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Uncle Terry

CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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"He's worse'n burdock burs ter git away from," answered Uncle Terry, "an' ye can't be perlite ter him unless ye want t' spend the rest o' yer life listenin'. His tongue allus seemed ter be hung in the middle an' wag both ways. It wasn't lonesome," he contin-ued, rising and adding a few sticks to the fire as the two women laid aside their wraps and drew chairs up. "I've read the paper purty well through an' had a spell o' livin' over bygones," and then, turning to Telly and smiling, he added: "I got thinkin' o' the day ye came ashere an' mother she got that came ashore, an' mother she got that excited she sot the box ye was in on the stove an' then put more wood in.

It's a wonder she didn't put ye in the stove instead o' the wood!"

As this joke was not new to the lisers no notice was taken of it, and the three lapsed into silence.

Outside the steady boom of the surf beating on the rocks came with monotonous regularity, and inside the clock ticked. For a long time Uncle Terry sat and smoked on in silence, resumsaid: "By the way, Telly, what's become o' them trinkets o' yourn ye had on that day? It's been so long now, most twenty years, I 'bout forgot 'em. s'pose ye hain't lost 'em, hev ye?"
"Why, no, father," she answered,

little surprised. "I hope not. are all in a box in my bureau, and no one ever disturbs them.

"Ye wouldn't mind fetchin' 'em now, would ye, Telly?" he continued after



She watched him take out the contents. drawing a long whiff of smoke and slowly emitting it in rings. "It's been so many years, an' since I got thinkin', bout it I'd like to take a look at 'em, jest to remind me o' that fortunate day ye came to us."

The girl arose and, going upstairs, returned with a small tin box shaped like a trunk and, drawing the table up in front of Uncle Terry, set the box down upon it. As he opened it she perched herself on the arm of his chair and, leaning against his shoulder, passed one arm caressingly around his neck and watched him take out the contents.

First came a soft, fleecy blanket, then two little garments, once whitest muslin, but now yellow with age, and then another smaller one of flannel. Pinned to this were two tiny shoes of knitted wool. In the bottom of the box was a small wooden shoe, and though clumsy comparison, yet evidently fashioned to fit a lady's foot. Tucked in this was

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a little box tied with faded ribbon, and in this were a locket and chain, two rings and a scrap of paper. The writing on the paper, once hastily scrawled by a despairing mothers' hand, had al-most faded, and inside the locket were two faces, one a man's with strongly marked features, the other girlish with big eyes and hair in curls.

big eyes and nair in curis.

These were all the heritage of this waif of the sea who now, a fair girl with eyes and face like the woman's picture, was leaning on the shoulder of her foster father, and they told a pathetic tale of life and death; of romance and mystery not yet unwoven.

How many times that orphan girl

had imagined what that tale might be; how often before she had examined every one of those mute tokens; how many times gazed with mute eyes at the faces in the locket; and hew, as the years bearing her onward toward maturity passed, had she hoped and waited, hoping ever that some some whisper from that faroff land of her birth might reach her!

And as she looked at those mute relics which told so little and yet so much of her history, while the old man who had been all that a kind father could had been all that a sing rather could be to her took them out one by one, she realized more than ever what a debt of gratitude she owed to him. When he had looked them over and put them back in the exact order in which they had been packed, he closed the box and, taking the little hand that had been caressing his face in his own wrinkled and bony one, held it for a moment. When he released it the girl stooped and, pressing her lips to his weather browned cheek, arose and resumed her seat.

"Waal, ye better put the box away now," said Uncle Terry at last. "I'll jest ge out an' take a look off'n the p'int, and then it'll be time to turn in."

CHAPTER XIV.

VE got ter go ter Boston,' said Uncle Terry to his wife a few days later. "Thar's some money due us that we ain't sartin we'll git. You an' Telly can tend the lights for a couple o' nights, can't ye? I won't be gone more'n that. Bascom's to take me up to the head, an' if the boat's runnin' I'll be all right."

This plan had cost Uncle Terry good deal of diplomacy. Not only did he have to invent a reasonable excuse for going by exciting the fears of both Bascom and Oaks regarding money really due them, but he had to allay the curiosity of his wife and Telly as well. In a small village like the Cape every one's movements were well known to one's movements were well known to all and commented on, and no one was better aware of it than Uncle Terry. But go to Boston he must, and to do so right in the dead of winter and not excite a small tempest of curious gossip

taxed his Yankee wit.

At Bath he had a few hours' wait and went to the bank and drew a sum of money from his small savings.

