

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine
of the Family

CHAPTER VII.

"Here beginneth the first chapter of Alison's failures," whispered Alison, in a funny little voice, as she encountered Roger on her way downstairs on Monday morning, and she laughed merrily as she shook her key basket exultantly in his face. Roger opened his eyes very widely at this, then he stepped back a few paces and looked at her admiringly.

"How ever did you get possession of that thing?" he exclaimed. "Do you know, Allie, my dear, that shabby little brown basket has been a bone of contention between Miss Leigh and Missie for the last month. Miss Leigh clings to it as her sole hope, and refuses to give it up. It has ended by Missie's neatly abstracting it at night. She has done it three or four times."

"Yes, I know. Poppie told me all about it. Well," in an amused tone, "I have only paid Missie in her own coin. Thanks to my good habits, I was dressed before she thought of waking, so I stole in, got my key basket, and wished Missie good morning at the same time. I am afraid she will come down dreadfully cross."

"As though that were anything new," returned Roger, contemptuously, as he took up the paper and retired with it to the window, while Alison busied herself with the coffee pot. Shortly afterward there was an unwonted sound on the stairs.

"If it were not perfectly incredible, I should say that was Rudel's footstep," Roger observed, in a doubtful tone.

"Oh, yes, it is Rudel," returned Alison, brightly. "I woke him, and made him promise to get up. Miss Leigh says he has got into sad ways. Good boy," as Rudel entered, looking very much pleased at himself, and he bore without making a very very face his sister's kiss on his forehead. Poppie, who came in a moment afterward with Miss Leigh, was not quite so reticent.

"What is that for?" she asked, with a child's innocence of grammar, but in much surprise, as Alison kissed her warmly, and said, "Good morning, Poppie, dear."

"Poppie means that we are not accustomed to these little civilities," put in Roger, as Alison looked perplexed for a moment, "nobody says good morning to anybody else at The Holms except Miss Leigh and I; we always do, don't we?" shaking hands with her as he spoke. "Father just gives an inclusive good morning at the door."

"I am afraid you are very much shocked, Alison," observed Miss Leigh, mournfully. "Mabel sets Rudel and Poppie such a bad example in this; no one thinks of such a thing except Mr. Roger, and he is always so very thoughtful."

When Mr. Merle came into the room a few minutes later he seemed quite surprised at the unwonted cheerfulness. He nodded to Alison, and then took up his letters, but she was not satisfied.

"You have not kissed me, papa," she said, as she carried him round his cup of coffee.

"Oh, I thought only Pussie cared for kisses," he said, good-humoredly; "Poppie never comes to me for one."

Poppie reddened, and bent over her plate in much confusion. Roger, who was next to her, saw the child's eyes were full of tears.

"I expect Poppie is afraid of bothering you," he observed. "You would like father to kiss you sometimes, as he does Missie," he said, kindly.

"Is that true, my little girl?" asked Mr. Merle, who had just caught sight of Poppie's quivering lip. The poor child, who was very sensitive, was on the point of bursting into tears, but Alison happily interposed.

"Papa is too busy to think much about such things. You must go round to-morrow and ask him for one, as I did to-day; he won't refuse either of us," and she looked laughingly at him from behind her urn.

The brightness seemed to rouse him effectually. He had looked pale and weary when he entered the room, but good-humor is infectious.

"You look very nice, dear," he said, approvingly. "I like to see you, Alison."

"I like to see her there, too," observed Roger, boldly; "it is her proper place." Missie, who had just opened the door, caught both these remarks; they did not evidently conduce to her amiability. She gave Alison a withering glance as she passed by her, to greet her father, and, taking no notice of her or the others, desired Rudel rather crossly to give her more room, and began her breakfast rather sulkily.

But for once her humors were disregarded. No one troubled themselves about her, and the conversation was renewed with scarcely a break. Perhaps both Roger and Alison were doing their best to carry it on, but their sense of effort was lost in the general good.

When breakfast was over, and Rudel had rushed off to school, and Mr. Merle and Roger had gone over to the mill, Alison asked her sister pleasantly how she proposed to spend the morning.

"That is my affair," she answered, very rudely. "I am not accustomed to give an account of myself to gratify people's curiosity. I may as well tell you, once for all, that I dislike interference."

