

Uncle Terry

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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(Continued.)

"But you want to make me blue?"

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way, Terry. Only I was thinkin' how fast the years go by. The leaves turnin' allus makes me think on't. It seems no time sense they just came out, an' now they're goin' ag'in! It don't seem more'n two or three years sense ye was a little baby a-pullin' my fingers an' callin' me 'dada,' an' now ye a woman grown. It won't be long afore yer 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, to be 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 you 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 hadn't bin thinkin' 'bout myself in this matter," he observed as he picked up the reins again and chirruped to the old horse, "an' only an' wantin' ter see ye provided fer, Terry. As fer Mr. Page or any other man, every woman needs a purtector 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 land that he recognized, he handed it to her with a smile and immediately left her alone to read it.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE halcyon days of autumn had come, when one day Albert packed a valise and boarded the early morning train for Maine. An insidious longing to see the girl that had been in his thoughts for four months had come to him, and week by week increased until it had overcome business demands. Then he had a little good news from Stockholm, which he said to himself, would serve as an excuse. He had told Frank what his errand was to Uncle Terry, and to say to any that called that he would return in two days. Of his reception by Terry he was a good deal in doubt. She had written to him in reply to his letters, but between each of the simple, unaffected lines all he could read was an undertone of sadness. That, with a vivid recollection of what Uncle Terry had disclosed, led him to believe there was some burden on her mind.

When he reached Uncle Terry's hand

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at the boat landing that old man's face fairly beamed.

"I'm right glad ter see ye," he said, "an' so 'ill the folks be. 'Twar about much 'bout on at the Cape any time an' sense ye war that it seems wassens ever."

"I thought I'd run down and stay a night or so with you," said Albert, "and tell you what I've learned about the legacy."

"Uncle Terry's face brightened. 'Hev ye got good news?' he asked."

"In a way, yes," replied Albert. "This firm of Thygeson & Co. write express surprise that Frye should have given up the case after they had paid him over \$500, and ask that I file a bond with the Swedish consul in Washington before they submit a statement of the case and inventory of the estate to us. It is only a legal formality, and I have complied with it."

"They must 'a' got skeery o' lawyers frum dealin' with that thief Frye," put in Uncle Terry, "an' I don't blame 'em. Did ye 'larn the real cause o' his suicidin'?"

"Wheat speculation," answered Albert. "He dropped over \$80,000 in three weeks, and it broke his miserly heart. I never want to see such a sight again in my life as his face was that morning. It haunted me for a week after."

When Uncle Terry's home was reached Albert found a most cordial reception awaiting him from Aunt Lissy, and, what pleased him far more, a warmly welcoming smile from Terry.

"'Tis sorry we didn't know ye were comin'," said Aunt Lissy, "so we could be better prepared for company."

"I wish you wouldn't consider me company," replied Albert. "Just think I am one of the family, and let it go at that."

The long ride in the crisp sea air following the scanty railroad lunch had given him a most amazing appetite, and the beautiful supper of stewed chicken and cold lobster, not to mention other good things of Aunt Lissy's providing, received a hearty acceptance. Although it was dark when supper was over, he could not resist going out on the rocks and listening a few minutes to the waves as they beat upon them.

When he returned to the house Albert found a bright fire burning in the sitting room.

"I put yer things in yer room," said Uncle Terry, and, handing him a lamp, he added, "Ye know whar 'tis now, I hope, so make yerself 't home."

Later, when 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 firelight. 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 monotonous, and the fire sparkled and glowed with a ruddy 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 bittin' good these days, an' mebbe ye'll enjoy it."

Aunt Lissy soon followed, and Albert was left alone with Terry. It looked intentional. 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 of a low spruce reproduced, but the fern decorated boat near by, the quiet little cove in front and a view of ocean beyond.

It was 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

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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 pattern nose and long eyelashes just meeting the cheek that bore a titillate tush! 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 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 silk and brocade and sit in cushioned pews seldom hear such a prayer as she uttered that night."

She then as Terry made no response he sat in silence a few moments mentally contrasting the girl with those he had met in Boston.

The girl clad in a gray dress severe in its simplicity and so ill fitting that it really detracted from the beautiful outline of her figure.

"There is only one thing lacking," he thought, "and that is a pair of eyes. Her eyes were braced and rolled 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 smile like her eyes and throat and shoulders and bust, so chaste that not a 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 unsullied by the world! "I wonder how she would act if suddenly dropped into the Saxons' 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 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. There 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: "Don't 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 own thoughts. The ocean of course has

said 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: "I wish you could visit Alice for a few months. She would drive the megrims out of your mind."

"I should be glad to have her come and visit me. I am sure I should love her."

"I wish she could," he answered, "but she is a schoolteacher, and that duty keeps her occupied most of the time. I shall bring her down here next summer." Then, feeling it unfair to conceal the fact that he knew her history any longer, he said: "I beg your pardon, Miss Terry, but I know what is at the bottom of your melancholy mood, and I know it the second night I was here last summer. Your father told me your history then."

"He did? You knew my unfortunate history that night?"

"I did, every word of it," he answered tenderly, "and I should have told you I did if I had not been afraid it would hurt you to know I knew it then."

Her eyes fell, and a look of pain came into her face.

"Please banish this mood from now on and never let it return," he said lastly. "I have come to tell you that in the near future the mystery of 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 have not kept most of it 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 I do 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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Blank forms for statement may be had from any of the assessors on application. The assessors will not make any changes in their valuation after the expiration of the said 30 days.

Dated this 18th day of April, A. D., 1905.
W. H. BRYLA, J. J. McEVEY, P. J. FERGUSON, Assessors.
29 Ave.



Mrs. Martha Pohlman

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