

Prophetic Dreams

With Many Instances of Dreams That Have Come True

By Jessie Adelaide Middleton

Prophetic or premonitory dreams, come generally to people who are clairvoyant, but are by no means confined to these. Some contain an element of warning, a caution to avoid certain places or things, and this warning should never be neglected. Scarcely a day passes that we do not see cases of warning dreams reported in the newspapers. Whenever there is a big railway accident, shipwreck, or any similar catastrophe, it brings the usual crop of dream-incidents in which the relaters assert that they did not travel by that particular boat or train on account of a warning in such and such a dream. Nobody thinks of disputing the truth of these dream-warnings; they are far too common amongst us for that.

Quite recently, when the steamship *Columbian* was burnt, five men were rescued by the U.S. revenue cutter *Seneca* and brought ashore in a deplorable state, after getting away from the burning ship in a lifeboat. They were fourteen days at sea, in an open boat, ate dead men's boots as food, drank sea-water and endured other privations too terrible to record.

Mr. Robert Tière, the second officer of the *Columbian*, in his graphic official narrative of these awful sufferings told, incidentally, the story of a dream. He said—

"Prieve died yesterday morning. He had a dream before he left on this trip that the ship would burn, and that he would die after being fourteen days in a boat. He told this to us again and again, while we were adrift, and, doubt it if you will, he assured us that we would be rescued on the fourteenth day.

"That gave us a little encouragement, but, after he died, we all felt that death was there, waiting for us, and that no hope was left. I know I had made up my mind that there was nothing more to be done except to wait for what was coming.

"Then we saw the *Seneca*. She was about seven or eight miles away from us. We got out the oars and started to row towards her. We thought we were making great time, but they tell me that we were hardly moving the boat at all. I wonder now that we even got a way on her. Then we saw we were seen from her, for she steamed towards us and we keeled over. I never expected, at this time yesterday, to be alive to-day."

"A lady," says Reginald Hine in *Dreams and the Way of Dreamers*, "came to me quite early, and said: 'I've been worrying in my dreams all the night about the name Derrick, and especially over the spelling of it, and in the end I settled that the true form of it was *Derek*, but what it all signifies or why I should be bothered by it I can't imagine.'

"I could throw no light whatever upon it, and a little later I left her. In the afternoon, however, a gentleman called on her, and in the course of conversation said: 'Do you know that a nephew has been born to me? And what do you think they are going to call him?' The lady said she could not guess. 'Why, it's a strange name,' he said; 'they've fixed on Derrick. And how do you think they're going to spell it?

" 'Ah, now,' she replied, 'that I can tell you easily.' And then she told him her dream.

"Such cases, of course, are comparatively rare, but most men, as myself, have at one time or another had similar glimpses into the dark ahead. We have seen, in sleep, houses

and landscapes which, in later days, we have discovered upon the earth. We have played fragments of life on the stage of our dreams and have had, to our surprise, to play them over again, later, on the larger stage of the world. And the things we have seen with our waking eyes, as through a glass darkly, that we have known in part, and prophesied of in part, these have been made manifest to us in their fulness in visions of the night.”

Camille Flammarion, the great French astronomer, in his book *L’Inconnu* (The Unknown), has a wonderful chapter on premonitory dreams, in which he gives seventy-four authenticated instances.

“I do not hesitate,” he says, “to affirm at the outset that the occurrence of dreams foretelling future events with accuracy must be accepted as certain. It is not fiction with which we are concerned, nor can the realization of this kind of dream be explained by the fortuitous coincidences which we call chance.”

He then goes on to give dream after dream which he has collected together and published to establish the fact that dreams have really foreseen and announced the future. He adds—

“The telepathic manifestations of the dying, the transmission of thought, the psychic action of one human being upon another, at a distance, without the medium of the senses, sight at a distance and the prevision of the future in dreams and somnambulism are for us *certain facts*.”

Prophetic dreams, Greek and Roman, in antiquity, are so numerous that in the Homeric mythology alone we get instance after instance. According to Homer—

“Twain are the gates of shadowy dreams; the one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory. Such as pass through the portals of sawn ivory are deceitful and bear tidings that are unfulfilled. But the dreams that come through the gates of polished horn bring a true issue whosoever of mortals beholds them.”

