

THE GREAT STONE FACE

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The Beginning

One afternoon, when the sun was going down, a mother and her little boy sat at the door of their cottage, talking about the *Great Stone Face*. They had but to lift their eyes, and there it was plainly to be seen, though miles away, with the sunshine brightening all its features. . . .

. . . . As we began with saying, a mother and her little boy sat at their cottage-door, gazing at the *Great Stone Face*, and talking about it. The child's name was Ernest.

"Mother," said he, while the Titanic visage smiled on him, "I wish that it could speak, for it looks so very kindly that its voice must needs be pleasant. If I were to see a man with such a face, I should love him dearly."

"If an old prophecy should come to pass," answered his mother, "we may see a man, some time or other, with exactly such a face as that."

"What prophecy do you mean, dear mother?" eagerly inquired Ernest. "Pray tell me about it!"

So his mother told him a story that her own mother had told to her, when she herself was younger than little Ernest; a story, not of things that were past, but of what was yet to come The purport was, that, at some future day, a child should be born hereabouts, who was destined to become the greatest and noblest personage of his time, and whose countenance, in manhood, should bear an exact resemblance to the *Great Stone Face*

The Ending

Ernest began to speak, giving to the people of what was in his heart and mind. His words had power, because they accorded with his thoughts; and his thoughts had reality and depth, because they harmonized with the life which he had always

lived. It was not mere breath that this preacher uttered; they were the words of life, because a life of good deeds and holy love was melted into them. Pearls, pure and rich, had been dissolved into this precious draught. The poet, as he listened, felt that the being and character of Ernest were a nobler strain of poetry than he had ever written. His eyes glistening with tears, he gazed reverentially at the venerable man, and said within himself that never was there an aspect so worthy of a prophet and a sage as that mild, sweet, thoughtful countenance, with the glory of white hair diffused about it. At a distance, but distinctly to be seen, high up in the golden light of the setting sun, appeared the Great Stone Face, with hoary mists around it, like the white hairs around the brow of Ernest. Its look of grand beneficence seemed to embrace the world.

At that moment, in sympathy with a thought which he was about to utter, the face of Ernest assumed a grandeur of expression, so imbued with benevolence, that the poet, by an irresistible impulse, threw his arms aloft and shouted, "Behold! Behold! Ernest is himself the likeness of the Great Stone Face!"

Then all the people looked, and saw that what the deep-sighted poet said was true. The prophecy was fulfilled. But Ernest, having finished what he had to say, took the poet's arm, and walked slowly homeward, still hoping that some wiser and better man than himself would by and by appear, bearing a resemblance to the GREAT STONE FACE.

POSTSCRIPT

When the two friends, arm in arm, arrived back at Ernest's cottage, the poet paused beside the door. Turning to Ernest, he was silent a long while as he gazed into the old man's eyes and then lifted his own glance above Ernest to a setting sun that shed its parting rays over the Great Stone Face.

"Ernest has faithfully done his work", the heavenly countenance bespoke. "Now it is time for you to do yours." Imperceptibly, the poet nodded his head, his gaze lowering again to the old man's face. The Poet again took his friend by the arm and led him into the cottage to retire for the night.

Ernest placed his hat on the table, before sitting down on his bed. Then the old man took off his shoes and lay back. At the foot of the bed a faded quilt lay neatly folded. When Ernest was a new born child, his mother set him in an old hickory cradle at her feet, where, seated on the bench before their cottage, she gathered the first patches of the quilt.

Through the seasons of Ernest's infancy - summer, autumn, winter, spring - the quilt unfolded. As Ernest's mother worked quietly, her fingers nimbly, she lowered her knowing regard to her child and then up to the Great Stone Face that gazed down from on high over mother and son.

Up and down, from the heights of the mountain notch to the depths of the cradle, her gaze passed. Through a first year, a second, a third the quilt grew with the child, fashioning embroidered scenes of an unfolding life. All this the poet beheld as he gently drew the beloved tapestry over the old man - before pausing for a moment to light the waxen candle on the table and sit down beside Ernest on the bed.

The old man's eyes rested silently in the poet's, whose heart welled with emotions that eluded even his inspired tongue. And then the poet reached out and tenderly parted the white hair from Ernest's forehead, which shown silently in the glimmers of the waning moon that glanced in through the open window beside his bed.

"Do you understand now, Ernest?", the poet asked.

The glow in Ernest's eyes deepened, as he nodded. "Yes, Gathergold, Old Blood and Thunder, Stony Phiz - they bore not the likeness of the Great Stone Face."

"Nor the poet, himself", his friend added.

Ernest nodded, his reflections deepening, "So it is." He looked long into the poet's eyes, "For, we, we are the ones we've been waiting for." The poet nodded, as Ernest took a deep breath and then turned his gaze out the window. Below the waning moon, high up in the notch, the heavenly countenance shone down, bestowing its nocturnal blessing on its devoted friend, as the old man's eyes closed.

