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Uncle Terry

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE mountains around Sandgate were as blue as the sky, and the scarlet and gold of autumn before life seemed quite as usual to Alice Page. The summer had passed, and though it left a scar on her heart she had resolutely determined to put the sweet illusion of her mind. "I was very foolish to let him see that I cared," she thought, "for it can never be, and by and by he will forget me, or if he does think of me it will be to recall me as one of his summer girls who had a fit of silliness."

Her heart ached at times, and in spite of all resolution her fingers would once in awhile stray to the borders of "Ben Bolt." She answered his letters in a cool, matter of fact way. Occasionally, when he referred to his heart hunger and how hard he was studying in hopes that she might think better of him, she wished that he had no purse proud and haughty mother to stand between him and a poor girl, and her next letter would be more chilly than ever. What perhaps was a bitter sweet thought was the fact that the colder she answered him the warmer his next letter would be. He happened to mention once that his mother had spoken of a certain young lady, who belonged to the cream of Boston society, as an eligible match and advised him to show her a little attention. It did not help his cause.

How grateful she was all through those melancholy autumn days that she had a large school to absorb her thoughts. She was having a long and hard fight with her own feelings, and imagined she had conquered them when Thanksgiving time drew near and her brother announced he would run up and spend the day with her. She almost cried for joy at the news, for proud spirited Alice Page was feeling very heart hungry when the letter came. Albert was just a little surprised at her vehement welcome.

"Oh, I have been so lonesome, Bertie," she said when they were alone, "and the evenings drag by so slowly! Then you do not write me as often or such nice letters as formerly, and Aunt Susan never seems to notice that I am blue. If it were not for my school I should go crazy, I think."

"I am very busy these days, sis," Albert replied, "and my mind is all taken up with work. Mr. Nason's business is increasing, and I have many clients besides him." Then he added, "How did you like Blanch Nason?"

"Oh, she was very nice," replied Alice coolly, "and if she were a poor girl and lived here I could easily learn to love her. As it is, it is useless for me to think of her as a friend. It was good of her to pay me a visit, though, and I enjoyed every minute of it."

"And what about Frank? Did he not say a lot of sweet things to you?" Alice colored.

"Oh, he is nice enough," she answered, "and tried to make me believe he had fallen in love with me, but it won't do any good. I am sure his managing mamma will marry him to some thin girl with a fat purse."

"So that is the way the wind blows, my sweet sister, is it? And yet my possible future law partner has been humming 'Ben Bolt' nearly every day for the past two months! You must have smiled on him very sweetly when he was here."

"Please do not say any more about him, Bertie," she answered with a little pain in her voice. "He is all right, but I am too poor and too proud to satisfy his mother, so that is all there is to it. Then she added in self protection, 'Tell me about the island girl! I heard you fell in love with her on the yachting trip and for whom you deserted the crowd.' Albert looked confused. "It is true, Bertie," she said quickly. "I can see it in your face. That explains your short letters. I shall feel more desolate now than ever."

"Alice, my sweet little sister," he replied, resolutely drawing his chair near and taking her hand, "it is true, and I intended to tell you all about it, only I hated to do it at first and so put it off. She is more than pretty, she is beautiful, and the most unaffected and tender hearted girl I ever met. But you need not worry. She is so devoted to the two old people who have brought her up as their own that she will not leave them for me as long as they live."

"Then he frankly told Alice the entire story of his wail of the sea and how she had refused to yield to his pleading."

"And now, sweet sister," he said at last, "I have a plan to unfold, and I want you to consider it well. I am now earning enough to maintain a home, and I am tired of boarding house life. It is not likely I shall marry the girl I love for many years to come, and there is no need for us to be separated in this way. I think it is best that we close the house or rent it for the present, and you and Aunt Susan come to Boston. I can hire a pretty flat, and we can take down such of the furniture as we need and store the rest. What do you think of the plan?"

"Oh, I shall be so glad of the change, Bertie! It is so desolate here, and I dread the long winter. But what can I do in Boston? I cannot be idle."

"Will not housekeeping for me be occupation enough?" he answered, smiling, "or you might give music

lessons and study shorthand. I need a typewriter even now."

