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ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1891.

to Do.

LENT IS HERE!

WAYS OF KEEPING IT.

from Many Standpoints.

A SEASON FOR SELF DENIAL FOR ALL.

Some Curious Customs of Observing Lent Recounted by "Progress" Correspondends-Rev. L. G. Stevens and "Noel Pilgrim's" Sound Advice on the Subject.

One of the readers of PROGRESS asked last week for some information about Lent, and how it should be observed, as well as some of the customs that have surrounded its observance. The substance of the inquiry was printed and replies solicited from those readers who have given the subject some thought and have ideas upon it, original or otherwise. The bright contributions that follow should not only be a complete answer to the inquiry but will afford entertaining reading for every reader of PROGRESS.

TOO OLD FOR ORIGINALITY.

Lent Affords an Opportunity to Rest the Mind and Recruit the Body.

How can any one be expected to have "an original opinion upon the subject" of Lent at this advanced stage of its existence? I think that every new idea thereupon must long since, have become feeble through age and long usage. My observations of its varying features have been numerous and various; but alas! they are in a hopeless state of general mixedness, defying any attempt to concentrate them into opinions. Each one seems to regard its rules and observances from a different standpoint, and I often think they seem, like beauty, to be chiefly "in the eye of the beholders." In the halcyon days of needful, but such times can hardly be relong ago I was a strict observer of Lent, refraining from butter, puddings, and other dainties, and suffering much anguish of out upon the helpless household, my ill temper increasing in direct ratio as the consummation of butter decreased. I seemed to miss its lubricating influence. That, of course, was not the fault of the season, but of myself, and I can offer no extenuating circumstances. Others I have watched in despairing admiration, who, apparently flourished upon meagre fare, and succeeded in starving their faults as well as the inner man, or woman-generally the latter. The process agrees even less with the sterner portions of humanity, I think. His favorite concession to conscience consists in renouncing the noxious weed, whereby assisting his family to keep Lent with great effectiveness. Their life is not worth living until "with joy they view" not "the gathering storm," but the hunting up of pipe and tobacco-pouch, and realize with thankfulness, not loud but deep, that Lent is over. It would be so delightful if people could be content to mortify themselves, without including all of their immediate associates in the process. Notwithstanding, however, the discrepancies in the conduct of those "who profess and call themselves Christians," I believe Lent to be a useful and beneficial institution, merely from a worldly point of of the world's loneliness, and poverty, and

time for the cultivation of the mind, even devotion, as a tribute to Him of His sufficiif the soul be rather neglected. One has ency, His glory, and His love. We may justly think then, that while the no time for reading or thinking when

soon-recurring strains.

merely from the lower plane. Others man it is his horseflesh, to another his Bright People Write about it other's poison," and who would be respon- | up.

sible, in the least degree, for the failure of a brother-man or sister-woman, should the result prove disastrous ? Nol. CHEOPS.

SELFISHNESS HAS MUCH TO DO.

With Some People's Observance of Lent-Good Advice For the Season.

Since self is the strongest impulse in most men, selfishness is sure to creep into religion. If it is-as seems to be the case, -selfishness that leads people to disregard and give up the observance of Lent and fast days, the same quality surely, misleads many into an observance of the season that is false and mean, if not silly, or ridiculous. In order to observe Lent aright we must have well in sight what it commemorates. Mankind having fallen into sin, inherits sins, great dower of pain. The God of love, incarnate in our nature, takes upon Himself that load of unavoidable pain. The forty days fast, the Agony in the Garden, in fact all the suffering, acts and days, form part of that mysterious fact the atonement. And not only so; there is the additional aspect of the willingly, and cheerfully bearing privation, and hardness, and crucifixion of self, which we know, we have to observe if we would be the men we may, and the help-

ers and benefactors of our fellows. Lent keepers are apt to regard the season in a selfish way. What shall I gain from this; what spiritual refreshment; what religious vigor; what victory over besetting sins; and, sometimes, alas! what self-satisfaction and praise of men. It is true, that times of self-restraint and abstinence are most useful, and perhaps stricted to particular seasons. And then, it is not pleasant to suppose that the Deity rejoices in our anguish, in our infliction of troublous strokes upon ourselves. Extra spirit therefrom. But methinks I took it | indulgence may be well made up for by extra hardness towards ourself, but there is a limit to penance. It may be argued well that repeated infliction for a fault ties the mind to remembrance of what should be forgotten, and what if remembered, may renew temptation. Nearly always a life of serious wrong-doing is its own complete punishment. When one makes a better stand he thinks there is nothing for him but dark days and bitter consequences. But it may not be so. Perhaps, by kindness and love, He whom we call Father, may seek to draw the wayward and un-