Alison felt inclined to laugh—there was something comical in Missie's mode of showing her temper, but she knew nothing

provokes people more than to laugh at them, so she prudently refrained from showing her mirth. "I am just going round the house with Miss Leigh while Poppie prepares her lessons," she returned, as coolly as though Missie had given her a fair answer. "In another hour I shall be quite at your convenience, if you would like to practice with me."

"Thank you," returned Missie, with freezing politeness. "I have no need to trespass on your valuable time; Eva will be here soon."

"Oh, very well," returned Alison, still in perfect good-humor; "then I will get my easel ready in the school room and paint a little, if Miss Leigh will allow me."

"Of course you must paint in the school room," returned her sister, tartly; "I suppose you do not intend to litter up this room with that great ugly easel, and Eva and I will be in the drawing room."

"I dare say when I have finished you will let me join you there," replied Alison, in a conciliatory tone. As she was bent on making Miss Hardwick's acquaintance for her own purposes she took no notice of sundry remarks in an undertone, that were fully meant to reach her ears, about people never knowing when they were not wanted.

Alison was soon too busy to remember Missie's existence. Miss Leigh, who was desirous of resigning her household duties into Alison's hands, keeping herself in the background and only acting as aide-de-camp, was soon explaining to the bewildered girl all her little pet theories with regard to kitchen and store room.

When Miss Leigh and Poppie went back to the school room, Alison settled herself and her painting apparatus in the furthest window, and tried to forget all her perplexities in hard work, but while Poppie droned over her lessons, Alison's thoughts would stray to a far different scene—to a shady room full of sweet flower scents, with a tall figure standing before an easel. "Oh, Aunt Di, if I were only painting beside you now!" she thought, with a sharp, involuntary pain.

"Oh, how beautiful! If I could only paint like that." The words were spoken, with a sigh, just behind her. Alison started; she had been dreaming indeed; the midday sun was streaming into the room. Poppie had put away her lesson books, and had run off, and Miss Leigh's place was empty, and standing just behind Alison's chair was a young lady dressed very simply in a gray linen dress and a broad-brimmed hat. At Alison's obvious start the young lady blushed and seemed confused.

"Oh," she stammered, "I am afraid I startled you. You were so busy that you did not see me come in. I have been watching you ever so long."

"I must have been painting in my sleep," returned Alison, with a frank laugh, but as she put aside her palette and rose, she cast a scrutinizing glance on the young girl beside her.

She was a slight, pale girl, evidently a little younger than herself; somewhat plain in feature, but with a pleasing, gentle expression, though a painful hesitation in her speech, almost amounting to a stammer, marred the effect of a singularly sweet voice. Even in that first moment Alison, who had a true artistic taste in all matters pertaining to dress, wondered at the bad judgment that could select dull, neutral tints for a complexion so colorless; the large hat overshadowed her features, and hid the soft hair that was her only beauty.

"You are Miss Hardwick, I suppose?" observed Alison, with a shrewd guess that this was the young sister of whom Miss Leigh spoke.

"Not Miss Hardwick," corrected the girl; "I am only Anna. Eva and Mabel sent me here because they wanted to talk to each other, and they always find me in the way. Will it trouble you if I stop here a little and watch you painting?"

"Oh, no; not at all. We shall be nice company for each other," returned Alison, in a friendly voice. "I have only this little bit of background to finish, and then I shall be free to talk to you."

Alison painted for a few minutes silently; she was thinking. Then she laid aside her brush.

"If you will excuse me a moment I want to speak to your sister and Mabel," she said, rather quickly, "and then, if you like, we will go and sit in the garden until luncheon is ready."

CHAPTER VIII.

Missie looked up with a frown as her sister entered the room, but Alison took no notice of her. She walked up straight to Miss Hardwick, and held out her hand with one of her pleasant smiles.

"I have just made acquaintance with your sister," she said, with quiet tact, "we are going in the garden, as the house feels so close this lovely day. I shall be so glad, and I am sure Mabel will be, too, if you will both stay with us to luncheon."

"I thought you knew better, Alison," Missie interrupted, pettishly, before her friend could speak. "Dear papa is so nervous and worried about business and Roger's wretched management that he is not able to bear luncheon visitors. Eva understands this, don't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes, darling," returned Miss Hardwick, with effusion; "but perhaps your sister, being a stranger and not quite used to all the ways at The Holms, has made a mistake. That is very natural."

