

A Wolfville Man's Dream

The sun shone clear in a sky the bluest of the blue. Not a cloud! Not the suspicion of one! And a tingle in the air that sent the blood coursing in the veins and made one glad to be alive!

A Wolfville man tucked the Sunday paper into his overcoat pocket and sauntered homeward.

"What a day!" he said. "I'll hitch up and go for a drive!"

The church bells fell upon the Sabbath stillness as he neared home. It was good to hear. A hurried lunch over, the good man and his wife, bundled up, were ready to start.

"There!" said the wife, as they drew near the square. "You were in such a rush to get off! We're right in the face and eyes of everybody coming from church!"

"If I hadn't had to wait so long for you, we might have got off earlier. Anyhow, who cares? G'long, there!"

He pulled vigorously on the reins.

"Do you see that coat?" The wife nudged her husband and spoke in a low voice. "That's not a bit prettier than mine, is it? I bet it cost a lot more!"

"Perhaps she sent away and got hers, too."

"Hold on! Don't go so fast!" The wife reached over, and, clasping the reins, brought the horse to a walk. "That's the one, I do believe, I was looking at!"

She looked around and eyed intently the coat in question. "Yes, it's the very one! They wanted fifteen dollars for it. I got this for fourteen, ninety-eight; and by sending a big order, got the expressage free. Of course, I didn't actually need some of the other things I sent for, but they'll come in handy. I think my coat is just as good as hers, don't you?"

"One coat is as good as another to me. The cheapest is the main thing."

A delightful drive it was. They did enjoy it. On the way home they stopped at a farmhouse where some people they hadn't seen for a long time lived; and the good woman of the house, who was just ready to start for the schoolhouse to teach a class in the Sunday school, took off her things and insisted in their staying and taking supper with them.

The drive in the crisp air made the good things appetizing, indeed.

Flurries of snow began to fall as they came in sight of the town again. They drove in, as they reached their home, unhitched the horse, and by the time the fires were lighted and the chores done, they were both ready for bed.

That night the man had a wonderful dream.

It was Monday morning.

At the breakfast table a knock came at the door.

"Good morning, neighbor! Come in!"

The man stamped the snow from his shoes and stepped into the cheery room. Under his arm was a huge catalogue from a department store in a far-away city.

"It beats all—the bargains in this thing! Everything a man needs he can get! Makes no difference what it is—food, clothing, furniture, anything at all—it's right here! Greatest bargains you ever saw!"

For a long time they pored over the wonderful volume.

Thereafter, every few days, the express man made his calls with great packages of dry goods, groceries, hardware, and all manner of necessary commodities, marvellously cheap.

There was nothing, seemingly, to take the good man into the town any more except the moving pictures, and it was not surprising that he was not cognizant of the changing conditions.

One evening as he was coming home with his wife from a moving-picture show, he said: "They don't seem to keep the stores open in the evenings anymore."

"What stores?"

"What stores? Why, the stores here in the town."

"There are no stores here. They were closed up long ago. Didn't you know that? You see, everybody, like us, sent off for what they wanted. One after another the merchants went out of business and moved away. There's not one left now. For a while one of them kept on by doing business on Sundays, but when the churches closed up he had to close up, too."

"The churches closed up!"

"Why, yes! You know everybody was like us and there was nobody to go. It's a funny looking place, Wolfville, now. In the day time, Sunday or Monday, it's as quiet as a funeral."

The man paused for a moment in thought.

"I was thinking," he said, at length, "things were getting kind of quiet. You say the stores are all closed up? That's too bad! What good is a place without stores? It's business that makes a town. And, come to think of it, I haven't heard the church bells lately. I always believed in a place having churches. How could the people expect to have these things without anybody supporting them?"

"But, husband, we haven't been supporting them much, you know."

"There's others besides us! The people ought to know, if they're going to keep up a place, they ought to do something to keep it up. I'm not going to live where

there are no stores and churches. I'm going to sell out."

"Sell out? Why, I doubt if we could give our place away if we tried. Almost every second house in the town is for sale. People are moving out and nobody is coming in. They tell me they'll have to raise the taxes again."

"Is that what's bringing up the taxes? Well, I'll be blown if I'm going to live here any longer. I'm going to get out if I have to close the house up and leave it. The idea of having no stores and churches in a place! The next thing they'll be for closing up the schools."

"Well, the school is pretty small to what it used to be—only three grades now. The High school students all have to go to Kentville. There! Will you go to the door? The deliveryman is coming with a bushel of potatoes."

There came a loud rap.

"Good land! Is that the delivery man already? And we're not up yet! Husband, slip on something and go to the door. I'll be out in a minute."

The husband sprang up and rubbed his eyes.

"Where in thunder am I, anyhow? Have I been dreaming? Is that the deliveryman with the potatoes?"

He sprang into his clothes and started for the door.

"Why—is it you? I—thought your store had closed up!"

"No," answered the genial deliveryman, "we're still open at the old stand. Business never was better. Wolfville is booming."

"Really? You don't mean it! Well, I'm mighty glad. Do we want anything? Of course we do! Wait a minute! Wife, how much can we get rid of today? Let's give him a good fat order! And say! if you have any bill against me, hand it over. I'll pay it with interest. What's a place without stores? I always said our merchants ought to be encouraged. This sending away for things I don't believe in—never did! Build up your home town, I say! Patronize home talent! Live and let live!" He threw down a ten-dollar bill. "Never mind the change! It's Christmas time—you'll find use for it all!" And, as the deliveryman started off with a beaming face, he called after him, "A merry Christmas to you and a happy New Year! And lots of them! And we'll all do what we can to make the old town hum, eh?"

"Nice young fellow, that!" he said to his wife as he closed the door. "Very nice young fellow!"

He looked around for some paper with which to build the fire. His eye fell on a massive volume. He made a lunge for it.

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A Walnut Work Box or Serving Table and Tray.

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Many other useful and ornamental Household Articles making most acceptable gifts.

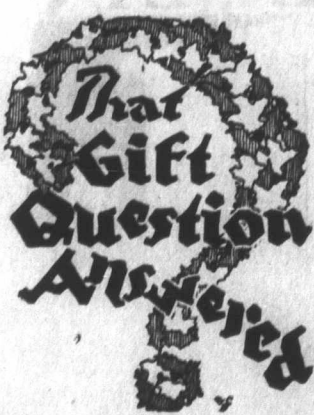
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