

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine
of the Family

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

"Papa, dear, you will not go into the study to-night," observed Mabel, in a coaxing tone, as Mr. Merle looked at the door, as though he intended to follow Poppie's example; "please come with us into the drawing room, and I will make you so comfortable."

"Very well," was his good-humored answer, as he got up a little wearily from his chair.

Alison waited a moment before she followed them.

"Are you not coming, too?" she asked, as Roger threw himself down on an easy chair.

Roger shook his head smilingly. "Rudel has got to do his lessons. Missie never admits him into the drawing room of an evening. She says it is not the room for boys. I generally keep Rudel company or go out and amuse myself."

"But not to-night, dear," she returned, gently, and he got up at once.

Rudel looked up rather wistfully.

"I have almost a mind to come, too," he muttered, but as Roger said, hastily, "Better not, Rue, we don't want any rows to-night, Alison is tired," he remained.

Alison threw a critical glance around the room as she entered it. No changes had been effected since she had last entered it.

Miss Leigh sat bolt upright by the big round table, with her work-basket and a pile of the boys' socks. Mr. Merle had a little table and a reading lamp to himself, and Missie sat on a stool at his feet with a novel on her lap. Alison guessed at once that this was their ordinary position.

"Oh, is that you, Roger? You don't often honor us with your company of an evening," observed Missie, with a toss of her pretty head. "This is a compliment to you, Alison, I suppose?"

"We ought to put our books away to-night," said Mr. Merle, rousing himself reluctantly, and making Alison feel as if he were treating her like a visitor. "Mabel, my dear, suppose you give us one of your little songs?"

"No, indeed, papa," returned Alison, eagerly. "I hope you will go on just the same as though I were not here. Of course I should like to hear Mabel sing, but not if it disturbs you."

"Oh, I always sing to papa of an evening," replied Missie, walking to the piano with much dignity. "Roger, I think you might offer to light those candles for me, but you boys have no idea of waiting upon ladies. You will find them dreadfully rough, Alison."

"On the contrary, I am rather fond of waiting upon ladies," was Roger's nonchalant answer, laying a peculiar stress on the last word that brought an angry flush to Missie's face. "I always wait on you, do I not, Miss Leigh?"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Roger, I always say you are so kind and thoughtful." Missie struck a chord sharply. "If you will be good enough to leave off talking I will commence my song," she said, coaxingly, and as Roger made a low bow and retired she began the prelude of a German song.

Alison listened with much pleasure. Among her other natural gifts, Missie certainly possessed a very good voice, and it had been evidently well trained. Her notes were clear and sweet, and if she could only have got rid of a certain affectation in her style, Alison could have praised her still more warmly.

As it was, her admiration was so sincere that Missie began to thaw for the first time. "I suppose you sing?" she said, a little bluntly.

"Not much. I certainly can not compare my voice to yours," was the modest reply. "but I am fond of instrumental music, and play a good deal."

"Then you will be able to play my accompaniments," returned Mabel, brightening still more. "Will you take my place, Alison? Papa will like to hear you, I am sure."

"Not to-night," returned Alison, feeling as though she were not capable of any further effort. "I am rather tired, and if papa would excuse me I think I should like to go to bed."

"By all means, my love," observed Mr. Merle, looking up from his book. "Pussie, dear, I hope everything is comfortable for your sister. Never mind singing to me to-night, if there is anything you can do to help Alison."

"I will come with you and see," returned Missie, a little ungraciously, and though Alison would rather have dispensed with her company, she thought it better policy to accept this faint offer of help. On the landing Missie stopped, and said, rather awkwardly, "I hope you don't mind about the change of rooms, Alison, but as you do not live at home, I thought I could please myself."

"I suppose I have come home to live now," returned her sister, wearily; "but if you do not want to give it up, Mabel, I will try to be content with my present one; I only want things to be comfortable, and to do my best for you all."

"Oh, as to that, we have got along very well," returned Mabel, hastily; "you need not put yourself out on our account. As papa says, I am grown up now—nearly seventeen—and able to take care of myself and other people, too. I hope you are not going in to see Poppie; I think it is a pity waking up the child, and she is so excitable."