The poet sat beside Ernest through the watches of the night, silently observing the changes that slowly, n'er imperceptibly passed across the old man's blessed countenance, illumined by the gentle tides of the moon. And then, with the first

rays of the rising sun, the poet leaned over and kissed the old man tenderly on his aged forehead. Blowing, gently, out the waning candle, the poet arose and followed his gathering thoughts out into the dawn.

At the doorstep, the poet paused a moment, before putting on his hat and lifting his gaze to the sunlit trail that beckoned him to retrace his steps back to the small nook among the hills, surrounded by the grove of ancient trees, where the evening before Ernest had spoken his last words. As the poet stepped forth, the spirits of the forest, whom, over the years, he had called forth in his inspired verse, harkened to the poet's passing, accompanying him to the verdure pulpit.

At the base of the pulpit, the poet paused, lifting his head to the gentle strains of Ernest's words that, like a lingering breeze, hung in the sylvan air. Then, stepping up to the pulpit, the poet took out his pencil and notebook and, illumined by the rays of the rising sun that filled the glen, opened his heart to the tidings that streamed down to him from The Great Stone Face on high.

"The seasons will flow on, one into another, until six score will have rounded themselves. During this time your wagon road that leads through this valley will widen itself into a country lane, highway, and interstate, clearing the way for time to hurry on. As the years pass, ever fewer will be the travelers from the valley and native land who will lift their gazes on high as they hurry through the notch, anxious to reach their destination.

Such are the ways of a young and growing nation that is compelled to leave its mark for good and ill. From beyond your borders, the path of many of the nation's foremost citizens will lead to the notch: the Gathergolds, Red Blood & Thunders, and Stony Phizs of future generations. Asked their view of The Great Stone Face, they will pause for a moment, glance on high, utter a few words, and then continue on their way.

Only one statesman will divine what is given to the poets and people of faith to foretell: the real question is not what we think of the Great Stone Face, but what He thinks of us. So it is. Many a legend, poem, and tale, including those traced back to the Native People, will bear forth this truth.

On the poet wrote with the breaking dawn:

Yes, as the six score years fulfill themselves your pace will catch you up so fully that you will have forgotten who you are as a nation. And then will come the season

of trials - trials that need come for you to awaken as a people, awaken from, and to, your dream.

During this season, disasters will strike, so you will be tempted to view them. In truth they will be a wake-up call that will bring with them growing pains. The young nation will be sorely tested and your own state motto to be, Live Free or Die, will take on a deeper meaning for many.

Amidst these trials, I, too, will leave you, and, as the great script of the heavens recount, that will mark the end of an old order and the beginning of the new. Those of keen eye will turn their gazes south to my native brother, the Indian Head, the Peace Maker, whose steady gaze is directed to the future."

As the sun rose into the heavens, the poet wrote on.

"Among your people will arise those who will begin to ask: 'Before we can respond meaningfully to the disasters that have befallen us, we must understand what it is that has brought them upon us. For, we will not know what to do, until we know, truly know who we are'.

So it is. Americans, you call yourselves. And yet, do you realize that your country, the "New World" is named after an explorer, considered by many to be a scoundrel, who never arrived on your shores? Do you realize that when your ambassador gathers with the community of nations that plaque that sits before him on the table of that great assemblage states not 'America' but "The 'United States'.

For, recall, do you not have neighbors to the north, central, and south. And yet, is 'The United States' a name? Canada is a name; Mexico is a name; Peru is a name. The United States, is that anything more than a definition — a promise unfilled?

Who are you then? The poet paused The question will lead those in whose hearts it silently burns to seek an answer. And the answer will reveal itself. In an old encyclopedia, the first of many, they will read: 'The literary name for the United States in the 19th century was Columbia'; as in the name of our nation's capitol, 'The District of Columbia'; as in the name of our first national anthem, 'Hail Columbia', played at the behest of one of your greatest Presidents, Lincoln, at all important affairs of state; as in the name of the 'Columbian/Tammany Society' of which Franklin and your Founding Fathers were members; as in the name of a

future space shuttle, Columbia, that would be lost over the home state of your President on the eve of his preparations to lead your nation to war.

And that answer, Columbia, will bear in itself another question: What does that mean: the literary name for the United States in the 19th century was Columbia . . . ? If it's good literature, is it not inspired? Can it be that the inspired name for your land is Columbia?

To other sources, those in whom the flame burns will turn. And there they will find the further answer to the question that grows in them: like Columbus, the etymology of the word Columbia is traced back to the Italian and Irish word "Colum", which means dove.

As this recognition dawns: the question who you are will take on ever deeper meaning. The people of your land will begin to awaken to the truth, if not yet reality, that the mission of your ever new world, your mission is to become 'The People of the Dove'.

The poet lifted his gaze to the heights.

Hearken, hearken to the words of your national song that heralds the new age:

**America, America God shed His grace on Thee and
crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.**

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