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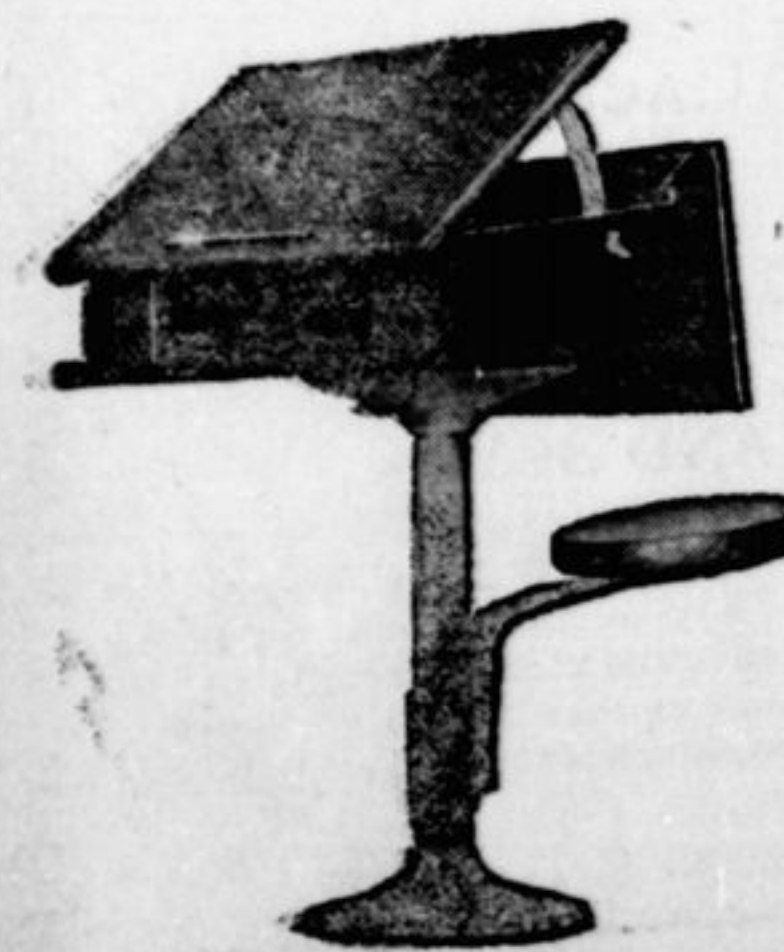
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Uncle Terry

CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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As 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! 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 appealing 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 silks and broadcloths 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 unshaded 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 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. 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 believed 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, 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 a sad 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."



"There is only one thing lacking."

"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 moods, and I knew 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 hastily. "I have come to tell you that in the near future the mystery of your life may be solved and, what is better, a legacy awaits your claiming. The matter has been in the hands of an unprincipled lawyer for some months, 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, it is all yours, 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.

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"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 fire-light.

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 others 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 creature like me an' sendin' that dress. I make sure the Lord's tetcht 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'm most envious fer her. 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' her 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, "Terry 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 whar Terry 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 sense she got her schoolin', an' most likely doin' lots o' thinkin'. But Terry's all right, an' the most willin' an' tender hearted creature 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's fish," he observed to Albert, who had followed. "They's a good deal like some wimmin-ye never know whar ter find 'em. Yesterday mornin' that cove just inside o' the pint 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 by a good deal by Terry, 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' whar 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 a'most through my spell o' life. What puzzles me is whar the good o' bein' born at all if ye've got ter die 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 recrosses 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 helixia,

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'rd out in thar minds, but there are times when I envy 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 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 environed 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 perferred religion, has, to say the least, been unfortnit, but, as I said afore, I wish I believed different."

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

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, Terry met them with a smile and the news that dinner was ready.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"We will go in my boat," said Terry the next afternoon when she and Albert were ready to start on their trip to the cove, and, unlocking a small annex to Uncle Terry's boathouse, she showed him a dainty cedar craft, she cushioned and carpeted. "You may help me launch the Sea Shell," she added smiling, "and then you may steer."

