

Madeline's Dream

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Madeline, her clothes under her arms, ran down the stairs and into the kitchen where her mother was preparing breakfast. Mother looked up to say good morning to her little girl, but when she saw how pale and breathless Madeline was, she asked, "What's the matter? Are you sick?"

"No," answered Madeline, but at the moment she could say no more. She sank down onto a stool near the fireplace and stared into the flame. She wondered how she could ever put into words the strange dream she had just had, and what her mother would think if she could.

It had seemed in her dream that she was a young lady sitting on a small strip of meadow close to the vineyard and that as she watched to make sure the goats didn't tramp on the vines and eat them, she glanced down at a Sunday School book in her lap. As she looked up again, she was startled to see three strange men.

At the remembrance, Madeline shivered in fright, just as she had shivered in her dream. But almost at once there came the feeling of peace that had flooded over her when one of the men said, "Don't be frightened. We have come from a place far from here to tell you about the true and everlasting gospel."

Then the men told her that an angel had directed a boy to find an important book of gold hidden in the earth. They said that someday she, Madeline, would be able to read this book, and then, because of it, she would gladly leave her home, cross the great ocean, and go to America to live.

In the warm sweet-smelling kitchen Madeline relived her dream. It seemed so real to her that she turned pale again and began to tremble. Father came in from milking the goats, and asked, just as her mother had done, "What's the matter? Are you sick?"

Madeline could only shake her head. Father gently stooped down beside her, picked up a stocking, and without another word began to help her dress. Afterward he lifted her onto his lap and quietly asked, "Do you want to tell me about it?"

Madeline nodded. It was hard to get the words started, but then they seemed to tumble over each other in their eagerness to be spoken. Mother left her preparations for their simple breakfast of figs, potatoes, and goats milk so she

could hear every amazing detail of the dream. Father listened intently, occasionally nodding his head as if he understood more than was being said.

That night when the family gathered around the fireplace for the evening prayer, Father told again the story of why they lived in a small village high in the north Italian Alps. Their grandparents many generations back had had homes in the lovely valleys at the foot of these lofty mountains. There the people lived simple happy lives, basing all they did on the teachings of the apostles who had lived at the time of Christ. The Vaudois (meaning people who live in the valleys of the Alps) even sent forth missionaries two by two to teach. Many people from other lands were converted to their faith.

News of their success reached Rome, and word went to the Vaudois valleys that they must give up their own church and abide by the dictates of the larger ruling church in Rome. This they refused to do. In fact, the Vaudois clung with even greater faith to the authority and teachings of the New Testament as handed down to them.

Angered, Pope Innocent VIII proclaimed a general crusade for the extermination of every member of the Vaudois church. Soon the peaceful valleys where they lived were filled with tragedy and destruction. There was hardly a rock that did not mark a scene of death. Those who survived were driven from their homes. They retreated higher and ever higher up the steep mountains.

The many years of unbelievable suffering resulted in the death of all but three hundred members of the Vaudois church. These people settled high in the Piedmont valleys of the Alps, their villages seeming to cling to the mountainsides. They were surrounded by inaccessible crags and cliffs.

It was hard to eke out a living. Each spring the women and children went down the steep mountains and in baskets carried the soil that had been washed down in the winter storms back up to their terraced fields and gardens. But in these craggy mountains they were quite isolated, and here they raised their hands to the sky and solemnly swore to defend their homes and their religion to the death, as their fathers had done before them.

Madeline's family had heard this story many times, but they never tired of it. Even the youngest children thrilled to hear of the courage of their tall strong grandparents. The older children often expressed gratitude for their home and for their church with its motto "The Light Shining in Darkness."

Long after everyone else was asleep that night, Madeline could hear the murmur of her parents' voices. The last thing she remembered before she went to sleep was hearing her mother insist, "But we already have the true gospel, so there couldn't be any real meaning to that story Madeline told us."

Madeline did not hear Father's answer, but occasionally as the years went by, he would question her concerning her dream. Even though some of the details became vague to her, they never did to him.

About eight years after Madeline's dream, the king of Sardinia, pressured by England and other countries to stop persecuting the Piedmont protestants, granted his Vaudois subjects freedom of religion. The tragic 800-year war ended in February 1848.

The very next year Lorenzo Snow, who later became the fifth president of the Church, was called to open a mission in Italy. But he and his two companions could not find anyone interested in their message. Discouraged, he wrote, "I see no possible means of accomplishing our object. All is darkness."

On September 18, 1850, Lorenzo Snow and his two companions climbed a high mountain in northern Italy and on a large projecting rock offered a fervent prayer for guidance. They were then inspired to dedicate the land for the preaching of the gospel, and they named the rock upon which they stood "The Rock of Prophecy."

Before leaving the mountain, the missionaries sang "The Hymn of the Vaudois Mountaineers in Times of Persecution." The strains of this song had floated down into the valleys many times from high caves and fissures in the rocks where the persecuted had been hiding. It had been a rallying cry as the Vaudois took up arms to fortify their mountain passes. It had been sung in thanksgiving in their church services. Now the three missionaries, standing on The Rock of Prophecy, sang the stirring words:

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers' God;
Thou hast made thy children mighty
By the touch of the mountain sod.

Shortly afterward, on a Saturday afternoon, Madeline's father went home early from his work of building a chimney for a neighbor. He told his family that three strangers were coming to bring an important message. "I must dress in my best clothes and go welcome them," he said.

He found the men he was looking for on Sunday morning and invited them to go home with him. As they walked up over the winding paths and through the dangerously narrow mountain passes, Madeline's father told them of the dream his daughter had had many years before.

When they reached his small rock home, they found Madeline sitting on a little strip of meadow close to the vineyard. She looked up from the Sunday School book she was reading into the faces of three men. They told her they had come

to give her people the message contained in a wonderful book of gold that had been taken out of the earth, and said that she could now read this book.

That evening Madeline's neighbors came to meet the strangers and hear their message. Some of the men found it so unusual and exciting that they stayed up all night to learn more about the newly revealed truths that had been brought to them by these missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Some baptisms were held in October 1850. Twenty families eventually accepted the gospel, and as Madeline's dream became a reality, the Vaudois area truly became "A Light Shining in Darkness."