"I shall not wake her, but I promised to go and see her," returned Alison, with

gentle firmness, as she bade Missie good-night. Missie need not have troubled herself about her little sister's wakefulness. Poppie was sitting bolt upright in the darkness, waiting for Alison.

"Now for a good cuddle and a talk," she said, stretching out her arms to Alison; "you are a nice old thing to keep your promise." And as Alison sat down on the little bed she forgot her weariness, as Poppie laid her warm cheek against hers, and called her dear, nice Allie.

CHAPTER VI.

Alison was too tired to lie awake a moment after her head touched the pillow, and she woke so late the next morning that breakfast was already over, and Miss Leigh sent up a message by Poppie, begging her to lie still and rest herself, as her father and Roger had already gone to the mill, and she would send her up some breakfast.

"Aunt Diana would call this a bad beginning," thought Alison. Nevertheless, as her head still ached, she yielded to the temptation. The sun was shining into her room, making her feel hot and restless, and she begged Poppie to lower the blind, so that the huge crane might not fret her eyes by its hideous ugliness. If she could only have shut out, too, its incessant whir and grind! But that was impossible. As she drank her tea she looked round the shabby room with a strange sinking of heart and spirits. "I must wake up every morning to this," she thought, "unless I make an enemy of Missie from the beginning by forcing her to resign my room. Will it not be better to endure any amount of discomfort than to do that? I will ask Aunt Diana what I shall do about it. No, no," recalling herself, "I must act now on my own responsibility. Aunt Diana will think me a poor, helpless sort of a thing if I always want her as a moral crutch to support me."

And with this wise resolution, Alison dressed herself quickly and finished her unpacking, after which she ensconced herself in the deserted dining room and wrote her first letter to Moss-side. A sweet, brave little letter it was. Alison touched very little on her own feelings; she did not even speak of her changed room. Somehow, she had a notion that it would vex Aunt Diana. She talked of Roger's warm welcome and Miss Leigh's kindness, and tried to make Aunt Di interested in Rudel's and Poppie's doll ways. Missie she barely mentioned, except to say how pretty she had grown and how nicely she sang, and then went on to speak of her father's changed looks. A great many loving messages, a few longing expressions for Aunt Di herself, completed the letter.

The early luncheon hour brought all the family together, but Alison's sense of orderliness and propriety was shocked by Rudel's rough appearance. He came in straight from school with unbrushed hair and unwashed hands, and sat down at the table, until Missie's loudly uttered injunctions, and at last his father's curt command to make himself presentable before he ate his dinner, obliged him to leave the room grumbling; and his return a few minutes later led to a most undignified scene of recrimination between him and Missie, carried on below their breaths with the utmost bitterness, with Poppie listening with both her ears, in spite of Miss Leigh's gentle reminders to go on with her dinner.

But this was not the only source of discomfort to Alison; her father was evidently in one of his gloomiest humors; something had evidently gone wrong at the mill, and, as usual, Roger was bearing the brunt of the annoyance. Alison's heart was full of pity as she heard the angry words that were launched at his unlucky head; in her own mind she was secretly marveling at Roger's patience.

Alison—who was on the verge of tears with suppressed pity, and longing to speak a word in his defense—was moved almost to anger by the unconcern on Missie's face. Evidently she was too used to hear Roger found fault with on every occasion to take any notice of it. She had finished her contest with Rudel, and now sat with her usual self-satisfied look, playing with her rings and humming a little French air to herself. "Papa, dear," she said, at last, placidly, "do let those stupid sawmills alone; you are only exciting yourself and making yourself ill. Come out into the garden with me and Poppie; it is so cool and shady there." And as Mr. Merle did not at once answer this appeal, she came round to him and touched his arm. "Come, papa," she repeated still more placidly; "you have scolded Roger enough, and it only puts you out. Come with me; I want you." And actually Mr. Merle suffered himself to be coaxed out of the room; and in another minute Alison saw them sitting together under the lime trees, with Poppie playing on the lawn.

