

The Quiet Hour

A Glorious Sunset.—I.

(Luke 11, 29)

By Rev. W. G. Jordan, B. A.

Surely we may call this a glorious sunset, and, as a matter of fact, Simeon's farewell song has been sung in the evening service of some sections of the church for more than thirteen centuries. It is a song suited to the close of a well-spent day and specially fit for the evening of a godly life. Thus we may apply the suggestive words "At eventide there shall be light." Simeon's words were beautiful when first spoken, but now they are strong and rich with the sacred association of many ages. But we have here something more than a golden sunset, there is also a glorious dawn. In this picture we have a babe and an old man as the two central figures, each entering into this life, another passing away from it; one whose great day was soon to open and the other whose little day was coming to its appropriate and solemn close. There is always something sweet and suggestive about these two extremes when they meet under peaceful circumstances, the old man taking the babe in his arms, the grey-haired old man, who can hardly walk, leading by the hand the bright-faced child, whose little feet never seem to tire of running to and fro; this is a picture in itself which does not need any artist to idealize and transfigure it. It is part of the true, sacred poetry of life which comes to us direct from God. If we learn its lessons in this particular case it will give deeper meaning to our common life.

This meeting took place in the temple, or, to use the more modern word, the Church. The Church is the place where all extremes should meet, and all differences be leveled. It is a place for the little child as well as for the old man. This should be a spiritual home where we meet with God and with each other. Perhaps the child cannot follow the sermon or understand the full significance of the service, but it can learn to feel at home, and begin to have some sense of the mystery of life. The old man, it may be, cannot see clearly or hear very well, but he can keep the memory of bygone days and testify that meeting with God and His people is not altogether a matter of seeing and hearing. These two met according to God's appointment. The parents brought their child because they were loyal to the law of their Church, which was to them the law of God. The old man came, prompted by a good impulse from God, a prompting of the Holy Spirit. He felt somehow that it would be a good thing to go to the church that day, the promises would be fulfilled and it would be a day of blessing to his soul.

Do you think that a man going in such a spirit could fail to receive a blessing? There is a divine order and a promise of blessing in our meetings and partings if we have the insight of faith to discern the deeper meaning of life.

There are some people who cannot understand why a babe should be brought to the temple. There are many things in life hard to understand, but certainly we cannot regard this as a great difficulty. The child had, according to the custom of that church and the law of that time "to be redeemed" as a sign that it belonged to the Lord. Jesus was made under the law and subject to all its requirements. The time had not come to declare that He was the Redeemer and would bring His people from this law to a higher life. So he was made a child and passed through childhood with its natural pains and social bonds. Our children are brought to the church as a sign that they are redeemed, and that this Jesus who was once a child, was and is the Lord and Saviour. We are told that as the old man Simeon held the child in his arms and looked into its smiling face, he had a foregleam of the coming truth, a flash of heavenly light, a presentiment of the new redemption. In explaining this we must consider the character of the man as well as the Spirit's inspiring impulse. Others might not have seen this, but men see what they are able to see, what they are trained to see, and to some extent what they wish to see.

He was a godly old man, a man of strong character and noble life. Irreverent wickedness never looks more foolish and miserable than when it is linked with old age. All its shallow brilliance, its false glitter, has departed; the unbelief and shame of a life-time grows into a great burden then. On the contrary, a true piety shows its quiet strength and abiding beauty

in the closing years of this life. We have met many pious old people and none of them repent of having chosen Jesus as their Saviour in early life, but many were full of thankfulness to the God of Grace who had guided them and filled their life with blessing. You want to cheer them, to carry comfort, as was your Christian duty, and so, you received the blessing, seeking to minister who were ministered unto, as the old Christian looked back upon a long past with gratitude, and forward to the great future with calm, unflinching hope. Such a man was Simeon, not a cold Pharisee, or worldly Sadducee, but a mature saint, nourished upon the noblest prophecies and sweetest psalms. He was ready and eager to go. He pictures God as a master who has been detaining his slave, but now allows him to depart. Such is a natural and proper feeling for an aged man, who can look back upon a well-spent life. In mid-life, if a man is depressed, weighted down with heavy burdens, which at times seem intolerable, he may be tempted to cry "Lord, let me die, I am not better than my fathers," but that is not a natural, spontaneous cry. It is wrung out of a man by hard pressure. When young people, who are in good health, talk in rapturous strains about wanting to die and go to heaven, or "to sing themselves away to everlasting bliss," there is apt to be something artificial in their tone, and nowhere is unrealism more dangerous than in the sphere of religion. Those who are young and strong must try to make this harsh world a little more like heaven before they take their flight to brighter scenes. But there are those who feel that they are held back by a mighty hand, their work seems to be done, they have had all life's experience, they have tasted all its sorrows and joys, and there seems no reason why they should stay here longer. When a great faith is revealed in this man's thought, that God is holding him back, and now he sees the meaning, it was that he might receive this great blessing. His life had been full of mercy, but one more blessing, the greatest of all was to come to him on the verge of eternity. When he received the blessing it was also his release. God is the Master, he is only the slave; but he submits cheerfully, because he knows that the higher will is just, and now the word is spoken he is at liberty to go, and thus the song rises from the depths of his soul—"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

"I Shall Not Want."

