

Some Fulfilled Dreams.

Dickens once had a dream which was fulfilled, at least to his own satisfaction. "Here," he wrote on May 30, 1863, "is a curious case at first hand. On Thursday night last week, being at the office here," in London, "I dreamed that I saw a lady in a red shawl with her back toward me, whom I supposed to be E. On her turning around I found that I didn't know her, and she said, 'I am Miss Napier.' All the time I was dressing next morning I thought, 'What a preposterous thing to have so distinct a dream about nothing! And why Miss Napier? for I never heard of any Miss Napier.' That same Friday night I read. After the reading came into my retiring-room Mary Boyle and her brother, and the lady in the red shawl, whom they presented as 'Miss Napier.' These are all the circumstances exactly told."

This was probably a case of unconscious celebration. Dickens had no doubt seen the lady, and been told that she was M's Napier, when his attention was occupied with other matters. There would be nothing unusual in his dreaming about a person whom he had thus seen without noticing. Of course it was an odd coincidence that the lady of whom he had thus dreamed should be introduced to him soon after—possibly the very day after. But such coincidences are not infrequent. To suppose that Dickens had been especially warned in a dream about so unimportant a matter as his introduction to Miss Napier would be absurd, for whether fulfilled or unfulfilled, the dream was, as Dickens himself described it, a very distinct dream about nothing.

Far different in this respect was the strange dream which President Lincoln had the night before he was shot. If the story was truly told by Mr. Stanton to Dickens, the case is one of the most curious on record. Dickens told it thus in a letter to John Foster: "On the afternoon of the day on which the President was shot, there was a Cabinet council, at which he presided. Mr. Stanton, being at the time commander-in-chief of the Northern troops that were concentrated about here, arrived rather late. Indeed, they were waiting for him, and on his entering the room the President broke off in something he was saying, and remarked, 'Let us proceed to business, gentlemen.' Mr. Stanton then noticed with surprise that the President sat with an air of dignity in his chair instead of lolling about in the most ungainly attitude, as his invariable custom was; and instead of telling irrelevant and questionable stories, he was grave and calm, and quite a different man. Mr. Stanton, on leaving the council with the Attorney-General, said to him, 'That is the most satisfactory Cabinet meeting I have attended for many a long day. What an extraordinary change in Mr. Lincoln!' The Attorney-General replied, 'We all saw it before you came in. While we were waiting for you he said, with his chin down on his breast, 'Gentlemen, something very extraordinary is going to happen, and that very soon.' To which the Attorney-General had observed, 'Something good, sir, I hope?' when the President answered very gravely, 'I don't know; I don't know. But it will happen, and shortly too.' As they were all impressed by his manner, the Attorney-General took him up again. 'Have you received any information, sir, not yet disclosed to us?' 'No,' answered the President, 'but I have had a dream. And I have now had the same dream three times. Once on the night preceding the battle of Bull Run. Once on the night preceding such another (naming a battle also not favorable to the North). His chin sank upon his breast again and he sat reflecting. 'Might one ask the nature of this dream, sir, said the Attorney-General. 'Well,' replied the President without lifting his head or changing his attitude, 'I am on a great broad rolling river—and I am in a boat—and I drift!—and I drift!—but

this is not business,' suddenly raising his face and looking round the table as Mr. Stanton entered, 'let us proceed to business, gentlemen.' Mr. Stanton and the Attorney-General said, as they walked on together, it would be curious to notice whether anything ensued on this, and they agreed to notice. He was shot that night."

Here the dream itself was not remarkable; it was such a one as might readily be dreamed by a man from the Western States who had been often on broad rolling rivers. Nor was its recurrence remarkable. The noteworthy point was the occurrence of this dream three several times, and (as may be presumed from the effect which the dream produced on its third recurrence) those three times only, on the night preceding a great misfortune for the cause of the North.—Richard Proctor.

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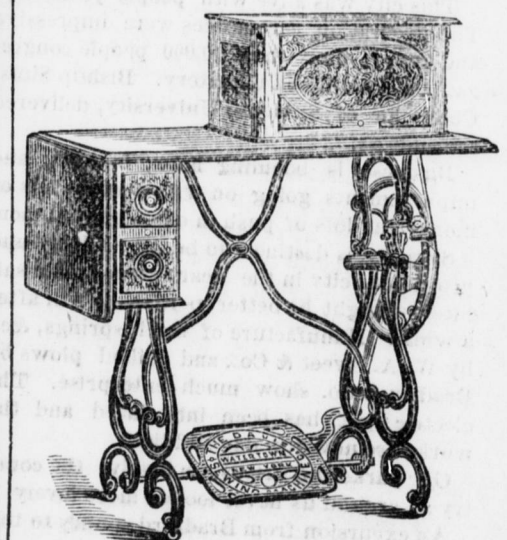
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