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THE UNPRESUMING MR. HUDSON.

BY MISS SEDGWICK.

[p. 17]

It chanced to me, during the last travelling season, to fall in with a party who, like myself, were destined for a fashionable watering-place. The most conspicuous members of this party were Mrs. Campbell, (a widow,) and her only and very pretty daughter, Louisa, whose name, according to modern usage, was gallicised into Louise. The mother was educated in the old school, or, to speak more accurately, in no school at all; but, if she were ignorant, she was unpretending; and it is, perhaps, as well to have the mind vacant, as to have it filled with foreign, ill-assorted, and undigested materials, that encumber it without increasing its riches or productiveness.

All Mrs. Campbell's pride, of every kind and degree, was concentrated in Louise. She had been,

[p. 18]

till this summer of her seventeenth year, at a fashionable boarding-school in one of our large cities. She had had approved masters, and, as her doting mother said, and reiterated, neither time nor expense had been spared in her education; and accordingly, in her mother's acceptation of the word, she was educated. She played and sang so well, that Mrs. Campbell averred she had rather listen to her than to Pedrotti or Mrs. Wood. She drew very prettily—she had learned by heart two entire plays of Goldoni—she made wax flowers, which her mother assured us were quite as natural as real ones—and she spoke French—like other young ladies. If the circumstances, relations, and issues of this brief life require anything more, the balance, (as our mercantile friends have it,) had not been thought of by the mother, or prepared for by the daughter. To do Miss Louise justice, however, she had not been spoiled. She was gay and good-humoured; she had the most good-natured self-complacency—no uncomfortable awe of her superiors—(I rather think she did not believe in their existence)—no jealousy of her equals, and to her inferiors she was kind-hearted.

[p. 19] It was in a stage-coach on a warm day in June that the day broke on our acquaintance. Mrs. Campbell was a lady of facilities, and we had not travelled a half-day together, before, by means of half a dozen ingenious, wayfaring questions, she had ascertained all she cared to know of us, and had liberally repaid us with what she thought we must care to know of her. Besides us there were two persons in the coach not so easily perused. The one a Colonel Smith, (Smith, happily called the anonymous name, and certainly that most tormenting and baffling to an inquirer,) and the other a Mr. Charles Hudson. Col. Smith's demeanour was very unlike his name, marked, high-bred, and a little aristocratic. "A gentleman, he certainly was," Mrs. Campbell said, as soon as we had an opportunity of holding a caucus on our fellow-travellers, but whether he were of

the Smiths of New York, Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Carolina, and so on, through the States, she could not ascertain. However, the cardinal point was settled. He was a gentleman, by all our suffrages; and this most important matter established,

[p. 20]

we were at liberty to interchange with him the common civilities of life!

Mr. Hudson was a more puzzling case for our inquest. Mrs. Campbell remembered to have met a very respectable family of Hudsons at Saratoga, who were from Boston—at least she was *almost* sure they were, but our Mr. Charles Hudson, in reply to certain leading remarks of hers, had said he had never been in Boston. She remembered, too, when she was in Baltimore, some twenty years before, to have seen a family of Hudsons who were very intimate with the Carrolls—this was equivalent to a patent of gentility—but Mr. Hudson affirmed he did not know the Baltimore Hudsons. One of us remembered a certain Mr. Hudson who once had unquestioned circulation in the *beau monde* of New York, but whence he came, was either not known or forgotten. Miss Louise had heard a young friend say she had danced with a Mr. Hudson in Washington—this could hardly be admitted as a credential, and we were at last compelled to wait till we could adjust the gentleman's claims by his merits! The disquieting anxieties of

[p. 21] some good people in our country, on the head of family or rank, is very like a satire on the fancied equality resulting from republican institutions.

Mrs. Campbell was not inclined to be over-fastidious, but she gave it in charge to her daughter to be "rather reserved," while we remained on the level arena of a stage-coach. Miss Louise paid as much deference to her mother as could be expected, reserve not being the quality *par excellence* of American young ladies. In the course of the morning, an accident to the coach compelled the passengers to walk for some distance down a steep and winding descent. The morning was beautiful. The air deliciously tempered. The majestic oaks and maples of Virginia, like its inhabitants (to borrow a rustic phrase from one of their mountaineers), "stout of their country," threw their broad dense shadows over our path—the rhododendron, then in its glory, was in profusion around us, and wild roses, with other unknown and unnumbered flowers on every side.