Alison turned round to seek Roger, but he had left the room, and Rudel had followed him; only Miss Leigh was looking up the cellorette, and jingling her key basket. "What does this mean?" faltered Alison. "Why does papa speak to Roger in this way? It is not right, is it?" "Come with me into the school room," was Miss Leigh's sensible answer to this; "as Sarah will be in directly to clear the luncheon, and we can not talk before her. I must speak to you, Alison; I must indeed." And leading the way to the old room Alison remembered so well, she closed the door in her quick, nervous fashion, and begged Alison to take the only easy chair that the room boasted. "No, indeed," returned Alison, quickly; "Poppie's little stool will do for me. What does it matter where I sit, or whether one is comfortable or not?" she continued, impatiently, as Miss Leigh stood hesitating. "Please rest yourself in that big chair, for you look quite fagged and tired, and I have had a nice rest."

"I think I am nearly always tired," returned Miss Leigh, plaintively. "Is it not dreadful, Alison—about poor Mr.

Roger, I mean? If it were not for my poor blind mother, whom I pretty nearly support out of my savings, I do not think I could endure this much longer. My dear," with the tears starting to her gentle eyes, "when one gets to my age one values peace and kind words above everything, and that is just what one can not get at The Holms."

"Do you mean that this sort of thing goes on daily?" exclaimed Alison, turning her flushed face to the governess. "Do you mean," bringing out her words with difficulty, "that papa often gives Roger all this to bear?"

"Well, my dear, one must not exaggerate. Things are not always going wrong at the mills, of course; and sometimes we can eat our meals in peace; but your poor dear father—one hardly likes to blame him to his own child—is very often hard on Mr. Roger. It seems to me as though nothing Mr. Roger can do pleases your father, and as if Mabel can do no wrong in his eyes. You can see for yourself, Alison, the influence she has over him."

"Yes, I see; but I can not understand it. When I was last at home Missie was only a child, and yet, though she is not seventeen, and ought to be in the school room and under your care, she seems completely mistress."

"She is never in the school room now," returned Miss Leigh, leaning back wearily in the armchair. "Sometimes she comes in to interfere with Poppie and find fault with some of my arrangements. But she has coaxed your father into giving her French and singing lessons with her friends, the Hardwicks, and for months she has refused to open even a history; and yet you have no idea how ignorant she is. Nothing but mischief has resulted from her intimacy with Eva Hardwick. I have spoken to your father over and over again about it, but he listens to Mabel's version of her friend's character, and only the other day he told me I must be mistaken, for Eva was a bright, high-spirited girl, and it was all nonsense what Mr. Roger and I said about her."

"Roger dislikes her, then?" "Oh, yes; he never speaks to her if he can help it. She is a fine-looking girl; older than Mabel, but vain and empty headed, thinking of nothing but balls and flirtations; and you know how dangerous a friend of that sort is to a girl of Mabel's age. To do Mabel justice, she was not half so vain and fond of dress and finery until she went so much to the Hardwicks. They have completely turned her head, and, worst of all, Eva has taken a dislike to Roger because he refuses to pay her any attention and laughs at all their nonsense; and that sets Mabel against her brother. Mabel always had a temper of her own," went on Miss Leigh, feeling a sort of relief in pouring out her feelings into Alison's ear, "but she was never so aggravating as she is now. You see, my dear, if a girl does not hold her own home as sacred, if she chooses a giddy young companion for her confidante, and retails to her all that passes in her own household, finding fault with her own people, and listening to her friend's estimate of them, she may end as Mabel does, in thinking her brothers rough and unmannerly, and Poppie a disagreeable little girl."

"Do you mean Missie is so dishonorable as to repeat to Miss Hardwick all that passes at The Holms?" asked Alison, indignantly. "They do not think it dishonorable," returned Miss Leigh, with a quiet good sense which Alison had never credited her. "You see, Mabel calls Eva her bosom friend, and refuses to have any secrets from her. If Eva comes this afternoon, all that passed at the luncheon table between your father and Mr. Roger will be retailed, as a matter of course. "Even if Mabel were disposed to be reticent for once, Eva, who is of an inquisitive nature, and who completely dominates her, would soon worm the whole thing from her. She has a grudge against Mr. Roger, and nothing would please her more than to hear of this humiliation. I have reason to know, Alison, that it is by Eva's advice that Mabel intends to keep your room. I have heard her say myself that, of course, as your home is with Miss Carrington, you have resigned your privilege here as the eldest daughter, and that there is no need for Mabel to knock under completely. Those were her very words."

