

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

A QUIET, natural home story, this, but full of character and interest for those who delight in domestic details of life. A young girl takes charge of a large family in a motherly fashion that wins regard, and the incidents are all pleasing and consistent. This serial will greatly please home readers, and its influence cannot help but benefit and enoble the mind and the purer impulses of the heart.

CHAPTER I.

There are conflicts in most lives—real hand-to-hand combats, that have to be fought, not with any fleshly weapons, but with the inner forces of the being—battles wherein the victory is not always to the strong, where the young and the weak and the little ones may be found abiding nearest to the standards.

Such a conflict had come to Alison Merle, breaking up the surface of her smooth outer life, and revealing possible shoals and quicksands, in which many of her brightest hopes might be wrecked. "It is hard. I do not know that even if Aunt Di think it right I shall ever have the heart to do it," murmured Alison, talking to herself in her agitation, after the manner of older folk. "I have just rooted myself in this dear place, and the soil suits me. I could not flourish anywhere else; and," finished Alison, with a quaint little smile, "sickly plants are worth nothing."

To any ordinary spectator the interior of that little room would have presented a picture of perfect serenity and absolute comfort. Even the young creature comfortably seated in a chair by the window, with an open letter and a cluster of deep red roses lying among the folds of her white gown, presented no disturbing image, though the cheek had lost its wonted fresh color, and the dark, dreamy eyes had a look of doubt that was almost pain in them. Two years ago—she had been sixteen then, and, oh, how discontented and ill and unhappy she had been. It was not only the loss of her mother, it was her own incapacity for responsibility, her morbid dislike to her surroundings, that had fretted all her fine color away. Change of air would do her good, and then Aunt Diana had come down upon them with the freshness of a moorland breeze.

"You must give your eldest girl to me, Ainslie," she had said to Alison's father; "she wants care and cherishing more than Miss Leigh has time to give her." And, of course, Aunt Diana had her way. Instead of the whirl of machinery—for her father's sawmills were just behind their house—Alison had now only to listen to the soft flow of the river that glided below the green lawns and shrubberies of Moss-side; instead of waking up in the morning to look across the dusty shrubs and trees to the vast wood piles and masses of unawn timber, that seemed endlessly between her and the blue sky, Alison's eyes had now the finest prospect; one shaded garden seemed to run into another, and when the willows were thinned or bare in winter time, what a view of the river and green meadows on the opposite side!

The moral surroundings were almost as much changed. Instead of Miss Leigh's dry method of instruction, Aunt Diana had placed within her reach many a pleasant short cut to knowledge, had suggested all sorts of enviable accomplishments; money was not stinted where Alison's talents could be turned to account.

In this pleasant but bracing atmosphere Alison had thriven and grown. She was still a tall, slim girl, somewhat youthful in look, but with plenty of warm life and energy about her; and though the dark eyes had still their old trick of dreaming, they seemed to dream more happily, and the shadow did not lie so deep in them—not, at least, until the June afternoon, when Alison sat sighing and visibly disturbed with her lap full of roses. It was evident at last that she found her thoughts too painful, for after another half hour's intense brooding she suddenly jumped up from her seat, scattering the flowers where they lay unheeded on the Indian matting, and walked abruptly to the door. She had dropped her letters, too; but she went back and picked them up, not replacing them in their envelopes, and then she went out into the passage.

A dark oak staircase led into a little square hall, fitted up with bookcases like a library, with a harmonium on one side; a glass door opened into a conservatory, through which one passed into the garden.

Alison turned the handle of a door just opposite the staircase, and stood for a moment hesitating on the threshold.

What a pleasant room that was, half studio and half drawing room, full of cross lights, and artistically littered with an odd jumble of medieval and modern furniture—oak chairs and cabinets, basket-work longes, tiny tea tables, fit for Lilliputian princesses, and hanging cupboards of quaint old china that gave warm coloring to the whole. Alison's eyes were

still fixed on a lady who stood with her back toward her, painting at an easel. "Well, child, what now?" The voice was nicely modulated, clear and musical, but the manner slightly abrupt.

