

so fasting dwindled down to what it is now, when a man having eaten a *recherché* dinner of fish and eggs, cooked in every conceivable form, and with every luxury, imagines himself to have fasted and gained some spiritual good. From this point of view, the answer to what is Christian fasting is simple, viz., "It is a consequence of a spiritual state of mind, in which a man is so absorbed as to make him forget the wants of the body."

2nd, Is fasting necessary? For the realisation of the higher Christian life *it is necessary* that the soul should be capable of such absorption in the things of the Spirit as to abstain from food and all fleshly and earthly desires without effort, or even consciousness of any sacrifice—therefore to have an experience in abstinence from food (but not food only) *is necessary* to a Christian if he is to know the height and depth of the love of Christ. But it *is not* necessary as a means to attain to this, rather the contrary; I apprehend that, so far from the soul being strengthened or blessed by such an outward exercise, it is weakened; and this view is borne out by the writers of the Acts and Epistles to their converts, for it is remarkable that in no one instance is the practice of fasting recommended as a means of growing in grace, much less is it enjoined. But in the consideration of the necessity of fasting as a religious exercise I must carefully guard myself from being supposed to fix a standard up to which all must come. In doing this I should depart from the very principle of the Gospel, wherein