

**HELPS TO A
HOLY LENT**

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Helps to a holy Lent by F. D. Huntington

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F. D. HUNTINGTON

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A HOLY LENT.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

It has been thought by several friends that a little work like that which follows would be acceptable, and of some use. The plan is very simple, and will be recognized at a glance. For each of the days, from Ash-Wednesday to Easter Even, a few thoughts are offered, such as might not otherwise come to mind, to assist the spiritual exercises of this sacred season, both by giving a special theme and perhaps increased freshness to private devotion, and by connecting the closet with ordinary life.

To those who are familiar with the principles and history of Church-worship it will hardly be necessary to say that each daily portion, including something of Holy Scripture, meditation, hymn, and prayer, bears an analogy to our liturgical appointments, and is a kind of faint reflection in miniature of the order of Divine Service.

In order to meet as many personal tastes and shades of sentiment as possible, variety has been consulted as respects style and subjects, due regard being had to truth of doctrine. A considerable part of the pages is original. Most of the Collects are taken from English sources, though many of them are traceable to a more Eastern origin. Among the names of foreign authors from whose writings extracts have been made are those of Vaughan and Newman, Liddon and Robertson, Pusey and Isaac Williams, Avrillon and Schauffler, Krummacher and Stopford Brooke, Goulburn and Faber, Ken and Keble, Bonar and Dora Greenwell.

The book has been prepared with interest. It is sent out without pretension, and with the hope that, being received into friendly hands, it may make some hearts stronger and some lives more like the life of our Lord.

F. D. H.

SYRACUSE,

Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul.

HELPS TO A HOLY LENT.

Ash-Wednesday.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

We are not to look on this appointment of a penitential season as an arrangement of our own. It is rather a sacred part of that divinely ordained system of spiritual ministries by which the Lord quickens the consciences and trains the holy life of His children. Traces of such a solemnity of forty days' continuance are found all along through the

earlier and later ages of Revelation. We know that it was the discipline of prophets, the reverential school of saints who lived wonderfully near to God. Entering once more upon it we have not to contrive a scheme of self-improvement without the guidance of the Spirit and the Bride. He who hallowed Lent by the Great Fast on the threshold of His mediatorial work for sinful souls passes into this still retirement with us. All these coming days and nights He will be our witness and our companion. The sincerity or formality of our special observances will be known to Him. Our self-denials He will share. The vows we make will be recorded in His book of remembrance. As the Gospel for last Sunday told us, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." The cry of our blindness and our weakness will not need to travel far to reach His ear, nor will He ever rebuke it, either for its ignorance or its importunity. It is with Him we are to walk all the way going up to Jerusalem.

There is one kind of suffering which we are not simply to accept and bear; we are to ordain the pain for ourselves, to go after it, to pray that it may be made keener than it is. This is penitence. If we do not know what that sorrow is, we are so

much farther from true peace. It is because we have been living only on the surface of life, unmindful of its deeper realities, not seeing its grander glories. Both Christ and His forerunner, when they began to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world, uttered one sharp, piercing call: "Repent!" They did not always go into minute specifications of every shade of sin, for they knew that they had for a witness a conscience in every breast, each heart knowing its own plague. They knew that there is always one comprehensive iniquity lodged farther in and spreading wider than any particular offence,—the sin of separation from God. In order to hate that the more heartily we must see it as it is, think about it, study its nature and workings, disentangle its sophistries and delusions, and appreciate the wretched comfort it gives to the adversary. Ashes must be sprinkled first before the ugliness in us can be changed to spiritual beauty. How significant the image is! Ashes are what is left when the fire is burnt out. They are bitter; worse than tasteless. They are pale. They are the sign of humiliation. No garment of praise can be put on till this spirit of heaviness has first wrapped its sackcloth about us.

Coming once more to the beginning of this gracious period we ought, first of all, to put away all superficial thoughts and all flippant conventional language about it. Do not trust to vague general intentions;—in the observance they will come to nothing, leaving only ashes in your mouth. Have a plan which you are not ashamed to own, and which you will probably be able to carry steadily through. So far as all arrangements of time and place and household are at your command, without wronging or disobliging others, make them yield to that plan. It is of less importance just what form your self-denial takes, than that it take some distinct form which you can define and present to your own mind. See that the Cross is really laid on somewhere. Nothing that you cut off from self-gratification for your Saviour's sake will you ever regret or wish to take back. Choose out, if you can, the weakest point. There is appetite in its several importunities; there is the passion for dress; there is idleness; there is the sin of evil speaking, in fact, all the foul brood of the transgressions of the tongue; there is bad temper; there is the lack of courage in manifesting your Christian convictions and bearing open witness;