

The Quiet Hour

A Glorious Sunset.—II.

Luke II, 29

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

"For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." What then did the old man see? He saw a little child, that was all; and there was no supernatural halo of glory round its head to make clear its divine origin; it was exactly like any other healthy, beautiful babe. But the man somehow did see a deep significance in this dawning life. It is said that those who are about to die see life clearly. That may not always be true, but there is large truth in it. A man who was led forth to die was asked, "What is the fairest thing in human life?" and, looking upon a beautiful, curly-headed boy, he said, "The life of a little child." Then it was recognized that the man who was about to die saw clearly. Simeon saw a still higher truth, and saw it more clearly. He saw that God's greatest gift to the world may come as a little child. The new-born babe is a wonder, and an uncertainty. No one can tell how much of blessing or of curse is wrapped up in its undeveloped life. Sometimes it has been given to a man to take keen glances into the child's future and prophesy correctly concerning his career. To this man the intuition was given that the child he now holds in his arms contains a new and richer revelation of God. As he reads this in the babe's eyes he says, "Let me go in peace." Peace was a great word with the Hebrews, when they met and when they parted. To the living they said, "Go to peace," and to the dying, "Go in peace." So God speaks to the old man through the babe which cannot yet speak: "Go in peace, because the Christ has come." This is not a blessing that he will share, before its full-orbed splendor is unveiled he will have passed into another sphere. But as he goes his satisfaction is in this, that there are in store new revelations for the Church of God, and great blessings for the world. Though he sees the salvation in the form of a little child he knows that it is a sublime fact, a glorious certainty which will work out its divine mission when he is gone.

This was a blessing for which he had waited so long, and with such unwearied patience. His attitude is described in these beautiful words: "Waiting for the Consolation of Israel." Noble name that for the Christ who should redeem and console his afflicted people. The great hope of the Jews was that God would

send an anointed king to redeem their nation. Their thoughts of the king were often worldly, their ideas of redemption crude and coarse; but even then it was a great thing, for a people to have a hope reaching out into the future, a hope centered in God. We can imagine there was a time when Simeon, as a young man, was ready to work for this hope, to do all in his power to prepare the way for the Saviour's coming. Perhaps he was ready also to fight for it, it may be that in his youth he was a zealot, full of enthusiasm for the coming of the new kingdom. Now he can only wait, his zeal is toned down into a patient hope, and he proves that "they also serve who stand and wait." As he waits he catches gentle music of the new kingdom, and knows that the time is at hand.

But the question arises again, how is it that this devout man has a much nobler view of the Messiah than was common in his day. Not long after this both priests and people rejected Jesus because he would not be a worldly king. The answer is in part that he was a spiritually minded man, a man whose thought and life was bigger than his formal creed. He was filled not with the spirit of party or sect, but with the spirit of God, an influence altogether higher and holier. There was in his soul a longing for a deeper life, which should have a wider range, hence his religion expresses itself in pure, sweet song, which is suggestive of greater things than the man himself can completely comprehend. But there is the other reason, that he stood consciously on the verge of eternity. The good man at least does see life more clearly when he looks into the face of death. Small things become still smaller then; and the really great things are seen in their true magnitude. When we come to view life in the light of eternity, many things for which we have struggled and fought sink into insignificance; and the spiritual forces of faith, hope and love are seen to be of abiding interest and power. This was his prophetic hour. Surely he had not waited in vain, when, on the eve of his departure it was given to him to speak a great word which the world will not allow to die, and to sing a sweet song, which has echoed down the centuries, and is still chanted in solemn tones in many lands. A preacher was once asked how long it had taken him to prepare a certain sermon, and he answered: "Forty years," meaning that the whole spirit of his life found expression in that particular discourse; and if

the whole of this man's life was spent as a preparation for this solemn song, it was a life well spent.

It may be that this old man spoke better than he knew; that he did not see clearly the full range of his own anticipations. Some glimpse he had of the glory of Israel and the real light of the nations; and also, as the next verse shows, of the meaning of the cross. It was no mere conquering king that he saw, but the crucified Christ in the form of a little child. But we ought to see clearly many things which for him were only in the germ; since his day there has been a great unfolding of the Kingdom, in the light of which we may read his words. We see now that the glory of Israel was and is the teaching which has come through her, the instruction that has gone forth from Zion. She was always craving political splendor, but God gave her something far more glorious. The real light of the world is the living Christ, and our personal concern is to come with child-like hearts to the Christ who was once a child. To accept the child Christ in a child spirit, this is the highest act of faith, and of self-surrender. With this in our hearts when we have to sav of our own life—

"The radiant morn' hath passed away,
And went too soon her golden store;
The shadows of departing day
"Grew on once more."
"Our life is but an autumn sun,
Its glorious noon, how quickly past."

We may also cry with confidence:—

"Lead us, O Christ, our life work done,
Safe home at last."
"Where saints are clothed in spotless white
And evening shadows never fall,
Where Thou, eternal Light of Light,
Art Lord of all.—Amen."

Waiting the Tide.

Close moored, apart, as merchant ships may stay,
Beyond their sailing hour to catch, at even,
Some tide to start them safer on their way,
And bring them earlier to the destined haven;

So now, though bound to earth-horn things,
I wait
Life's lingering tide, slow gathering to the flood,
"Tis well, less rashly venturing through the strait
To seas untried, I miss my way—(God)—
—Selected.

Revelation; or the Christ the True Light.*

Nothing could be more appropriate for the first day of a New Year than this beautiful prologue of St. John's Gospel, which takes us back to "the beginning." There are "dispensations," new beginnings, in the life of the world and the Church, and God gives us new beginnings, new days, and new years in our little lives. This is the last of the Gospels, and in one sense the sublimest; it opens in a way that combines simplicity with dignity, and gives us all through a majestic presentation of the Divine Christ. Its character harmonizes with its authorship, as coming from the "dis-

Lesson for Jan. 1st. John 1: 1-14. Golden Text, verse 4: memory verses, 9-12.