

A WONDERFUL DREAM.

"O, yes—? Yes, yes—I believe in dreams," said old Silas Tafton. He took another whiff at his pipe, and then added: "One of the greatest speculations I ever went into came of a dream, a wonderful dream. I'll tell you about it!"

And we listened to the old man's story as follows:

"You remember, some of you, about the great land speculation here in Maine some 30 years ago. Poor men—a very few of them—were made suddenly rich; and rich men were made suddenly poor. I was living then in Grey. One day old Sam Whitney of Oxford, stopped at our place, and showed us a map of a new town which had been laid out in Sagadahoc. On the map it looked beautiful. There were brooks and lakes, and broad plains of pine and oak, with streets all laid out, and spots for churches and school houses all marked out in proper array. I had a cousin living down that way, and I concluded to go down and take a look. I found the town of Ellenville, which old Whitney had showed me on his map, to be a wild, worthless tract, all rocks and swamp; but on the edge of this tract, in another township, my cousin owned a piece of good land, and I bought 150 acres of it, and made me an excellent farm; and for that purchase I was never sorry.

Meantime Ellenville was nearly all sold in 100 acre lots. The excitement was at fever heat, and people bought without once thinking to come and look at the land they were purchasing. But by and by the new owners came to look up their property, and you can rest assured they were a blue set when they assembled on the territory. Within all the limits of the mapped-out township there was not an acre that could be cultivated. On the side that bordered on my farm it was a craggy ledge of rocks; and beyond that to the eastward the land settled away under the mud and water of a sunken slough. Some of these lots had been sold as high as \$5 an acre; and a few of them even higher than that. One poor fellow named John Twist, from Vermont; had paid \$5 an acre for a lot that cornered on my land. On the map it had been set down as a magnificent pine forest, with a beautiful river upon its border, on which there was a superb water power. John Twist bought and paid for it; and when he came to look at it he found it to be a mass of barren rock, with here and there a clump of scrub oak and a few stunted Norway pines; and for a river he found a water course that tumbled melted snow over the crags in the spring, but which was dry most of the time. I did not see the poor fellow when he came to survey his property, but I could imagine how he felt.

After a while, however, the excitement passed off and the sufferers of Ellenville turned their backs upon the graves of their speculative hopes. On my farm I prospered. My land was of the best quality; my wife was a true helpmate; my crops were abundant; my stock thrived and I found myself, at length, with a goodly pile of silver dollars tied up in my stocking.

One evening in early autumn, after our crops had all been gathered, a man, riding a sorry looking nag, pulled up before our door. He was a well-looking man, with a sedate and solemn face, and dressed in black. It was safe enough to conclude that he was a minister; and so he announced himself. He said he was the Rev. Paul Meckmore. He was a missionary, on a home circuit, and asked for shelter for himself and beast for the night. Of course we welcomed him cheerfully, and were pleased with him. He had travelled extensively, and his conversation was interesting and instructive. Before he went to bed he read a chapter in the Bible, and said a prayer; and Betsy said to me after he had retired, that she had never heard such a beautiful prayer in her life.

The next morning at the breakfast table Mr. Meckmore was very sedate. He asked a blessing, and then only answered such questions as were asked him. Finally Betsy told him she was afraid he had not slept well. He smiled and said he had slept very well, saving the spell of a curious dream which had visited him three separate times during the night. Betsy asked him if he would tell what it was about.

"It was the old dream of hidden wealth," he said, with a solemn look. "I haven't dreamed such a dream before since by a wonderful dream in southern Africa I was led to the discovery of a diamond mine worth millions of dollars; and it never proved me a penny. But such wealth is not for me. I need it not. My calling bath higher and holier aims. And yet this poor flesh is sometimes weak enough to lust after the dream of gold and silver."

By degrees we got from him that he had dreamed of a silver mine among the crags of his hills. The mine seemed to his vision utterly exhaustless in the precious metal; but he could not locate it. Betsy, whose curiosity was aroused, would have pushed the matter; but Mr. Meckmore finally shook his head more solemnly than ever, and said that he would rather forget the dream if he could. When the missionary's horse was at the door, and the owner was prepared to start off, he informed us that he was bound toward the Canada line, and that he might return that way. Of course we told him that our door would always be open to him; and he promised that he would abide with us again if he had the opportunity.

In two weeks Mr. Meckmore came back. He had received a summons, he said, from the home board, to return to Boston, and make immediate preparation for a winter's campaign in the West.

This second evening in the society of the reverend gentleman we enjoyed more than we had enjoyed the first. His fund of anecdote and adventure was literally exhausted, and yet an odor of sanctity and delicacy prevailed all his speech. We urged that he should spend a few days with us, but he could not. He said it would give him great pleasure to do so, but this call to the new field of labor in the West was very imperative.

On the next morning at the breakfast table our guest was even more sedate and thoughtful than on the previous

occasion; and when questioned upon the matter he told us that he had been visited by the same strange dream again.

"This time," he said, "the vision appeared with wonderful distinctness. I not only beheld the vast chambers of virgin silver, but I saw an exact profile of the surrounding territory. It was a wild, desolate spot by a deep ravine, through which the snows of winter seemed to find release in the spring, rushing down a craggy hillside to a dark, wide-stretching swamp below. This would not impress me so seriously were it not that, once before a dream of the same import proved a startling reality."

