

# Aunt Diana

The Sunshine  
of the Family

## CHAPTER IV.

It was finally settled. Alison felt that duty called her home, and soon the day came when she had to part from Aunt Diana. It was a sad leave-taking, and the tears were in Alison's eyes long after the train steamed slowly into the Cherterton station. Alison gathered up her numerous articles of traveling gear, and looked out with some eagerness, but Roger's tall figure was nowhere in sight, and much disappointed and perplexed, she gave a porter instructions about her traveling boxes.

"Will you fetch me a cab, please?" faltered Alison, feeling ready to cry again at her loneliness, and wondering at Roger's unkind desertion, and then all at once she encountered a pair of round blue eyes, very wide open. She started; yes, there was the wide mouth, the droll, freckled face that she remembered so well; of course it was Rudel, grown, but not otherwise altered, grinning affably at her.

"Why, Rudel," she exclaimed, reproachfully, "why did you not speak to me? I was looking for Roger, and nearly passed you by."

"Oh, but I should have hallooed all in good time," he returned, with another grin, shaking hands with her, but refraining from any warmer fraternal greeting.

As soon as she was seated in the cab he got in after her, and proceeded to put down both windows. "You would not like me to go outside, I suppose," he said, in a good-humored, dawdling voice; "these cabs are so stuffy they make a fellow feel queer."

"Go outside if you like," returned Alison, willing to humor him, but rather disturbed at the boy's coolness.

"Oh, it does not matter," was the contradictory response; "we have not far to go, and cabs are so unusually stout there would not be room for Otter. Oh, by the bye, Roger told me to tell you that father told him that somebody else must come to the station, as he could not be spared. Roger was awfully put about, for he said I should be no help, and I have not been much, eh?" with another grin that threatened to become a laugh.

"I wish dear old Roger could have come, but I am glad to see you, too," was Alison's polite reply. "I thought you would have kissed me after two years of absence."

"Oh, I never kiss girls," reddening visibly.

"Not your own sisters?" exclaimed Alison, in a pained voice. "Oh, Rudel, you used not to be so stiff and unkind."

"I ain't one or the other," rousing up at this reproach. "I think it is first-rate—your coming, I mean—and you are no end of a brick to do it, and," with a sudden burst of confidence, "I shouldn't mind giving you a kiss now and then, when you wanted it particularly, if you would promise not to tell Missie; I would not give her one—no, not if she were to ask me on her bended knees—a stuck-up little mix!"

"Oh, Rudel, for shame! Mabel is as much your sister as I am."

"No, she isn't, and never shall be," growled the lad. "I tell you what, Alison, you are an out-and-out, and no mistake, and I will help you fight all your battles, that I will, as sure as my name is Rudel, and that is better than ever so many kisses."

"Dear Rudel, I am sure you mean kindly, though you have such a funny way of showing it; but I have no wish to fight any one."

"Oh, but you will be obliged to fight Missie, whether you wish for it or not," was the cool rejoinder; but Alison was spared any further argument on this subject, as they had reached The Holms, and in another moment were driving up the graveled sweep between rows of dusty evergreens.

The Holms was a singularly built house. A square, stone hall, uncarpeted and chilly looking, led to the kitchen and other domestic offices, all on a large scale and unusually roomy; a wide flight of stone steps, differing from the modern staircase by being also uncovered, led to the sitting rooms, dining room, drawing room, school room, and study, all opening on to a narrow corridor, fitted from end to end with books—books literally lining it from floor to ceiling.

As Alison wearily ascended the steps, a thin ladylike woman in a black gown, with a depressed, gentle face, came to the head of the staircase.

"I am so glad to see you, my dear," she said, kissing her affectionately. "Why, I do believe you are grown, Alison; you are taller than I expected to see you, but you are looking pale."

"Oh, that is nothing," returned Alison, hastily. "I am tired with the journey." For just then she did not wish her looks to be too keenly criticised. "Where are the others, Miss Leigh—father, Mabel and Poppie?"

"I am so sorry, Alison, that I am the only one to greet your homecoming. Mabel and Poppie are out; they had an invitation to an afternoon party at the Brownlow's; it is little Stacy's birthday. I wanted Mabel to stay at home and let Poppie go without her, but she would not hear of it."

