

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.

March 15.

"He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."—Eph. ii. 14.

It is scarcely possible for us now to understand how difficult it was for the Jews to receive the Gentiles as fellow-heirs with them of the promises of the gospel. The Apostle Paul speaks of it as the "mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." (Eph. iii. 9.) And it required the teaching of a miraculous vision to convince the Apostle Peter of the great truth, that God had "also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." St Paul repeatedly reminds his converts of their former state—"remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles," &c., (Eph. ii. 11,)—"You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind," (Col. i. 21,)—and this he does to stir them up to lively gratitude, deep humility, and earnest watchfulness, lessons which not they only, but we also who are their successors, would do well to learn from the consideration of God's dealings with Jews and Gentiles. We see how His ancient people have been cast off, that we might be brought nigh through the blood of Christ; and though long centuries have passed, and the Church has ceased to wonder at this "mystery" as a new thing, the lesson taught by it remains as important for us as for the first Gentile converts, "because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. *Be not highminded, but fear.*" (Rom. xi. 20.)

"Silent let Jew and Gentile stand,
Without one vaunting word,
And, humbled low, confess their guilt
Before heaven's righteous Lord."

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March 16.

"I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me."—Ps. iii. 5.

These morning and evening thoughts breathe the very spirit of holy peace—a peace like the hallowed calm of this world's infancy, when "the evening and the morning were the first day," and "God saw that it was good." This earth can no longer thus reflect the smile of its Creator; it is no longer "very good;" sin has marred its moral beauty. But there is in the hearts of God's own children a new creation wrought by His own Spirit, and when He beholds them as "accepted in the Beloved," they may well lie down in peace and sleep, and awake sustained by the Lord in safety. Let us strive to cherish a truly *confiding* belief in our heavenly Father's care; this only will set us free from anxious cares and fears of our own, and restore to us the peaceful sleep of happy childhood. It is not to the comforts of home and the protection of friends, it is not to bodily ease, nor even freedom from anxiety, it is to *God alone* that I owe peaceful nights and tranquil wakings— "*Thou, Lord, only* makest me dwell in safety."

"New every morning is the love,
Our waking and uprising prove,
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought."

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March 17.

"He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?"—Dan. iv. 35.

Oh, that my mind may be filled with lowly reverence while considering this great subject, *God's infinite power!* We live surrounded by it, yet how little do we think of it! how much are we struck by some display of power in men, while the thought of Him from whom alone all power comes scarcely passes our minds. "He doeth according to His will;" and here lies our highest comfort, that *His* will is holy, and just, and good, and though evil may indeed appear for a while to triumph, it cannot long reign, for the Highest Will is the Holiest! In the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth He reigns; not as a blind destiny or fate, but as the living, personal Lord our God; and, in order that we may the more plainly recognise His power as a personal attribute, "He hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."

"Jehovah doth reign,
Almighty His will,
And angels and men
His plan must fulfil.
In vain they endeavour
Against Him to rise,
His kingdom stands ever
As firm as the skies."

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March 18.

"God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."—Ps. cxviii. 27.

The hundred and eighteenth psalm gives us a beautiful idea of the worship of the true Israelite in ancient days. We seem to see the train of worshippers, headed by their prophet-king, approaching the temple-gates with songs of praise; entering, and rejoicing in the "day which the Lord hath made;" receiving the blessing of the priests; ("we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord;") and then, with hearts enlightened by God to perceive the meaning of His ordinance, we see them offering the appointed sacrifice, which they call on the priest to "bind unto the horns of the altar" —a sacrifice of atonement; after which the glad song of praise bursts forth from these hearts rejoicing in a sense of forgiveness—"Thou art *my God*, and I will praise thee: thou art *my God*, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." If such was the Israelite's joy in his merely typical sacrifice, what ought *ours* to be, now that the types are fulfilled by the great reality of the One perfect Sacrifice ? Let us look, and wonder, and adore, as we behold Christ offering Himself to God for us; and let us, by a living faith, behold in Him our *only* and *sufficient* Atonement.

"The reconciling Word

We thankfully embrace;

And joy in our redeeming Lord,

A blood-besprinkled race!"

March 19.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—Heb. xiii. 8.

Jesus liveth and reigneth now, but He is the same Jesus who suffered and died; He is the same who for us became a babe. No "babe in Christ" need fear to draw near to Him who was once the infant in the manger. He is the same who was tempted: none can know so well how to succour us when we are tempted. He was "grieved for the hardness of men's hearts," and all who are in grief for the hardness either of their own hearts or of those of others can find sympathy in Him, for He is still the same Jesus. He loved His followers on earth, He loves His followers now with the same love. He wept, He "groaned in spirit," He "sighed," "He was weary with His journey;" He has not forgotten these things—He is still the same. He hung upon the cross, He went down into the dust of death, He slept in the sepulchre of Joseph, and He rose on the first day of the week; and there is not one of us who may not, by these proofs of what His love led Him to do of old, learn and know what His love is even to this day, and will be through eternity, for He is "Jesus Christ, the *same* yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

"Fear not, then, distress'd believer,

Venture on His mighty name;

He is able to deliver,

And His love is still the same."

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March 20.

"And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."—Matt. viii. 26.

There is a grand simplicity in this narrative. As we read it, we seem to feel Him near and mighty to save; we are humbled at our own "little faith;" and we are taught that He who could thus still the winds and the sea, can also make a "great calm" in our hearts, and silence the storms within our unruly spirits. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" but when the Lord, by His great power, changes the sinner's heart, and turns him from the error of his ways, though there may be at first "little faith," and a sore strife within, yet if He once speaks the word, and reveals Himself in His power and in His love, there is a "great calm," beyond all that the heart had ever hoped to find. "Lord, increase our faith:" let this be our constant prayer. As faith grows, peace will grow, not perhaps the peace that is undisturbed by conflict, but that far deeper and holier peace, which even in the midst of storms spreads around the soul *His own* "great calm."

"Fierce passions discompose the mind,
As tempests vex the sea;
But calm repose and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to Thee."

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March 21.

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."—Phil. ii. 15.

By the conduct of professing Christians men judge of their religion, what need, then, that it should be "blameless and harmless!" The disciples of Christ may expect to find those who will say "all manner of evil against them for His name's sake," it must be their own care that whatever is so said shall be said "*falsely*." The Christian standard of morality ought to be so high, and pure, and consistent, that even the worldling may be forced to confess its superiority, and to take knowledge of its followers, that "they have been with Jesus." Let us ask if it is so with us. Let us watch ourselves in this matter, lest we be found gliding down with the stream in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Let us be on our guard, lest we be found by our conduct either causing Christ's foes to rejoice, or grieving and stumbling Christ's little ones. May our lights shine in the world with no uncertain or feeble ray, to the praise of His grace who has delivered us from the power of darkness.

"Be all my heart, be all my days
Devoted to Thy single praise;
And let my glad obedience prove
How much I owe, how much I love."