Our party was not of the most romantic materials, but as we descended the gorge, and looked below us on a sea of the topmost branches of lofty trees,

[p. 22]

and long before us to a narrow and winding ravine, sunk between the mountains, and affording just space enough for a road beside a brawling stream, we were, though, as I have confessed, not of the most susceptible materials, all excited by this fresh and beautiful aspect of nature. The pretty Louise, with the elastic step and joyous spirit of youth, leaped down the rocks and over the runs, singing, laughing, and exclaiming at

every step. Her mother toiled after her, calling out, “Louise, my dear, you'll fall. Put on your bonnet, my child, you'll be one freckle—Louise! Louise! your gloves off! how absurd!” But Louise heard not, or heeded not. She ran on like another Atalanta, defying the gentlemen to overtake her, and, like her prototype, giving them a fair chance, by often stepping aside to crop a flower too inviting to be resisted. They all followed her lead—all but Mr. Hudson, who coolly walked beside the elder ladies—pointed out the best stepping-places—gave them his arm when necessary— and gave them the flowers he gathered, reserving only a few of the choicest. Mrs. Campbell touched my arm, and whispered, “We need no ghost to tell

[p. 23]

us for whom those are destined.” The lumbering coach came on, and one after another the pedestrians were picked up. Louise's colour was heightened by exercise, and her eyes were sparkling with excited spirits. She was something like a flower in the desert—the only one among us, young or pretty, and she was flattered and petted on all sides. She sat between her mother and myself, on the back seat, and was continually putting her pretty face forward on one side and on the other, to answer the compliments and sallies directed to her from the gentlemen who occupied the middle and front seats. As, with the exception of Mr. Hudson, they were all of the trustworthy, elderly, papa and uncle order, this did not imply any undue forwardness in our young friend. At any rate, Mr. Hudson, the only member of the party not *hors du combat*, did not profit by the vantage-ground she offered, to advance his acquaintance with her. He, now and then, glanced his eye at her, and a strikingly open, gentlemanly eye had Mr. Hudson, (so said the mother,) and sometimes smiled at the *jeux d'esprit* that might have derived a portion of their brilliancy from the bright lips through which they passed, as water

[p. 24]

takes a hue from the precious ore through which it sometimes issues. “Mr. Hudson appears quite to appreciate Louise,” whispered Mrs. Campbell, “and yet did you ever see any one so unassuming? He has not even ventured to offer her the bouquet he gathered for her!”

“For me, mamma, are you sure he gathered it for me?”

“Certainly, my love, for whom else could it be?”

Louise was determined the flowers should not fail of their destination, through the youth's over-modesty.

“How sweetly pretty your flowers are, Mr. Hudson!” she began.

“They are both sweet and pretty, Miss Campbell.”

“Fragrant, you mean?” Mr. Hudson bowed assentingly; “that is delightful, where could you have found them? I never can find a sweet wildflower. I am passionately fond of fragrant flowers; indeed, I think flowers without fragrance are quite an imposition. Look at these,” she held up the bunch with which she had seemed, a few moments before, quite satisfied; “a French flower-girl could

[p. 25]

make quite as good!” she threw them with a pretty toss of her head, out of the window; and still on this hint, Mr. Hudson spake not—to the point.

He very coolly smelt his flowers, and said, he wished a certain Englishman were in the coach, whom he had heard assert that American flowers had no fragrance—that the climate, like the satyr, blew hot and cold on them; melted and froze the odour out of them. He thought he would he satisfied that his opinion, like some other foreign opinions, was rather the result of his own ignorance, than of a just appreciation of the products of the country.

Mrs. Campbell heard his long speech out—begged leave to smell his flowers—then passed them to her daughter, and she, after some eloquent “Ohs!” and “Ahs!” returned them to Mr. Hudson, who received them with a very polite inclination of his head, but without anything like the anticipated, “pray keep them!” I looked at the mother, expecting to see her a little crest-fallen, but no! her face was the very picture of confidingness and good-humour, with a slight touch of pity for the self-denying modesty of her new acquaintance. “I do not

[p. 26]

doubt,” she said to me at the first opportunity, “that Mr. Hudson has been to France, where, they tell me, it is reckoned very improper to offer attentions of any sort to a young unmarried lady. He is uncommonly unassuming! but do you not think he is a little too particular?”

