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THE MOB-CAP:

OR, MY GRANDMOTHER'S TRUNK

By Mrs. Caroline Lee Hartz.

It was past midnight, and the moon had gone down when the stage stopped at Edward Stanley's lodgings, who was about to visit his village home. The lamps threw a strong glare on the pavements, but the interior of the vehicle was in such deep shade, he could but imperfectly distinguish his fellow travellers. He observed, however, that several young gentlemen occupied the front and middle seats, while an old woman, muffled in a cloak, sat alone on the back one. She turned her head sharply round as he entered, and the light glimmering under her large hood was brightly reflected from a pair of spectacles of such spacious dimensions, they seemed to cover her whole face, or at least all the face that was visible through the wide plaited border of mob-cap. Edward took the only vacant seat in the stage, at her side, with a very respectful bow, which was received with something between a hem and a cough, a sound diverting in itself, and rendered still more so, by its echo from the opposite seat; for the young gentlemen seemed determined to derive all the amusement possible from their antiquated companion. Edward had a convivial spirit, but he had too deep a reverence for age ever to make it a subject for mirth. It was in itself a sufficient guarantee for veneration, even when unaccompanied by those traits which impart a beauty to the faded brow, and to the hoary head a crown of glory. The recollection of his own grandmother, too, who had died since his absence from home—one of those fine, dignified relics of the majestic simplicity of olden time, which remind one so forcibly of the degeneracy of modern days—gave a tenderness to his manners, in addressing an aged person, which was peculiarly engaging in the present instance, from the effect of contrast.

'Take care, Grandmother,' said the young man opposite, as the stage jolted over a huge stone, 'take care of your spectacles. We shall not upset now, depend upon it.'

'No thanks to you if we don't,' cried she, muttering, in the indistinct accents of age. Then turning towards Edward, she continued—'It is really refreshing to see a well behaved, decent young gentleman, after enduring the impertinence of the dandies and jackanapes. Never mind, you may laugh now, as loud as you please; but if you live, you will be old yourselves, one of these days.'

She put her hand into her pocket, which seemed unfathomable in depth, and drawing out a snuff box, after rapping it several times, she presented it to Edward, who was obliged from politeness to take a pinch, and all the passengers petitioning for a similar favor, a sneezing concert commenced, in which the old lady herself acted the most sonorous part. After the mirth occasioned by this chorus had subsided, she dropped her box into her pocket, and it sunk, like a pebble descending into a vault. Edward began to enjoy his journey exceedingly; he never felt disposed to sleep in a stage coach, and the old lady declared herself of the same temperament, though he gallantly offered his shoulder as a pillow to the great amusement of the others, who were ere long nodding their heads to and fro, occasionally striking their heads against each other, or reclining backwards in more unsober attitudes. Edward and his muffled companion fell into the most familiar and agreeable conversation. She seemed very shrewd and original in her remarks, and exercised the privilege of age in inquiring his name, the place of his residence, &c.

'Ah,' said she, 'I knew you had a mother and sisters—or a sister whom you loved, from your kindness to me, an old woman, and a stranger.—Heaven be blessed for the influence of gentlemen on the heart of man. And you are going to the village of—Do you know any thing of the widow Clifton, daughter to Squire Lee, who lives some where in these parts?'

'Not personally—but report says she is such a gay, dashing character, I suspect she will find herself very much out of place in a sober country town. I hear, through my sister, that she is to take possession of her late father's dwelling, which has been fitted up for her accommodation in quite a princely style. You speak as if you knew her, Madam.'

'Yes, for I was a great friend to her Grandmother, a fine old lady as ever lived, a thousand times handsomer than Gertrude—but very likely you may not agree with me. Young eyes see differently from old ones.'

'Is she young?' asked Edward.

'Yes,' she is scarcely twenty, for she married, poor thing, at a very early age, and was left a widow soon after. She has need of more discretion than she has now, or ever will have.'