"Never mind, returned Alison, quietly; but she was conscious of a hurt, chilled feeling as Miss Leigh brought out this lame excuse. This was her return home after two years' absence, and yet Roger could not be spared to meet her at the station, and Mabel could not give up an

afternoon's amusement to welcome her sister. Her father was busy as usual; probably he had forgotten her existence at this time.

"You are very tired, my dear," continued Miss Leigh, disturbed at the young girl's sudden gravity and paleness. "Shall I take you to your room, and send you up a cup of tea? I daresay you would like to be quiet a little."

"Thank you," replied Alison, gratefully. Rudel skipped up after her, three steps at a time.

"I suppose you do not want to see Sulky now, Alison?"

"No, no," interrupted Miss Leigh, "your sister is tired, Rudel; you had better go down and leave her to rest."

"Oh, I was not talking to you, Mother Leigh," was the boy's rude retort; and as Alison turned round to shake her head at him, she discovered him in the act of making one of his favorite faces at the back of the unconscious governess.

"I say, missus," he observed, when he had sufficiently relieved his feelings, "have you told Alison about her room?"

"No, not yet, Rudel," returned the much-enduring Miss Leigh.

"Then I shall. I call it a mean trick of Missie's; no one but a girl would do such a thing; here she has been and taken your room, Alison, with mother's things in it; and nothing the missus can say will get her to give it up. Missus is awfully wild about it, ain't you, missus?"

"Oh, Rudel! do be quiet," remonstrated Miss Leigh, in the old worried voice Alison knew so well. "What a tiresome boy you are! and I wanted to tell your sister quietly. Alison, my dear, I am very sorry, but Mabel has appropriated your room, and most improperly refuses to give it up. I spoke to your father about it last night, but he only said it did not signify, that he expected you would not mind, as your visit to us might not be a very lengthy one. I think you had better speak to him yourself."

"I will see about it," returned Alison, quickly, anxious to stem the governess' nervous flow of words. "Am I to sleep here to-night?" as Miss Leigh opened the door of a back room.

"I have made it as nice as I can," returned Miss Leigh, apologetically, "but I am afraid you will think it an ugly room; it wants repapering, and the carpet is dreadfully old."

"Oh, it will do very well," observed Alison, quietly; but she looked round her with a sinking heart nevertheless. It was Mabel's old room and very shabbily furnished, and looked over the kitchen garden and the sawmills.

She listened with well assumed patience as Miss Leigh pointed out the various little improvements she had effected. Though Alison did not know it, the easy chair and little round table were taken from Miss Leigh's own room; the fuchsias and geraniums in the blue vase were Roger's gift; and even Rudel had contributed the big green fern that stood on the window ledge.

"Now, I will send you up your tea," observed Miss Leigh at last, when the boxes had arrived, and Rudel had assisted to unstrap them; "there is no hurry, my dear; you will have nearly two hours to yourself to unpack and rest."

Alison tried to answer cheerfully, but her head was aching in earnest now; the tears were very near the surface again, but she battled with them bravely.

## CHAPTER V.

A cup of excellent tea was very restorative in its effects, and when Alison had freshened her tired face with cold water, and brushed her disheveled locks, and exchanged her traveling dress for a light, cool-looking, zephyr cloth costume, she felt less reluctance to present herself to the critical eyes of her father and Mabel.

"May I come in?" questioned a voice that she knew at once was Roger's, and in a moment she had sprung joyfully to the door.

"Oh, Roger, you dear old fellow, I am so glad to see you again!" she exclaimed, forgetting all her troubles in the sight of his familiar face. Evidently her pleasure was reciprocated; a pair of strong arms almost lifted her off her feet, and bore her across the room toward the window, and, after a hasty kiss or two, Roger put his hand under her chin and gravely inspected her.

"I suppose you are glad to see me," he observed at length, "as you have been crying evidently at the pleasurable anticipation. So you are sorry to come home, Alison, eh? and yet—rather reproachfully—you are wanted very badly here."

Alison's only answer was to lay her face down on his arm; this was a little too much for her jaded spirits, a few more tears would come. Roger had found her out, as she knew he would.

"Come now, this won't do, Allie," he said, with a sort of soothing roughness; "we shall pack you back again to Aunt Diana, if you are going to fret. I looked for rather a different greeting after two years' absence."

"I can't help it," she said, trying to dismiss her tears; "I am tired, and everything seems strange to-night, and I do miss Aunt Diana."

