

Mrs. Edgar, which was highly appreciated. The service at St. Paul's Church attracted over 100 people and the little building was completely filled. Evening Prayer was read by the incumbent, Rev. Geo. Gander, (South River) taking the Lessons. Then six candidates were presented for confirmation. The Bishop not only addressed the candidates but also preached. The Bishop's words fell on attentive ears, for on all sides it was pronounced to be the best confirmation service ever held in the village.

Next morning the Bishop and Mr. Piercy took train for Burk's Falls, where in the evening the Bishop confirmed a class of seven—of whom two were adults—in the Church of All Saints. Of this service it may be noted that the responses were more than usually hearty, because led by a strengthened choir. The canticles and hymns were brightened by the support of a cornet as well as the little cabinet organ.

At 3 o'clock the next morning, (the 4th of Feb.) the Bishop left the parsonage to catch the north-bound accommodation train.

### Fasting in Scotland.

*The Scottish Guardian, March 5th, 1897.*

The spirit of the times is at present all in favour of making religion with its practices and duties as easy and agreeable as possible. Comfortable churches are filled (or not) with comfortable people reclining on comfortable cushions in comfortable postures, who attend services for the most part rather to gratify personal predilections than to conform willingly to any sense of duty to the great Head of the Church. Extraordinary sermons on extraordinary subjects, so-called *bright* musical services, varied and occasional sacred concerts and "pleasant Sunday afternoons," appear best calculated to induce many Christians to give up an hour-and-a-half of that agreeable, if somewhat somnolent, ease that nowadays characterises the Christian Sunday. We do not complain of comfortable churches, or even of comfortable cushions, in themselves, nor should we be so bold as to decry musical services, or even sacred Sunday concerts; what we do assert is that there is a great and distressing tendency to limit religious duties to such accidental things as

those are. That the great body of professing Christians in Scotland are infected with this spirit of an emaculated Christianity, no one, who knows anything of the lives of the people, can doubt. Everything goes to show that Presbyterianism, from more than one point of view, has degenerated. It has lost much of its old manly piety and rugged grandeur, it has abandoned the austerity of its Puritan discipline, and, while some gain may have accrued, not a few thoughtful Presbyterians will agree that the gain is but little compensation for the loss. Few among them would care to welcome back the old bare, bald and dreary services of thirty years ago, still fewer would like to revive the severe Calvinism that once was the staple of Presbyterian doctrine, but we believe many sincerely regret—and with good reason—the abolition of the old fast days, which are now to be found only here and there in the country as pathetic relics of a more serious generation. It would be easy to level objections against those old fast days before Communion, but the spirit inculcated by them was assuredly more apostolic, more catholic, and more manly than the present nerveless and flabby Christianity that animates by far the majority of Scottish people to-day.

It has come to this, that in many parts of Presbyterian Scotland there is now not even the name of fasting to remind people of a duty that the Catholic Church has at no time failed to enforce. If history teaches anything, it is singularly conclusive on this point, that, let a form of religion once cast-off or neglect all asceticism and self-denial, it at once, like an undisciplined army, loses power, detaches the loyalty of its followers, and fails to attract fresh adherents to its ranks. Is not this just what our Presbyterian brethren are finding, and is not, at least, part of the cause to be found in the fact that now no season or appointed days exist to maintain the discipline and the privilege of voluntary self-denial? We may be thankful that our Church has not so far slipped from the old moorings as to drift into the baneful tendency of religion-made-easy. In theory, at least, we have our seasons of self-denial, when the Church dons the sombre garments of the ascetic life. We need not blind our eyes to the dangers of an irrational and foolish

asceticism, they are plain enough to most sensible people, but the discussion of them may well enough be postponed till they approach somewhat nearer to us than at present they seem likely to do. For what is the plain unvarnished truth about the observance of such a season as Lent among ourselves? We have to face the sad fact that, in spite of our professed adhesion to Catholic practice, in spite of our Prayer Book teaching, and in the teeth of rubrics which not all the ingenuity of learned antiquarians can explain away, the Lenten and other fasts of the Church seriously affect only a fringe of our people. To the bulk of Episcopalian Lent signifies little more than the singing of what must be meaningless hymns about fasting, and the respectful attention (or inattention, as the case may be) to sermons that call, albeit often in vain, for graver and more serious thoughts than the average Sunday discourse demands. Beyond the inner circle of the faithful few in our congregations the duty of fasting never appeals, the average Churchman as a rule does not keep Lent. Such a state of matters—and we do not think it can be exaggerated—imperatively demands a remedy. It is evident that a large number of people see no duty resting upon them of obedience to the Church's rule of fasting, and we make bold to say that to some extent the responsibility for this rests with the clergy. The deprecating, half-apologetic manner in which the practice of self-denial is treated, so far from arousing in the people any sense of duty, often excites only a pitying contempt for such "sloppy" things as fasting and abstinence are made out to be. Lenten exhortations too frequently amount to nothing more than feeble suggestions to smoke a little less tobacco and drink a little less beer, and even these become lost in the preacher's solicitude for his delicate people's health, with the result that most of the congregation on the Sunday leave the church with the comfortable feeling that they may safely dispense themselves from this irksome and dangerous rule of the Church. There are again some few preachers who err on the other side by an assumption of dogmatism that irritates the thoughtful, and by a dictatorial reference to petty rules that are made to appear ridiculous to the