“He may be so—but particularity is a good fault in a stage-coach, Mrs. Campbell.”

“Certainly, that is a very just remark, and it will be quite time enough to encourage him when we arrive at the Springs.”

At “the Springs” we arrived in the course of the following day, and were received and had our places assigned us as one party, of which the “unassuming” Mr. Hudson made, so to speak, an integral part. No mode of ripening an acquaintance is so rapid as that of travelling two or three days, more or less, in a stage-coach. In a steamboat, if you are reserved, sullen—Anglois—(we quote a French synonyme)—you may go apart, upon the upper, or the lower deck—fore or aft—you may drop your veil and look down into the water, or turn your back upon the company, and gaze upon the shore— or you may creep into a berth, and draw a curtain

[p. 27]

between yourself and the world; but what art— what device—what panoply, can resist the social system of a stage-coach! Scott somewhere says, I believe in his chapter upon equality, that it exists only among the Hottentots; he overlooked the temporary but perfect democracy of a stage-coach, where each is reduced to a unit, and feels, whatever his rank, fortune, or distinctions may be, as he is packed, crowded, and pinioned in, that his next neighbours virtually address to him what a surly fellow in a “Jackson Meeting” yesterday, said to a poor man who remonstrated against being jostled and squeezed, “What are you, sir? you are nothing, sir, but an *individual!*”

But with the good-humoured and kind-hearted, instead of hostility, there is a *neighbourly* fellow- feeling, nurtured by the intimate relations of a stage-coach. Our fellow-passengers seem to us like cotemporaries,—we have set out with the same purposes and hopes—met with the same disappointments and mischances—“we have had our losses together;” in short, in a stage-coach, as in every mode and condition of human life, sympathy—the electric chain of social being—may be developed,

[p. 28]

and, instead of gall and vinegar, we may enjoy the sweetest of all draughts—the milk of human kindness.

Franklin wrote an essay upon the morals of chess. A chapter on the morals of travelling might not be unprofitable in a country like ours, where half the population is afloat three months of every year.

But my short story must be finished without (I fear!) a moral of any kind.

The Springs, or rather the Spring, which we had selected for our *poste restante* for some days, was the celebrated Sweet Spring in Union County in Virginia. We chanced to have arrived there before the fashionable season. Our pretty Louise was very near the sad predicament of a belle without a beau. She had, however, plenty of admirers and attendants. Bachelors of some forty or fifty years' standing; widowers from the south, who had come up to the springs to get rid of their bile and their sad memories, and young married men there were who were permitted by their good-natured wives to ride and dance with Louise.

Louise was of the happy disposition that takes “the goods the gods provide,” and enjoys them; that

[p. 29]

never, to use a vulgar simile, throws down the actual bread and butter for the possible cake. The Virginia Springs have few artificial contrivances for pleasure, and it was delightful to see in the pretty Louise the inexhaustible resources of a youthful and cheerful spirit. She would talk by the half-hour with the old Frenchman who obtains a little *pécule* by keeping the bath and furnishing fire and towels for the ladies, “for what it pleases them to give him.” She would listen to his stories of the French revolution, and his assurances in Anglo-French, (forty years of his threescore and ten had been passed in America,) that she spoke French like a *Parisienne*. She was, like a butterfly, perpetually on the wing over that beautiful lawn, (how profanely marred by the ugly little cabins that dot it!) which swells up from the deep dell in which the Spring is embosomed, and where, like some sylvan divinity it is sheltered and hidden by a guard of magnificent oaks and elms.

