

June 1.

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon."

—Hosea xiv. 4-6.

How bountifully does God bestow His blessing on the returning penitent! These verses remind us of the reception of the prodigal son,—"*bring forth the best robe and put it on him.*" They describe a free outpouring of love like the gush of a long pent-up stream; and a rich profusion of beautiful images is employed to describe the effect upon repenting Israel, as if no single type could suffice to express the beauty, and strength, and fruitfulness produced by the returning favour of God. The mercy and love of our God descend like the dew upon the dry and thirsty ground; perhaps we in this climate of gray skies and green pastures can scarcely estimate the force of this image, but to the Israelite it must have been one of thrilling beauty;—and the effects of this precious dew are quickly seen,—the believer shall grow as the lily in purity and grace, as the cedar in strength, as the olive in fruitfulness; his roots strike deeply down, "rooted and grounded in love;" his branches spread shelter around, and the fragrance of his life and example is sweet as the dewy morning among the cedars of Lebanon.

"As dew upon the tender herb,
Diffusing fragrance round;
As showers that usher in the spring,
And cheer the thirsty ground:
So shall His presence bless our souls,
And shed a joyful light;
That hallow'd morn shall chase away
The sorrows of the night."

Good Words for Every Day of the Year,
Good Words, 1860. Editor, Norman MacLeod, DD.
Edinburgh: Alexander Strahan and Co. London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co.

June 2.

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. xi. 26.

"Till He *come*." We do shew forth His death, "till He come" not as He first came, but as He has promised to come, in His glorious majesty. Let the thought of this coming be ever present to my mind when I eat of this "bread, and drink this cup;" He means us to look forward to it when we make our nearest approach to Him; He points out to us the light in the distance, and tells us to direct to it a steadfast eye; and if the time seem long, He comforts us by the thought of His presence with us now as typified in the symbols He has given us, to be used by us in faith and hope of that day's approach when such types shall be no longer needed, for we shall see Him as He is. Let me seek to have a lively faith in the great fact of His future coming; such a faith as may become a lively hope, cheering the heart during waiting time,—"till He come." Whether His coming be to me the coming in death, or His own glorious appearance, may I strive to watch for it believingly, hopefully. And in every approach to His table, may the thought be present to my mind that this may be my last opportunity of fulfilling His command; my last time of seeing Him through the glass darkly; my last remembrance of His dying love "till He come."

"Watchers tell us that the night
Bears the signs of coming day;
Let us hope and watch for light
As the shadows flee away.'
And oh, with care,
Let each prepare
To meet the solemn hour for which we pray!"

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June 3.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven."—John iii. 11-13.

It is a part of the plan of God towards us, that, along with many plain truths, He has presented to us in His Holy Word many deep mysteries. The new birth, of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, is one of these. The work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, like the felt but unseen wind, is to be *believed* in; not plainly understood, for it is above man's reason. The person of our Lord himself, as God and man—"he that *came down* from heaven, even the Son of man who *is in heaven*"—is another of those glorious mysteries, which we are to receive, because, as Jesus tells us, "we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Strange, that any man should dare to refuse this witness! And as we are to believe these mysteries, because He has revealed them; so are we to believe, with deep reverence and lowly faith, the greatest mystery of God's revelation, the glorious truth of Three Persons in one God. Lord, teach us to lift up our eyes to this great mystery with the humblest awe and submission, and join the angels in saying, Holy, holy, holy God!

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June 4.

"Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."—Ps. cii. 25-27.

"No end!" how little can we conceive what this means! We look up to the heavens as *our* highest type of durability, and contrast their daily and nightly splendours with the passing nature of all earthly glories here below. On how many generations have sun, moon, and stars looked down in their changeless beauty!—yet these are but as of yesterday compared to the awful eternity of God. "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure." "As a vesture shalt Thou change them;" it is a beautiful thought that they are as His vesture—the robes of our King—the covering that hides Him from us, and yet reveals Him to us—shewing us the skirts of His glory; "who coverest thyself with light as with a garment." But had it not been for His Word, by which He has made Himself known, we might have been, even now, like the heathen, worshipping the vesture, instead of the Eternal King; the glorious sun, instead of its great Creator.