'I should like to see this gay young widow,' said Edward, nu-

singly, the vision of a pair of heavenly blue eyes that he had seen stealing softly before him, but it is not likely that we shall become acquainted, for my mother and sister live very retired, and when I am at home I devote myself to them.'

It was surprising in what confidential terms he was addressing his new acquaintance, and how entirely he forgot to ask her name and residence, though he had so freely imparted his own.

As the morning air came chill and dewy over the hill, she drew her cloak more closely round her, pulled down her hood, and seemed drowsy and silent. Edward was not sorry to be left a while to his own reflection. He thought of the mild eyes of his mother, at that very moment, perhaps, turned towards the window anxiously watching his coming, of the more eager anticipations of his only sister, and more than all, he thought upon the witching smile that caught his youthful fancy.'

He was roused from his reveries by the sudden stopping of the stage, and he found he was to be separated from his ancient friend. Jumping out with as much alacrity as if he were in attendance on youth and beauty, he assisted her as she descended with slow and difficult steps, and opening the gate for her to pass, gave her a cordial and respectful farewell.

'I shall not soon forget you, young gentleman,' said she, holding out her tremulous hand, 'and if the time ever comes when I can serve you, you will find the aged can remember the kindness of youth.'

Resuming his seat, his thoughts winged their way towards the home he was now rapidly approaching. In two or three hours, he began to distinguish the trees familiar to his boyhood. A little further, a majestic elm stretched its lordly branches over the street that passed it on either side, the land-mark of his school day pastimes.—Then a white house glimmered through the green foliage that overshadowed it,—and a moment more, Edward was in the arms of his mother, with his sister clinging around his neck. An only son and brother, returned after twelve months' absence, to beings whose best affections were garnered in him, might reasonably call forth very warm and joyous emotions. A shade however passed over their brows, as the saddened glance of Edward rested on the easy chair, where he had last beheld that venerable form, with placid brows, crowned with living silver, now laid low in the dust—and they all remembered the dead.

A year's residence in the heart of a city, would naturally produce some change in a young man, as yet only in the morning of manhood, and as Clara's admiring eyes ran over the face and figure of her brother, she blushed at her own rusticity. There was an indescribable something in his air and manner, that told he had been in a region different from her own, and a shadow of awe began to steal over the deep love she felt for him. Mrs. Stanley, whose chastened and pious thoughts were dwelling on the inner man, rejoiced that his heart remained unchilled, during his intercourse with the world, for the fountain of filial tenderness was still full and gushing over.

Edward Stanley was poor—that is, he had only his own unborn energies to carry him through the world. He had just completed his studies as a lawyer, having finished his last year with one of the most distinguished members of the bar, a friend of his late father, who, though he died poor in one sense of the word, was rich in the good opinions of his fellow men. Edward was resolved it should prove a year of probation, and adhered to his determination not to suffer even the holiest interests of nature to turn him aside from his steadfast course. The trial was past—he was admitted to the bar—and now felt privileged to rest and refresh himself for a while at the well-springs of the heart.

That evening, as he looked abroad and saw the moon, sending down such rills of light through the deep shades of the landscape, he thought how beautiful Fanny Morton had looked, when she stood a year ago, in the midst of such silver waves, and he longed to know how she would look then, standing in the self-same moon-beams. The wish was easily accomplished, for her father's house was but a short distance from his own, and he soon found himself near the threshold. The house was situated a little retreating from the street, and the path which led to it was soft and grassy, lying too in thick shadow, so his approach was not perceived. There she stood, almost in the same attitude, leaning against the door, looking upwards with eyes so deeply, beautifully blue, they seemed to have borrowed the color from the night heaven to which their gaze was directed. Her fair, flaxen hair glittered in the moon-light with a golden lustre, brightly contrasting with the pure whiteness of a brow, where the serenity of youth and innocence was now softly reposing.

'Fanny!' said Edward, emerging from the shadow: and she

sprang forward at the well-known voice, with a bounding step, and a joyous smile.