Alison came forward at once and inspected the picture. "It is very pretty, Aunt Di," she said, forgetting her own worries in a moment. "It is one of your best. I think I see what you mean, but to me it is all beautiful; that old man—a pensioner, is he not? and that poor, tired sheep, that seems to have dropped down by the way, left behind by the flock, is so suggestive of the title, 'Noontide Rest.'"

"That is what I intended. You are an intelligent child, Allie; both the man and the sheep must be old; it is not for young creatures to rest at noontide; my old pensioner has already borne the burden and heat of the day."

"Of course, I see what you mean, Aunt Di."

"My parable is not hard to read," replied Miss Carrington, with a smile, but as Alison studied the picture with increased interest and admiration, a pair of shrewd, kindly eyes were studying the girl's face.

"Go and put yourself in that easy chair opposite, and tell me all about it," she said at last, rousing her by a good-humored little push. "I must finish this branch if I am to enjoy my night's rest, but I can listen to any amount of lettered woes," with a suggestive glance at Alison's hand.

"Oh, Aunt Di, how do you find out things so?" stammered Alison; then, as though used to obedience, she moved to the chair that was always reserved for Miss Carrington's visitors, whom she was wont to entertain after a fashion of her own.

"I wonder how long I am to have patience," observed Miss Carrington, painting on industriously, as Alison sat with drooping head, looking at her letters, without offering to read them. "I am quite sure those are Rudel's straggling characters; that boy's handwriting is a disgrace to the family; it has put him out of my will forever; fancy one's nephew being such a sorry scribe."

"Rudel does write badly," returned Alison, with a faint little smile, "but I like his letters better than Missie's; there is one from Miss Leigh, too; do you admire her handwriting, Aunt Di?"

"No; it is too thin and angular," returned Miss Carrington, severely; "it wants freedom and breadth; it reminds me too much of Miss Leigh herself."

"I do not think we are any of us very fond of her," interrupted Alison. "I know she fidgets father dreadfully, and Roger, too, though he is so good to her."

"Roger is good to everyone but himself," responded Miss Carrington; "but even he, with all his good nature, has owned to me that Miss Leigh has a very trying manner. You see, Alison, fussy people make poor companions. Miss Leigh has never leisure for anything but her own worries; she is too overweighed for cheerful conversation; if she could forget Poppie's misdemeanors, and Missie's pertness, and Rudel's roughness, and the servants' failures for about half an hour at a time, I could quite fancy Miss Leigh a pleasing companion; but now let me hear her letter."

"It is dreadfully long," sighed Alison, as she reluctantly obeyed. It was evident that she wished Miss Carrington to read the letters for herself, but Aunt Diana held a different opinion.

"My dear Alison," it began, "I am afraid that my weekly account will be little more cheering than the last; indeed, I am arriving slowly at the conviction that, unless some change be made in the household arrangements, I shall be compelled, however reluctantly, to resign my post."

"Humph! that looks bad," from Miss Carrington.

"I have done all I can in representing to your father the mischief that must result from his injudicious treatment of Mabel; she is becoming so thoroughly spoiled, so entirely her own mistress, that no amount of reasoning has any effect upon her. I do not wish to lay any undue stress on her behavior to myself; but her treatment of Mr. Roger, and the bad example that she sets to Poppie, not to mention the constant bickering that is always going on between her and Rudel, are quite destroying the harmony of the household. You may imagine, my dear Alison, how trying all this is to a person of my sensitive temperament."

"I always said it was a black day for us when Miss Carrington took you away from The Holms. With all due deference to your aunt's benevolence and good feelings, I can not help thinking that a daughter's place is with her widowed father. Of course, you will talk the matter over with your aunt, and perhaps you may be able to assist me to some solution of our difficulties."

"PATIENCE LEIGH."
"Patience has changed to impatience," muttered Miss Carrington, grimly. "Sensitive people never own to being out of temper, but I should have said myself that there was a spice of ill-temper in that letter. Poor Miss Leigh is decidedly ruffled."

"She never could manage Missie; I always knew that," returned Alison, sorrowfully.

