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S. F. GARDNER, Manager,
Chatham, November 30, 1903.

Uncle Terry

By
CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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CHAPTER XXXV.

"I'm goin' to give ye a taste o' mackerel fishin'," said Uncle Terry the next morning after breakfast. "We'll go over to the fish house, an' ye can put on some oilers an' save yer good clothes." On the way they met the well remembered old lady Albert had first noticed at the prayer meeting. She recognized him and, offering a rather soiled hand, for she had been spreading fish on the racks, exclaimed: "In the Lord's name I thank ye, Mr. Page, fer rememberin' a poor old creetur like me an' sendin' that dress. I make sure the Lord's teched yer heart, an' if ye ain't a believer yet ye will be."

"I am glad my little remembrance pleased you," answered Albert pleasantly. "It was only a trifle, and you need not feel obligated for it." He kept on after Uncle Terry, not wishing to waste any time, but she followed to add more thanks, ending with, "God bless ye, sir, an' may he warm the heart o' one good girl, fer ye deserve it."

When he had donned a suit of oilers and Uncle Terry was pulling out of the little cove Albert said: "That old lady is the most pious person I ever met. No one could doubt she means every word she says." "Waal, it's about all the consolation she gits out o' life, an' 'twixt you an' me, she takes more'n all the rest o' the believers here," answered Uncle Terry, "an' at times I 'most envy her fer it. She's sorter cracked 'bout religion; leastwise that's my notion, an' mebbe it's lucky she is, seein' she's poor an' nothin' but that fer comfort. She's smart 'nuff other ways, though, an' there ain't nothin' goin' on here she don't know. She's kind hearted, too, an' if she had anything ter give she'd share her last cent with ye. If enybody's sick she's allus ready to help. That's lots o' wuss folks in the world than the Widder Leach." And then, as if that crowned the sum total of her virtues, he added, "Telly an' Lissy thinks lots o' her."

He paused for breath and, turning to see if they were heading right, resumed his strong and steady pulling. "That," observed Uncle Terry, pointing to a long and narrow ledge, "is what Telly started fer shore all alone just nineteen years ago last March." And then he added while he watched Albert's averted face, "Twas an on-lucky day fer the poor sailors an' a lucky one fer us, fer she's been a heap o' comfort ever since."

"Tell me, Uncle Terry, why it is she feels so sensitive regarding her history and what is the cause of the peculiar moods you spoke of last summer. I noticed it last evening, and it pained me very much."

"It's hard tellin'. She's a girl that's given ter broodin' a good deal, an' mebbe when she was told the facts she began ter suspect some o' her ancestors would be lookin' her up some day. She allus has been a good deal by herself sence she got her schoolin', an' 'most likely doin' lots o' thinkin'. But Telly's all right, an' the most willin' an' tender hearted creetur I ever seen or heard on. She'll make an amazin' good wife fer some man if she ever finds the right 'un."

When they reached the island Uncle Terry landed and, going to the top of a cliff, scanned the sea for signs of fish. "Mackerel's cur' us fish," he observed to Albert, who had followed. "They're a good deal like some wimmuns—ye never know what ter find 'em. Yesterday mornin' that cove jest inside o' the p'int was live with 'em, an' today I can't see a sign o' one. We better sit here an' wait a spell till I sight a school."

To a dreamer like Albert Page the limitless ocean view he now enjoyed lifted him far above mackerel and their habits. His mind was also occupied a good deal by Telly, and while he desired to please the kindly old man, who imagined fishing would entertain him, his heart was not in it.

"Don't let us worry about the mackerel, Uncle Terry," he observed as they seated themselves on top of a cliff. "This lone, uninhabited island and the view here will content me until your fish are hungry."

"It allus sets me thinkin', too, an' wonderin' what we cum from an' what we air here fer. An' our stay is so amazin' short besides! We air born, grow up, work a spell, git old an' die, an' that's the end. Why, it don't seem only last year when I cum to the Cape, an' it's goin' nigh on to thirty now, an' I'm 'most through my spell o' life. What puzzles me is what's the good o' bein' born at all if ye've got ter die so soon! An', more'n all that, if life's the

Lord's blessin', as the widder b'lieves, why are so many only born to suffer or be crippled all their lives? An' why are snakes an' all sorts o' vermin, to say nothin' o' cheatin' lawyers, like Frye, ever born at all?"

Albert smiled at the coupling of Frye with vermin. "There are a good many wiser heads than mine, Uncle Terry, that have never been able to answer your question," he replied, "and I doubt if they ever will. To my mind the origin of life is an enigma, the wide variations in matters of health and ability an injustice, and the end a blank wall that none who scales ever trocusses 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 allus envy the believers, as the widder calls 'em, fer they are satisfied what is beyond an' have it all pict'ed out 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 on't, an' that feelin' is lots o' comfort to 'em when they are drawin' near the end. I've been a sort o' 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 b'lieve 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 suthin keeps sayin' 'Mebbe—mebbe—mebbe'—an' I feel more cheerful again."

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 pathos 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 envired 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 wished I 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, to say the least, been unfortunat, but, as I said afore, I wish I believed different."

He paused a few moments and then added sadly, "This hopin' ain't allus

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. Then, following that, came 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 am 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.)

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