plunged in the whirlpool of visits, dances, church may lay down general principles, and kindred delightful if demoralizing fes- no two persons can keep Lent in just the What to Do and Not and kindred delightful if demoralizing fes- no two persons can keep Lent in just the tivities, and the comparative quiet and same way. In the above spirit, and withrest of the Lenten season must serve to out ostentation or any talk about it, the strengthen both mind and body for the way of self-denial and curtailment of things lawful, but not then expedient, will with a This 1s, of course, regarding the subject little consideration become plain. To one

will, perhaps, enlarge upon it from the liquor, to another his cigars, to another his the higher standpoint. I don't think I can. evenings away from the atmosphere of Still less can I counsel any one "what to home, where his absence causes many a do, or not to do." One man's meat is an- piteous feeling, perhaps, bravely covered

To one woman it is dress, to another it is society, to another too many novels, to another the atternoons round of gossiping visits. In the matter of food, if one is anxious to fast, in the right spirit, let him | triumph. put himself to the test of taking half a meal. If he can do this without rattling the crockery, insulting the patient partner of his home, slamming the door and coming home early, and, like a spring bear to next meal, he may consider himself a subject for abstinence. But it not, he had better attain patience by the method of repletion. Better hold on to one good grace, than develop a dozen bad ones by abnormal religious observances.

It is amusing to hear good people talk about the various little ways of self-affliction they assume, but really the worst part is the talking, for we know well it is the having or not having of little things that makes up the comfort or discomfort of

The most striking case I ever heard of was that of the young woman who wouldn't put her hair in curl papers during Lent. She went about with a Zulu-like verandah of front hair, to every one's amazement, and bewilderment, and no doubt her own great inward edification and development. I recollect a rather pretty little story which indicates the real Crux, and may be a useful illustration. A teacher was endeavorexample,-the first fruits, Christ ing to show to her class of little girls what "taking up the cross" meant; she patiently told them it was the hard thing which ought | Thy dear sake, praying that Thou wilt ac- Let the Sunday school children through to be done readily and cheerfully, etc. Then she invited anyone to state what her particular "cross" seemed to be. One little girl held up her hand. "Well, what is your cross, Mary?" The answer came, Washin dishes, mum.

NOEL PILGRIM.

duties and pleasures, and gives a little | sake-our various acts of self-denial and | of us a day, when we have fish for dinner | fact remains that two-thirds of the Chrisinstead of meat, and the change is so agree- tian world is professedly on its knees durable to our palettes that we almost wish it ing this season; the fact remains that in could be Ash Wednesday all the time. spite of all revival drawbacks and lapses, it Then, in due season Good Friday arrives, is a season blessed of God for the renewing and we come down to breakfast hungry, of our vows, the enlarging of our sympabut sternly resolute; coffee without milk, thies, and the strengthening of our faith. I am not disposed to question, with your and a crust of bread form the staples of our banquet, and it we leave the table with a correspondent, whether "outside of the very vacant feeling in the region of our churches there is much real self-denial, or vest, there is a glow of conscious rectitude | rather a show of it." I believe that outabout our hearts that goes a long way to- side, as well as inside, there is much "real wards filling the vacuum, but which fades self-denial," it not "a show of it." Your gradually, until, towards 11 o'clock, it is correspondent asks "what she is supposed all vacuum, and no glow. The pantry is | to do and what not to do.' Without entering into the minutiae of

within easy reach and the weakness of the flesh so far overshadows the willingness of rules and regulations, let me offer two the spirit that it has to be attended to first. broad suggestions : and a stock of fuel laid in to keep it from

fainting. So the good resolutions wither to God that those bodies of Christians who and fade, and the flesh has one more do not now observe this time-honored season may see their way clear to unite with their brethren in following Christ in His I knew a girl once. I knew her very passion; that the season may speedily bewell indeed-because I happened to be the girl myself-who undertook to give up butcome international and world-wide in its ter during Lent, Sundays excepted. Of willing observance by all Christian believcourse she kept it from Ash Wednesday ers. The day of practical Christian union till the first Monday afterwards, and then still seems far distant. If by a consensus she fell from grace, so far that she never of Christian opinion these six weeks of got back again. Life without butter was an prayer could be jointly observed by all arid wilderness, with only six oasis in Christians everywhere, irrespective of pressight, and the distance between these spots | ent creed and name, would not a vast stride of verdure was too great to be spanned by be taken toward the consummation of that human appetite, so she gave up the effort union for which our blessed Lord so earnin despair, and the latter state of that girl, estly prayed-that union which must be the who had put her hand to the plow and ever-growing hope of the church of God's turned back, was worse than the first. elect, of "all them that love our Lord What do I think of Lent, do you ask? I Jesus Christ in sincerity.' 2nd. Pray that the christian church may