Mrs. Campbell, though the essence of good-nature, was not just then in so satisfied a frame of mind. It was her daughter's debut as a young lady, and she had seen visions, and dreamed dreams of lovers

[p. 30]

and their accompaniments, offers, refusals, and an acceptance! No wonder that the scarcity of the raw material, the warp and woof of which the good mother expected to have woven the matrimonial fabric, should have proved trying to her. Its natural effect was to enhance Mr. Hudson's value; and while Mrs. Campbell unceasingly commended his *unpresumingness*, she gave him the kindest encouragement to dispense with it, and sometimes appeared a little nettled at his obstinate modesty. Walks were often proposed, but Mr. Hudson, instead of taking a tempting and accessible position beside the young lady, would attend her mamma, or modestly leave them both to the elderly gentlemen, and stray along alone. Once, I remember, a stroll was proposed to a romantic waterfall. The gentlemen whose services we had a right to command were playing billiards. “I am sure,” said Mrs. Campbell, “we may venture to ask Mr. Hudson— he is so unpresuming!”

Accordingly he was asked, and politely joined us —Mrs. Campbell (albeit still ignorant of Mr. Hudson's parentage, fortune, &c.) was all affability— Miss Louise was all gaiety and frankness—so pretty,

[p. 31]

so attractive, so aided by the sylvan influences that in “love-breathing June” dispose the young and susceptible to the sentiment par excellence, that I confess I marvelled that our young friend remained the *unpresuming* Mr. Hudson.

One evening, at Mrs. Campbell's suggestion, a dance was got up. It was a difficult enterprise, but by the aid of one or two married pairs, and a philanthropic elderly single lady, we mustered a sufficient number for a cotillion. “You and Louise will have hard duty this evening. It is to be hoped she may prove an agreeable partner,” said Mrs. Campbell to Mr. Hudson, as he led off her daughter; “of course,” she added, in a whisper,

to her next neighbour, “they must dance together, but I should not have hinted it to him if he were not so very unassuming!”

But Mr. Hudson did not find the necessity strong enough to overcome that quality of his disposition, which now began to appear to us all, as potent as a ruling passion. He evidently enjoyed the dance with his graceful partner, then modestly resigned her hand, and filled up the measure of his virtue by

[p. 32]

dancing with the unattractive married ladies, and finally crowned it by leading off a Virginia reel with the above-mentioned single lady.

When I parted with Louise for the night, “what a gentlemanly, agreeable man is Mr. Hudson!” said she, “and as mamma says, so very unassuming!”

The next day was fixed for Mrs. Campbell's departure. She was going to the Natural Bridge. I went to her room to pass the last half-hour with her, and while she was expressing her sincere regret at leaving us all, including Mr. Hudson, on whom she bestowed her usual encomium, we saw a servant bring his baggage from his cabin, and place it with that destined for the Natural Bridge. “Well! well!” exclaimed Mrs. Campbell, who could not, and indeed did not attempt to conceal her satisfaction, “still waters run deep! I suspected all the while----”

“Pshaw! Mamma—do hush!” said Miss Louise, whose smiles, in spite of her, betrayed that her mind had, simultaneously with her mother's, seized on the solution of Mr. Hudson's mysterious unassumingness.

“La! Louise, my darling, we need not mind

[p. 33]

Miss-----; I am sure she is so discerning, she must have seen, as I did long ago, that Mr. Hudson was like young Edwin in “Edwin and Angelina.”

“Then he has not yet talked of love,” I asked, rather mischievously.

“Bless me! no! This, however, is a pretty bold step, going to the Natural Bridge with us—but—*n'importe*, as Louise says, he will do nothing hasty—I am sure of it—he is so unassuming!”

Whilst we were talking, the Fincastle coach arrived, and it was announced to Mrs. Campbell that there must be a delay of an hour or two before it would proceed, as it required some repair, and (as every body knows who has travelled in Virginia) there was no other carriage to take its place *en route*. The servant who communicated this to Mrs.

Campbell, told us that a very nice-looking gentleman, and his lady, and daughter, had arrived in the coach, who were to remain at the Sweet Springs. "Who were they? and what were their names?" She did not know, "but she reckoned they were somebody, for they had a heap of baggage." It was immediately proposed that we should abandon the cabin, and reconnoitre the drawing-room and