"And how old is Mabel, or Missie, as you call her?"

"Sixteen last birthday, Aunt Diana."

"Humph! there is not a more troublesome age."

"Aunt Di, I have something very serious to say. These letters came two or three days ago, and I have been thinking about them ever since. I do believe Miss Leigh is right in what she says, and that I am shirking my duty."

"Since when?" a little dryly.

"Since I got quite well and strong and happy, about a year ago," returned Alison, answering most literally. "I ought to have gone back then, and not have stopped on here quietly, taking the good

of everything, and enjoying myself just as though I had no duties, and no place in life. It is all my fault if Missie is getting the upper hand, and making every one uncomfortable. I ought to go home to father and Roger."

There was no immediate answer to this, but in another moment Miss Carrington had walked to her slowly, and then, standing beside her, her hand stroked the girl's hair with a mute caressing gesture. "Do not cry about it, Allie," she said presently; but her own voice was not quite so clear as usual. "It is not a thing to be decided in a hurry; we must look at it all around; impulse is never a sure guide. No one is quite their own mistress, even at eighteen, and I am afraid you will have to ask my leave, unless you prefer running away."

"Oh, will you let me go, Aunt Di?" with a sudden start of joy, as though the knots that her conscience had tied were suddenly cut through in a most unexpected way.

"My dear, if it be right I will help you to go," was the expressive but somewhat curt answer to this; but as she spoke, Miss Carrington's hands pressed the girl's head a little heavily.

"Now," she continued, with a visible effort, "we must put all these troublesome things away for the present; there is the dressing bell, and we have only time to get ready for dinner, and you know it is our evening at Fernleigh, and we shall have to be cheerful for Mr. Moore's sake."

CHAPTER II.

An hour and a half later Miss Carrington and her niece were walking quickly down one of the garden paths until they came to a little gate set in the hedge; unlatching it, they passed into a neighboring garden, and then turned their faces in the direction of a low white house, with a veranda running all round it, and roses in profusion running over it. As they did so, the notes of a violin, evidently played by a practiced hand, reached them. Miss Carrington's face brightened, and, making a gesture to her companion to move softly, she stepped up to a window and looked through it. The room, if it were a drawing room, was almost as heterogeneously furnished as her own, but it bore the character of a library. Two of the walls were lined with bookcases; a grand piano and a harmonium occupied some of the space; there was a round table littered with books, and a superfluity of easy chairs in every stage of comfort, arranged more with a view to ease than appearance. A nearer inspection would have pointed out certain bachelor arrangements—some costly Turkish pipes; a pair of pistols, splendidly mounted; some silver cups and tankards, with various inscriptions on them, all engraved with the name of Greville Moore, and purporting to be certain prizes in the half-mile race, the high jump, throwing the cricket ball and other feats of prowess, performed by some youthful athlete.

An elderly man, with a long white beard and mustache, in a black velvet coat, sat with his back to the light, playing the violin. His face, seen in repose, was clear cut and handsome, in spite of the deep lines that time and perhaps many cares had traced upon it; but his eyes were cast down, as though in deep meditation, an habitual action, for Mr. Moore had been blind half his life. He was playing from memory an exquisite fugue from Bach. The thin, somewhat wrinkled hand handled the bow with a precision, a delicacy, a mastery of knowledge, that seemed surprising in his situation. Apparently he was lost himself in enjoyment of the sweet sounds that he had conjured up in his darkness, for a smile played round his lips as the harmony widened and vibrated, and his foot softly moved as though in unison. In a moment the fugue was ended and the bow lowered.

"Is that you, Sunny? Little witch, why have you stolen a march on the blind man? Of course, you have flown through the window."

"Aunt Diana set me the example," returned Alison, demurely. "How do you do again, Mr. Moore?"

"Oh, nicely, nicely; time always passes quickly with me in my own special world. Have you given your aunt her favorite chair? How does the picture progress, Miss Diana? Sunny tells me it is one of your best."

"Would you have me praise my own work?" returned Miss Carrington, brightly. "I must leave you to Alison's criticism. I hope to do something good before I die, and if I do not succeed, well, my life will have been happier for the trying."