This has been interpreted as signifying the cornea of the eye (the horn) which sees with certainty, and the ivory of the teeth, between which come deceptive words. Another interpreter says that by the horn, which is translucent, Homer typified the atmosphere of the heavens and by the opaque ivory the earth itself. Yet another regards the gate of white ivory as the symbol of Day, and the dark horn as the symbol of Night.

The Bible is rich in prophetic dreams, too well known to readers for me to dwell upon here. I need only mention the dreams of Pharaoh and of Pilate’s wife.

Some people, living in the present day, have a special gift of premonitory dreams. One of these is Mrs. Scarlett, of Penenden House, near Maid-stone, widow of Lieutenant Colonel L. J. Y. Scarlett, and mother of the present Lord Abinger. Mrs. Scarlett has most kindly allowed me to relate some of her dreams, gleaned from her note-books, in this volume. Her dreams are nearly always of prophetic description.

I may add that the name of Scarlett recalls an interesting Shelley reminiscence, Mrs. Scarlett is the niece and adopted daughter of Sir Percy Shelley, Bart., son of the poet by his marriage with Mary Godwin.

I

“I was living in London,” writes Mrs. Scarlett, “and went into the country for about a fortnight. Whilst away I had this dream.

“I dreamt I had been troubled with toothache, and had been to the dentist to have it cured and had just returned, bringing with me the result—a fine large double tooth. On arriving home, however, I found I had left my umbrella behind at the dentist’s, and so started off again at once to go and fetch it; but the way to the dentist’s was through country lanes which I knew well, in the county of Wilts, and I turned in at the gate of a farm called ‘Queen’s Oak Farm,’ that had belonged to us for a long time, but had been sold for some past ten years. I got my umbrella and returned the same way, but, on reaching the gateway, was told by a passer-by to take the road to R—, and not the road to L— as I had intended. This led me, in my dream—for really there is no village anywhere near there—to a pretty country village, with an old church in the centre. Its bell was tolling most mournfully, and I asked some one for whom it was tolling. ‘Oh,’ they said, ‘don’t you know? It’s for Mrs.—. You know her well.’ But I could not catch the name, and went on. And this part of the dream seemed to end.

“A second part then began. I was dressed in evening-dress, and was wearing a certain pearl necklace that is a family heirloom. I was sitting on a sofa in an empty ball-room, but the room was bright and there were many mirrors on the walls, and it was all lighted up. It was also very prettily decorated with white flowers. As I sat there, a footman brought me a note on a salver. It was a most peculiar note, because it was written in white ink upon black paper. It was from a cousin of mine, who wrote to ask if I would at once—by messenger waiting for it—send her an invitation to the ball for her two daughters (mentioning them by name). There was no sequel to this, and my dream ended.

“When I returned to London, I was told that this same cousin (who lived in London and whom I had left perfectly well) had taken a chill and was seriously ill, so I went at once to inquire after her, and started about three. On arriving at her house, I was told she had died that morning, at about ten-thirty.

“Now this dream is full of little details that would have warned me what was coming had I understood them. The umbrella, for instance. I had forgotten my umbrella at her house the last time I had been there, and had to send for it.

“The farm and the country it was in, were significant, for it was a farm that my cousin knew well, and she had been very fond of that country, and it was, besides, a family place.

“When, in my dreams, I wear evening-dress, it does not mean good news in any way. And whenever I dream of wearing this particular pearl necklace, it always means a death in the family. Only once have I worn it in a dream for the death of any one not related.

“The letter received from my cousin, in white upon black (emphasizing mourning), and her mentioning both her daughters by name, so that I could make no mistake, and the ‘messenger waiting’ (meaning Death) were all symbolical.”

II

“The family pearl necklace that I still wear in my dreams is, as I say, a symbol of death in the family. Only once has it been used to point out a fatal end to any one not of our family. But on the only other occasion it was so, was for Queen Victoria.

“I dreamt I was in my bedroom and had not finished dressing for Court. I was entirely dressed, except for having no jewels on of any kind. I had the dress, train, tiara, veil, everything, but was waiting to *be told* what I was to wear as a necklace, and I felt very

miserable and distressed, for a great deal seemed to me to depend upon the necklace I was to wear, and a message was to be given to me about it. I went to the table and took up two jewel-cases. One contained the before-named family pearl necklace (a single row of remarkably fine pearls, an heirloom in my husband's family). The other case contained an emerald and diamond necklace I had, and which I was very much attached to, and I seemed to hope very strongly that this would be the one I was to wear.

