 'attempts have now and again been made to compel individual Catholics to accept the decisions of various divines, synods, and congregations, almost as if they were infallible decrees, and to exaggerate their importance in a very oppressive manner.' *d* It is frequently urged by these teachers that fasting means abstinence from flesh meat and 'the depriving ourselves of certain kinds of food and drink in a rational way,' *e* and particular rules are laid down as to the things which people may eat and may not eat. Even from those rules and command to abstain from meat, the major part of the people, viz., the working class, besides other folk, are declared to be exempt owing to their occupation and the necessity for strong and frequent nourishment.

As might be expected, there has been a variety of rules framed by those who, failing to recognize the law of the Church, still felt it to be their duty to practice abstinence in some form and measure, and with varying degrees of strictness. So it happens that we read of those who, taking care never to miss a meal, have denied themselves certain articles of diet for a definite period; which practice has been reckoned as a complete fulfillment of the Divine law to fast. Those, however, who think 'they fast—rigorously eating scalloped oysters instead of minced veal, and fried soles instead of roast mutton,'—no doubt are sincere, but they fail to recognize 'the reality of the ancient discipline' which was a 'real privation of food, real beating of the breast, and heaping ashes on the head, and weeping between the porch and the altar.' *f*

In primitive times 'men thought more of the quantity than of the quality of their food, as may be gathered from the undoubted custom of abstaining totally until the evening. Sozomen relates a story of the Cyprian Bishop Spiridion, who offered a guest pork for his evening meal, and seems to have been much surprised at hearing that he limited himself to a diet of fish. But the Bishop was probably a country mouse, and did not know that more advanced Christians were beginning to compromise with the rigorous abstention throughout the day to which he had always been accustomed.' *g*

It has been said that 'religious fasting is a voluntary denying ourselves as to some measure of time, quantity, or quality, or rather all these together, our wonted lawful bodily refectations and pleasures.' *h* This appears to be an exact definition of fasting; it will be observed, how-

ever, that it leaves the proper measure of time, as the minimum required, an open question. Granting that total deprivation of food is the ideal, it is important to know how long a time the abstinence must continue in order to constitute a pure fast. Individual caprice cannot settle the question. If we desire a final answer it is evident some authority is needed to fix the minimum number of hours of abstinence to complete a fast.

It never seems to occur to our spiritual guides to refer to the written law of the Church which settles the question. It may therefore be presumed that either they have never discovered the existence of such a law, or, if they have come across it in their reading, they wisely think their duty lies in the direction of propounding such rules as they may feel disposed to practice themselves, illustrating the proverb 'example is better than precept,' whereas the law and rule may be higher than the observance.

It has been said that 'the clergyman's greatest temptation is the table. Among his people he receives the warmest welcome. The best, which means the richest food is prepared for him in great variety. He is helped first and generously.' The same observer recommends, 'if instead of the three meals a day, he takes but two he would often find his digestion and brain-work greatly improved.' *h* Their particular temptation and personal neglect of abstinence does not exempt the clergy from their solemn vows to teach the whole truth and give the people the chance of realizing the full advantages of the higher standard. Unquestionably there is a large section of true Christians who aim at a high ideal. Amongst these are the most devoted men and women who attach the greatest importance to the formulated judgment of the Church. These at least will appreciate that portion of the argument which claims the decision of the primitive fathers in support of the proposition that the law of fasting, as the ideal rule and standard, has been defined by competent authority. The following extract from the homily on Fasting (referred to in the XXXV. Article) makes this clear:

'Fasting then, even by Christ's assent, is a withholding of meat, drink, and all natural food from the body for the determined time of fasting. And that it was used in the primitive Church appeareth most evidently by the Chalcedon Council . . . which decreed that every person, as well in his private as public fast, should continue all the day without meat and drink, till after the evening prayer.' *j* The second part of the homily continues: 'In the former homily, beloved, was showed that among the people of the Jews, fasting, as it was commanded them from God by Moses, was to abstain the whole day, from morning till night, from meat, drink, and all manner of food that nourisheth the body, and that whoso tasted aught before the evening, on the day appointed to fasting, was accounted among them a breaker of his fast.' *k*