(To be continued.)

Drugs and the Brain.

Most people believe that drugs affect the brain. Yet this apparently is not so, according to physicians. Drugs no more affect the brain than does insanity—that is, not at all!—except alcohol, which does injure the brain, though not at all on account of its mental effects, but for the very different reason that alcohol has a chemical affinity for the albumen and fats of the tissues. By this chemical action it slowly alters and damages brain tissue, but this result in no wise differs from similar alterations produced by alcohol in the tissues of the liver and of the kidneys. Tobacco is a powerful poison, and yet no autopsies can show the yeast difference between the brain of a lifelong smoker and that of one who never lit a cigar. Likewise, the brain of an opium fiend is indistinguishable from any other brain, and so on for the rest. Drugs do affect the mind and will power, but not the brain substance itself.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

The annual wear and tear on the world's currency is estimated at two tons of gold and 100 tons of silver.

In all the civilized countries of the world 60 per cent of the persons over 10 years old have to work for a living.

There are in the State of New York forty-three villages of between 1,000 and 2,000 inhabitants which have free libraries.

The Finns evidently have not found woman suffrage a failure. Nineteen women were elected to their first Parliament. Now twenty-five have just been elected to the second.

Berlin opened a rink on Sept. 1 for ice skating all the year round. This makes the fourth permanent ice rink in Europe, others being operated in London, Paris and Munich.

The ivory nut, which is so much used by button manufacturers, is the fruit of a species of palm which grows in Central and South America. It forms a valuable crop, particularly in Panama, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

A German statistician has calculated that the steam power in present use on this globe is equal to 120,000,000 horse power. The coal needed to supply this steam for a year would make a freight train extending ten times around the earth.

From Mora comes a story of sugar beets more than two feet long and weighing only a trifle less than twelve pounds. There are said to be two of these monster tubers there, and it is claimed they were grown on the farm of a native who lives several miles up the valley from the town of Mora.—Las Vegas (N. M.) Optic.

The fact that five Paris daily papers are at present publishing serial stories translated from the English reminds us of a capital error which appeared in some such translation a short time ago. The English author had written: "He-he-he!" laughed Jones. The French paper rendered this as: "Lul-lul-lul!" ria Jones. "Lul" is the personal pronoun "he."—London Punch.

The first recorded production of a play in Australia took place in June of the year 1789. It was called "The Recruiting Officer." The proceeds of the first night (some £20) went to the family of a man who had been drowned. In January, 1796, a rough and ready playhouse was opened and the public had to pay one shilling a head for admission. The payments were made in kind, wheat, flour or rum taking the place of the usual currency.—London Standard.

Don't mark your stationery any longer with a monogram. That is out of date. The latest symbol is the thumb mark. It is engraved in gold or silver and has all the value of a Bertillon mark of identification. Stationers who have introduced this way of marking use the prints in the center of a correspondence card and about half an inch from the top to make them most effective. The thumb is sometimes printed in red or blue, although the metal colors are more popular.—New York Sun.

Mrs. Bertha Aynton has succeeded in ascertaining the cause of the refractory behavior of the searchlight in certain respects and in devising a remedy. The British admiral called on Prof. Aynton to investigate the trouble some time ago. After making many investigations he turned the problem over to his wife, who is the only woman member of the Institute of Electrical Engineers and who received the only medal ever awarded to a woman by the Royal Society of London for original unaided work.

The Congregational parsonage at Kittery is one of the oldest houses in the State of Maine. It is the oldest ecclesiastical residence in the State, and the oldest one in present use in New England. The house was built in 1729, in the days of Hon. William Pepperell, father of Sir William Pepperell. It contains the library bequeathed by Sir William to Dr. Benjamin Stevens, for forty years minister of the Kittery Point church. Dr. Stevens in his turn bequeathed the library to the Congregational ministers of Kittery and York for all time. Many of these books contain the Pepperell coat-of-arms.—Kennebec (Me.) Journal.