think of it as an all too brief season when we sinners try for a while to follow in our more and more regard it as her privilege Lord's footsteps, when we should try in and duty, by the accumulation of savings our weak way to bear even a faint shadow which represent real and felt self-denialof His sorrow and suffering, to be-as I savings of time and food and money and work, ot physical energies and mental heard an eloquent preacher say a short plans, and spiritual fervor-to strengthen time ago-"Christlike for Christ's sake," to deny ourselves a few of the pleasures and expand the great missionary cause throughout the world. Begin with the and vanities of the world, in memory of His forty days of anguish, and thereby children of our families and households. draw a little nearer to Him; to imitate | Teach them to follow the example of their Him if ever so feebly, to say in our hearts. elders, to earn something, (not beg it) "Thou hast done all things for us, oh | and then to dedicate it and lay it aside for Lord, this little weak effort we make for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. cept our sacrifice.

This, I think, is my idea of keeping Lent in the true spirit, not of ostentatiously wearing plain garments, and praying in fourteen millions of children in the Protes-fashionable churches, but of trying to come tant Sunday schools of Great Britain and a little closer to God in our inmost hearts. the United States, led by their million and ASTRA.

offering of their united Lenten savings for SOME FACTS ABOUT THE

Or show With downcast look or sour?

No! 'Tis a fast to dole Thy sheaf of wheat And meat Unto the hungry soul.

It is to fast from strife, From old debate And hate; To mortify thy life.

To shew a heart's grief Lent; To starve thy sin, Not bin; And that's to keep thy Lent.

L. G. STEVENS.

LET FORMS AND RITUALS ALONE.

Do The Duty Next Thee Lies-That is Enough Ground to Cover.

Lent, my inquiring sister (for masculine omniscience would never profess ignorance on this or any other subject), is doubtless so named from the Latin lentus. slow, because among its observers, Anglican and Roman, this fast time is-paradoxically-the slowest time in the year.

With some it takes the place of the Dissenters' revival-a brief but violent attack of religious fervor, brought on by the dissipation preceding it, and giving a zest to that following. The symptoms are devout attendance on all church services and a rigid self-denial, which, if piled on as thickly for any great length of time, ought to entitle the devotee to translation to celestial regions; while the same quantity boiled down and spread over the entire year would render her ('tis seldom him) a very pleasant person to live with here be-

With others, more practical or more worldly-minded, this is the season in which exhausted vitality is strengthened, wardrobes renovated, and finances replenished. The ways in which to keep Lent are as many and various as the temperaments of those who observe it. To many of us, as we look on, they savor less of the sublime than the ridiculous.

Take my advice, my friend, and in this Lent make special offerings for the general season (as in the rest of the year) let forms missionary work of the church. What a and rituals alone, and "do the duty next "Childrens Crusade" it would be, if the thee lies." That word "duty," defined by the school-boy as "the thing we don't want to do," covers enough ground, to my mind, without these extra and frantic efforts at a half of teachers would make an Easter self-denial for the space of some forty days.

stable one nearer than ever to Himself. "I said that darkness should content my soul," God said, 'Let there be light;' I said the night should see me reach the goal, Instead came dawning bright.

I bowed my head to meet the smiter's stroke, There came sweet dropping oil; I waited, trembling, but the voice that spoke Said gently, 'Cease thy toil."

I looked for evil, stern of face, and pale; Came good too fair to tell.
I leaned on God when other joys did fail, He gave me these as well."

To keep Lent well is, it seems to me, to observe it as an act of sympathy with Him who first kept Lent for our sakes. We are sober and self-denying, careful in religious exercises, because He at this time underwent His voluntary act of fasting in the wilderness, when upon Him who bore "the iniquities of us all" was laid the full load view. It interrupts the rush of social pain. We throw in with His-for His

THE SPIRIT VERSUS THE FLESH.

"Astra" is Amusing and Solemn-The True Meaning of Lent.