"I took them both to the door and waited, and the time till the door opened seemed immense. I waited with deadly suspense. I had no choice in the matter; that was all I knew. But I was in fear and trouble.

"The door opened, and a tall shadowy figure stood there. I opened the two cases and held them both out. The figure bent over them, and then, with a sigh, said: 'I fear—I fear you must wear this one!' and pointed to the pearls. The door shut, and I was in deep distress.

"The Queen died about three days after. At the time I dreamt this she was not supposed to be seriously ill.

"Pearls are tears. Emeralds would have been the symbol of hope."

III

"I am north country (Northumberland) on my father's side, but have no Scotch blood in me.

"My husband's grandmother was a Campbell (of —), and one of the last of her family. Her niece was heiress to the family estate, and married, so that it no longer remains in that name.

"I have, at times, seen many of the Campbells, but know none of them well, and the son and heir of the above heiress, who was my husband's cousin, I never saw in my life.

"I dreamt that I was with my daughter—then about nine or ten years old—in a house I and my husband had lived in, in London, some twenty years before. We were looking out of the windows into the street. Suddenly I saw, on the opposite pavement, four Highlanders in full costume, wearing our tartan (C. of K.), carrying a big coffin through all the traffic and passengers, who seemed to pay no attention to this extraordinary proceeding. I said to my daughter, 'Look there! They are coming to this house!' and then I seemed to be much concerned that I was not suitably dressed, and had not got on the proper tartan of the clan.

"However, they passed the house and went down the street, finally turning up to the right, and into the mews. I said, 'It does not matter; they must come back again, and I will be ready for them! They are coming because of your grandfather' (he had been dead some ten years). Soon they reappeared on our side of the street, and came in at the door. I went out of the room and opened the door of the next room, for them to take the coffin in there, which they did. As they went in, on my opening the door, 'a waft of Death' came out. I can express it in no other way. It seemed to be so expressed in words in my dream.

"Some time after this the head of the family, and owner of the C. estate of K., died. I had never seen him.

"Since then I have dreamt of seeing a piper in the proper tartan ('our' tartan) preparing to blow his pipes. Shortly after, Mrs. W—, the sister, died. Their mother was heiress to the C.'s and cousin to my father-in-law and his son, my husband.

“The symbolism here is far more crude and earthly, more like the Scottish ‘second-sight,’ than I generally have.”

IV

“I dreamt I was at a large London railway station, waiting for some one. Finally people came to me, and said, ‘There is going to be a garden-party at So-and-so’s, but you are not invited. However, you may stand here and see the people going to it.’ I obediently stood where I was told, close to the ticket-collector, and finally saw a dismal group of people—four or five women amongst them—all dressed in deep black, with long crape veils, who gave him their tickets to clip, and passed through the gate.

“I said, ‘Well, if the party is like that and consisting of such dismal people, I’m sure I don’t want to go.’

“About three weeks or a month after this dream, a very old friend of mine died, and those who wished to attend his funeral went from King’s Cross Station, by special train. I was one of these, and was rather early, so I waited by the door of the carriage and was looking up the platform, when I suddenly saw a group of four people coming down towards me, the very same as in my dream. I made the fifth. We were, of course, in deep mourning, and the group was the exact replica of the dream. It gave me a great shock.”

* * *

“If I dream of a colour, or number, I must always recollect them and put them down, for they always bear a reference to some event about to happen.

“A date or number may not be the date of the event that comes, but turns out perhaps to be the number of days to elapse before it occurs. Or I have to puzzle it out, and find the meaning.

“On the occasion of a sudden death, by accident, of one of the family, I dreamt every night, for some three weeks before, of various things, and jotted them down. Afterwards the various little details—apparently of no interest—all fitted in like a puzzle, in the most curious and elaborate way, but they were all too personal for publication.

“Without dreams, I often ‘sense’ what is going to happen to people, but have never thus been able to prevent any accident, as every one refuses to do (or not do) the very slight thing that would prevent it. But I never have this in regard to my own family, and we have suffered from sudden deaths and accidents I have had no forewarning about whatever.