We conversed further on the subject, and after breakfast Mr. Meckmore took a pencil, and upon the blank leaf of an old atlas he drew a picture of the spot he had seen in his dream; and he pointed out where beneath the roots of an old stumpy pine tree, he had seen an outcropping of the precious metal. He had drawn the picture, he told us, to show us how vividly his dream had been; but, advised us to think no more of it. Even were it possible that the mine was far below the surface; and, moreover, the Lord only knew where the spot was located, even allowing that such a spot existed.

For once in my life I allowed my curiosity to get the better of my outspoken honesty. I allowed the reverend guest to depart, and did not tell him that I knew of a spot exactly the original of that which he had pictured, even to every rock, shrub, tree and ravine. And that spot was upon the lot which had been purchased by John Twist, and which John Twist probably owned still.

That very afternoon, armed with an axe and pick, I went forth to the rough cliffs of the twist lot. I knew exactly where the pictured spot was to be found, and when I reached it I was more than ever struck by the faithfulness of Mr. Meckmore's draught. The accuracy in detail was wonderful. And when I reflected that this draught had been made by one who was an utter and absolute stranger to the place—made from the simple impressions of a dream—it is a marvel that I was so strongly and strangely impressed? I found the old tree which the reverend dreamer had designated, and went to work at its roots.

And ere long my labours were rewarded! Beneath one of the main roots I found a lump of pure white metal as large as a hen's egg; and upon further chopping and digging I found several more smaller pieces. They had evidently been broken from a molten mass, and upon rubbing off the dirt I found them all pure and bright.

That night I slept but little. I could only lie awake and think of the vast wealth that lay buried in that bleak hillside. But what could I do? The lot was not mine and I should run great risks if I troubled another man's property. And, moreover, if I made further exploration while the land was not mine, the secret might be divulged, and the vast wealth snatched from me. I must purchase the Twist lot, and I had no doubt that I could buy it for a mere song.

On the next day I rode over to see my cousin, and when I had spoken of the Twist lot he informed me that not only that lot, but a number of others were for sale. They had been advertised and were to be sold at auction in two weeks. He called me a fool when I told him I should bid on the Twist lot, but I told him I had looked it over and had made up my mind that my sheep could find plenty of grazing there; through the summer months. He asked me if I hadn't already got all the sheep pasture I wanted; but I told him he need not trouble himself.

During the next two weeks I kept quiet and held my tongue, giving no opportunity for my secret to become known. On the appointed day I went over to the settlement, where the land was to be sold. It was to be put up in hundred acre lots, and sold by the original plans of the Whitney purchase. Lot number one was put up first, and sold for one-quarter of a cent an acre.

The next lot was the Twist lot, and I heard that iron and copper ore had been discovered upon it. A stranger in jockey clothes started in at 50 cents an acre. Another stranger who wore a blue frock and top boots bid 75.

Then there were more talk about iron and copper. The man in the jockey suit said that he had positive assurance that pure iron ore had been found in some of the gulches; and he bid \$1 an acre. At this point I entered into the contest, and bid \$1.25. Up—up—up—25 cents at a time, until I had bid \$10 an acre. People called me crazy. Ten dollars an acre was more than the very land in the whole country was worth. But I held to my bid, and kept my own counsel.

And the Twist lot was knocked down to me for just \$1,000. The terms were cash. I told them to make out the deed while I went home after the money. And away I rode. I emptied my old stock of gold and silver, and found \$950. I borrowed the other \$50 without trouble at the settlement, and of straightway proceeded to the office of Squire Simpkins; where the deed had been made. The instrument was duly signed and sealed, and when the squire had assured me that the payment of the money would make all fast and safe I handed over the gold and silver.

I observed that the name of John Twist had been recently signed, and I asked Simpkins if Mr. Twist was present.

"He was here a few minutes ago," said Simpkins, "and will be back again for his money. He's feeling pretty good I should judge, since he has got rid of his hundred-acre lot for twice as much as it cost him, and for a thousand times more than any sane man could think it was worth."

Half an hour afterward I called at Simpkins' again. Mr. Twist had just gone out with his money.

"There he is now," said Simpkins, "just bound off."

I looked out of the window, and saw at the door of an inn, on the opposite side of the way, a tall man, in a bottle-green coat, with bright, glaring buttons, just mounting a horse. I recognized the horse, and I recognized the man.

"Who is that man," I asked; "he with

the green coat and bright buttons?"

"That," said Simpkins, is "Mr. John Twist."

In a moment more the man in the bottle green coat had ridden away, with his heavy saddle bags behind him; and buttoned up within that coat I beheld my reverend guest? It flashed upon me that the Rev. Paul Meckmore and he were the same person! And this was not all that flashed upon me.

A few days afterwards I took my lumps of white metal to a man who was versed in such matters, and asked him what they were. He took the largest lump, and tested it and said:

"Pewter."

I asked if pewter was ever dug out of the earth in that shape.

"Well," said he, "seeing that pewter is an alloy of tin and lead, it couldn't be very well dug up, unless somebody had gone and buried it beforehand."

Touching further exploration upon my Twist lot I will not speak. I will only add that I have an old stocking at home with half a dozen lumps of pewter in it and I never look upon it but I am forced to acknowledge that dreams are sometimes very strange and wonderful things.

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