

that it would be a matter of indifference whether that duty were observed or not.

But how did the Apostles and early Christians understand their duty? Should not their conduct be a comment on our Lord's words? So it was. Look at them when they have some especial work in hand *e.g.* they are gathered together to be separated for a peculiar mission; and does it not strike you what a prominent place fasting has, with prayer and the laying on of hands, before they send them away? Or they wish to commend congregations to the grace of God, is it not worthy of note that fasting with earnest prayer is never omitted? And then St. Paul gives his own personal practice. If he be asked, "How do you, excitable, strong of feeling, keep under your body and bring it into subjection;" he replies, "Lest I should be a castaway, I am in fastings often."

And you remember on one occasion the Disciples were defeated in their attempt to master a certain devil, and after their Lord had cast him out, they go in their mortification to Jesus and ask, "Why could not we cast him out?" The reply of Jesus is very memorable and most instructive on the point of fasting. He tells them, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." On another occasion, there is a strange combination of the Pharisees and John's disciples, and they go to Jesus and accuse His disciples as neglecters of fasting. In reply our Lord expressly says, "I shall be taken away from them and then shall they fast."

And now what is the evidence of our own reason on the matter? Is fasting beneficial? It is useful in quieting the mind for spiritual exercises? Does it enable the soul to pursue its work with more energy? I imagine there will be no hesitation in answering after this manner: "Yes, there is an inseparable union between body and soul, and the one necessarily acts on the other, and the union is so close that nothing can happen to the one without the other being thereby affected. If I weaken and enervate the body by dissipation my soul will also suffer in its powers for high and rational employment. If I pamper my flesh and fill and inflame my desires with wine and meats, my passions will surely break through all control and bid defiance to every effort for their subdual. Therefore I am sure fasting is very beneficial in aiding the soul in its struggle for mastery over the desires of the flesh."

And what is the evidence of experience, apart from religion, in this matter? Suppose we ask the man of Science, the student, the author; What do you say? Is fasting in your work useful or not? His reply is emphatic, "When I am engaged in my intellectual labors, I always find it profitable to be very moderate; I find that abstinence quickens my perceptive powers and gives freedom of action to the faculties of the soul." Is not then the evidence from Scripture and from experience-con-