

**THE CHILDREN'S PORTION.
ENTERTAINING, INSTRUCTIVE
AND ELEVATING STORIES, PP
13-289**

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The Children's portion. Entertaining, instructive and elevating stories, pp 13-289 by Robert W. Shoppell

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ROBERT W. SHOPPELL

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THE CHILDREN'S PORTION.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

REV. ALEXANDER MAC LEOD, D. D.

I.

THE KING'S CHILDREN.

There was once, in Christendom, a little kingdom where the people were pious and simple-hearted. In their simplicity they held for true many things at which people of great kingdoms smile. One of these things was what is called the "Golden Age."

There was not a peasant in the villages, nor a citizen in the cities, who did not believe in the Golden Age. If they happened to hear of anything great that had been done in former times, they would say, "That was in the Golden Age." If anybody spoke to them of a good thing he was looking for in years to come, they would say, "Then shall be the Golden Age." And

if they should be speaking of something happy or good which was going on under their eyes, they always said, "Yes, the Golden Age is there."

Now, words like these do not come to people in a day. And these words about the Golden Age did not come to the people of that ancient kingdom in a day. More than a hundred years before, there was reigning over the kingdom a very wise king, whose name was Pakrouns. And to him one day came the thought, and grew from little to more in his mind, that some time or other there must have been, and some time or other there would be again, for his people and for all people a "Golden Age."

"Other ages," he said, "are silver, or brass, or iron; but one is a Golden Age." And I suppose he was thinking of that Age when he gave names to his three sons, for he called them VESTERGOLD, GOLDENDAY, and GOLDMORROW. Sometimes when he talked about them, he would say, "They are my three captains of the Golden Age." He had also a little daughter whom he greatly loved. Her name was FAITH.

These children were very good. And they were clever as well as good. But like all the children of that old time, they remained children longer than the children of now-a-days. It was many years before their

school days came to an end, and when they ended they did not altogether cease to be children. They had simple thoughts and simple ways, just like the people of the kingdom. Their father used to take them up and down through the country, to make them acquainted with the lives of the people. "You shall some day be called to high and difficult tasks in the kingdom," he said to them, "and you should prepare yourselves all you can." Almost every day he set their minds a-thinking, how the lives of the people could be made happier, and hardly a day passed on which he did not say to them, that people would be happier the nearer they got to the Golden Age. In this way the children came early to the thought that, one way or other, happiness would come into the world along with the Golden Age.

But always there was one thing they could not understand: that was the time when the Golden Age should be.

About the Age itself they were entirely at one. They could not remember a year in their lives when they were not at one in this. As far back as the days when, in the long winter evenings, they sat listening to the ballads and stories of their old nurse, they had been lovers and admirers of that Age. "It was the happy Age of the

world," the nurse used to say. "The fields were greener, the skies bluer, the rainbows brighter than in other Ages. It was the Age when heaven was near, and good angels present in every home. Back in that Age, away on the lonely pastures, the shepherds watching their flocks by night heard angels' songs in the sky. And the children in the cities, as they were going to sleep, felt the waving of angel wings in the dark. It was a time of wonders. The very birds and beasts could speak and understand what was said. And in the poorest children in the streets might be found princes and princesses in disguise."

They remembered also how often, in the mornings, when they went down to school, their teacher chose lessons which seemed to tell of a Golden Age. They recalled the lessons about the city of pure gold that was one day to come down from heaven for men to dwell in; and other lessons that told of happy times, when nations should learn the art of war no more, and there should be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the earth.

"Yes, my dear children," their mother would say, in the afternoon, when they told her of the teacher's lessons and the nurse's stories. "Yes, there is indeed a happy age for the children of men, which is all that your nurse and teacher say. It is a happy

time and a time of wonders. In that time wars cease and there is nothing to hurt or destroy. Princes and princesses in poor clothing are met in the streets, because in that Age the poorest child who is good is a child of the King of Heaven. And heaven and good angels are near because Christ is near. It is Christ's presence that works the wonders. When He is living on the earth, and His life is in the lives of men, everything is changed for the better. There is a new heaven and a new earth. And the Golden Age has come."

II.

DIFFERENT VIEWS.

It was a great loss to these children that this holy and beautiful mother died when they were still very young. But her good teaching did not die. Her words about the Golden Age never passed out of their minds. Whatever else they thought concerning it in after years, they always came back to this—in this they were all agreed—that it is the presence of Christ that makes the Gold of the Golden Age.

But at this point their agreement came to an end. They could never agree respecting the time of the Golden Age.