Alison looked grave. "Is Miss Hardwick often here?" she asked at last. "They are together every day, either here or at Broadlands—the Hardwicks' house. But as your father objects to strangers, or, indeed, to visitors of any kind, Eva very rarely spends the evenings here. They were practicing in the drawing room this morning, and afterward they went out together. There is another sister, Anna, a nice little thing, rather pale and delicate looking, but they both snub her. I suppose that makes Mr. Roger kind to her when she comes, for her sister certainly slights her, and Mr. Roger always stands up for every one but himself."

"It seems odd, my saying all this to you, Alison," observed Miss Leigh, after a pause; "for you are young yourself; but you were never flighty and easily led, as Mabel is. I believe she has her good points; she is really very much attached to your father, and will leave Eva sometimes, if he wants her; and in her own way she is fond of Poppie, though she tyrannizes over her. There! Poppie is crying as usual; that is generally the end when she is long with Mabel. I suppose, by that, your father has gone back to the mill. I had better go to her, Alison, if you will excuse me."

Alison had plenty of food for meditation when she was left alone; a very difficult problem was before her to solve. How was she to gain an influence over her faulty young sister?

(To be continued.)

The deepening and lengthening of the Annisquam River have made an island out of Cape Cod.



Baked Bananas.

The skin contains considerable pectine, which is well to have, so one may clean the fruit and only strip off one-third of the skin of each banana, and with a spoon loosen the remainder from the fruit. Arrange five or six in a baking pan, the stripped side uppermost. On each lay one-half of a teaspoonful of butter in bits, sprinkle with one teaspoonful of lemon juice. Bake for twenty minutes in a good oven. Serve with a chocolate sauce or any desired.

Cheese Fondue.

Put into a double boiler a tablespoonful of butter, a cupful of milk, a scant cupful of fresh, soft bread crumbs and two cupfuls of cheese, grated. Cover and cook until all ingredients are blended and creamy. Add two eggs, whipped light, and stir until the mixture thickens; put in a pinch of cayenne and a teaspoonful of salt and serve on toast or crackers.

Graham Bread.

Set a sponge as for white bread. Let it stand in a warm place all night, and in the morning work into it enough graham flour to make a good dough and add to it three scant tablespoonfuls of molasses. Knead thoroughly and make into loaves. Put into greased pans and set to rise until light, then bake in a steady oven.

Molasses Cookies.

One large cup of butter and lard mixed, one cup of sugar, two-thirds of a cup of molasses, one-half cup of hot water in which one level teaspoonful of soda has been dissolved, one teaspoonful each of cinnamon, ginger and cloves, flour for a stiff dough. Roll out, cut into shapes and bake quickly.

A Dainty Breakfast Dish.

Toast your bread light brown, butter and salt. Beat the white of egg stiff and pile on the toast, scooping out a little round center; into this drop the whole yolk. Set in the oven and brown again. Put bits of butter and salt and pepper on the egg and serve on individual plates.

Canned Tomatoes, Not Boiled.

Peel ripe tomatoes and put in clean jars. Pour boiling hot water in jars, put tops on, set in boiling water so they are all covered and let stand until cold. See that tops are all on tightly and that rubbers are good. Keep in dark place. Be sure to use sound tomatoes.

Quince Honey.

Four large quinces, grated; three pounds of granulated sugar, one pint of water, alum the size of a pea; put the water, sugar and alum in a kettle, boil and skim; put in the quinces and boil for ten minutes, then turn into jars and seal.

Steak Stew.

One round steak, cut into pieces of the desired size, then fried in drippings. When well browned sprinkle with salt, cover with hot water and simmer gently for one and one-half hours. Thicken the gravy and serve.

French Salad Dressing.

Three tablespoons of olive oil, one tablespoon vinegar. Mix salt, red pepper, a little mustard and a trifle of sugar, stir smooth with oil. To these ingredients add the oil and vinegar.

Rye and Indian Pancakes.

One pint milk, one teaspoon soda, two eggs, a little salt; mix firm enough to cut off with a spoon in boiling lard with half rye and half Indian meal; molasses to sweeten.

Soup Meat Balls.

Put cooked soup meat, cold boiled potatoes and onions in the food chopper, add pepper and salt to taste, form into balls, press flat and fry brown.

Short Suggestions.

