

October 15.

"I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."
--1 John ii. 13.

Little children! how characteristic is this of the tender and deep spirit of the beloved John! He does not call them, as St. Paul does, *my* little children, "*my* beloved sons," he rather addresses them as *God's* little children than as his own. They were God's, and yet they were but *little* children, capable of progress and of growth in grace; children compared to others, yet children of the King; and he addresses them now specially as children because they had *known the Father*. O the blessedness of of such a knowledge! O how wise beyond all the wisdom of man is the child (whether a child in years or in spirit) who knows God as his Father! I can conceive that man might have been made by God so independent of each other that there would have been no need of the care of a father or mother! and it seems to me as if God had made the tender parental tie between father and child just on purpose to teach us His own glorious character as *our Father*, so that we may know Him, and love Him, and trust Him as His little children. May He give us more and more of this best knowledge. May the thought of Him as our Father in heaven be the dearest thought of our hearts. May the Spirit of adoption enable us to cry *Abba, Father!*

"Father, to Thy throne on high
I would lift a child-like eye,
By thy Spirit, taught to cry,
Abba, Father!

Sinful child although I be,
Sinless blood was shed for me,
Therefore I may come to Thee,
As my Father!"

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.

October 16.

"My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word."
-- Ps. cxix. 25.

Alas! that this should be so often the bitter cry of the child of God! Alas! that I have so often to mourn over a dull, dead, languid heart! Sometimes it cleaves in fruitless sorrow to the "dust" of dear ones no longer on earth. Sometimes the "dust" of the veriest trifles is enough to attract it. Wandering thoughts disturb the moments that should be devoted to prayer and communion with God. The Word of God becomes less *interesting* to the mind, less touching to the heart. The records of holy lives make us only mourn to find how little we have in common with them. The works of love which we try to do for God's glory are either coldly performed or set aside on the least excuse. Oh, sad state for a released heart to fall into! "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." Let us go to Him and say, "Quicken thou me according to thy word; " that Word is full of promises, full of pardons through the atoning blood. Where we first found life let us seek it again, the Fountain is not closed. He can quicken us together with Christ, and breathe again into our nostrils the breath of spiritual life. Let us tell Him "my prayers are dead, my affections are dead, and my heart dead; but Thou art a living God, and I bear myself upon Thee."

"Though I am but a worm
Unworthy of His care,
The Lord will my desire perform
And grant me all my prayer."

October 17.

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shalt save me." --Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

Here we have an example of *trust* in God in the midst of outward trials. It was not mere natural firmness of mind, far less was it stoical indifference, which kept the Psalmist's spirit in peace while surrounded with trouble. It was *faith in God*; he walked as seeing Him who is invisible; He believed in His almighty power, and in His sustaining grace; he knew also that this Divine power was on his side. "Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against mine enemies;" his enemies were God's enemies, and when a man can be sure of this he may well be bold! Every Christian may expect times in his life when he shall have to "walk in the midst of trouble;" it was our Lord's path, and we may well expect it to be ours; "the servant is not above the master." Let us then prepare ourselves for whatever He may appoint for us, by strengthening ourselves in the Lord, and seeking to grow in faith and confidence in Him. United to Christ we shall be safe; we shall have, like David, the assurance that our enemies are His enemies; and we shall say, like Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands,
To His sure truth and tender care
Who earth and heaven commands."

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October 18.

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and awake from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." --Eph. v. 14.

"Unto you that fear my name shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." --Mal. iv. 2.

How precious is this promise of our God. Well may we say, "Hail, holy light!" Glorious as is the rising of the natural sun on a dark world, it is but a faint and feeble type of the dawn of Him who is so beautifully named the Sun of Righteousness, when He shines upon the poor benighted soul, and awakens it to true life and light. He finds us plunged in the darkness of ignorance and misery; He lets in the light of knowledge, holiness, and happiness. He reveals sin in all its hatefulness, and, at the same time, lest the soul should sink in despair, He shows the way of forgiveness and the path of holiness, begun on earth and reaching to the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light;" the upright soul, however feeble its faith may be, has this characteristic, that it loves and seeks the light, as a plant in a dungeon, if it has any life at all, sends forth its long pale, feeble shoots struggling towards the sunshine. Lord, enable me to obey Thy call and hear Thy promise! and may Thy Holy Light so shine into my heart as to destroy in me every work of sin and darkness!

"Rise, Sun of Righteousness, arise!
Thy goodness may we see;
And where Thy glory lights the skies,
Lord, let our dwelling be!"

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October 19.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." --Eph iv. 31-32.

What a different world would this be if Christians were all found acting thus! How lovely a spectacle would the Church present! How sad it is that it should ever be otherwise with those whom "God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven!" But while I see and deplore the evil in others, let me not forget to watch myself, and diligently to banish from heart, tongue, and thoughts, all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour; for how can such things dwell in a renewed spirit which ought to be filled with heavenly grace! Nor is it enough to banish the evil; I must also cultivate the *active* graces, and seek to grow every day in conformity to my Lord by being filled with such a spirit of love as was found in Him; where *love* is in lively exercise, bitterness and wrath *must* die, and then it will not be difficult, but sweet and natural for Christians, to be "kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another;" and all because of the power of forgiving love upon their own hearts. Let me think how much God forgives, and learn the answer to Peter's question -- "How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?"

"Sweetly may we all agree,
Touch'd with softest sympathy;
Kindly for each other care,
Every member feel its share!"

October 20.

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondswoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." -- Gal. iv. 31; Gal. v. 1.

This warning was not more needful for the Galatians than it is for many at the present day; for is it not true there is still a tendency among men to abridge the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, by things which "have indeed a show of wisdom in will, worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body?" How unlike is this to the true humility, which says, "I am nothing, Christ is all! How can I add anything to His perfect work?" It is only by abiding in Him that His people bring forth fruit to His glory, through the lifegiving power of His Holy Spirit. Any kind of sanctity which they strive to impose on themselves, and to work out for themselves apart from Him, becomes soon an intolerable yoke of bondage, as oppressive in its requirements, as it is entangling and subtle in its working. How many have been thus gradually drawn away from the simplicity of the truth! They begin by wishing to bring something to Christ, something more than others bring, and end by bringing him less; for, "going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

"Jesus! How glorious is Thy grace!
When in Thy name we trust,
Our faith receives a righteousness
That makes the sinner just."

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October 21.

"Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." -- 1 Pet. v. 5.

Let us all say, "Lord, clothe me with this heavenly clothing, for from Thee alone it comes." It is not natural to us; it is not to be acquired by our own powers; all our consciousness of our own deficiencies cannot truly humble us, unless God grants us the spirit of humility, the Spirit of Christ. This humility is no mere outward garb; it is lowliness of heart, not of manner alone; it springs from a true self-knowledge; the man who has seen into his own heart has seen little to be proud of there. Let us try to look at ourselves, not through the glass of flattery or of self-conceit, but as we are in God's sight -- and oh, how dare we be proud. Let us deal truly with ourselves, and if we find we are not willing to be low in the eyes of others also, let us pray with which we have not -- a humble heart. God "giveth grace to the humble;" let us come to Him, seeking to be nothing in ourselves, that His grace may be magnified in us; those who would drink of his steam must stoop low; but never can they stoop so low as their Master did when He drank of this brook by the way, and bending to wash the feet of His disciples, said to us as well as to them, "I have given you an example."