"Yes, she has spoiled you for us; you have grown a dainty little lady, Allie."

"Oh, no; I am not spoiled in that way," she interrupted him breathlessly. "You can not quite understand, Roger; but there is such a mixed feeling. I have wanted you all these two years; you have never been out of my mind a single day."

"Well, I am glad to have you back to scold you properly. What color are your eyes generally, Alison? They are as pink as an Albinos to-night."

"It is my turn to look at you," she returned, trying to pluck up a little spirit. "Why, you have grown a mustache, Roger. How well it suits you!"—but Roger only broke into a merry laugh.

"Did you ever see such a handsome fellow? Really, Rudel and I are marvelous specimens of manly beauty. He beats me in freckles, though, ha, ha!" And Roger quite rocked himself in merriment.

"I like the look of you very much," returned Alison. "Your hair is a little rough—and, oh! your boots are muddy. You have wanted me to keep you in order."

"I don't seem to match you, somehow," he observed. "Do you always look as though you were just turned out of a handbox? I wish you would take Missie and Poppie in hand; they drive Miss Leigh crazy with their untidiness. Oh, we are a happy family, Allie—nothing but billing and cooing, and that sort of thing going on from morning to night. You might take Rudel and Missie for a couple of love birds, the sweet young creatures are so fond of each other, and as for Poppie and Missie—look, there is a specimen of the home music dulcet strains floating up the staircase. There goes Missie."

Alison's brow knitted with some perplexity as she listened. "Flora, will you go into your own room? I insist on it—you are not fit to be seen in that torn frock," in a sharp, girlish voice.

"What does it matter? She won't mind," in a shrill, childish treble; "you are so cross, Mabel. Do let me come in with you and see Alison."

"No, no; do as I tell you; you shall come in presently. There! you have trampled on my dress and torn some of the trimming, you horrid little thing! I will tell papa if you are so naughty, and then he will not let you come down to tea." Here an expressive roar on Poppie's part interrupted the discussion. Alison, who could bear no more, moved quickly to the door and opened it. A pretty looking, fair-haired girl, dressed somewhat untidily and in bad style, with rather a vixenish expression on her flushed face, was standing just outside Alison's room, and behind her a somewhat plain little girl between eight and nine years of age, rather small in stature, and with a droll, freckled face like Rudel's, only it was just now puckered up with crying—a red, inflamed spot on one cheek was evidently the result of a smart blow on her sister's part in payment for the torn trimming.

"How do you do, Mabel?" she said, with a somewhat cold salute of Missie's cheek. "Please do not prevent Poppie coming to me. I could not help hearing, you spoke so loud, and I do not mind one bit how she looks. Come here, Poppie, dear;" but the child, evidently shy and upset by the late fracas, held back in an embarrassed manner, until Missie gave her a rough push. "Why don't you go to Alison, you stupid little thing?" she said crossly, for she was put out at her sister's sudden appearance on the scene.

"Please do not force her to come to me; we shall be very good friends directly," returned Alison, sorry for the poor child's awkwardness. "Come with me, Poppie dear; Roger is in my room, and I will show you the pretty new game I have brought for you."

The child's face brightened in a moment, and she moved instantly to take Alison's hand; again Missie interposed.

"She must change her frock, Alison; tea is just ready, and I hear papa's step in the garden. He will be very angry if Poppie looks rough or untidy; and I can not allow him to be vexed," pursing up her lips with a virtuous expression.

Alison controlled a quick retort with some difficulty. She had fully expected to find Missie a most aggravating little person, or why should Miss Leigh complain of her so bitterly? But the reality was worse than she anticipated.

"Never mind," she said, calmly; "we must not vex papa, must we, Poppie? I will help you change your frock, and perhaps after all we may have time to look at the fish ponds." And without another glance at Missie, Alison made Poppie cheerfully lead the way, as she did not know her room.

As Alison, after dressing Poppie, came down the staircase with the child still clinging to her, Mr. Merle suddenly made his appearance from the study. He almost started at the sight of his daughter, and an expression of pain crossed his handsome, careworn face. In the dim light Alison recalled her mother too plainly to his eyes.

"Oh, papa," she said, hurrying to him, and putting up her fair young face to his. He kissed her kindly, patted it, told her that she had grown into a woman since he had seen her, and questioned her with some interest about her journey.

