

Children's Work.

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Day Dreams of the Future.

THE DREAMER.

CHAPTER VI.

There seemed to be no better way of solving the problem, if solved it might be, than by going to our neglected Bibles and trying to find some information which might help us at this terrible crisis, and we decided to make a careful study of prophecy to that end. In this we were helped very much by the minister's knowledge of the text, and while we were reminded all the time of our fearful loss, still we persevered in the search. Horror upon horror loomed up before us as we read. Would it be possible for any living soul to endure to the end? We seemed to find some indication that the present state of things would only exist for a short time, three years and a half being the extent as far as we could glean any idea; but, such a fearful period it promised to be, the world never saw. Not only the unchecked wickedness of the human race wholly given to sin, but judgment after judgment was to be hurled against it by the offended majesty of God. Fire and earthquake, tempest and scourge: woe upon woe, were to be poured out unsparingly from Heaven. Supposing we could by any means escape these trials, there were others quite as trying, and the only comfort there was for us lay in the remembrance of the safety of our dear ones, taken away from all the evil which had set in like a flood, and with this came the determination that whatever might be our fate, we would be true now to what we knew to be right. We thought we could catch a gleam of hope for the future, if we could only escape the dangers crowding so thickly around us at the present time, and made up our minds that if there were such, by no word or deed would we risk losing it, although death seemed so sure.

Among other disturbances I noticed some strangers in the town, and from their behavior they appeared to be vested with some authority, and whence it was obtained we soon had cause to know. Our study of prophecy had forewarned us, and we were therefore forearmed.

A power had arisen in the earth which seemed to have the ability to bend the present human race to its will, now that the restraining power of the Holy Spirit, abiding in the hearts

of the church had been withdrawn from the earth. The great enemy of mankind, conscious that his opportunity for mischief was limited, now made one more desperate effort after supremacy; or, if failure awaited him, to drag down as many lost souls with him as possible. Not that he appeared in person, but sent out two others invested with authority from him to carry out his plans. This authority seemed so absolute, that there could be no neutrality: it must be, either surrender to the will of this power, or death; and surrender meant giving up and denying altogether the faint hope we were nursing so carefully. It meant being marked by some mysterious sign which would commit us entirely to this power, but which we decided that death at their hands would be far preferable. We also decided to fight it out to the end.

Perhaps you remember that my wife's last act was to touch my forehead with her lips. Could I blot out the memory of that kiss, which had burnt its way into my heart, by having a mark placed where it fell, which would separate me from her more entirely than I was, and beside that, all too late as it was, my love for the Saviour was too real and too sweet to be sacrificed? No! a thousand times, no! I would be true, cost what it might, and I set myself earnestly to the task of self-preservation.

Perhaps I did not tell you that my business was the sale of provisions, and the alternative of not receiving the required mark was that we should neither buy nor sell, and that meant, under ordinary circumstances, nothing less than starvation. Under my store were ample basements, with one part so arranged that an uninitiated person would have some difficulty in finding it. Into this secret resort I stored all kinds of food which would keep the best; and, with those like-minded, I determined to hide when compliance became otherwise unavoidable. I longed to outlive the struggle, for it seemed from our study of prophecy, that we might yet take some part as subjects in the blessedness of the reign of Christ on the earth, though we had sinned away our right to reign with Him. We might, at least, be on-lookers, and see what glories awaited this sin-stricken earth, when the restitution should have taken place.

(To be continued.)

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