

HYMNS AND MEDITATIONS

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Hymns and Meditations by Miss A. L. Waring

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MISS A. L. WARING

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WITH

An Introduction

BY

THE RT. REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON, D. D.

BISHOP OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

FROM THE EIGHTH LONDON EDITION

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INTRODUCTION.



THE reasons that induce me to recommend the republication of this little volume are easily stated. It belongs to a class of devotional writings having a peculiar ministry and a peculiar value, — a value not the less real because it is not the fashion of the age to magnify it. The class is not large; but within it this work takes a high place. The tone of spiritual thought and feeling in most of the pieces is very lofty and very pure. The ideas of a Christian life which are wrought into the poetry are always both strong and tender, vigorous and gentle, brave and trustful. We find few traces of that refined religious selfishness on the one hand, and that feeble sentimental-

ism on the other, which vitiate so much of the pious literature, and especially the metrical pious literature, of modern times. A state of comfortable pietistic complacency is not here put instead of a self-renouncing submission to the perfect will of God, nor does the call to action ring out with the less clearness and power, because we see laid open before us the divine depths of a complete and serene communion with the indwelling Christ. It is not common to meet with the expression of a more profound, more healthy, more child-like faith, or in more chaste, beautiful, and harmonious words, than in the lyrics numbered VIII., XIV., XV., XVII., XIX., XX., XXV., XXVI., and XXXII. These alone would justify the claims of a book taking much more room than this one.

Undoubtedly, there are degrees in the poetical merit of the different pieces in the volume, as might be expected. It would be unreasonable to imply that these unpre-

tending songs are, in whole or in part, proofs of the possession of the very loftiest degree of the creative gift, or to presume that all Christian minds will prize them equally. But tastes are so various, that it is safe to include all that appear in the London edition. Indeed, there is hardly one that does not bear upon it at least some slight trace of a refined perception and a select faculty; as, for example:—

"And let my moments, as they flee,
Unfold my endless life in Thee!"

"A heart at leisure from itself."

"Songs of defence my soul surround."

"On thee my humbled soul would wait,
Her utmost weakness calmly leaning."

"A life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty."

"Put doubts of my affection by,
And make me free to sing of thine."

"For all the work I have to do,
Is done through strengthening rest in Thee."

"And when Thy joy the Church o'erflows,
I know that it will visit me."

Into such stanzas as the following inventive thought and holy trust crowd their meaning compactly and yet musically:—

“ Oft in a dark and lonely place,
I hush my hasted breath,
To hear the comfortable words
Thy loving Spirit saith;
And feel my safety in thy hand
From every kind of death.”

“ *Glory to thee for strength withheld,*
For want and weakness known,—
The fear that sends me to thy breast
For what is most my own.
I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see;
The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me.”

“ Henceforth, whate'er my heart's desire,
Fulfill in me thy own design;
I need the Fountain and the Fire,
And both, O King of Saints, are thine.”

Nor will any reader who has ever made a study of style fail to notice the frequent occurrence of fine discriminations in the application of terms, of delicate shades of imaginative coloring, and of a certain re-

serve and self-command in the use of fancy when there was an obvious temptation to a much more prodigal expenditure of it. Repeatedly we find line after line of words of a single syllable. Such simplicity is not often found except in union with strength. One is led to believe that this is one of those instances where intellectual originality is both developed and disciplined by the energy of a spiritual life in the soul. It is doubtful whether the author would ever have appeared as a genius, if "the eyes of her understanding" had not been "enlightened" by that "love of Christ which passeth knowledge," — so comprehending "what is the length and breadth and depth and height."

F. D. H.

Boston,
Day of the Annunciation,
1863.