

be universally recognized a commonwealth firmly determined to follow the path of progress which leads to doing good to all men.

SWEDEN AND NORWAY.

The special Stockholm correspondent of the NEWS, in his letter published elsewhere in these columns, gives a translation of what may be regarded as the ultimatum of King Oscar to the left wing of the Norwegian Storting and the reply of the leaders of that party, on the questions of difference between the two Scandinavian kingdoms. King Oscar lately, notwithstanding the fact that the radicals scarcely held their own in the last elections, has taken the position that the consular question should be settled in an amicable way by representatives of the two countries. In accordance with this view, he now states in a letter to the presiding officer of the Storting, Mr. Sivert Nielsen, that no union between independent countries can be rendered safe without mutual compliance and that the majority of the legislative assembly should not refuse to negotiate when a change in mutual relations existing since 1814 is contemplated.

To this Mr. Nielsen, for his party evidently, replies that the Storting claims the right of each country to manage for itself all affairs not designated as mutual by the Act of Union; the radicals will therefore "not repudiate negotiations according to this principle, between the two kingdoms."

This reply, while apparently conciliatory and loyal, will undoubtedly be regarded as a refusal to enter upon any negotiations on the particular question at issue, because the majority of the Storting has all along maintained that the consular and diplomatic service of Norway is not a matter of "mutual" concern. To enter upon negotiations with the opponents on that subject would, consequently, be a virtual retreat on the part of the left from the position now held. And the leaders of that movement in Norway are not known to give up any advantage until compelled to do so. Sivert Nielsen is a fair representative of the prominent men of the party to which he belongs. He was, if we remember rightly, a leading spirit of the judicial body that impeached and convicted the Selmer cabinet a few years ago at an early stage of the present controversy, and that by the most extraordinary methods. No compromise is probable as long as the fate of the Scandinavian union depends upon men so decidedly radical.

As the matter now stands between Sweden and Norway, a crisis seems imminent, but what the final outcome will be is not yet apparent. The real question at issue is whether Norway shall be allowed to recede and establish a republican form of government. Of course, so far, no single individual nor any organization could openly come out with a declaration to that effect, because that would be treason in a monarchical country. But all the labor of the left party has had a tendency in that direction for years. Privately republican doctrines have been disseminated and openly one

support after another of the uniting bridge between the two kingdoms has been torn down, on the plea that the constitution of Norway could in no other way be maintained. This remarkable feat of establishing a republic on the foundations and within the limits of a constitutional monarchy is the problem the left has undertaken to solve. So far their success has been phenomenal and justifies perhaps their expectation of final triumph in the near future.

ABOUT LENT.

A period of forty days before Easter, commencing with Ash Wednesday, is known in the Roman church, as is virtually the same part of the year in the Greek and Oriental churches, as Lent. The word is of Anglo-Saxon derivation and means simply, "spring," as the German *Lenz*, but it is used as a substitute for the ecclesiastical terms *Tessarakte* or *Quadagesima*, from Greek and Latin words respectively, meaning forty. During the entire period the members of the churches mentioned are supposed to fast. That is, they are to abstain from eating flesh and limit the quantity of food to a minimum. They are to attend public worship daily, with frequent partaking of the Sacrament, and particularly on Saturdays and Sundays. Increased diligence in almsgiving and deeds of charity is one feature of it, while public amusements, particularly stage plays, blitday celebrations and marriages are considered untimely. Of course, the strictness with which the fast is observed is very much relaxed from what it was anciently and varies with the piety and religious consciousness of different individuals, but these are the principles recognized in theory at least by the orthodox of the western and eastern churches.

In some of the Protestant churches the Lent is retained on the ecclesiastical calendar and special prayers and texts for sermons are provided for the clergy for the edification of their audiences; but as to fasting or abstaining from certain kinds of food, that is left to each individual. The anxiety of the reformers to obliterate every trace of Romanism in the Protestant countries led them to abolish many ancient customs and fasting among others. In this connection it is interesting to note the tenacity with which traditions handed down from the past live in the ranks of the people. In some Lutheran countries it is still customary during the Lent to add certain kinds of food to the bill of fare. On a particular Monday, for instance, bread and milk is eaten, and pancakes is the proper thing on a certain Tuesday in the season, just as eggs, the symbol of the resurrection, are Easter food, and fish, the symbol of the Savior, is considered appropriate at Christmas, because the letters in the Greek word for fish (*ichthys*) are the initials in the original language of the New Testament of the words, Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior. Thus traditions and customs after centuries still linger among the people, even long after the original meaning is forgotten. Protestantism still retains much of Romanism, while this latter has perpetuated ancient paganism, and

Judaea too, to a considerably greater extent than is generally supposed.

As to the origin of Lent, it can be traced to the very early days of the Christian Church. At first it appears only as an almost universally recognized custom of setting apart sometime before the anniversary of the death of our Lord for devotional exercises and contemplation of His sufferings for mankind. To the devout disciple it was impossible to combine such meditation with feasting and gaiety. The importance to the individual Christian of feeling the power of the atonement in his heart as well as understanding the doctrine was no doubt the foundation for the practice. At last forty days were fixed as the proper length of time, in commemoration of the forty day's fast of our Lord and that of the two great men of the Old Dispensation, Moses and Elijah. It was also found that forty days, excluding four Sundays, would be a tenth part of the year, which, it was argued, was due to the Lord, as tithes of everything were by the Mosaic law. The custom of keeping Lent is certainly a very ancient one, although at present little more than the name of it exists. That a few observe it in the right spirit is no doubt true, as it is also that such are benefited accordingly.

THE NEGRO SIDE.

In the NEWS dispatches last evening (March 5) was an account of Miss Ida Wells being excluded from a Methodist meeting in San Francisco because she had not proved that she was a member of the Methodist church. The woman who is thus being given notoriety is a negress who formerly lived in the Southern States, and who is entering into the reform movement against the treatment to which negroes are subjected there. She is an eloquent speaker, and relates in graphic words the story of the condition of her race in the South.

In her discussion, Miss Wells points out many features which will be interesting to consider as the statement coming from the negro side of the controversy. Regarding the particular occurrences which have led to the movement in behalf of the colored race—the lynching of negroes for heinous offenses against white women—Miss Wells recalls that when the masters of the slaves had gone to battle during the Rebellion, the negroes were left on the plantations to protect the women and children. There was then no complaint of these awful crimes, which she claims are the outgrowth of the later conduct of the white race, in its antagonism to the black man. She states that colored women have suffered more from the criminal assaults of whites than ever white women have from negroes, and in every case the punishment meted out to the whites has been infinitely less than to the negroes. She further alleges that the silence of the North is largely responsible for the lynchings in the South, for the suppression of which her race asks the co-operation of moral and Christian people.

Miss Wells insists that one great cause of the trouble is that, although the slaves were freed during the war, at its close the Southerners believed