

rally be accompanied with sorrow for the cause of that death; and therefore the Lenten fast, probably from its first institution in Apostolic times, has become a period of self-discipline.

The general mode of fasting appears to have been to abstain from food till six o'clock in the afternoon, and even then to refrain from animal food and wine. The English Church has not prescribed any rule on the subject of fasting; but in the Homilies she urges the example of early times, as though she intended to inculcate considerable strictness in the observance of the duty. The work which most people have to attend to makes it impossible for them to fast every day for six weeks till evening, or even to take only one meal a day. The continuous labor of life in the nineteenth century was unknown to the majority of persons in ancient days, as it is now in Eastern countries. Modern western Christians, therefore, must aim at reconciling the duty of fasting at times prescribed by the Church with properly accomplishing the work God has given them to do, so that no universal law can be laid down on the subject. But it may be possible to distinguish the food taken on fasting days without injury; many can frequently abstain from animal food, and luxuries and delicacies can be avoided.

Lent was the principal time in the early Church for preparing Catechumens for Baptism. Catechetical lectures were especially given at this season, which was one of humiliation and abstinence from pleasure. Fasting, prayer, penitence, on account of sin, were particularly practised; while outward tokens of mourning were adopted, and sinners were called upon to do outward penance as a sign of inward penitence, that they might be received back to communion at Easter.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

THE ordinary name of this day was derived from an ancient custom of using ashes made from the palms distributed on the Palm Sunday of the previous year, and signing the cross with them on the heads of those who knelt before the officiating minister for the purpose, while he said the words: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust shalt thou return." The most remarkable portion of the service is the Communion Service, which is an adaptation of the above mentioned rite. Its use is almost universally restricted to the first day of lent. The awful maledictions, and the archaic character of the address, will probably have the effect of keeping it so; although the object is not to call down malediction upon others, but to express our belief that sin of every kind will be followed by punishment. The service altogether is singularly different from all other parts of our services—denunciation of sin usually taking the form of a Litany rather than that of exhortation. It is also remarkable as containing a reference to the restoration of the church's discipline, which it says "is much to be wished." It has, however, been remarked

that "an aspiration after the revival of an open penance, which is utterly impossible, is apt to lead the thoughts away from the restoration of a discipline and penance which is both possible and desirable."

MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.

THE following is the extract from the Primary Charge of Dr. Hessey, Archdeacon of Middlesex, to which we referred last week. The charge was delivered May 16th, 1876:

"An attempt is being made this session to induce the Legislature, by an indirect process, to render valid a connection—I cannot call it a marriage—of a man with his wife's sister. If this is brought about, I need scarcely point out to you that the Table of Forbidden Marriages, which is authorized by the Church, will be infringed upon on one point. But it is more important to observe that, by such infringement, its authority upon all points will be impaired. It will be impossible to maintain the Table as founded on Scripture, which indeed it is throughout, either in the letter or by inference and implication, unless it is accepted in its entirety. And to this must be added the consideration that embarrassment will be caused to the clergy, who will naturally hesitate to admit to the Holy Communion those who are not, according to the view of the Church, united in lawful marriage. You know how the miserable question arose. That connection, and, indeed, all those which are mentioned in the Table, were originally voidable by the ecclesiastical law, if action was taken during the lifetime of both the parties. If proceedings were not taken during that period they could not be taken afterwards, and thus the issue was by mere lapse of time rendered legitimate for civil purposes. The Church's discipline slept, and it was seldom worth anybody's while to interfere, unless some worldly interest was at stake. At length exactly such a case appeared. A connection of this particular description occurred in a certain noble family. Serious complications, involving title and property, might have ensued. On this, an Act was passed, which, while it seemed to be called forth by the scandals produced by such connections and the injury accruing to the offspring, had really a very different object, the relief of the special offenders. They were supposed to have acted in ignorance of the law, or through mistake as to the meaning of voidability, and were, therefore, forsooth, to have their connection legalised. This, however, was studiously veiled by legalising, not merely *their* connection, and the issue from it, but every such connection which had taken place, or should take place, up to a certain date. After that date, in order that there might henceforth be no mistake, no plea of ignorance whatever, such unions were to be absolutely null and void from the beginning. It was thus presumed that people would for the future take warning. But mark the mischief of what may, without irreverence, be

called "respect of persons." Almost immediately after that Act had been passed, and a principle had been broken in upon for the sake of relieving certain great people, other people began, frequently in defiance of the entreaties of friends, to break the law. Their contention was that it could not be a Divine law, or that it would never have been allowed by the human legislature to be contravened. Accordingly they set on foot an unceasing agitation, without regard to difficulty or expense, to get it repealed. For years they have carried this agitation on. In vain has it been shown to them, over and over again, that the Table which the statute sanctions is part of the Moral Law. In vain, that it was understood so to be by the Church Universal until, towards the end of the fifteenth century, Alexander VI. (Roderic Borgia) gave a dispensation for the union of Emmanuel, King of Portugal, with his sister-in-law, following it up afterwards with a dispensation to Ferdinand, King of Sicily, for a union with his own aunt. In vain are they reminded that, though from the sixth to the fifteenth century, the Tables of Forbidden Degrees were much extended, and though such additional prohibitions were frequently dispensed with, and the Church of Rome has chosen in her infallibility to confound all prohibitions together, and so at length to claim power to dispense with all; the latter are purely Ecclesiastical; those in the Table are Moral. At first she only dispensed with the additional Ecclesiastical prohibitions, and did so on the ground that they were not Moral but Ecclesiastical. In vain have their professions that this is *the one* case of hardship been exposed, by their being reminded that it was originally proposed to sanction a union between a man and his niece, but that this was abandoned as being too shocking to the moral sense to be endured.

In vain has the plea that the law must be bad, because it has been often violated, been refuted. 1st. By documentary evidence that even worse transgression against the Tables has been committed; and, 2nd. By showing the absurdity of the admission of a principle which would render it necessary to repeal any law against which there are frequent offences.

In vain has it been proved to demonstration that this question is not a poor man's question. Their assertion that it is so has been disposed of by statistics which show that the majority of such unions have taken place among the lower portion of the middle class, with a few among the upper.

In vain has their assertion that it—the union—is not forbidden in Scripture in so many words, and that nothing not so forbidden is unallowable, been disposed of by the following argument, which shows that implication and fair inference must be admissible:

Firstly.—It is not said that a father may not marry his daughter. We infer that to be unlawful, thus: it is said that a son may not marry his mother; conversely, we infer that a mother may not marry her son; and then, by analogy, we infer that the father may not marry his daughter. But this is a prohibition by inference; it is not found in so many words.