[p. 34]

piazza, in quest of the new-comers. In those strongholds of ennui—watering-places—the perusal of new faces is as exciting as the covers of a fresh novel to the fair patronesses of a circulating library. We were disappointed in our purpose. We met no one but Mr. Hudson. He seemed, since we parted, a changed man; and instead of the listlessness, abstraction, and indifference—to all which it pleased Mrs. Campbell to apply the term unpresumingness—he was all expression and animation. Once only the flow of his spirits was checked for an instant, when Mrs. Campbell said with a complacent smile, "I was very glad to see your baggage brought out for the Fincastle coach." He stammered and blushed, and she changed the conversation. Louise was touched by the consciousness of having produced a sensation, and was quiet and retiring, and Mr. Hudson so much more attentive and interested than I had ever seen him before, that I began to think the mother was not at fault, and that our Mr. Hudson was as like the unpresuming hermit lover, as a whiskered, well-dressed, Springs' loungeur could be. I was confirmed in this belief, and convinced that he would soon "talk of

[p. 35]

love," when, on going with Louise to her cabin in search of something she had left behind, we saw, on her table, a book neatly enveloped in white paper, on which was written in pencil, "*To L. C. from C. H.*," and under it the trite quotation from the text-book of lovers, "The world is divided into two parts—that where she is, and that where she is not." "How very odd!" exclaimed Louise, blushing, and smiling, and untying, with a fluttering hand, the blue ribbon wound around the envelope. She opened the book. It was a blank album, with flowers pressed between its leaves, the very flowers that the "unpresuming Mr. Hudson" had not the courage to offer to Louise on the first day of their acquaintance. Here they were embalmed by love and poetry; for on each page was pencilled a quoted stanza from some popular amorous poet. We had hardly time to glance our eyes over them, when the horn of the Fincastle coach sounded its note of preparation. "What am I to do?" said Louise; "why did not that stupid chambermaid give me the book before; he thought I had seen it, and that explains his being in such spirits, and mamma telling him, too, she was glad he was going on with us! he

[p. 36]

must think it as good as settled! What am I to do? I can't leave it—can I?"

"Not if you choose to take it," I replied, implying the advice she wished.

“Then do, dear Miss, just wrap it up in that shawl of yours, and while I am getting into the coach, you can just tuck it into my carpet-hag. I can show it to mamma, and if I return it, there is no harm done, for he is so unassuming! but is it not droll, his flaming forth so all of a sudden?”

Very “droll!” and inexplicable, certainly, did appear to me this new phase of the Proteus passion, and marvelling, I followed my young friend, scrupulously concealing the album in the folds of my shawl. As we left the door of the cabin Louise had occupied, we saw, in the walk just before us, the two ladies of whose arrival we had been apprized.

“Oh!” exclaimed Louise, “how much that young lady's walk is like Laura Clay's!”

At the sound of her name the stranger turned, and proved to be an old schoolmate of Louise's. I took advantage of the moment when the young ladies were exchanging their affectionate greetings,

[p. 37]

to perform my delicate commission, and having ordered in the carpet-bag, I had drawn it into one corner of the room, and was just unlacing it, when the two girls came in.

“How very provoking,” said Louise, “that we are going just as you have arrived.”

“And only think,” returned her friend, “of the chambermaid telling me I was to have the room of a young lady going in the Fincastle coach, and my never dreaming of that young lady being you, and we could have had such nice times in that room together, I have so much to tell you!”

“And I have the drollest thing to tell you!” said Louise; “but, by the way, I heard you were engaged,”—the young lady smiled—“is it true?”— she nodded assent—“Oh, tell me to whom? I am dying to know—the deuce take that horn!—just tell his name.”

“Charles Hudson.”

“Charles Hudson!!”

“Yes, my dear—Charles Hudson—is it not too curious you should have been a week here with him, and not found it out?”

Louise was too much astonished to reply. She

[p. 38]

cast an imploring glance towards me, and I, while I relaced the bag, returned a look that assured her the album should be secretly restored to its right place. Mr. Hudson's unnatural coldness to the charms of my pretty little friend, the mystery of the book—Miss

Clay's initials being the same as Miss Campbell's—all was explained. Louise concealed her blushes in a hasty parting embrace, and as she stepped into the carriage, I heard her mother saying to Mr. Hudson,

“Not going with us! why did you change your mind?”

“Some friends have arrived here, Madam, whom I expected to have met at the Natural Bridge.”

Mrs. Campbell bowed for the last time to the unassuming Mr. Hudson. The coach drove off, and left me meditating upon the trials of a pretty young girl who is chaperoned to watering-places by a silly, expecting, and credulous mother.