

### The Winning of Margaret.

MARGARET DONALDSON walked up the garden path, and an expression of weariness and sorrow spoke from face and attitude. Grandma watched her from her low chair by the window. She entered the room, and did not seem to realize that any one was there, but sat down by the table, dropping her face into her hands, as if in great perplexity or pain.

"What's the matter, my bairn?" questioned grandma. "Has the world gone ill wi' ye the day?"

"O grandma, it goes ill with me every day! Everything is a great mystery to me, and I seem like a poor bird beating its wings against the wires of a cage in a vain attempt to find liberty of spirit. What is truth? I ask over and over."

"Why, bairn, ha' ye lost your hold on God and his word?"

"Grandma, I have never before breathed a word; but the greatest of my troubles is that I can find no harmony in God's word, and the story of Jesus seems to me like a priest's story only."

"O my bairn! is it possible that ye ha' come to this state of darkness?"

"Yes, grandma. Ralph has talked his doubts to me, and showed me the inconsistency of those who profess to be Christians. The long, cruel history of the world itself seems to say that God, if there is a God, cares naught for his creatures. I was down in the city today, and the people's faces seemed full of unrest and trouble. Poverty and wealth were side by side, and the contrast was too painful. The papers teem with reports of murders, atrocities and crimes, of famines, pestilences and wars, and even the church is full of pride, vanity and selfishness. And there's no truth in anything or anybody."

"And so, my bairn, ha' I so poorly represented my God that ye can say these words before me?"

"O grandma, if there is anybody I have confidence in, it is you! You are true, but we cannot believe alike. Hush, there is some one coming. Don't breathe a word of my trouble, dear grandma."

"Oh, it's your mother and sister! How long they have been out this afternoon! So ye ha' come at last," said grandma, as they entered.

"Yes," said Mrs. Donaldson, "and we have had a strange, glad experience. We met a missionary and his daughter at Mrs. Brown's, where he was holding a Bible reading, and I invited them to spend the evening with us. They seem to be devoted Christians; and, grandma, my heart beats with joy as I tell you they think we are living near the coming of the Lord."

"Do they? I ha' been thinking of his coming today; for I read in Titus this morning where it says

we are to be 'looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our savior Jesus Christ'. It is a 'blessed hope,' and will be a 'glorious appearing.' I wonder will these old eyes see that day of days?"

"O grandma!" exclaimed Bertha, "how can you talk so? I should be frightened out of my wits if I thought the coming of the Lord was near. Why, that means the end of the world, doesn't it?"

"It means the end of all sorrow and evil, and the coming of all that is beautiful and bonny. He that is clothed in the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness need never fear for his coming. It will only mean to such the entering in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. It will only furnish the chariots of God to conduct us to the palace of the king," said Mrs. Donaldson.

"But, mama, suppose you are more interested in getting a dress to appear at Margaret's wedding than one far away in heaven; then what will become of you?"

"Bertha, do not talk in this light way. No wedding garment of earth can be compared with the heavenly garment that was purchased with the precious blood of Christ. It is whiter than any fuller of earth can white it. My heart's desire for you, Bertha, is that you may become one of the king's guests, and don the spotless wedding garment. Without it you may well tremble at the thought of the coming of the Lord, lest you be found naked before him."

"Ah, well, mama, I do not think it will come in my day. I intend to live a long, merry life, and then repent when I get old. In this way I can have this world and the next too."

"Get all the happiness you can," said Ralph, as he entered the room. "If people could learn that right living is the only way to happiness they would soon throw away their old superstitions, and the world would soon be free, for all good people would unite to save it from its ignorance. But what is it you are so earnestly discussing?"

"The coming of the Lord," said grandma.

"What lord?" asked Ralph.

"The Lord Jesus Christ, who was once despised and rejected of men, but who will some day come in great power and glory, to be admired by all who believe."

"Oh, well don't trouble yourself about the coming of the Lord! You know that according to the orthodox faith the millennium must first come. Of course you all know that I have little faith in the orthodox doctrine, but rather believe that the world will go on as it has done from the beginning. There is no telling what is to happen."