"The glorious orb, whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first obedient to Thy word
He started from the goal,
Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis Thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart."

June 5.

"Stormy wind fulfilling His word."—Ps. cxlviii. 8.

"And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth and cleanseth them."—Job xxxvii. 21.

The aspects of nature do not always speak to us of a God of love. There are hours of terror as well as of beauty, days of tempest as well as of sunshine, but both have their appointed ends to fulfil, and God ordains them both. Dark storm clouds and mighty winds may cause havoc in their course ; but if we could see the end from the beginning, we would probably discover that without them nature would languish; clouds and rain are needful as well as sunbeams, that the earth may retain its green beauty; and the " stormy wind fulfilling His word" purifies the air, and carries away in their turn the clouds that have done their work. Oh, may I learn wisdom from His dealings in governing nature, and believe that when great national revolutions (like the Indian mutiny) convulse a country, these things are also under His control, and are but the "stormy wind fulfilling His word." A bright light may be behind the clouds that look so dark. Let me rely on His wisdom, and believe that, "be the earth never so unquiet," the Lord reigns over it.

"Jehovah doth reign
Encompass'd with light,
Though clouds may restrain
His beams from our sight.
Far up in his splendour
The sun shineth clear,
Though tempests may hinder
His light to appear!"

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June 6.

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." —Heb. xiii. 9.

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."—Eph. iv. 14.

This warning is as much required now as ever; and we have all great need to pray that God would Himself keep us—for we cannot keep ourselves—in His own true faith and fear. "Winds of doctrine," "divers and strange," blow from all points, and men seem powerless as children to resist them. The name of *earnestness* seems to carry more weight than the name of *truth*. Human devices for stimulating piety are followed eagerly, without the question being once asked whether they are sanctioned by the Word of God. Men forget that it is only by ways of His own choosing that they can draw nearer to God; and in following self-appointed means they become entangled in a "yoke of bondage," and lose the "liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." Others are "tossed to and fro" by their vain efforts to find or to make a perfect Church; though God has nowhere promised that we shall ever find this on earth; such persons are very apt to be led away by "sleight of men, and cunning craftiness." I believe that this restlessness of spirit begins by our neglect of *close* duties; we do not walk closely with God *there*, and then we begin to find fault with Churches and means of grace. Lord, do Thou so refresh me with the continual dew of Thy blessing, that I may flourish like the palm tree, in the place in which Thou hast planted me!

"Till I see Thee face to face,

Be Thyself my dwelling place!"

June 7.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." —John ii. 15.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God."—Jude v. 21.

The heart must love something. If the love of God does not dwell in it, we may be sure that some idol rules there—either the love of self, or the love of the world and the things that are in the world—in some form or other. And how solemn is the warning of the inspired apostle against this sin! Much is conveyed to us by the way in which he brings in his great message here; "I write unto you little children; I write unto you fathers; I write unto you young men; I write unto you little children; I have written unto you fathers; I have written unto you young men,"—A voice for all ages, a warning to every class of believing men, young or old; applicable to *all*, whatever may be their stage in life's journey, or in Christian experience, —"*love not the world!*" Make me, O Lord, to hear this voice, and understand and obey it. May I be quick to discern what *is* the world, under whatever shape the false god may be disguised ; and may I not only cast out the idol, but consecrate the shrine to Thee and Thy blessed service; for Thou hast said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," and thus alone can we follow the other command, "Love not the world."

"I will love Thee,—all my treasure!

I will love Thee,—all my strength!

I will love Thee without measure,

And will love Thee right at length.

Oh, I will love Thee, Light Divine

Till I die and find Thee mine!"