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Uncle Terry

By
CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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It was a charming picture. "There is only one thing lacking," she said shyly as he held it at an angle so the firelight 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 Terry'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 first 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 first 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 telltale flush! "As 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 rhythm, 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 at every meeting?"

"Just the same," replied Terry, "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 piteous 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 Terry, "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 sincere prayer that came from some one's heart and was not manufactured for the occasion. Those who wear fine

stiks and broadcloth and sit in cushioned pews seldom hear such a prayer as she uttered that night."

Then as Terry made no response he sat 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 her 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 unsullied 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 sad sea waves, has woven a little of their melancholy into your nature and a little of their paths 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 they have gone down into the ocean 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 your

life may be solved and, what is better, that a legacy awaits your claiming. The matter has 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?"

"Father has told me a little of it, but I know he has kept most of the trouble to himself. It's his way. Since he came back from Boston he has acted like his old self, and no words can tell how glad I am. As for the money, if must and shall go to him, every penny of it, and all the comfort I can give him as long as he lives as well."

"I thank you for what you have said," said Albert quickly, "for now I shall dare to tell you another story before I go back. Not tonight," he added, smiling, as she looked at him curiously, "but you shall hear it in due time—up at the cove, maybe, if tomorrow afternoon is pleasant. I, too, am superstitious in some ways."

Perhaps to keep Terry from guessing what his story was he talked upon every subject that might interest her, avoiding the one nearest his heart. It came with a surprise when the little clock chimed 11, and he at once arose and begged her pardon for the possible trespass upon conventional hours. "You will go up to the cove with me?" he asked as he paused a moment at the foot of the stairs.

"I shall enjoy it very much, and I have a favor I want to ask of you, which is to let me make a sketch of you just where you sat the time your boat drifted away."

When he retired it was long after he heard the clock downstairs strike the midnight hour, and in his dreams he saw Terry's face smiling in the firelight.

(To Be Continued.)

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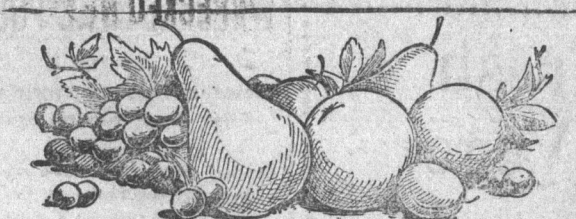
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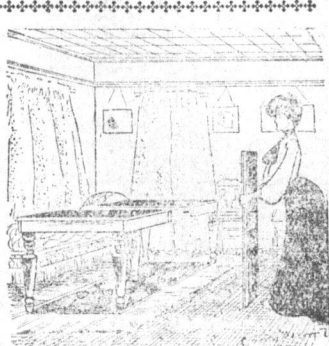
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