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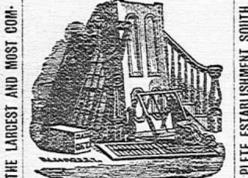
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Uncle Terry

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

WEEK after Uncle Terry's return from Boston he asked Telly to go with him on his daily drive to the head of the island. He had described the exciting incidents of his trip both to his wife and Telly, and feeling obliged to do so, had told them that Mr. Page had taken charge of the case and would communicate with him when anything definite was learned. Telly had expressed unusually cheerful views since, and more affectionate, and had at once set about painting the two sketches Albert had sent.

"The leaves is turnin' purty fast," he said to her that day, "an' I thought 'nebby'd like to go with me an' take a look at 'em. They won't last long." When the two had jogged along in almost silence for a few miles Uncle Terry said, pointing to a small rock by the roadside, "Thar's whar I fust found Mr. Page, Telly."

He watched her face closely as he spoke and noted the look of interest that came. "I told him that day," he continued, chuckling, "that lawyers was mostly all thieves, an' the fact that he didn't take it amiss went fur to convince me he was an exception. It's a bit bird as allus duffers. From what he's done an' the way he behaves, I'm thinkin' more an' more o' him the better I know him, an' I believe him now to be as honest an' square a young man as I ever met."

Uncle Terry was silent a few moments while he flicked at the daisies with his whip as they rode along. "Ye've had a couple o' letters from him sense he went back, ha'n't ye?" he asked finally. "I noticed they was in his writin'." He saw a faint color come to her cheeks. "Yes, he wrote me he was finishing a couple o' sketches he made here, and wanted to have me paint them for him. They are the ones I am working on now."

"That's all right, Telly," continued Uncle Terry briskly. "I'm glad ye've done it for him, fer he's doin' a good deal fer us."

Nothing further was said on the subject until they were on their way back from the head of the island. The sun was getting low, the sea winds that rustled among the spruce needles had almost fallen away, and just as they came to an opening where the broad ocean was visible he said: "Did ye ever stop to think, Telly, that Lissy an' me is gittin' purty well 'long in years? I'm over seventy now, an' in common course o' things I won't be here many years longer."

"What makes you speak like that, father? Do you want to make me blue?" "Oh, I didn't mean it that way, Telly, only I was thinkin' how fast the years go by. The leaves turnin' alius makes me think on't. It seems no time sense they fust came out, an' now they're goin' agin'. It don't seem more'n two or three years sense ye was a little baby-pullin' my fingers an' callin' me dada, an' now yer a woman grown. It won't be long afore yer a-sayin' 'yes' to some man as wants ye, an' a-goin' to a home o' yer own."

"So that is what you are thinking of, father, is it? And you are imagining that some one of the name of Page is likely to take me away from you, who are and always have been all there is in life for me?" She paused, and two tears trembled on her long lashes, but she quickly brushed away. "Please do not think me so ungrateful," she continued, "as to let any man coax me away from you, for no man can. Here I was cast ashore, here I've found a home and love, and here I shall stay as long as you and mother live, and when you two are gone I want to go too." She swallowed a lump that rose in her throat and then continued: "As for this legacy that you have worried about so much, and I am sure has cost you a good deal, it is yours, every penny of it, and whether it is big or little, you are to keep and use it as you need it for love me. You haven't been yourself for six months, father, and all for this trouble. I have watched you more than you think, and wished many times you had never heard of it."

When she ceased Uncle Terry looked at her a moment, suddenly dropped the reins and putting both arms around her held her for a moment and kissed her. He had not kissed her for many years. "I ha'n't bin thinkin' 'bout myself in this matter," he observed as he picked up the reins and chattered to the old horse, "an' only an' wan' ter see ye provided fer, Telly. As fer Mr. Page or any other man, every woman needs a purticer in this world, an' when the right 'un comes along don't let yer feelin's or sense o' duty stand in the way o' havin' a home o' yer own."

"But you are not anxious to be rid of me, are you, father?" "Ye won't think that o' me," he replied as they rattled down the sharp incline into the village. She noticed after that that he wanted her with him oftener than ever. Later, when another letter came for her in a hand that he recognized, he handed it to her with a smile and immediately left her alone to read it.

