

did all that Esther had commanded him. On the third day Esther went in—the edict was recalled—Aman was hanged, and the Jews were allowed for two whole days, to slaughter those who were prepared to slaughter them.

Was it an arm of flesh, pampered in the luxuries of the table, that repelled the foe in the days of Judas Maccabeus? Not so. But it was a handful of people who sought the protection of the Most High by Fasting. "The success of the war," said Judas to his band of trembling followers, "is not in the multitude of the army, but strength cometh from heaven," "and they Fasted that day, and put on sackcloth and put ashes on their heads." (1 Mac., iii. 17, 47.) "And they joined battle, and the Gentiles were routed." (iv. 14.) By the same arms success was ensured to them throughout the struggle. Antiochus poured in his multitudes anew, hoping at last to terrify the people of God and to overwhelm them. But he found that they who seek the face of the Lord by Fasting are not to be terrified or overwhelmed. See the new invasion, the new Fast, and the new victory, thus described by the Holy Ghost:—"The king, with his mind full of rage, came on to show himself worse to the Jews than his father was. Which, when Judas understood, he commanded the people to call upon the Lord day and night." And there mode of calling was this: "they craved mercy of the Lord with weeping and Fasting, laying prostrate on the ground for three days continually. This done, Judas exhorted them to make themselves ready. He went out, committing all to God. He gave, as the watchword, 'the victory of God.' He set upon the king's quarters by night, and slew four thousand men in the camp, with the greatest of the elephants, with them that had been upon it; and, having filled the camp of the enemy with exceeding great fear and tumult, they (Judas and his men) went off with great success. After this Antiochus fought with Judas, was overcome, and made peace." (2 Mac., xiii.)

IV. But Fasting not only disarms the wrath of God, when his hand is lifted up to smite sinful individuals or nations; it not only gives strength and victory to the weakest of mortals, but it brings heaven to our succour in all the trying occurrences of life. Do the clouds of adversity lower over our heads, and do their forebodings overwhelm us with depression of spirits? Let us Fast, and Heaven will dispel the gloom and show us the rays of approaching mercy.

Whose spirits were ever more depressed with grief than those of Daniel, when he viewed the sins of his people and their merited punishment? But he says "I set my face to the Lord, my God, to pray, and make supplication, with Fasting and sackcloth and ashes,"—and he prayed and said, "Let thy wrath be turned away—hear the supplication of thy servant and his prayers and show thy face upon thy sanctuary which is desolate." And what was the return made by heaven to his prayer and Fasting? The angel Gabriel was immediately dispatched from on high

to cheer him with his message:—"Seven weeks are shortened upon thy people and upon thy holy city." (Daniel, ix. 3, 10, 17, 24.) And, as if it had been a small reward for his Fasting and prayers, to cheer him with a near view of his people's deliverance from temporal bondage, the same messenger had orders to cheer him with the near view of their deliverance, and that of all mankind from the spiritual bondage of sin through Christ.

It is not easy to conceive frail mortals placed in more perplexing circumstances than the two families of Tobias and Raguel. Imagine that you see each family pending on the life of a single child. Imagine the daughter of Raguel, already seven times married, and as often left a widow on the first night after her marriage. Imagine her now married, for the eighth time to young Tobias, the only son of her father's kinsman and dearest friend. Imagine her father already preparing the grave to which he already expected to have, next day, the melancholy task of consigning the corpse of his son-in-law. Imagine on the other hand, Tobias, the father, aged and blind, whose only son is at a distance, surrounded by dangers and for whose safety he entertains the most gloomy anticipations. But Sarah had, at last, learned from an angel how to ensure life and happiness to her spouse, and joy to herself and parents—by Fasting. "She went into an upper chamber of her house, and, for three days and three nights, did neither eat nor drink, but continuing in prayer, with tears, besought God that he would deliver her from this reproach," viz, that of dying without issue. (Tob. iii. 10, 11.) In like manner Tobias the elder, was about to have the happiness of seeing his son return safe, well married, and rich. And all this, together with the restoration of his sight, he had ensured by Fasting. (Tob. xi. 8.)

V. I hope I have not to deal with those who, when pressed by evidence deduced from the Old Testament, are prepared, rather than relinquish their opinion, to throw it and its evidence to the winds. But if, among my readers, there should be any such, I shall now treat them with a few texts from the New Testament.

At a very early stage of the Gospel dispensation, Fasting and its rewards catch the eye of the attentive reader.

In the second chap. of St. Luke's Gospel, we are told that, Anna the Prophetess "departed not from the temple, by Fasting and prayers serving night and day." (v. 27.) and she was rewarded with the privilege of confessing and proclaiming the Redeemer on the very day of his Presentation. Fasting is commended by Christ, with the promise of a reward from his Father. (Matt. vi. 16, 17.) We are told by Christ that Fasting casts out devils, when nothing else will do it. (Mark, ix. 29, and Matt. xvi. 20.) By Fasting the apostle sought and obtained worthy co-partners in the ministry. (Acts, xiii. 3.) By Fasting they sought and obtained the same all-important object. (Acts xiv. 22.) Fasting is the badge of a true Christian, (2. Cor. vi. 5, and 2. Cor. xi. 27.) Christ himself, instead of abolishing it as

a part of the ceremonial law, condescends, on the contrary, to prescribe rules for it. (Matt. ix. 15.) And, finally, he began his own public career on earth by a Fast of forty days; and no precept ought to be more binding in the eyes of a real Christian than the example of his Master.

