

A dream of armageddon

H.G. Wells

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"A Dream of Armageddon" is a short story by H. G. Wells which was first published in 1901. The story opens aboard a train, when an unwell-looking man strikes up a conversation with the narrator when he sees him reading a book about dreams. The white-faced man says that he has little time for dream analysis because, he says, his dreams are killing him. He goes on to tell how he has been experiencing consecutive dreams of an unspecified future time in which he is a major political figure who has given up his position to live with a younger woman on the island of Capri. The dreamer describes the island in detail, despite never having visited it, which impresses the narrator, who has actually been to Capri. The dreamer tells how his dream idyll comes to an end. While dancing, he is approached by an envoy from his own country who implores him to return and resume his old role before his successor brings about a war. However, this would mean leaving the woman he loves, and his dream self chooses love over duty. For three weeks of dreams, the solicitor is present at the collapse of the paradisical island of Capri and the future world, while war draws closer and flights of military aircraft are described flying overhead. Global war finally erupts, and his dream life ends in worldwide catastrophe and personal tragedy: the dreamer sees his love killed and experiences his own death. At the very end of the story the protagonist reveals that despite being killed in his dream, he nevertheless carried on dreaming even as his body was being ravaged by "great birds that fought and tore."



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