"No, that is the lady's privilege in all voyages," he answered, "and we must begin this one right."

It was a good four mile pull to the mouth of the inlet, and when he helped his fair passenger out he said: "Do you mean to say you rowed up here alone every day to work on that picture, Terry? You will let me call you Terry now, won't you?"

"Why not? All my friends do, and I feel you are my friend." Then she added: "Now I am going to have my revenge and make you pose while I sketch this time. It was the other way before."

"I am glad it is," he said, "for my arms are too tired to use for an hour. How do you want me, flat on the rock fast asleep, the way I was when my boat drifted away?"

"Oh, no, that would look as if you were dead, and as this is to be my reminder of you I want you very much alive." As for the pose she wanted Albert to assume, she could not determine which she liked the best.

"I want to sketch you in the position most natural to you here," she said finally, "and must ask you to choose that yourself."

"Let us trim the boat the way mine was that day, and I will sit beside it and smoke while you work."

The idea was adopted, and while Terry sketched he smoked, contented to watch the winsome face, so oblivious to his admiring glances.

"There," she observed, after a half hour of active penciling, "please lay your cigar aside and look pleasant. I want to catch the expression of your face."

When the sketch was completed she asked if he had any suggestions to make.

"Only one. I would like you in the picture and sitting beside me."

"I would rather not be in it," she replied soberly. "I only want to see you as you are here today. It may be a long time before you come to the Cape again."

"Would you like me to come often?"

"Of course," she answered, turning away her face. "It is so lonesome here, and there is no one I care to talk with except father and mother and Aunt Leach and Mandy Oaks."

Albert's heart began to beat with unusual speed. Never in his life before had he felt the impulse to utter words of love to any woman. "Terry," he said, "I promised to tell you a little story here today, but it's all said in a few words. I love you, and I want you to share my life and all that I can do to make you happy." A trifle incoherent, but expressive.

For a moment, while the tide of feeling surged through that queen's heart and into her cheeks, even to the tips of her ears, she was silent, and then, as both her hands went to her face, she almost whispered: "Oh, no, no; I cannot! I can never leave father and mother alone here! It would break my heart!"

"But you do care a little for me, don't you, Terry?" he begged, trying to draw her hands away from her blushing face. "Just a little, Terry; only say a little, to give me hope."

And then, as one of the hands he was trying to gain was yielded and as he softly stroked and then raised it to his lips, she turned her pleading eyes to him and said: "You won't be angry, will you? And you will come and see me once in awhile, won't you? And let me paint a picture to give you when you come?"

It may have been the pain in his face, added to her own desolation, that overcame all else, for now she bowed her head, and the tears came.

"I thank you for so much, Terry," he answered tenderly, "and God bless you for it. I do not give you up and shall not if I have to wait all my life for you. I can be patient if I only have hope." He brushed his face with one hand and, still holding hers, arose and drew her up. Then Albert slyly put his arm around her waist, and as he drew her to him he whispered, "Just one, Terry, my sweetheart, to make this spot seem more sacred."

It was not refused.

"Come out on the point, dear," he said as she tried to draw herself away, "so we can see the ocean better. I will tell you the story I promised last evening." He still held her a half prisoner, and when they were seated where the waves were beating almost at their feet he began his recital. When he came to that portion in which Frye played a part, and ending in such a ghastly denouement, she shuddered.

"That is the one horrible part of taking your own life," she said, "to think how you will look and what those who find you will say. If I were to do such a thing I should first make sure no one would ever find me."

The remark startled him. "Terry," he said soberly, "do not ever think of such a thing. Would you, whose heart is so loving and tender, burden all those who know you with a lifelong sorrow?"

"No, no, not that way. Only if those who love me were taken I should want



"Lissy an' me sorter 'spected that Terry was the magnet."

best fer some on us either, fer it's hopin' fer some one to cum year after year that's made Terry what she is an' 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 Terry 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 Terry 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 Terry will say 'yes' I shall be the happiest man on earth. And now," he added, "let's go fishing, Uncle Terry."

"I guess it's 'bout time," was the

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