“Dreams seem to be clearer with complete strangers. Sometimes I dream of a railway accident about to happen. I seem to see a symbolic sketch of it.

“Before the *Titanic* went down I had an uneasy feeling there would be a great disaster at sea, and, writing to a friend in London, told her this. She opened my letter at the very moment the paper was brought in containing the news, and she was much taken aback at my words in the letter.

“I had, from the age of eleven to twenty-five, one particular dream, not prophetic, but what I might call ‘historical’ (Date: the time of the Civil Wars, 1644 to 1660), about once a year. In this I was always the same age—sixteen. I began to dream it at eleven,

and at twenty-five I was still sixteen in my dream. Then it left me, and has never returned since.

“The scene is laid in a fine old hall, in a large old country house, which I should know again if ever I saw it.

“Here is another curious dream I had. I was in a room in danger, and escaped by a secret stair and cupboard. This led me to the roof of a stone castle, and the view was lovely. A friend of mine, a member of an old Scotch family, was one of the persons figuring in this. The escape was very vivid, and the view from the leads impressed me also. Years elapsed, and one day I had a copy of *Country Life*, and was turning it over, when the roof, the leads, the parapet, the little door and the beautiful view all appeared in the paper. It was Cawdor Castle, and I have never been there in my life.

“I dreamt, before the Coronation Day of King Edward VII, that I was told to attend an operation. It seemed to be part of my duty. I duly attended, standing in the corner of the room. I only had to be in the room, and paid no attention to details, nor did I see who the person operated upon was; only I knew it was a man, and I saw the surgeon’s table, etc. (I have never attended at any operation). I was as much taken by surprise as any of the public when the Coronation was put off. But the cause of the postponement, which was the King’s operation, reminded me of my dream.

“Here are some more dreams from another of my note-books—

“Feb. 1,
1904.

“A dream-person held out two swords, in scabbards, crossed, towards me, and asked me to choose one of them. I said I could not do so, as it was too important. Those swords were swords that had belonged to my husband, and which I still possess. I had never thought of it before, but one would represent Peace, and the other War, for this reason—

No. I—a very heavy, large sword, with an inscription on it—was given to him by his uncle and god-father, General Sir James Scarlett, on his joining the Scots Guards. It was a ‘business’ sword, and so heavy for long marches and field days that he bought a light, dress sword, to wear on such occasions. This weighed half as much, and was the second of the two swords tendered to me.

“Shortly after this, the Russo-Japanese War broke out.

“July 27,
1904.

“I had a very disagreeable dream. I dreamt some neighbours had a very mischievous grey parrot which they allowed to fly loose, and it did great damage to trees and gardens, and teased and killed little birds.

“I was walking in the country and saw this parrot screeching. It was being mobbed by clouds of small birds, who were attacking it, and I thought ‘Serve it right! It has at last got into trouble with its mischief!’ and I went on.

“I returned another way, and on my path saw a horrible object. The dying parrot, its feathers pulled off, its body torn and mangled, bleeding, its eyes out, and its beak nearly torn off, was lying before me. It was an awful sight, and I could do nothing.

“July 29,
1904.

“The papers had notice of the assassination of the Russian Minister of the Interior, M. de Plehve, killed by a bomb thrown by a man. M. de Plehve was terribly mangled, and was practically blown to pieces by the bomb.

“M. de Plehve had been very obnoxious to the Jews, and was much disliked by the Russian people for his seventies and merciless disposition. Had the above dream anything to do with this?

“March 4,
1904.

“Dreamt on coming down to breakfast I found a newspaper sent by post, addressed to me; but I seemed to be annoyed at the wrong number having been put on it for the house. It was a number with ‘3’ in it—a double number. I seemed to remember, on awakening, ‘13’ or ‘23,’ but I seemed to think ‘13’ looked more like it when I wrote them down.

“When I opened this newspaper all the inside-sheet had mourning-borders on it. I read nothing in it, however.

“From this dream I feared, on awakening, some death of one of the royal family, or some important personage, and, knowing that numbers in my dreams generally have a signification, I waited to see if, three days after, anything occurred. But nothing happened. The Duke of Cambridge was not well, but somehow I never thought of him. On the thirteenth day from March 4—he died— March 17. I saw the mourning-borders in the papers on March 18, just as in my dream.