"Oh, no," returned Alison, trying to keep cool. "I am making no mistake. Papa will not be in to luncheon, or my brother, either, as they have business a little way out of town. So I thought, as we should be quite alone, that it would be a good opportunity, Mabel, for you to have your friends."

Missie's pink cheeks became crimson with vexation; it aggravated her to see Alison taking upon herself so quietly the duties of the mistress of the house; and she was still more injured that her father's movements had not been first noticed

to herself. She took no notice of her sister's remarks, and added no word, as Miss Hardwick accepted the invitation with great alacrity. When Alison left them after a few more words, she listened reluctantly to Eva's criticism.

"I had no idea your sister was such a stylish person," she said, when the door closed on Alison; "she has fine eyes and a good figure, and she knows how to suit her own style in dress. She is not as pretty as you, darling, of course, but she has some claims to good looks."

Alison did not return these moderate compliments; she was not at all attracted by Miss Hardwick. She was a large, heavy looking girl, rather handsome, but her face had no play of expression, and her manner was decidedly artificial.

Alison spent a pleasant hour with her new friend under the lime trees. She soon grew interested in Anna's artless talk. She was evidently very young for her age; though she was seventeen, she was still childish in manners. Probably she had been repressed and kept in the background by her sister.

"It is so good of you to let me talk to you," Anna said. "Mamma and Eva say I am such a chatterbox, when I begin to ask them questions. I think I am fonder of talking than most people. Anthony says that makes me so troublesome."

"Who is Anthony?" queried Alison, a little curiously.

"Oh, he is our cousin; he is staying with us now. Eva says it is so nice, because we have no brothers, and he can take us about. Eva and he are great friends; she always calls him Tony. He is such a handsome fellow, with a big black mustache like a cavalry officer. He is in the army, you know. I am dreadfully frightened of him, because he laughs at me, but it is only his way, he means to be good-natured."

Alison prudently refrained from all comments, but said, lightly, "Now we have talked all this time, and I wonder what has become of your sister and Mabel? I propose that we have afternoon tea under these trees, and that you and I, with Sarah's help, should prepare a little surprise for them. Will not Poppie be delighted?"

Anna might have been a child from the way she clapped her hands; she had never enjoyed herself so much in all her life as during the next half hour, as she and Alison dragged chairs across the lawn, and arranged the little tea table, with the nice basket of hot cakes that old Nanny had prepared, some fresh strawberries, and a little vase of roses in the center. Even Missie looked pleased when, on returning from their hot walk, she caught sight of the snowy cloth under the trees.

"That is really a good idea," she observed, in a grudging tone, however; but Eva very nearly made her cross again by saying:

"How delicious of your sister! I really would hug her for this. What a pity we never thought of this before, dear, and then Tony might have joined us!"

When Roger returned from his work, an hour earlier than he expected, he stood quite transfixed on the gravel walk; for certainly such a pleasant little picture had never been seen before in the garden of The Holms.

"You may have my chair by Miss Leigh," exclaimed Poppie, eagerly. "Oh, the cakes are so nice, Roger, and there are two left."

"I must make you some fresh tea, you poor tired day laborer," observed Alison, as Roger threw himself into the wicker chair and removed his hat.

"Oh, let me do it!" exclaimed Anna, eagerly. "I know the way to the kitchen quite well."

"Yes, and I will go, too," added Poppie. "There are some more strawberries, I know."

"Bring me a big plateful," called out Roger, as Poppie frisked away; but he looked after them both rather curiously. His little friend looked different, somehow, he thought. Was it Alison, he wondered, who had put those coquettish looking roses into the little gray gown?

Anna's face looked dimpled and smiling. Her blue eyes quite shone when she came back. She and Alison and Roger had a long talk, while Miss Leigh listened and knitted industriously. Missie and Eva had wandered away again—most likely to avoid Roger. He had addressed Miss Hardwick with studied politeness, but she had tossed her head and hardly answered him. She would make no terms with the enemy who had wounded her vanity so grievously.

"We will take one more turn, darling, and then we must really go," she had said to Missie; and in a few more minutes they heard her calling for Anna.

"Come, Anna, don't dawdle. We must really go now."