"I don't notice anything left out as I recall the spot." "But there is," she replied, "and one that should be there to make the picture correct. Can't you guess?" He looked at Telly's face, upon which a roguish smile had come. "No, I can't guess. Tell me what is lacking?" "Yourself," she replied. "But I do not want the picture to remind me of myself. I wanted it so I could see you and recall the day we were there." She made no reply, and he laid it on the table and asked for the other one. It was all done except the finishing touches, but it did not seem to be a reproduction of his original sketch at the cove.

"I took the liberty of changing it a little," she said as he was looking at it, "and put in the background where you said you fust saw me." "It was nice of you to think of making the change," he replied quickly, "and I am very glad you did. I wanted it to portray you as I fust saw you."

A faint flush came into her face. As she was watching the fire he studied the sweet face turned half away. And what a charming profile it was, with rounded chin, delicate patrician nose and long eyelashes just touching the cheek that bore a delicate flush! Was that faint color due to the fire or to his words? Then they dropped into a pleasant chat about trifles, and the ocean's voice kept up its rhythmic, the

fire sparkled, and the small cottage clock ticked the happy moments away. "How is Mrs. Leach?" he asked at last. "Does she pray as fervently as ever?" "Just the same," replied Telly, "and always will as long as she has breath. It is, as father says, her only consolation."

"I have thought of that evening many times since," he continued, "and the impression that poor old lady made on me with her pitious supplication. I wonder how it would affect a Boston church congregation some evening to have such an appearing figure, clad as she was, rise and utter the prayer she did. It would startle them, I think."

"I do not think Mrs. Leach would enter one of your city churches," responded Telly, "and certainly not clad as she has to be. She has a little pride even if she is poor." "Oh, I meant no reflection, only the scene was so impressive I wondered how it would affect a fashionable church gathering. I think it would do them good to listen to a real sinner's prayer that came from some one's heart and was not manufactured for the occasion. Those who wear fine silks and broadcloth and sit in cushioned pews seldom hear such a prayer as she uttered that night."

Ten as Telly made no response he set in silence a few moments mentally contrasting the girl with those he had met in Boston. And what a contrast! This girl clad in a gray dress severe in its simplicity and so ill fitting that it really detracted from the beautiful outlines of her form. Her luxuriant tresses were braided and coiled low on the back of her head, and at her throat a tiny bow of blue. Not an ornament of any nature, not even a ring, only the crown of her sunny hair, two little rose leaves in her cheeks and the queenlike majesty of throat and shoulders and bust, so classic that not one woman in a hundred but would envy her their possession.

And what a contrast in speech, expression and ways—timid to the verge of bashfulness, utterly unaffected and yet sincere, tender and thoughtful in each and every utterance, a beautiful flower grown to perfection among the rocks of this seldom visited island, untrained by conventionality and unshelved by the world! "I wonder how she would act if suddenly dropped into the Nasons' home, or what would Alice think of her." Then, as he noted the sad little droop of her exquisite lips, and as she, wondering at his silence, turned her pleading eyes toward him, there came into his heart in an instant a feeling that, despite her timidity and her lack of worldly wisdom, he would value her love and confidence far above any woman's he had ever met.

"Miss Terry," he said gently, "do you know I fancy that living here, as you have all your life, within sound of the sea waves, has woven a little of their melancholy into your nature and a little of their pathos into your eyes. I thought so the first time I saw you, and the more I see of you the more I think it is so."

"The ocean does sound sad to me," she said, "and at times it makes me feel blue. Then I am so much alone and have no one in whom to confide my feelings. Mother would not understand me, and if father thought I wasn't happy it would make him miserable." Then, turning her pathetic eyes full upon her questioner, she added: "Did you ever think, Mr. Page, that the sound of the waves might be the voices of drowned people trying to be heard? I believe every human being has a soul, and for all we know if their souls may be in the water and possibly are trying to speak to us."

"Oh, no, no, Miss Terry. That is all imagination on your part and due to your being too much alone with you."