"But what will Aunt Susan think of the change? And it will be such a change for her!"

"She will get used to it," he answered.

Then, as Alice began to realize what it meant to bid goodby to the scenes of her childhood, the old home, the great trees in front, the broad meadows, the brook that rippled through them, the little church where every one greeted her with a smile, and the grand old hills that surrounded Sandgate's peaceful valley, her heart began to sink. Then she thought of the pleasant woods where she had so often gone nutting in autumn, the old mill pond where every summer since babyhood she had gathered lilies, and even those barefooted school children of hers.

"I shall dislike to go, after all," she said at last, "but perhaps it is best. I shall be homesick for a spell, but then I shall have you."

Then she rose and like a big baby crept into her brother's lap, and, tucking her sunny head under his chin, whispered: "Oh, if you were never going to be married, Bertie, I would leave it all and try to be contented. I could come up here every summer, could I not?" Then she added disconsolately: "But you will get married soon. Your beautiful island girl will not keep you waiting so long."

"No sweetheart and no wife shall ever lessen my love for you, Alice, who have been my playmate, my companion and my confidant all my life."

When they had discussed the proposed step in all its bearings for a half hour Albert said: "Come, now, sis, bring a little for me. I am hungry to hear you once more."

She complied willingly, and, as the plangent voice of Alice Page trilled the list from "Lily Dale" to "Suzanne River" and back to "Bonny Eloise" and "Patter of the Rain," Albert lazily puffed his pipe and lived over his boyhood days.

When the concert was ended he exclaimed: "I will look around before Christmas and see what kind of a flat can be found, and then when your school closes you must come down and visit me and see how you like Boston."

"Oh, that will be just delightful, only you must promise not to tell the Nasons that I am coming."

"But if they find it out Blanch and Frank would feel bitterly hurt," he replied. "Remember, they did you the honor of coming up here to visit you, and Blanch has said to me several times that she hoped you would visit her this winter."

"I should love to," replied Alice, hesitating, "but—well, I will tell you what we can do—we will wait until the day before I am to return, and then we can call there one evening. They need not know how long I have been in Boston."

When morning and departure came Albert said: "I will do as you wish, sweet sister, and unless some of the Nasons should meet us at a theater I imagine it will work all right, only it is a little rough on Frank."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE proposed change did not seem to disturb Aunt Susan much, although Alice noticed that she was more quiet than ever and avoided that subject.

"I'm ready an' willin' to go if you think best," she said, "an' I'll do my best as long as I can. I ain't got long to stay, an' if I see you two happy I'm content."

Two weeks before Christmas came a cordial letter from Blanch reminding Alice of her promise to visit her during the holidays and insisting that she do so now. With it was inclosed an equally cordial but brief note of invitation from Mrs. Nason. Alice replied to both in due form and with profuse thanks, also stating that she had promised her brother she would visit him during her vacation, and hoped to have one or two evenings with them at that time.

Alice inclosed both notes to her brother and told him he had best inform the Nasons of her intended visit in a matter of fact way. "But," she added, "do not let on that you know they have invited me to visit them. We will do just as we talked—go there and spend one or two evenings, or perhaps I may meet them at a theater, which would be much better."

By return mail came his assurance of obedience and a sizable check. "Use it all, my dear sis," he wrote, "and for your own needs, too. I do not want you to feel ashamed of your gowns when you come to Boston."

"Bless his dear heart," said Alice when she read the letter, "what a prize that island girl will get in him!"

When Christmas came and she kissed Aunt Susan goodby, she was near giving up the trip altogether. It may have been the sad face of her aunt that brought the irresolution, or a feeling that meeting Frank would reawaken the little heartache she had for five months been trying to conquer. When she reached Boston she was met by her brother.

"I have not told Frank," Albert exclaimed, "and shall not let them know you are here until we call. I want you

to myself for a few days, because after Frank knows you are here I am sure to be one too many most of the time."

"Not on his account, you'll not be," replied Alice with a snip.

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Page, and allow us to return a little of your hospitality. Of course I understand that your brother comes first, and rightly, too, but we must claim a part of your time."

"I had promised myself one or two evenings at your home," Alice answered quietly, "but I do not feel that I ought to desert Bertie more than that."