"Good by. I have had such a happy afternoon, thank you so much," whispered Anna, with a timid kiss that Alison warmly returned. "One day you will have me again, will you not?"

"Come whenever you like, dear. I am sure we shall be good friends," returned Alison, forgetting the necessity of lowering her voice.

Miss Hardwick laughed affectedly as she heard the speech.

"You are a lucky girl to have got a friend so quickly. Is she not, Mr. Roger? Oh! I forgot; you are her friend, too, with a little spice of venom in her tone."

"I shall be most happy to be considered Miss Anna's friend; and I am sure Alison will say the same," rejoined Roger, in his downright manner. "Good by, Miss Anna."

(To be continued.)

Roumania is said to hold the prize for illiteracy. Two-thirds of the population can neither read nor write.

A giant blue crab of Japan measures 12 feet across the nippers.



Household Talks.

Cooking Time Table.

Time for baking different kinds of food:

- Beans, eight to ten hours.
- Biscuit, 20 minutes.
- Bread, 40 to 60 minutes.
- Sponge cake, 45 to 60 minutes.
- Thin cakes, 20 to 30 minutes.
- Custards, 20 to 45 minutes.
- Thick fish, 45 to 60 minutes.
- Small whole fish, 20 to 30 minutes.
- Gems, 20 to 30 minutes.
- Muffins, 20 to 30 minutes.
- Patties, 15 to 25 minutes.
- Pies, 30 to 40 minutes.
- Potatoes, 30 to 60 minutes.
- Pudding, 20 to 45 minutes.
- Scalloped dishes, 15 to 30 minutes.

Chop Suey.
Cut into small pieces two chicken gizzards, two chicken livers, one ounce of green root ginger, three stalks of celery and two pounds of young pork. Put all into a frying pan with a tablespoonful of olive oil. Make a mixture of four tablespoonfuls of salad oil, one tablespoonful of vinegar, one of Worcestershire sauce, a half-cup of boiling water, a pinch of powdered cloves, salt and pepper to taste. Stew until the meat is done, and just before taking from the fire add two cupfuls of mushrooms; boil for three or four minutes and serve.

Steamed Gingerbread.
Sift one pound of flour into a basin, add one teaspoonful of baking soda, two teaspoonfuls cinnamon, two teaspoonfuls ginger, two teaspoonfuls caraway seeds, one cupful currants, a pinch of salt and a little grated nutmeg. Melt together in a saucepan four tablespoonfuls of sugar, four tablespoonfuls of butter, six ounces of molasses; pour them among the flour, add two well-beaten eggs and enough buttermilk to moisten. Pour into a buttered mold, cover with buttered paper. Steam for two and a half hours.

Potato Salad.
Six boiled potatoes, two small onions, two hard-boiled eggs, pinch of salt. Chop onions first very fine, then chop the potatoes and eggs, but not so fine. Dressing—Three-fourths cupful of vinegar, butter size of egg, one large tablespoonful of mustard, three tablespoonfuls of sugar, dash of cayenne, two beaten eggs. Melt butter and stir in the mustard after making it smooth in a little vinegar, then beat the eggs thoroughly and add the sugar, then all the other ingredients, and cook until it thickens, stirring all the time.

Pumpkin Pie.
Peel a good firm pumpkin and cut into small pieces. Put these into a greased iron pot early in the morning, add a cup of cold water, set at the side of the range and stew gently over a slow fire until night, stirring often. While hot beat in a quarter-pound of butter. Set aside until cold. When ready to make pies add enough rich milk to bring the mixture to the consistency of thick cream, whip in two well-beaten eggs for each pie, add sugar and powdered ginger to taste and bake in open crusts.

Fruit Salad.
Peel and separate into lobes four oranges, cutting each lobe into three pieces; blanch, dry and break into bits enough English walnut meats to make a teaspoonful; seed and halve a cup of Malaga grapes. Mix these ingredients together and set in the ice until cold. Line a bowl with crisp lettuce leaves, fill with the fruit, sprinkle lightly with salt and pour over all a good mayonnaise dressing.

Stewed Oysters or Oyster Soup.
Heat a quart of oysters in their liquor until the edges begin to curl. Have ready in another vessel a quart of milk, into which a bit of baking soda has been stirred. Melt in this a generous tablespoonful of butter, stir in the hot oysters and liquor, season with salt and pepper, and serve at once with oyster crackers.