The dining room, a large, handsomely furnished room, looked sufficiently cozy as they entered it. Missie was in the seat of honor; she gave a little simpering laugh as Alison entered with her father. "I suppose this will be your place to-morrow," she said, for, as Alison replied simply, "I suppose so, but I need not disturb you to-night," a vexed look crossed Missie's face, but as Rudel was already grinning in hopes of a row she prudently disappointed him.

When they rose from the table, Missie's first words were a peremptory order for Poppie to put away her toys and go to bed. This led to a feeble protest on Miss Leigh's part.

"It is not so very late, Mabel, and Poppie has not seen her sister for two years. I think she might wait a little longer."

"I am not going; there now!" observed the child, defiantly, quite oblivious of her father's presence.

"Go it, Pops. I'll back you," whispered Rudel, rubbing his hands; "she sha'n't touch you as long as I am here."

Mabel's eyes flashed. "You horrid, rude boy, Papa—" But here Alison gently interferred.

"You will go to bed now, dear, will you not?" she whispered in the child's ear, "and I will come and tuck you up, and wish you good-night." And thus propitiated, Poppie's sullenness vanished, and she trotted on at once.

(To be continued.)

Cancer of the stomach causes about 9,000 deaths a year in the United States and nearly 5,000 in England and Wales.



"How did he lose his money?" "His father-in-law failed."—Illustrated Bits.

"Have you got an independent fortune?" "No, I'm married."—Cleveland Leader.

Mrs. Knicker—Where do you keep your auto? Mrs. Newrich—In a mirage, of course.—New York Sun.

Jimmie—My ma's gone downtown to pay some bills. Tommie—Pooh! The man comes to the house to collect ours!

He—She is such a charmingly innocent girl, isn't she? She—Oh, yes; she has taken years to acquire it.—The Tatler.

Knicker—You know that speech is given to man to conceal his thoughts. Broke—Well, penmanship does it even better.—New York Sun.

She (at the piano)—I presume you are a true lover of music, are you not? He—Yes, I am; but pray don't stop playing on my account.

"John, you yawned twice while we were calling on that lady." "Well, dear, you did not expect me to keep my mouth closed all the time, did you?"

Magistrate—If I remember rightly, this is not your first appearance in court. Prisoner—No, your honor; but I hope you don't judge by appearances.

"I've just figured out how the Venus de Milo came to lose her arms?" "How?" "She broke them off trying to button her shirt waist up the back."—Puck.

Weary Walker—I see 500 more men has been t'rown out of work. Tired Traveler—Gee! Dere's gettin' to be too much competition in our business!—Puck.

"The seventeen mothers in the village mothers' club agreed to decide by ballot which had the handsomest baby." "Well, who won it?" "Each kid got one vote."

"Are marriages made in heaven?" "As to that I can't say, but I do know this much—" "What is that, Peleg?" "There's lots of courting done in church."—Washington Herald.

"This watch will last you for a lifetime," remarked the jeweler. "Nonsense!" retorted the customer. "Can't I see for myself now that its hours are numbered?"—London Spare Moments.

Man (to boy at roadside)—What time is it? Boy—Purty near 12 o'clock. Man—Thought it was more than 12. Boy—Nope. Never gets more than 12 in this country. Begins at 1 again.—Judge.

Bystander—Doctor, what do you think of this man's injuries? Doctor (of Irish extraction)—Two of them are undoubtedly fatal; but as for the rest of them, time alone can tell.—Boston Transcript.

"You have a new housemaid, I see, Mrs. Youngwife." "Yes, I got her about a week ago." "How do you like her?" "Very much indeed. She lets me do almost as I like about the house."—London Tit-Bits.

"What diagnosis did the doctor make of your wife's illness?" "Said she is suffering from overwork." "Is that so?" "Yes; he looked at her tongue and reached that decision immediately."—Detroit Free Press.

Mr. Newwed—You never call me pet names now unless you want something. Before marriage it was different. Mrs. Newwed—Oh, no. Before marriage I called you pet names because I wanted you.—London Gentlewoman.

"Jimmie, your face is dirty again this morning!" exclaimed the teacher. "What would you say if I came to school every day with a dirty face?" "Hub," grunted Jimmie, "I'd be too perillite to say anything?"—Circle.

Mother (in a very low voice)—Tommy, your grandfather is very ill. Can't you say something nice to cheer him up a bit? Tommy (in an earnest voice)—Grandfather, wouldn't you like to have soldiers at your funeral?—London Tit-Bits.