In Henderson County, Cain Cox, five miles from Athens, has not only adhered to diversification in all its forms, raising fruit, tomatoes and the cereal and hay crops, as well as some cotton, but he has been investing some money in other experiments, some of which are about to turn out very profitably. One of his side experiments has been almonds, he having put in quite a number of the young trees about five years ago. The trees are now well grown and are bearing fine almonds, though not as large nor as fine as the imported variety. The trees bore a few almonds last year and many more this year, and by another year Mr. Cox thinks he will get a crop large enough to market.—Houston Post.



Baking Angel Food.

A woman whose angel food is famous says that there are a few things she always bears in mind when preparing this delectable cake. The oven must be slow at first, but one that gradually increases in temperature. Quite unlike the case when baking other cake, the oven door may be opened without danger of affecting the cake; this makes it much simpler to adjust the heat of the oven. The pan in which it is baked must be most carefully lined with paraffin paper. If the cake is baked two or three days before it is to be eaten it will be better.

Time to Cook Fish.

- Salmon, about ten minutes to each pound.
- Cod, about ten minutes to each pound.
- Turbot, about ten minutes to each pound.
- Flounders, about five minutes.
- Fresh haddock, eight to fifteen minutes.
- Small lobster, from twenty to thirty minutes.
- Small mackerel, about ten minutes.
- Whiting, about five minutes.
- Small soles, about five minutes.
- Trout, from five to ten minutes.

Raisin Pudding.

One teaspoonful of suet, minced fine, add four teacups of flour, one-half pound raisins, one teacup molasses, a teaspoonful baking powder, scant cup of milk, with salt and cinnamon to flavor. Boil two and one-half hours and serve with brandy sauce. Three-fourths cup sugar, small piece butter, table-spoon flour, two teaspoonfuls brandy, one cup boiling water. Serve hot over pudding.

Devil's Food.

One cup of sugar and a half-cup of butter, creamed; two eggs, well beaten; one cup of grated chocolate. Pour one-half cup of boiling water on the chocolate and let it stand until cool; add a half-cup of sour milk, the sugar and butter and eggs, a teaspoonful of soda dissolved in a tablespoonful of boiling water, two cups of flour and vanilla to taste. Mix well and bake in a loaf tin.

Pineapple Tapioca.

Soak one cup tapioca overnight in plenty of water. In the morning put on and cook until clear. Add one pineapple (or one can) cut in pieces, three cups sugar, juice of two lemons and cook. Just before taking off the fire add the whites of three eggs beaten stiff and stir through thoroughly. Chill and serve with whipped or plain cream.

Beefsteak with Cream.

Take beefsteak free from fat; chop fine; cook with little water half an hour. Then add salt, pepper and butter, with a tablespoon of flour worked in thoroughly, then a generous lot of cream; let boil a few minutes and serve hot. Dried beef or cold meats can be substituted.

Chinese Salad Dressing.

For a cheese salad dressing, work two tablespoonfuls of soft grated cheese until it is smooth. Season with salt and paprika and moisten thoroughly with vinegar and oil. This is delicious on egg or lettuce salad.

Baked Apples.

In baking apples cut out the core, stick in a few cloves, and fill vacant space with sugar. Add a little water to the pan when baking, and when they are done they will have the taste of pears. Delicious with cream.

Peach and Pear Salad.

Pare, slice and arrange on a glass dish, in alternate layers, the peaches and pears (Bartlett or Seckel), with whipped cream and sugar between. Stand them on the ice half an hour before serving.

Bran Bread.

One quart clean bran, one pint white flour, one cup sweet milk, six ounces New Orleans molasses, one egg, two teaspoonfuls bicarbonate soda. Bake in gem tins.

Well to Remember.

When burning vegetable refuse in stove or furnace, put a handful of salt into the fire and there will be no unpleasant odor.

Rice and Raisins.

Three cups of boiling water, one cup sweet milk, one cup rice, one-half cup seedless raisins. Mix and cook in double boiler.

To Keep Broken Eggs.

Take off shell and beat in a quarter teaspoonful of salt. Can be used for cake or anything.

Short Suggestions.

Cutting onions, turnips and carrots across the fiber makes them more tender when cooked.