"That's so," said grandma, meditatively. "The millennium must come first, I suppose. There are

puzzling things about the coming of the Lord. But then I know the judge of all the earth will do right. We shall not be left to go astray; but the honest seeker after truth will be led into all truth."

"It does not look as if the millennium were coming very soon," said Margaret. "My heart is fairly broken in looking on the terrible troubles in the world. In the last few years we have heard of pestilences, earthquakes, famines and rumors of wars. Only the other night my blood ran cold hearing Stitt Wilson lecturing on the appalling social problem that confronts the world. The Stundists have been banished in Russia to Siberia; the Armenians have been slaughtered by the Turks; the Indians have starved by the million; the Chinese have engaged in terrible massacres; the Jews have been driven from country to country in pitiful persecution; fearful disasters by land and sea have desolated the world; Cuba has suffered untold miseries, and our own country has been plunged into bloody war."

"Talking of suffering in the world," said Ralph, "it seems to me that the poor are the most wretched victims. Look at any large city where the homeless, friendless, out-cast masses are pouring in. Tenement houses are fairly stuffed with classes whose condition is almost indescribable for hopelessness. I saw sights in London that cling to me like a nightmare. The rich are getting richer and richer, and the poor, poorer and poorer. Looking at the social world alone, one can but conclude that some terrible revolution must take place. The history of the past promises that a bloody revolution is at hand."

"Everybody seems to feel that we are on the eve of some great crisis," said grandma.

"Yes, but it's not the coming of the Lord," said Bertha; "for has there not always been poverty, trouble, pestilences, famines and national difficulties? It looks to me as though there are two forces warring together in this world. The question is, Which is the stronger? One would be a frightful pessimist to think that evil would overcome good. I believe that we shall soon see the golden age again. You know that they have long talked of arbitration. Wars cannot last long. No doubt the old world will never take up arms again. The dream of Tennyson is about to be fulfilled, when he says:

"The war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled, In the parliament of men, the federation of the world."

"That is a poet's fancy, sure enough," said Ralph. "Why, child, do you suppose that the nations have invented the most atrocious, death-dealing weapons for nothing? All Europe is armed, as they say, to the teeth. There's Russia with

her bear's paw over Turkey and China, and Germany and England and France and Spain, all watching like so many hungry wolves, ready at the first possible opportunity to join in the scramble for territory. War has always been a terrible thing, but the war that is ahead of us, that statesmen declare inevitable, will be something unparalleled in the history of the world. If there is anybody left after the war is over, may be there will be a thousand years of peace. The world will need it in order to replenish its inhabitants."

"Well, I am weary of the whole thing," sighed Margaret. "I know that inventors seem to be inspired with diabolical ingenuity in devising implements of destruction. One would be led to conclude that men were made by a God of hate to hate on another. I look toward the future with dread, and I know that statesmen fear that there threatens the world one of the bloodiest war storms that ever burst upon men. Grandma says that God is love, and that he is long-suffering. I can hardly see how he can forbear to put an end to all the sorrow and strife of the world. But there, mama, come the missionaries, and Mr. McClaren is with them."

"McClaren is a man that I put little confidence in," said Bertha. "Whatever has brought him with these missionaries? He always reminds me of the text, 'O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the desert'; for he is always finding new holes through which to crawl out of the conclusion of an honest argument."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### A Good Book.

Auntie Fatte.—'Ere is a good book, Willie.

Willie (suspiciously).—Do you mean a book worth reading, or only a Sunday school book?

### Had a Dim Idea.

"What was the cause," asked the superintendent, "of the Egyptian plagues?"

"I guess they didn't boil the water," ventured a little girl in the infant class.

### Not Good in Figures.

One night a little boy who had reached the multiplication table in the course of his education was sitting anxiously over a paper of figures, when his mother came along and said, "Johnnie, do you find your arithmetic very hard?"

"Yes, indeed, mama, I do," was his reply. "It was so awful hard that I prayed to God to help me, but he's made three mistakes already!