To cover the pan in which fish is cooked will make the flesh soft.

Honey should be kept in the dark. If exposed to light it will quickly granulate.

If the wooden chopping bowl is stood upside down when not in use there will be no danger of its spitting.

Wooden tubs are much used for washing glass and delicate china, as there is far less risk of breakage.

A pinch of borax stirred into a quart of milk will keep it sweet, if you object to the taste of it after boiling.

Raise some okra in your garden. Dried it keeps indefinitely and is the best flavor soup and bouillions can have.

Lemons that have become hard from long standing can be made usable by covering them with boiling water for a few minutes.

CRITICIZES THE RAILWAYS.

The Rev. Patrick Quinn of Dublin Amazed at Their Reckless Speed.

"In some respects the railroads in this country are behind ours," said the Rev. Patrick Quinn of Dublin, Ireland, in the Baltimore American. "One thing I have noticed that seems strange to me is the way the trains dash through towns. I never saw anything like it before, and I wonder people are not killed every day. In Great Britain there are iron fences on each side of the tracks through the cities and towns and guards are constantly on the watch to prevent people climbing over them or crawling underneath."

"In some places the authorities compel the railroad companies to put tunnels under crossings, and thus eliminate all danger. The trains here are so dirty, too. Why, I wash my hands thirty or forty times a day when I am traveling. The noise from the ringing of bells and the blowing of the whistles is almost enough to set one crazy. There is a perfect bedlam when a train starts from a station; a big bell clangs, the engine starts puffing and snorting, and all this, in addition to which shrill whistling is kept up for half an hour, while the train tears its way through the city. The appointments and the meals served I must say are pretty good. Our trains make better time than yours. You have nothing to equal the express from London to Glasgow or the one between London and Liverpool."

"This rush and dash in which you live all the time is enough to turn a man's head. Chicago is worse than any other city that I have visited in this respect, and the people there are almost criminals on the subject of speed. They tear around as if their time was worth hundreds of dollars a minute. It requires courage to try to cross one of the downtown streets. Automobiles, cars and wagons of all sorts tear up and down with an absolute disregard of human life. Several persons were knocked down and killed during the few days I spent in the city, and I breathed a sigh of relief when I got away."

WORKED FOR HIS DOG.

Such friendship as a man feels for his dog and the dog feels for his master is a sentiment of a peculiarly pleasing nature, because the best that each gets from the other is just affection and sympathy. Cases arise in which the affection leads to willing sacrifices, on one side or the other. An instance recently noticed in the New York Times is that of a negro, Edward Grooms, and his dog.

Like most members of his race, Edward Grooms has a dog. Its breed and ancestry are unrecorded, both probably being dubious; but it is doubtless an amiable and estimable dog in Groom's eyes, and the local tax collector held the animal quite good enough to be taxed.

Grooms appreciated the compliment, but did not have the money to pay the impost. Things were moving toward a tragical termination for the dog when, from some source or other, came the suggestion that if Grooms would serve ten days in the chain gang the tax would be considered paid and the dog could live.

The master adopted the plan, and saved the life of his dog by toiling for ten hot, weary days as a shackled buldler of roads. It was, without question, a fine thing to do, and the chains that Grooms wore were no disgrace—were rather badges of honor in the eyes of those who understood why he wore them.

One man remarked that although people now know that Edward Grooms loved his dog, the dog knew it all the while, and would have done as much or more for him any day that occasion or opportunity arose. That is dog nature. "Of all the beautiful things in this world there is none more beautiful than love, and it is not so common as to be beneath regard, even in the case of a man and a dog."

Quick Change.

"Who," she asked, "is that scrawny, bow-legged, ridiculous looking person talking to Miss Rockingham?" "That is Count Brisczpicknitzel."

"Oh! What an aristocratic, noble bearing he seems to have now that he has shifted his position so that the light strikes him properly!"—Chicago Record-Herald.

The Cowslip.

"I saw a cowslip by the river's brim," said the long-haired boarder who had just returned from a stroll.

"I hope 'twan't one of my cows," said the practical farmer. "Did she slip clear in?"

Look yourself over candidly and honestly, and you will be surprised at the great amount of time you devote to foolishness.

If a woman wants a welcome when she gets home, she should leave her husband with the baby when she goes.