'Edward, I am so glad you are come.'

Her manner was so frank and affectionate, it relieved him from the agitation he felt in addressing her. Perhaps he felt a disappointment in meeting her childish expression of pleasure, instead of the deep silence of joy, for it is certain the romance of his feelings considerably subsided, and he uttered some commonplace sayings, instead of the high-wrought sentiments in which he had been indulging. He had never told Fanny in so many words that he loved her, but they had lived in the almost daily interchange of offices prompted by affection. In absence he had blended her image with every memory of the past and every hope of the future, and now in her presence, he acknowledged that she was fairer and lovelier than even the visions his fancy had drawn. The people of the village seeing Fanny again the constant companion of Edward and Clara Stanley, as in former times, prophesied a speedy union, though they dwelt on the excessive imprudence of the match, as they were both too poor to think of marrying, and many declared Fanny to be nothing better than a piece of painted wax-work, fit only to be looked at and admired.

They were returning one evening, about sunset, from a walk in the woodland. Fanny was literally covered with garlands, which Edward and Clara had woven, and with her straw hat swinging in her hand, and her fair locks unbound, she formed the most picturesque feature of a landscape, then rich in all the glories of summer. They turned aside from the path, for the trampling of horses' feet were behind them.

'Look, brother, look!' exclaimed Clara, as a lady, in company with two gentlemen, rode gaily by. She was dressed in green. Her long riding dress swept far below her feet, and waving feathers of the same colour mingled with the folds of a veil that floated lightly on the breeze. She turned and looked earnestly at Fanny, who, blushing at her fantastic appearance, drew behind Clara, when the veil of the stranger suddenly loosened, and fluttering fell at Edward's feet.—Never was a fairer opening for gallantry. The lady checked her spirited horse, and bending gracefully forward, received the veil from the hands of Edward, with a smile and a bow that would have repaid any man for a greater exertion. Her complexion was dark, but richly coloured with the warm hues of exercise and health; and when she smiled, her eyes were so brilliantly black, and her teeth so glitteringly white, that Clara could talk of nothing else for an hour after she reached home—and Edward caught himself wandering several times, who the lady of the green plumes could be.

'Yes,' said he, suddenly, when he saw at night, lights gleaming from the windows of the great white house on the hill.—'It must be Mrs. Clifton, the dashing widow.'

And Mrs. Clifton it proved to be, whose arrival caused no slight sensation in this quiet village.—Edward and Fanny were quite forgotten in the superior claims of one, who, though among them, was not of them. One represented her as proud as Lucifer, sweeping through the streets, with her officer-like cap and feathers.—another, as a Lioness, leaping her horse over hedges and walls. Some represented her as dark as an Ethiopian, terrible and grand—and others, as beautiful as an angel, and blithe as a wood-nymph. Meanwhile the unconscious object of these contradictory and most invidious remarks, continued her rides over hill and dale with unwearied activity, and sometimes she appeared in a splendid carriage, with a footman, who was said to be dressed in livery, though he wore a suit of sober grey.

What was the astonishment of Clara Stanley, when she saw one morning this splendid carriage stop at her own door, and Mrs. Clifton herself descend from it? Clara's next feeling was deep mortification; for both her mother and herself were dressed in plain calico morning frocks, and the room was in a state of particular disorder, for she was occupied in cutting and arranging work, and her brother had covered the table with papers he was about to examine.

'Oh, Edward!' cried Clara, if there's not Mrs. Clifton: what shall we do?'

'Do!' said he, laughing and starting up eagerly.—'Why ask her to come in?' and with an ease and self-possession that almost provoked the mortified Clara, he met this startling visitor at the threshold.

She introduced herself with so much grace and politeness, and fell into conversation so readily and simply, apologizing for what she feared might be deemed an intrusion, but expressing an earnest wish to become acquainted with neighbors in whose society she anticipated so much pleasure, so naturally and sincerely, that Clara's burning cheeks began to cool, and her confused senses to be