

ordinary wants of the body : a stronger feeling has overcome even the need for food. In this case, fasting is clearly the result of the state of mind—it is so absorbed in its distress that it has no power of thought for other things, and does not feel the wants of the body. If we apply this to Christian fasting, we shall, I think, be able to understand something of what it is, and be helped to comprehend Christ's example, Christ's teaching, and His practical illustration of the power of fasting, when springing from its only true source. But perhaps it may be objected that I am setting up an idea that is impossible, that though a man may be absorbed by grief to the exclusion of *all* other things, that it cannot be, that a man shall be *so* absorbed in heavenly things as not to feel the need of food, or rather forget all about it. But this is only from the low state of spirituality of the Church ; it is not impossible, for I myself have known happy instances ; and I have no doubt, in the days of the first zeal of the Church, they were constant, and that it was from the example so set that it became the fashion to fast at all. The world, or the less religious, saw these men and women intensely spiritual, setting apart seasons for prayer, which were also seasons of fasting, simply because they were so occupied and absorbed with their devotions that they wanted no food, and they jumped at the conclusion that eating no food (fasting) was the secret of their spirituality ; and when people wanted to be religious, they were recommended to fast, and