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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Mrs. Thomas Norton

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

"And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness."

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THE MAN WHO WAITED

Henry F. Milans

In the Christmas story as related by Luke there is a character for whom I feel a special affinity to-day as I struggle to marshal my fast-failing strength to write what may—just may—be my last article.

This character's name is Simeon. Though scarcely noticed by modern interpreters of the Nativity scene, his devotion and faithfulness seemed important enough to Luke—for Luke gives Simeon ten verses in his Gospel.

Yet, in all the Christmas sermons I've listened to, I can't recall any dealings with Simeon. And I can recall reading only one article about him. There probably were others printed from time to time in the religious press. But I remember only one—and that one, printed years ago, remains fresh in my fading memory, I suppose, because it contained what I considered at the time a minor presumption. (Isn't it strange how the memory invariably clings more tenaciously to things that make us mad than to things that make us glad!)

The author's mistake, as I considered it, was in stating that Simeon was "a retired preacher." That bothered me. The Bible nowhere indicates that Simeon was or ever had been either prophet or priest. It simply states that he was a man "just and devout." And I, as a layman, resented the author, a minister, assuming that because Simeon had these high qualities he must perforce be a member of the cloth! Foolish of me, wasn't it? Yet the momentary flare-up on my part did serve the good purpose of riveting Simeon in my mind.

Relied on God's Promise

At the time Simeon made his appearance in the record he was old, very old. For many years he had been puttering around the Temple, allowed the run of the place in deference to his great age—and perhaps in deference to a queer conviction he held. Though his voice probably quavered and his aged limbs tottered as he went about engaging the priests and worshippers in conversation, there was nothing quavery or tottering about his stubborn insistence on what he called God's personal promise to him. God had promised, he declared to any who would listen, that he, Simeon, should not die until he had seen the coming of the Messiah and the dawn of Israel's brighter day.

The folks at the Temple probably smiled gently at the old man's garrulousness. But even though the days and years passed without his seeing the Hope of Israel, his faith never faltered. His old eyes continued eagerly

to scan every new Temple visitor, asking himself again and again, "Is this the Lord's Anointed?" He knew that when the right one came along God would surely tell him.

Thus it was a dramatic moment indeed when, among the newcomers to the Temple one day, he saw Joseph and Mary enter with the Babe and God whispered to the aged man's heart: "This is He, Simeon—the Babe there! This is My Son, who shall save His people from their sins!"

Spiritual Perception

Shuffling over to the pair and the Child, but with his soul marching on the double-quick to the tune of Heavenly music, Simeon took Jesus into his old arms, and with a cry of thankfulness blessed Him. From what he is recorded to have said (Luke 2:34, 35) it is plain that Simeon saw more closely than any of them just what Christ's coming meant. And when the little ceremony was over—a ceremony that he perhaps had rehearsed many times in his long years of patient waiting—he turned his eyes Heavenward and said simply:

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace . . . for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

I have said that I feel for Simeon a special affinity. Not because my life has come anywhere near matching his record of being "just and devout"—for many of my years were spent in wild and reckless sin, and even since my conversion I have often doubted, often fretted, often been impatient with myself, with God and with men. Nor is it because the Holy Spirit ever revealed to me, as to Simeon, any special promise of long life or any remarkable visitation to top it off.

I feel for Simeon that special affinity because I, too, know I am facing my day's end. It is quite possible that, by the time this article appears in print, God may have beckoned and I shall have slipped away to be "forever with the Lord." But whether that be so or whether God shall see fit to detain me here until January 5—when I shall be eighty-six—or a while thereafter, it cannot be long. With my eyesight now almost gone and my strength fast waning, I can feel in my body the rapid breakup that presages an early end. Simeon must have felt the same!

Moreover, I feel for Simeon that special affinity because I, too, have "seen the Lord." Not with my physical eyes have I seen Him, nor with my physical hands have I held Him, as Simeon was privileged to see and hold the Babe of Bethlehem. But during these past thirty-five years since He came into my heart and transformed my life, I have seen Him, met Him, known Him—this God-Man

who came to earth "to save His people from their sins,"—quite as intimately as though He were with me daily and hourly in the flesh.

It has been said that my life has encompassed "perhaps more of the tragedy of sin, the romance of human love and the triumph of God's redeeming grace than that of any other man alive to-day." However that may be, it is true that my soul has been a battleground over which the forces of evil and good have waged. And, I say it to the glory of Him who finally delivered me from a habit that had ruined me and all I loved and who has enabled me to live these past thirty-five years as an example of His miracle-working power, I know of a certainty that "God is, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

And beyond that, I have seen God triumph again and again, not only in personal lives, but in the broad affairs of the world. Born in 1861, just as the clouds of Civil War were gathering over America, I have spanned three generations. Three generations of the most eventful years of human history. Years during which the world had made more of scientific and economic and political and social advance than in all the generations preceding them put together. It has been a thrilling time in which to live. Despite set-backs and upheavals of one kind and another, the human race has gone forward—stumbling often, even falling occasionally, but always with its face toward a Better Day.

His Soul a Battleground

I have seen men put the material over the spiritual—and I have seen materialism discredited and junked among the philosophers of the better life. I have seen science virtually displace Jesus in the confidence of men who even elevated it to a place of worship—and I, even as you, have seen the scientists standing before their Franksteins and calling desperately for religion to save them from the monstrous things they have created. Right now they are crying for an implementation of Jesus' ideals if we are to live at all in this atomic age.

The world is hastening—toward the Day of the Lord.

And, like Simeon holding the Babe in his arms and seeing in Him the hope of the world, I want to register my belief in youth—in youth whose hands, Christ-strengthened, must shape the shape of things to come. I repeat, I believe in youth! I cannot share the fears of some of my contemporaries about youth in general. Old age fumbles and blunders, grows blind and cynical and inept. Again and again

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