"I put yer things in yer room," said Uncle Terry, and, handing him a lamp, he added, "ye know whar yer things is, hope so make yerself 't hum." Just as they were all gathered about the fire, both the "wimmin' folks" with their sewing and Uncle Terry enjoying one of the cigars Albert had brought him, the old man's face gleamed as genial as the frelight. He told stories of the sea, of storm and shipwreck and curious experiences that had come to him during the many years he had dwelt beside the ocean, and while Albert listened, stealing occasional glances at the sweet faced girl whose eyes were bent upon her sewing, the neighboring waves kept up their monotone, and the fire sparkled and glowed with a roddy light.

"Don't you ever get tired of hearing the waves beat so near you?" asked Albert at last. "Wal, there's suthin' curious 'bout that," answered Uncle Terry. "I've got so used ter 'em they seem sorter necessary ter livin', an' when I go 'way it's hard fer me ter sleep fer missin' 'em. Why, don't yer like ter hear 'em?"

"Oh, yes; I enjoy them always, and they are a lullaby that puts me to sleep at once." It was but little past 9 when Uncle Terry arose and, bringing in a basket of wood, observed, "I guess I'll turn in middlin' 'arly so's to git up 'arly an' pull my traps 'fore breakfast, an' then I'll take ye out fishin'." The mackerel's blinn' good these days, an' mebbe ye'll enjoy it."

As Lissy soon followed, and Albert was left alone with Telly. It looked intentioned. For a few moments he watched her, still intent on her work. "Have you finished my sketches?" he said finally. "Not quite," she replied. "I had to go up to the cove to work on one in order to satisfy myself, and a good many days it was too rough to row up there, so that hindered me. I have that one finished, though, and the other almost."

Was it possible that this girl had rowed four miles every day in order to paint from the original scene of his sketch? "May I see the finished one?" he asked. She brought it. Not only was the picture of herself sitting in the shade up to the eaves reproduced, but the quiet little cove in front and a view of ocean beyond. It was a charming picture. "There is only one thing lacking," she said shyly as he held it at an angle so the frelight would shine upon it, "and I didn't dare put that in without your consent."

"I do not notice anything left out as I recall the spot." "But there is," she replied, "and one that should be there to make the picture correct. Can't you guess?" He looked at Telly's face, upon which a roguish smile had come. "No, I can't guess. Tell me what is lacking?" "Yourself," she replied. "But I do not want the picture to remind me of myself. I wanted it so I could see you and recall the day we were there." She made no reply, and he laid it on the table and asked for the other one. It was all done except the finishing touches, but it did not seem to be a reproduction of his original sketch at the cove.

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own thoughts. The ocean of course has a sad sound to us all if we stop to think about it, but it's best not to. What you need is the companionship of some cheerful girl about your own age. Then he added thoughtfully: "The matter's been in the hands of an unprincipled lawyer for some months, as no doubt Mr. Terry has told you, but now he is dead, and I have taken hold of it and shall not rest until you have your rights. We shall know what your heritage is and all about your ancestors in a few months." Then he added tenderly, "Would it pain you to hear more about it, or would you rather not?"

"Please banish this mood from now on and never let it return," he said hastily. "I have come to tell you that in the near future the mystery of your life may be solved, and what a blessing that is! Life is an enigma, the rock variations in matters of health and ability an injustice, and the end a blank wall that none who scales ever recrosses with tidings of the beyond. As some one has expressed it: 'Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities!' We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry."

"An' right thar," put in Uncle Terry earnestly, "is whar I alius ever fer believers, as the widder calls 'em, fer they are satisfied whar is beyond an' have it all pict'rd in thar minds, even to what the streets are paved with an' the kind o' music they're goin' ter have. It's all guesswork, in my way o' thinkin', but they are sure

of it, an' that feelin' is lots o' comfort to 'em when they are drawin' near the end. I've been a sort er scoffer all my life an' can't help bein' a doubter, but there are times when I envy the Widder Leach an' the rest on 'em the delusion I believe they're laborin' under."

"But do you believe death ends all consciousness?" asked Albert seriously. "Have you no hope, ever, of a life beyond this blank wall?" "Sartin' I have hopes, same as all on us has, but I wish I was more sure my hopes was goin' ter be realized. Once in awhile I git the feelin' thar ain't no use in hopin', an' then a little suttin' keeps sayin' 'mebbe-mebbe-mebbe'—an' I feel more cheerful agin'."