“Of other experiences I have had plenty, but they would not be of particular interest to your readers.”

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The Honourable Ruth Scarlett has, like her mother, had some most interesting experiences in the matter of prophetic dreams. She has kindly allowed me to publish her own account of the following, which is the most vivid and complete she has ever had, and also one dreamt by her brother.

I

In small ways,” writes Miss Scarlett, “I am continually having these prophetic dreams, which are quite different from ordinary dreams, and so vivid that they become confusing when they deal with matters of everyday life. My mother’s are generally much more complicated and symbolical.

“Some years ago I met, on a visit, an Irish lady. In the course of the following year she asked me to go to see her in a house she had taken in London, as far as I remember it was in or near Lennox Gardens. The night before I went to the house I dreamt most vividly that I had already gone there, and after the manner of dreams, there was some absurdity in the visit. The children were all having tea with the butler in the hall, and very much annoyed at my interrupting them. I noticed the furniture with particular care: there was a sedan chair under the stairs with painted panels of Vernis Martin, and the banisters were

richly carved. I went into the drawing-room, where I noticed everything most minutely, and then I went, with my hostess, through a larger door and found myself in Ireland, in a delicious sort of valley between hills, where very long grass grew. There was a small farm on my right as I walked down the valley.

“The next day, when I visited my friend, I found the house exactly as I had dreamt of it. The sedan chair was under the stairs, the banisters were beautifully carved; but when I came to the drawing-room, instead of a door which led to Ireland, there was a large looking-glass, and the flowers in the vases were primroses instead of jonquils, and I missed a picture of a lady holding a child on her shoulder, which had been particularly vivid. I mentioned my dream to my friend, and she told me that an hour before I came she had altered the flowers from jonquils to primroses, and the picture I missed was not an oil painting, as I had seen it, but a large photograph which hung over her bed in her room upstairs.”

II

“My brother, who was then in a militia regiment, came down one morning and told me he had had a most vivid dream. He thought he was taking his company to church, and as they passed over some bridge crossing the river, he heard a splash, and some one shouted, ‘Man in the water.’

He rushed to the parapet, jumped over and saved the man, and as he reached the banks he heard the crowd saying, ‘Another suicide.’ About three weeks after this he wrote to say the dream had come true. He was taking his company to church, and as he reached the bridge he heard a splash, and some one shouted, ‘Man in the water.’ He and some one from the company ran forward, and the other man, who was quicker than he was, jumped in, saved the man, and my brother heard the crowd murmuring, as he drew near the bank, ‘Another suicide.’”

* * *

Mr. George R. Sims, who writes most interestingly upon occult subjects, has given an instance of a prophetic dream which came to a member of his own family. He says— “A nephew of mine was drowned by falling off his yacht in Poole Harbour. I was in Geneva at the time, with some relatives, and we were on our way to Chamonix. On the night of the day that the accident happened, one of my relatives dreamt that at Chamonix I was handed a black-bordered envelope announcing a death in the family. We left Geneva on the morning that the death had been related to us, and reached Chamonix in the afternoon. Soon after I had arrived at the Hotel Couttet, the manager handed me a telegram. It was from my sister, informing me of the tragedy.”

It is not generally known that Robert Browning, the poet, whose commentary on the circumstances shows that he was far from being a ready believer in the signification of dreams, also related a curious instance of a prophetic dream in which his sister-in-law saw a Vision of his wife, and received a warning. Browning thought it worth recording, for he made a note of it at the time.

In June 1868 Arabel Barrett died of rheumatism of the heart. She passed away, as her sister-in-law had done, in Robert Browning's arms, and in writing to tell the news to Miss Blagden, Browning described a curious circumstance connected with it.

"June 19,
1868.

You know I am not superstitious. Here is a note I made in a book, Tuesday, July 21, 1863: 'Arabel told me yesterday that she had been much agitated by a dream which happened the night before, Sunday, July 19. She saw her,¹ and asked, "When shall I be with you?" The reply was, "Dearest, in five years," whereupon Arabella woke. She knew in her dream that it was not to the living she spoke.' In five years, within a month or two of their completion—I had forgotten the date of the dream, and supposed it was only three years ago and that two had still to run. Only a coincidence, but noticeable. . .

¹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning.