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is by far the best dollar
medicine known.
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Uncle Terry

By **CHARLES CLARK MUNN**

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CHAPTER III.

A STRANGER visiting Sandgate, in the Green mountains, on a summer afternoon would inevitably conclude the town was asleep. Often not a person would be visible the entire length of its main street, cooled by three rows of maples, one dividing it and one shading each of the two sidewalks formed of narrow strips of weather stained marble. Under some of these trees that almost touch branches for half a mile or two cows might be grazing or taking a siesta while chewing the cud of content. On the vine laid porch of the village tavern Landford Pell would quite likely be dozing in an armchair tilted back, and across the way Mr. Hobbs, who keeps the one general store, would as likely be napping on a counter, his head pillowed upon a pile of calico. A little farther up the street and near the one tall spired white church Mrs. Mears, the village gossip, may be sitting on the veranda of a small house almost hid by luxuriantly growing Norway spruce and idly rocking while she chats with the Widow Sloper, who lives there and whose mission in life is to cut and fit the best "go to meetin'" gowns of female Sandgate. Both dearly love to talk over all that's going on, and whether this or that village swain is paying special attention to any one rosy cheeked lass, and if so, "what's likely to come out." Both mean well by this neighborly interest, and especially does Mrs. Sloper, who always advises platts for stout women, "with middlin' fullness in the bust" for thin ones.

One or two men may be at work haying in the broad meadows west of the village, through which the slow current of a small river twists and turns, or others wielding hoes on a hillside field of corn to the east, but so far as moving life in the village street goes there will be none. On either side of the Sandgate valley two spurs of the Green mountain range, forest clad, stand guard as if to isolate from all the world this peaceful dale, where dwellers' sole ambition in life may be summed up in to plow, plant, reap and go to meeting.

On the north end of this park-like highway and beyond the last house it narrows to an ordinary roadway and divides. One fork turns to the right, following up the banks of a winding stream to an old gristmill with moss covered wheel and lily dotted pond above. The other turns to the left, crosses the narrow Sandgate valley and bears south past the Page place. If it were Sunday, not many years ago and about 11 in the morning, a stranger passing the church would have heard through the open doors and windows the exquisitely sweet voice of Alice Page, clear as a bell and melodious as a bird's, toying and trilling through "Coronation" or some other easily recognized hymn, and had that stranger awaited the close of service he or she would have seen among the congregation filling out one petite and plump little lady, with flower-like face, sparkling blue eyes and kiss inspiring mouth, who would most likely have walked demurely along with her big brother Albert and, turning down a narrow pathway, follow him across the meadows, over a footbridge that spans the stream and up to an old fashioned elm shaded house.

This landmark, known far and wide as the Page place, is historic. Built in the time of King George and one of the first three erected in Sandgate, it has withstood the storms of two centuries and seen many generations of Pages come and go. Additions have been made to it—an ell on one side, larger windows and a wide veranda in front. Inside it is much the same, for the open fireplaces remain in place and sitting room, and a tall clock of solemn tick stands in the hall where it stood when Paul Revere took his famous ride.

The last owner, Simeon Page, or, as he was called, Squire Page, joined the great majority two years after an enterprising railroad crept up the Sandgate valley. He had bitterly opposed its entrance into the town, and it was asserted that chagrin at his defeat hastened his death. His widow, with their two children, Albert and Alice, and a widowed sister, remained and with the aid of hired men managed the farm. But bushes began to choke the pastures and meadows, the outbuildings grew shabby, the house received no paint, and as the children grew up and needs increased one by one the broad fields were sold. It had been the squire's ambition that his only son should become a professional man, and carrying out his wishes, Albert's mother had pinched and saved, denying herself all luxuries, and given him a collegiate education. He had graduated with honors, read law, been admitted to the bar and then returned to Sandgate and opened an office. Alice, three years his junior, had been sent to a boarding school for two years, where she devoted most of her time to music, then came home again as mother's helpmate.

But the years of self denial were at an end, for one June day that mother laid down her burden and was placed beside her husband in the village cem-

etery. Then the two orphans found themselves joint heirs to an old time wooden house, a few acres of meadow, a couple hundred dollars of debts and—nothing else. No, that is not right, for they both had youth, good health and habits and good educations.

Albert, who had rather taken charge of matters since his return to Sandgate, kept the debt situation from Alice after his mother's death, feeling she had grief enough to bear without it, but for all that it troubled him seriously. The income from his practice was scarcely enough to clothe him and not likely to increase, for Sandgate had scant use for a lawyer, and what to do or which way to turn he knew not. If it were not for Alice and Aunt Susan, he thought it would be easier, but they must be provided for. Alice, who had been his companion, playmate and confidant since the days of short dresses, he especially cared for, and that feeling was mutual.

So devoted a brother and sister were they that it had kept them from forming other associations, and when Albert had been asked why he did not eschew some other young lady to the huskiness, barn dances or church socials his usual reply was, "Alice is good enough for me, and when she prefers another beau I may, but not till then."

With Alice, though many of the village swains wooed, she wouldn't. Even Jim Mears, stalwart and with a hand like a foot, farred no better, and when Albert rallied her once about young Mears she answered, "Oh, Jim's all right, he isn't handsome, but, then, he's strong," which delicate sarcasm may be considered a sufficient reflex of her feelings toward others of the would be attentive young farmers.

But for all that Alice was counted in on every festive gathering. If it was a barn dance, she was always there and never lacked partners, and when the jolly party rode home in a big wagon filled with straw it was her voice that always started "The Quilting Party" or other old time ballad usually inspired by moonlight. When a strawberry festival was in order at the church, she was given a post of honor, and when Christmas decorations were necessary every young man felt it a privilege to obey her orders. At home she was the same winsome little queen and had no more devoted subject than her brother.

For a month after the funeral he worried a good deal. He knew that bills had been left unpaid through his mother's illness and that the family were in straitened circumstances. His own law practice so far had yielded scant returns, and what to do and where to turn was a puzzle. He wrote to a former classmate whose father was a prominent merchant in Boston stating his situation and asking advice. It was two weeks ere he received a reply, and then, though a cordial letter

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of sympathy, if did not go far toward solving the problem. A week later, however, came a letter from a lawyer in that city of the name of Frye offering him a position as assistant in his office at a small salary. It was so small that Albert thought it a hopeless task to pay home expenses out of it and leave anything toward their debts. It was more than his present income, however, and yet to accept the offer and leave Aunt Susan and Alice alone seemed hard. On the other hand, to borrow money on what little of the farm was left did not help matters, for when that was gone what then?

Matters came to a climax one day and ended his indecision. He had been away from his office all that afternoon taking a long stroll in the woods to escape his loneliness, and, returning at tea time, found a cloud on his sister's face.

"Mr. Hobbs called this afternoon," she said as they sat down to the table, "and asked for you. Said he went to your office and, not finding you in, came here." And then she added, with a quiver in her voice, "Oh, Bertie, we owe him over a hundred dollars!"

The trouble was all out now, and Albert looked gloomy. "I don't think any more of him for coming here to dun us," he answered savagely. "He might have waited until he saw me."

"Oh, he was very nice about it," responded Alice, "and begged my pardon for speaking of it. He said there was no hurry, only that he had made out his bill as a matter of form, etc., and we could pay it when convenient."

Albert made no further comment, but when the meal was ended said, "Come out on the porch, sis, and let us talk matters over." She followed him, feeling there was trouble coming, and, drawing her low chair next to his, placed one elbow on his chair arm and covered her face with that hand. For a few moments he remained silent, watching the fireflies beginning their evening dance over the meadow and listening to the distant call of a whippoorwill. Across the valley the village lights were coming in sight one by one, and a faint odor of new mown hay came to him. The pathetic little figure at his side unmoved him, however, and he dreaded to say what he must.

"Well, sis," he said at last, "I've kept matters from you as long as I can. We not only owe Hobbs a good deal, but as much more in smaller bills to others, and there is no money to pay them. I've worried about them more than you know or than I cared to have you. One of two things must be done, either borrow money and pay these bills or I must go away and earn some."

Then the little head beside him sunk slowly to his chair, and as he began stroking it he added: "I've written to Frank Nason, my old college chum, and through him have received a fair offer to go to Boston and have decided to accept it. I shall leave here as soon as I can get ready."

The trouble was growing serious now, and as he ceased speaking he caught the sound of a suppressed sob.



"Oh, Bertie, we owe him over a hundred dollars!"

"Don't cry, Alice," he said tenderly; "it can't be helped. Our home must be broken up some time, and it may as well be now as any other. The thing that worries me most is leaving you and Aunt Susan here alone."

Then the sobs increased, and the bowed form beside him shook.

"Oh, Bertie," she said at last in a choked voice, "don't leave us here alone. Let us sell the old house, pay the bills, and if you must go away let us go too."

"No, dear, that is not best," he answered softly. "I can't earn enough at first to do it. You will have to stay here till I can."

Then the proud spirit that had come to Alice Page from many generations of self helpful ancestors spoke, and she said as she raised her head and brushed away the tears: "If you are to leave me here I shall go to work as well. I can teach school or do something to help you, and I shall too."

Her defiant little speech hurt Albert just a bit, and yet he felt proud of her for it. "It may be best for you if you could get a chance to teach," he responded, "and it will help me some and take up your mind, which is worth a good deal."

But the worst was to come, and the evening before his departure he never forgot. There were some consolations to exchange, however, for she had seen Mr. Mears of the school committee and obtained a position to teach the north district school in Sandgate, a small byroad schoolhouse two miles from her home, and felt a little pride in telling about it, while he had to report that all whom they owed had promised to wait patiently for their dues.

(To Be Continued.)

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