Albert looked at the roughly clad and withered old man who sat near, and in whose words lurked an undertone of sadness mingled with a faint hope, and in an instant back came a certain evening months before when the Widder Leach had uttered a prayer that had stirred his feelings as no such utterance ever had before. All the paths of that simple petition, all its abiding faith in God's goodness and wisdom, all its utter self-abnegation and absolute confidence in a life beyond the grave, came back, and all the consolation that feeling surely held for the old and poverty stricken soul who uttered it impressed him in sharp contrast to the doubting "mebbe-mebbe" of Uncle Terry.

As Albert looked out to where the waves were breaking upon a ledge, and back again to this old man sitting with bowed head beside him, a sincere regret that it was not in his power to utter one word that would aid in dispelling the clouds of doubt came to him. "Since I lack in faith myself," he thought, "all I can say will only increase his doubt. I wish I had as much faith as the widder, but I have not, and possibly never shall have." For a long time he sat in silence, living over the years during which skepticism had been slowly but surely growing upon him, and then Uncle Terry suddenly looked up at him. It is likely the old man's keen eyes read at a glance what was in Albert's mind, for he said: "It don't do no good ter brood over this matter o' believin' Mr. Page; I've rocked it thought different many a time, an' more so now I'm gittin' near the end o' life, but I can't, an' so thar's no use in worryin'. Our 'pinions 'bout these matters are a good deal due to our bringin' up an' the experiences we've met with. Mine, connected with those as has perished religion, has, as I said afore, been unfortin', but, as I said afore, I wish I believed different."

He paused a few moments and then added sadly, "This hopin' ain't alius best fer some on us either, fer it's hopin' fer some one to cum year after year that's made Telly whar she is an' grieved Lissy an' me more'n she ever knew."

Albert looked curiously at the old man beside him, and a new feeling of trust and affection came to him. In some ways Uncle Terry seemed like his own father, and a sudden impulse to be frank with him.

"Uncle Terry," he said, "I have a little story to tell you, and as it comes close to you, I believe it's right that you should know it. The first time I saw Telly I said to myself, 'That girl is a prize any man may feel proud to win.' I asked her if I might write to her, and what with her few letters and the little I have seen of her I feel that she is the one I want for a wife. I have not even hinted it to her yet, and before I do I would like to feel that you are satisfied with me. May I have your consent to win her if I can?"

Uncle Terry reached out and grasped Albert's hand, and shaking it cordially, answered, "Ye hev my best wishes in the matter, an' I wouldn't say that if I didn't think ye worthy o' her." Then he added with a droll smile, "Lissy an' me sorter 'spected that Telly was the magnet that drew ye down here!"

"I thank you for your confidence and consent," replied Albert gratefully. "I'm earning an income that is more than sufficient for two, and if Telly will say 'yes' I shall be the happiest man on earth. And now," he added, "let's go fishin', Uncle Terry."

"I guess it's 'bout time," was the answer, "fer thar's two schools workin' into the cove, an' we'll have some fun."

Three hours after, when they landed at the cove fairly sated with pulling in the gamy little mackerel and happy as two boys, Telly met them with a smile and the news that dinner was ready.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Notice of Discharge. I will apply to the Judge of Probate for Clarendon County, on the 21st day of December, 1905, for letters of discharge as administratrix of the Estate of John C. Ingram, deceased. HATTIE C. INGRAM, Administratrix. Sumter, S. C., November 20, 1905.

Notice of Discharge. I will apply to the Judge of Probate for Clarendon County on the 21st day of December, 1905, for Letters of Discharge as guardian for Bessie Ingram, Alma Ingram, Fishburne and Georgie C. Blanding, minors. HATTIE C. INGRAM, Guardian. Sumter, S. C., November 20, 1905.

Notice of Discharge. I will apply to the Judge of Probate for Clarendon County, on the 18th day of November, 1905, for Letters of Discharge as Executor of the Estate of E. G. DuBose, deceased. R. E. McFADDIN, JR., Executor. Sardinia, S. C., November 18, 1905.

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