"Lawyers are sech sharps, consarn 'em!" he said to himself. "Td better go loaded. Most likely I'll come back skinned. I never did tackle a lawyer 'thout losin' my shirt."

When, after an all night ride, during which he sat in the smoking car with his pipe and thoughts for company, he arrived in Boston, he felt, as he would phrase it, like a cat in a strange gar-ret. He had tried to fortify himself against the expected Frye, who, he felt sure, would make him pay dearly for any service. When he entered the rather untidy office of that legal light Uncle Terry looked sus-

piciously at its occupant.
"Well, sir, what can I do for you?"
asked Frye after his visitor had introduced himself.

"Waal," answered Uncle Terry, taking a seat and laying his hat on the floor beside him, "I've come on rather a curis errand." And, taking out the a cuts errand." And, taking out the slip he had a few days before placed in his wallet, he handed it to Frye with the remark, "That's my errand." Frye's face brightened.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Terry," he said, beginning to rub his hands together. "If you have any facts in your possession that will aid us in the search for an heir to this estate we shall be glad to pay you for them, proteined they are facts. Now six what is thied they are facts. Now, sir, what is r story?"

Uncle Terry looked at the lawyer a test tent before answering.

didn't come here to tell all I knew fust go off," he said. "I know all fust go off," he said. "I know all bout this shipwreck an' a good deal more that'll consarn ye, but fust I want to know who is lookin' for the information an' what's likely to cum on't."

It was Frye's turn to stare now. "This man won't be any easy witness," he thought, and then he said, "That I am not at liberty to disclose until I know what facts you can establish, but rest assured that any in-

tablish, but rest assured that any information you may have, if it be proved of real value, will entitle you to an ample reward."

"I reckon ye don't quite ketch on to my drift," replied Uncle Terry. "I didn't cum here lookin' fire pay, but to see that justice was sarved an' them as had rights got that dues."

"Well, sir,", said Frye in a suave voice, "we, too, are looking to see the ends of justice served, but you must understand that in a matter of this importance we must make no mistakes. An estate awaits a claimant, but that claimant must establish his or her identity beyond the shadow of a doubt in order, as you must see, that justice may be done.

"Waal," replied Uncle Terry, stroking his chin with his thumb and finger while he deliberated, "I s'pose I may as well tell ye fust as last. I cum as well tell ye fust as last. I cum here for that purpose, an' all I want to fix is, if thar's nothin' in it ye'd keep it a secret an' not raise any false hopes in the minds o' them as is near and dear to me."

"It's a lawyer's professional duty never to disclose any business confidence that a client may confide to him," answered Frye, with dignity, "and in this matter I fafer you wish to become my client. Am I right, Mr. Terry?"
"I didn't cum here exactly purposin"

to hire ye," answered Uncle Terry. "I cum to find what's in the wind, an' if 'twas likely to 'mount to anything to tell all I knew an' see that them as had rights got justice. As I told ye in the fust on't, I'm keeper o' the light at the end o' Southport island, an' have been for thirty year.

"One night in March, just nineteen year ago comin' this spring, thar was small bark got a-foul o' White Hoss ledge right off'n the p'int and stayed thar hard an' fast. I seen her soon as 'twas light, but thar was nothin' that could be done but build a fire an' stand an' watch the poor critters go down. Long toward noon I spied a bundle workin' in, an' when it bundle workin in, an when it struck I made fast to it with a boat hook an' found a baby inside an' alive. My wife an' I took care on't and have been doing so ever since. It was a gal baby, and she growed up into a young lady. 'Bout ten years ago we took out papers legally adoptin' her, an' so she's ourn. From a paper we found pinned to her clothes we learned her name was Etelka Peterson, an' that her mother, an' we supposed her father, went down that day right in sight o' us. Thar was a locket round sight o' us. Thar was a locket round the child's neck an' a couple o' rings in the box, an' we have kept 'em an' the papers an' all her baby clothes ever since. That's the hull story."

"How did this child live to get

ashore?" asked Frye, keenly interest-"That's the curis part," replied Uncle

Terry. "She was put in a box an' tied 'tween two feather beds an' cum ashore dry as a duck." Frye stroked his nose reflectively, stooping over as he did and watching his visitor with hawk-like eyes.

"A very well told tale, Mr. Terry," he said at last. "A very well told tale indeed! Of course you have retained all the articles you say were found on the child?"

"Yes, we've kept 'em all, you may be sure," replied Uncle Terry. "And why did you never make any official report of this wreck and of the

facts you state?" asked Frye.
"I did at the time," answered Uncle Terry, "but nothin' cum on't. I guess my report is thar in Washington now, if it ain't lost."

(To Be Continued.)

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