"I'm sure," said the areveler, "the public would be interested to know the secret of your success." "Well, young man," replied the captain of industry, "the secret of my success has been my ability to keep it a secret."—Catholic Standard and Times.

"I'm afraid I'm catching cold," said Kloseman, trying to get some medical advice free. "Every once in a while I feel an itching in my nose, and then I sneeze. What would you do in a case like that, doctor?" "Well," replied Dr. Sharpe, "I guess I'd sneeze, too."

"How did those two ever come to marry each other?" "Well, she was the only woman he ever knew who would listen to his anecdotes over five minutes at a time, and he was the only man she ever knew that could look at her that long without getting neuralgia."—Puck.



## Bonbon Cake.

Make an angel-food cake and bake in three layers. Make a boiled icing and flavor with lemon. First layer, spread with icing, then layer of cranberry jelly and another of icing. Second layer, spread with icing, then chopped dates and nut meats mixed with enough jelly to spread, then another layer of icing. Third layer, spread with icing and sprinkle over with blanched and ground almonds.

## Steamed Meat Balls.

First boil one teacup of rice soft, when cold add two and one-half pounds of Hamburg steak, ground fine, a little salt and mix. Add one egg, boil one small hard head of cabbage whole until the leaves can be taken off without breaking; to each leaf put one tablespoon of mixture and fasten them with toothpicks; steam until meat is cooked through, serve with cream sauce.

## Charlotte Russe Filling.

Beat the white of one egg until dry, add one-half cup powdered sugar gradually. Beat one cup of double cream, add one teaspoonful extract orange or vanilla or two tablespoonfuls claret and beat until it sticks to the bottom of the dish, then fold in the egg and sugar. Chill before using for a filling. This recipe gives plenty to fill a three-pint mold.

## Boiled Cake.

One cup sugar, one cup water, one-half cup butter, half a package of seeded raisins, one teaspoonful each of cloves, cinnamon and soda. Put all on the stove and let come to a boil. Remove from the fire the minute it begins to boil and set aside to cool, then stir in just enough flour to make a thin batter and bake in a loaf in a slow oven one hour.

## Apple Desert.

Bake two layers of cake of two eggs, one-quarter cup of butter, one-half cup sugar, one-quarter cup milk, one teaspoon baking powder, sifted with enough flour to make a thin batter, flavor with vanilla. Put some stewed apples between the layers and some on top, covered with whipped cream; garnish with stewed prunes; let stand for two hours before serving.

## Baked Tomatoes.

Select fresh tomatoes, scald them and remove the skins. Butter a pudding dish and slice the tomatoes into it. Sprinkle some pepper and salt over them and a layer of grated cheese. Over that put some fine breadcrumbs and several small pieces of butter. Bake from twenty to twenty-five minutes in the oven, but do not overcook this dish.

## Cabbage Salad.

Cut half of a white cabbage in very thin strips and sprinkle with salt. Put between two plates and let stand one hour. Drain off the water and sprinkle cabbage with a good salad dressing. Pile it lightly in a dome-shaped mass. Cut cold beets in thin slices, separate into rings and arrange the rings in an overlapping border around the base.

## Egless Cookies.

One cup of water, one sup of molasses, two-thirds of a cup of shortening, one cup of cold water, one teaspoonful of baking soda, dissolved in a little hot water; one teaspoonful each of cinnamon, cloves and allspice and two teaspoonfuls of ginger. Mix well, add flour enough to roll out, roll out very thin and bake.

## Steamed Potatoes.

Wash, peel and remove the eyes from the potatoes; drop them into cold water until they are ready; put them into the steamer and cook until they are tender; they will require thirty to forty minutes. When done, set in a warm place with the lid half removed; shake occasionally so as to make them flourey.

## Pickled Onions.

Take small onions, white ones are the best, pour boiling water on them, let stand till cold, then you can peel without hurting your eyes; then make a brine of boiling water and salt so an egg will swim in it; cover your onions and let stand for twenty-four hours and drain.

## Beaten Biscuit.

One quart of flour, a small teaspoonful of salt and a piece of butter and lard, mixed, about the size of an egg. Mix with cold water into very stiff dough. Beat on a biscuit block with a ax until the dough is smooth and blisters. Mold by hand and bake in a quick oven.