

in that word. The sight was heaven. Earth has nothing more to do with thee. It had best roll itself away from under thy feet as quickly as possible and let thee drop into the infinite Bosom of thy Father, the beauty of whose Son may kill thee by the gentlest and most beautiful of deaths.

It is hard for him to part with that sweet burden from his arms. In that extreme old age the vents of song have been opened in his soul, and in the silence of the temple he sings his *Nunc Dimittis*, even as Zachary sang his *Benedictus*, and Mary her *Magnificat*. Age after age shall take up the strain. All the poetry of Christian weariness is in it. It gives a voice to the heavenly detachment and unworldliness of countless saints. It is the heart's evening light, after the working hour of the day, to millions and millions of believers. The very last compline that the Church shall sing, before the midnight when the doom begins and the Lord breaks out upon the darkness from the refulgent east, shall overflow with the melodious sweetness of Simeon's pathetic song. Joseph was wrapt even then in an ecstasy of holy admiration. Even Mary "wondered" at the words, so deep, so beautiful, so true, for she knew, as no other knew, how marvelously her Babe was of a truth the light of the world. And when in her humility she knelt for the blessing of the aged priest, had he Jesus in his arms still when he blessed her, and did he wave the Child above her in the sign of the cross, like a Christian Benediction, or had she Jesus in her arms, holding Him at His own creature's feet, to get a blessing? Either way, how wonderful the mystery! But what a strange blessing for thee, happy, sinless mother! There is other poetry in Simeon than those strains of light which flashed from him but a while ago. There is other music for Mary's ear, the terrible music of dark prophecy which the Holy Ghost utters from His sanctuary in the old priest's heart; and we would fain think that Simeon held Jesus in his arms when he uttered it, by the very way in which he begins. "Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."