Lent is a penitential season! That is about the only point concerning the great church fast upon which we all seem to be thoroughly agreed ! Indeed the amount of ignorance prevalent upon this important subject, even among good church people is simply surprising. It is not many months since I had the pleasure of hearing a lady whom I imagined knew much more about church matters than I did myself, argue fiercely for half an hour about the proper observance of Good Friday, and then turn suddenly round to her opponent with a puzzled look and ask, "What is Good Friday the anniversary of, anyway? What do we keep it for ?" And she was "a good churchwoman," a strict member of the "evangelical Church of England." I am afraid there are some of us like her! If we were asked unexpectedly what Lent was, we should answer that it was six very dull weeks, during which we had little fun and a great deal of religion-more than we wanted, in fact; when those of us who did not care for dainties concluded to mortify the flesh, by giving them up for forty days, when we only danced on the sly and gave ourselves airs because we only went to card parties; when our churchgoing chiefly consisted in lamenting the fact that we had not time to attend the daily services more frequently, and complaining that they were held at such an awkward hour.

Rev. L. G. Stevens' Suggestions as to "What to Do In Lent."

The season of Lent makes no apology for its existence. It grew natually, in response to a demand of the Christian conciousness, out of the feeling that, if Christians were to be in the proper state of mind to enter into the spiritual joys of Easter, they must prepare themselves for it beforehand by more earnest and faithful Christian thinking and living. The Christian consciousness very early recognized the fact that it was necessary to call a halt before Easter, that with cleaner hands and purer hearts and a sublimer faith, the church might

Originally it probably lasted "forty nours"-the time during which our Lord was under the power of death. By degrees the time was enlarged, till in the seventh century, it extended to forty days -the period that our Lord spent in the wilderness. This solemn season-marked by special efforts towards penitence, selfdiscipline and devotion-is very generally representing as they do more than twothirds of those "who profess and call themselves "Christians."

In these churches it is a special "revival season," and, like revival seasons outside of those churches which hold to the "Historic Episcopate," it is doubtless often abused by a spirit of formalism, by forced rather than spontaneous emotionalism, and Ash Wednesday means, for only too many by frothy sentimentalism. Yet the mighty

spread of the redeeming knowledge of the childrens Friend and Saviour. And then, too, to think of Good Friday

1st. Make this a season of special prayer

the day on which the Saviour Jew died for the sins of both Jew and Gentile. Are we to missions among the Gentiles, we ignore the pleading cause of christianity among the Jews, or give niggardly, faithlessly, without any expectation of a visible result? What a grand thing it would be, and with what telling effect upon the Jews themselves-who today in large numbers are beginning to look back and inquire whether the great Deliverer has not already come and been rejected; whether, after all, the Jewish nation did not commit a terrible blunderwhat a grand thing, I say, it would be if, on every Good Friday, the entire professed gather around the holy sepulchre on Easter | Christian world should rise as one man to its high privilege and its acknowledged duty, and give generously, ungrudgingly for the promotion of that gospel religion among God's ancient people, to which we owe our progress, our civilization and our

preeminence A Lent earnestly and honestly observed is a blessed instrumentality for personal renewal and growth, and therefore for the extension of God's "saving health among all nations." Only it must be earnestly and honestly kept. Special efforts must be made, as in all revival seasons, to worobserved by Anglican, Lutheran, Protes- ship God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in tant Episcopal, Roman and Greek churches, truth. We must "fast from strife." We must "starve our sin." As old Robert Herrick so quaintly but comprehensively

> Is this a fast to keep The larder lean, And clean From fat of veal or sheep?

Is it to quit the dish Of flesh, yet still To fill The platter high with fish Is it to fast an hour,

Or ragged go,

Concerning "Helpmeet."

We object to the word "helpmeet." The only excuse for its use is its usage by not remiss in our christian duty, if in giving and among ignorant people. When God saw that it was not good for man to be alone He said : "I will make him an help meet for him." These words, recurring in Holy Writ, have been confounded by the careless and unthinking, and the result is that abomination, helpmeet.'

Christ bade the Pharisees and Sadducees 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance.' If we are to have helpmeet, why should we not also have fruitsmeet?

The confusion of ideas induced by the juxtaposition of certain words is felicitously illustrated by the old story of the pastor who, rising in his puplit, said :

"Brethren, I take for my text to-day a part of the fifteenth verse of the thirteenth hapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark: 'Topknot go down!'"-Chicago News.

Faint Heart.

"Ever had your life insured, old fellow ?" "No. Companies won't take me. Heart action too feeble. Nobody to insure my life for, anyhow."

"Ain't you married ?"

"No. Heart action too feeble for that too "-Chicago Tribune.

Explanatory.

Foreman-The men have all struck this morning, sir. What shall we do? Head of Firm-Put a sign out. Foreman-What had I better put on the sign? Head of Firm-" Hands off."-America.

Vain Hope.

Fond mother-John, do you know Gertie has arranged a little piece for the piano? Fond father-Good! Peace for the piano means peace for all of us. -Ex.



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