The apostles and first Christians, at least, thought that his example was to be followed; that his rule was to be practised; that his badge was to be worn. St. Paul was no weak or superstitious man, yet he Fasted. (2. Cor. vi. 5, and xi. 27.) and he deemed Fasting necessary for securing his eternal welfare. (1 Cor. ix. 5.) What, then, becomes of the arguments of those who think they have turned Fasting into ridicule by saying that, "Scripture nowhere recommends voluntary sufferings," that, "we are to use God's gifts," that, "God rejoiceth not in the grumbling of an empty stomach," Who will hear of nothing but "the all-sufficiency of Christ's merits." If such doctrine be gored for any thing, what becomes of the crime of Eve, for which she paid so dear, and for which we, her descendants, are still paying? She only used God's gifts. But you will say, she did it in disobedience. So do we, when we refuse to Fast. What becomes of the crime of the rich man of the Gospel? (Luke; xvi.) He only used God's gifts; only gave his stomach what craved; observed no Superstitious Fasts, as we choose to call them. For we are told that he was either a glutton or a drunkard. He only feasted sumptuously every day, yet he was buried in hell. (v. 29.) True it is that, "God rejoiceth not in the grumbings of an empty stomach." But he himself has punished, and daily punishes our sins, by imposing Fasts upon us; for, every time that we subject us to wants and privations, we may say that he imposes a Fast on us. And he rejoices that we should approve of and imitate his plan; he rejoices that we should know our enemy, and give him no encouragement; that we should keep in subjection, by extra mortifications, that appetite whose desires have been the source of all our sins; that we should punish ourselves in the quarter whence our sins originated. The merits of Christ are all-sufficient. But all-sufficiency & indiscriminate interposition are very different things. He has only promised the interposition of his all-sufficiency on certain conditions, which we must fulfil. Hence St. Paul tells us, that he laboured to fill up those things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ in his flesh, that is, to perform those acts of penance which Christ required of him as a condition for the application of his all-sufficiency. I could say much more, and say it on Scriptural authority; but I have said enough to convince the sincere; and all that I could say would not be enough to convince the insincere and the spoiler. Only He who can change the heart can convince these.

It then, we will not Fast, let us not say that it is because Fasting is not a scriptural doctrine. If we will not Fast, let us seek the cause of our aversion in some other motive. But woe to that motive for

the sake of which we are prepared to incur the evils which may be averted by Fasting, and to forego the benefits which it may secure. For it follows, from what I have shewn, that the language of Scripture is this: Do you wish to obtain from heaven the pardon of sins, whether private or national? Fast, and they shall be forgiven. Do you wish to avert the calamities which threaten you or your country? Fast, and the scourge shall be suspended. Do you wish to ensure blessing private or public? Fast, and your desires shall be granted. In fine, do you wish to establish your claim to the honour and privileges of a Christian? Fast, for Fasting is the Christian's badge, the Christian's livery.

I know the force of early prejudices and party spirit. I know it, and can sympathize with it. But real religion should rise superior to such considerations. Till this is the case, we may be of Paul or of Apollo, but we are not of Christ.

Who would not, every day of his life, raise his heart to heaven and exclaim: "From the prejudices of education and party deliver me, O Lord," when he sees the able, the sentimental, and otherwise pious Cowper consigning to a place as gloomy as his own soul (or, if this be thought severe,) consigning to eternal perdition all who do penance, and for no other crime but for doing penance? (See "Truth"—Cowper's Poems, vol. 1.)

And why this severity, this rabid severity? Because his religious tutors have dunned him into the persuasion, that penance can only be the suggestion of pride and a diffidence in the merits of the Redeemer. Now, in almost every text that I have quoted, we have seen that the Holy Ghost represents Fasting as the offspring of humility, and the Catholic Church recognises no merit in a pharisaical Fast.

Are the enemies of Fasting, then, prepared to bear the weight of the scourges which are averted by it? Are they prepared to forego the blessing which are obtained by it? Or have they discovered another more easy and safe way of averting the one and obtaining the other?—Tract 14, published by the Catholic Institute of Great Britain.

FRANCE.

Paris.—The reliques of Notre Dame, says the *Univers*, were bestowed in a place of security in evil times, and they have been preserved by the piety of the faithful; they have lately been restored (by the person who received the precious deposit) to the Archbishop and Chapter.

On the 11th the Academy of Sciences elected M. Beriot as the successor of M. Lacroix, in the section of geometry. This nomination, says the *Univers*, does honor at the same time to the servant who, by the power of merit, has triumphed over inveterate prejudice, and to the academy itself, which has regulated its honors by the rule of acience only. It will not be the less respected or illustrious for having admitted a devout and sincere Christian.

The Comte Christophe de Beaumont, an exemplary Christian, and nephew of Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, died last week.