This version of the twenty-third psalm appeared in a recent number of the Northfield Echoes:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."
I shall not want rest. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

I shall not want drink. "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

I shall not want forgiveness. "He restoreth my soul."

I shall not want guidance. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake."

I shall not want companionship. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

I shall not want comfort. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

I shall not want food. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

I shall not want joy. "Thou anointest my head with oil."

I shall not want anything. "My cup runneth over."

I shall not want anything in this life. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

I shall not want anything in eternity. "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

At the devil's booth all things are sold;
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
For a cup and bowl with our lives we pay,
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's asking;
The heaven alone that is given away,
The only God may be had for the asking.

—James Russell Lowe.

The Coming of His Feet.

In the crimson of the morning, in the whiteness of the moon,
In the amber glory of the day's retreat,
In the midnight, robed in darkness, or the gleaming of the moon,
I listen for the coming of His feet.

I have heard His weary footsteps on the sands of Galilee,
On the temple's marble pavement, on the street,

Worn with weight of sorrow, faltering up the slopes of Calvary,
The sorrow of the coming of His feet.

Down the minister aisles of splendor, from beneath the cherubim's wings,
Through the wonderting throng, with motion strong and fleet,

Sounds His victor tread, approaching with a music far and dim—
The music of the coming of His feet.

Sandled not with shoon of silver, girdled not with woven gold,
Weighted not with shimmering gems and odors sweet,
But white-winged and shod with glory in the Turban light of old—
The glory of the coming of His feet.

He is coming, O my spirit! with His everlasting peace,
With His blessedness immortal and complete,
He is coming, O my spirit, and His coming brings release,
I listen for the coming of His feet.
—Independent.

Seek, move, act in peace, as if you were in prayer, says Fenelon. In truth this is prayer.

If you are a fisher of men you will have to toil all night, but Christ will appear in the morning.

Who treads the path of love and loss,
With humble steps and head bowed down,
May bear on each the heaviest cross,
But wears in heaven the brightest crown.

—George Arnold.

The man who prays in secret is the man who most enjoys common prayer. The man who makes most of religion in daily life, is the man who makes most of the Church and feels most deeply the need of its worshipful observances.

What the Ant Teaches.

I want to try and teach you some lessons from the ants. They are very busy creatures, but I think you will agree with me that they are very interesting. They are only spoken of in one book in the Bible—in Prov. vi, and xxx.

In chap. xxx, 25, we are told "the ants are a people not strong" and verse 24 tells us that they are "exceeding wise." This is what God told us about them, and He gave them all their wisdom.

In chap. vi, 6, God tells us to consider their ways and be wise. "Now, most of you do not like considering very much, you think it more fit for old people than children. But go now, and find an ant's nest, in some garden; watch the little creatures and you will see how busy they are. Each one seems to have some little task before him; sometimes you will see one trying to carry something almost as big as himself, he tumbles down with it, but is soon up again, trying again and again, until the task is done. Sometimes their nest gets partly destroyed, and then they all set to work busily to put it right again. Here, then, is the first lesson the ant teaches us—diligence.

It teaches you all to be diligent in everything—in your duties at home, in your lessons, and above all, and first of all, to be diligent in seeking the Lord.

In chap. viii, 17, we read, "Those that seek Me early shall find Me." While you are young is the time to seek the Lord Jesus. As you grow older your hearts will get filled with other things. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. vi, 2.)

In chapter vi, 8, we learn something more about ants, which teaches us another lesson. "They provide their meat in summer." They know the long winter is coming, with the frost and snow, so they are wise and gather up a good store while they can. Now think for a moment what this teaches you. You all know that the sweet story of God's love and the invitation to come to Jesus will not always sound in your ears. The day will come when, instead of the summer time of the Gospel story, there will be the winter of God's judgment. Prov. i, 28 tells us that "Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer, they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me."

How important, then, to learn these two lessons from the ants—40 be diligent, and to be diligent at the right time. There is a verse which puts the two together for us—"Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found." (Is. lv, 6.)