Then, for the first time, Blanch put in her little word: "Now, do not offer your brother as an excuse. I have been anticipating your promised visit for a long time, and no brother is going to rob me of it. I shall come around tomorrow forenoon, and if you are not ready to go back with me, bag and baggage, I will just take your baggage, and then you will have to come."

"I will stir up a mutiny on the Nancy brig if he does not consent," laughed Blanch; "so there is an end to that, and you must be ready at 10 tomorrow."

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"Why, this is by E. T. too," she exclaimed. "And turning to her brother she repeated, 'Who is E. T.?'"

"Well," he answered, "I will take you down to the island some time and introduce you to her. She will be glad to meet my sister, you may be certain."

Then the brief history of this girl, as her brother had told it, came to her. "So that was the wreck she floated ashore from, was it, Bert? And can she paint like that? Why, I am astonished! And who is the girl leaning on the rock? What an exquisitely dramatic and enthusiastic they are. To begin with, when the national committee selects the place of meeting, it is guided first of all by the size of the hall. In the last ten years, there has probably been no hall used for a national convention which did not seat from twelve to fourteen thousand people. The largest one ever used was at Kansas City in 1900. On the floor are a thousand delegates, a thousand alternates, not far from five hundred journalists, representing the pick of the American press and full a thousand prominent men, not always of the same party, because eminent men of both parties attend occasionally the conventions of their rivals. In the rear of the floor seats and in the galleries are from eight to ten thousand people interested in the convention. At various points are stationed the bands, each with a leader who watches out for the moment to strike up in celebration of the arrival of the particular politician or statesman by whom he has been engaged. As men come in who are known, cheers go up and noisy music rings out. As gradually the convention settles down into quietude the leaders are seen moving from delegation to delegation, trying to effect a compromise here or to work a trade there. The first day, as a rule, little is done. The committees are appointed and the committee on resolutions wrangles for several hours. The people who attend the convention go away in despair, and the sessions of the convention are cut down to a very few moments in the morning and afternoon. When the fight of the ball comes on, the real drama commences. Then men known by name from Sandy Hook to the Golden Gate check off one by one the votes of the various delegations, and a gain or a loss is signalled by cheers and enthusiasm. If a nomination is made, the scene is one which is possibly equaled nowhere else in the world. No man who saw the nomination of Mr. Bryan in '92, or the later nomination of Bryan in 1900 can forget the enthusiasm which attended the completion of the work of these conventions. Men of standing, politically and financially, great men in the nation, acted like children, danced with banners, seized horns and trombones, attempting to play tunes upon them. If I may be permitted a personal reminiscence, the most picturesque spectacle that has been seen in any convention, at least in my time, was when Senator Clark of Montana, widely known as the richest man in the United States, carrying a banner in one hand and holding on his arm the one woman delegate in the 1900 convention, a lady from Utah, led the grand march in the Kansas city convention hall in celebration of the nomination of Mr. Bryan.—The Pilgrim.

to myself for a few days, because after Frank knows you are here I am sure to be one too many most of the time."

"Not on his account, you'll not be," replied Alice with a snip.

THE TOAD IS USEFUL.

Distinguished Entomologist Tells How He Helps the Farmer.

The dusty, homely toad, that has been shunned and stoned by country boys almost since the beginning of time because "they make warts grow on your hands," has found a champion who makes him appear a much more useful animal than is generally supposed.

A. H. Kirkland, a Boston entomologist, has made an extended study of the toad as a destroyer of insects; and he has come to the conclusion that the little animal is a valuable friend to all farmers. In the hope of preventing its destruction and convincing farmers of its usefulness, he has written a paper which has just been published by the department of agriculture in Washington.

In order to determine just how many and what obnoxious insects are eaten by toads, Mr. Kirkland collected and examined the stomachs of 148 toads and classified their contents. The result showed that at least 98 per cent of the toad's food is of animal origin. The following table, which Mr. Kirkland compiled, gives an idea of the animal's preferences:

Food elements.	Per cent.
Ants	19
Cutworms	16
Thousand-legged worms	10
Tent caterpillars	9
Ground	