Steamed Indian Pudding.
Put two cups Indian meal into a basin, sift in one cup of flour, one teaspoonful baking soda, a pinch of salt, one cup of sultana raisins. Beat up one egg, add two tablespoonfuls of molasses and one pint of buttermilk; pour them among the dry ingredients. Mix well and steam for three hours.

Rusk.
Mix together two cups of raised dough left from the bread, one cup of sugar, a half-cup of butter, two well-beaten eggs and flour enough to make a stiff dough. Set to rise, and when light mold into high biscuits and set to rise again. Sift a mixture of sugar and cinnamon over the top and bake.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Only 60,000 full-blooded red Indians are to be found to-day in the United States.

To cleanse the streets of the city of London, nearly 80,000,000 gallons of water are annually required.

Printing from movable type was known in Korea over a century before the invention of the art in Europe.

Freights to India, formerly \$3.65 to \$4.86 a ton from European ports, have fallen as low as \$1.22 to \$1.70 a ton.

Including Hayti, Santo Domingo, Panama and Liberia, there are now twenty-four republics in the world.

The Turkish day begins exactly at sunset, and at that time the Turk sets his clocks and watches on the hour of 12.

Although the sand in the Sahara only averages thirty feet in depth, it has been found 200 feet below the surface.

In a single minute a machine which cuts up wood to make matches will turn out 40,000 "splints," as they are called.

The Calcutta constable—or "parawal-lah," as he is called—has an apparatus attached to his shoulders to support an umbrella over his head.

After twenty years of experimenting an Edinburgh firm has brought out an essence of tea which is said to preserve the aroma and cheering qualities of the prepared leaf.

Italians of the poorer class generally enjoy good health. This is partly attributed to the fact that the working classes of Italy eat less meat than those of other European nations.

It has been stated in the Calcutta press that the government railways in India will next year use coal brought to India by steamer from Natal, because it is better than Bengal coal and more economical.

The intellectual man of forty is the world's greatest asset as far as work is concerned, though the discoveries which have advanced the world are all made before that age. The planting is done before twenty, the crop grows from twenty to forty and the golden harvest is from forty to sixty, occasionally until seventy.—Army and Navy Life.

America has now triumphed over Egypt and India in holding what will soon be the largest irrigated tract of desert land in the world. This is what is known as the Twin Falls country in the State of Idaho. The ultimate area under irrigation, when the entire Twin Falls project shall have been completed, will be 1,350,000 acres.—Harper's Weekly.

The total amount of pensions paid by the United States between 1896 and 1908, inclusive, was \$3,654,663,364.42, and the cost, maintenance and expenses of the organization for the payment of these pensions during the same period were \$122,574,462.96, a total of \$3,777,237,828.38, exceeding the amount of money in circulation in this country in 1907 by more than \$1,120,000,000.—Army and Navy Life.

Uruguay is taking a national census. From 40,000 to 45,000 persons are engaged in the task, which works out at about one person in every twenty-five of the population of the republic. This large proportion is found necessary owing to the very scattered character of the population in certain parts of the interior, where there are only two or three inhabitants to the square mile.

The maharajah gawkwar of Baroda has melted down and converted into bullion the celebrated gold and silver cannon of Baroda. Of these costly but useless toys the silver guns of a former gawk were the inspiration. In order to "go one better" than his predecessor, the late gawkwar had the gold guns cast and mounted at a cost, it is said, of \$500,000. They reposed in the state armory and were the wonder and admiration of all visitors.

A Matamoros newspaper calls attention to a test of the pumping of water in the Rio Grande region for irrigation compared to the older method of constructing dams. A 36-inch pump with 36,000 gallons capacity on a 24-foot lift, was operated at a fuel cost of 62½ cents an hour. Whatever irrigation is being attempted on the Mexican side is being done through the pumping system, and there is every prospect that more and more of it will be attempted by the owners of land along the river.

Japan's first school for the education of actresses has been formally opened at Tokio, under the direction of Sada Yokka. Of the young women who presented themselves for admission about twenty were accepted and they will take a two years' course. More than twice that number, all having the educational requirements, applied for admission, but could not be accepted because, as the head of the school explained, "their small stature precluded their assuming the heroine parts which belong to the dramatic literature of Europe."