This definition was recognized by Robert Nelson, a celebrated layman at the beginning of the last century, who wrote: 'In a strict sense fasting implies a total abstinence from all meat and drink the whole day, from morning to evening.' *l* It may, therefore, well be considered a remarkable fact that this the only true and

i Dr. Corrie in his Commentary on the Homilies questions the source of this Canon, and refers, as the origin of the mistake, to St. Thomas Aquinas, *Secunda Secundae*, Q. cxlvii. 7, 3, and says it is cited in the Canon Law, Decreti, Pars. iii. de Consecratione Dist. I., c. 50. See Labbe's Councils, Tom. ix. p. 1018.

j The Homilies, S.P.C.K. edition, p. 296. *k*, do, p. 301.

l 'Companion for the Festivals and Fasts,' by Robert Nelson, p. 393.

authorized definition of fasting has invariably been neglected by later writers on the subject. Why is this? Is it not a reasonable definition? Can there be any question whether the Church has the power to deal with such a matter—to define the meaning of the terms she employs? Is the authority of Holy Scripture, which is given as the basis of the definition, not clear, sufficient, infallible? One would think this would be conclusive to those who decline any other authority besides the Bible, and by proving how distinctly the duty, object, and method of fasting is revealed therein, secure their fullest sanction, and lead them to make such a Scriptural practice individually their own.

(To be continued.)

THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. ANDREW.

From the reports of the Council to the Fifth Annual Convention lately held in Woodstock we find that a Boys' department of the Brotherhood has been inaugurated under the control of the provisional committee. Reports were received from 98 of the 130 active Chapters of the Brotherhood in existence at the time of meeting. A regrettable feature, however, of the report was the statement that there were between 30 and 40 Chapters in a dormant condition. This, together with the determination of the Brotherhood not to hold its next General Convention until some time in the Fall of 1896, seems to imply a lack of real vitality in the organization; if it does not, indeed, presage dissolution. The Council reported an extension of the work in the Diocese of Newfoundland during the previous year, where one Chapter had been formed, and also spoke of nine new Charters granted for the Diocese of Fredericton.

The condition of the Brotherhood in the Diocese of Toronto would also appear to be unsatisfactory. According to the report at the time of the Convention the present active strength in that diocese was 26, but there were 12 dormant Chapters, 2 Charters had been withdrawn and only one new Charter granted during the year. In the Diocese of Ontario there were 26 present active Chapters, 6 dormant, 1 Charter withdrawn, but 3 new Charters granted. In Huron the present active strength was 20 Chapters, with 7 dormant reported and 7 new Chapters formed. Fredericton diocese reported 14 Chapters existing, none dormant, no Charters withdrawn and 9 new Chapters formed during the year. In Nova Scotia the condition was much the same, viz.: 9 Chapters existed, none dormant, 2 Charters withdrawn and 2 new ones formed. In the Diocese of Montreal the position of the Brotherhood also appears unfavorable, the report being present active strength 9, dormant Chapters 5, Charters withdrawn 1, and only 1 new Chapter formed during the year. In Niagara the position appears to be much the same, 9 Chapters existing, 3 dormant, 3 Charters withdrawn and 1 new Charter during the year.

It appears to us impossible to read the report issued by the Council of the Brotherhood for the work of the past year with anything like satisfaction; indeed it seems to betoken grave danger as existing in regard to the future of the organization in Canada, and to indicate that there must be much greater life infused into it if it is to attain anything like the success which has attended the sister organization in the States.

Losing the temper takes all the sweet, pure feeling out of life. You may get up in the morning with a clean heart, full of song, and start out as happy as a bird, and the moment you are crossed and you give way to your temper the clean feeling vanishes and a load as heavy as lead is rolled upon the heart, and you go through the rest of the day feeling like a culprit.

c 'Parochial and Plain Sermons,' by Rev. J. H. Newman, vi. 93.

d 'Catholicity and Reason,' by St. George Mivart, in *The Nineteenth Century*, Dec., 1887, p. 854.

e See the Catholic Dictionary.

f 'Church Going,' by Hon. Mrs. Chapman, in *The Nineteenth Century*, Sept., 1887, p. 387.

g *The Morning Post*, Feb. 18, 1885.

h 'How Clergymen may secure Health,' by Dr. Dio Lewis, in *Homiletic Monthly*, Feb., 1884, p. 11.