

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine
of the Family

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

"Roger," exclaimed Alison, passionately, "this must be Fergusson's doing; he must have tampered with your letter and cut out the entry in the ledger, and of course the check is in his possession."

"Wait a moment, Allie," returned Roger, looking very stern and pale. "The check was cashed the next morning by a clerk of ours who was turned away for dishonesty; but the bank did not know that, and thought him still in our employ, so the money is lost to us. My father is dreadfully angry and puzzled about the whole affair, but he does not suspect Fergusson. He flew in a perfect rage when I hinted about his gambling debts. He blames me for carelessness; he says I ought not to have left the office without locking up both the check and the ledger in the iron safe. Fergusson has told my father that he saw Ibbotson the clerk we dismissed, hanging about the yard talking to the men. He declares that while we were in the yard Ibbotson must have got into the office, turned over the letters and abstracted my receipt; he must have read the entry in the open ledger, and he knew all the keys, and would easily find the check. He has gulled my father completely; he has actually made him believe that, in ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour at the most, Ibbotson could cut the page in the ledger, track the check to the private drawer, hunt out my receipt and make his escape—and all this without any preconceived plan. Why, the whole thing is monstrous and utterly improbable. I am positive that the only thing Ibbotson has done is to cash the check."

"Roger, oh, how dreadful it all is! Of course, there can be no doubt in your own mind who did it all?"

"There is not a shadow of doubt in my own mind, Allie; but how am I to bring my father to believe it? Ibbotson has left the place, or he was actually going to set the detectives on him. Fergusson has completely hoodwinked him. Circumstantial evidence is strong against Fergusson, to my thinking. Judge for yourself, Allie; he was with me in the office when I opened the check; he saw me make the entry in the ledger, as well as write the receipt; he also must have seen me thrust the check hastily into the private drawer before I ran out into the yard. No doubt he returned to the office as soon as my attention was engrossed with poor Mitchell. A few minutes was all that was needed to accomplish the job, Allie. I have found out to-day that he is terribly involved, and that his creditors are threatening him. I told you things are coming to a crash. I am afraid we shall lose more than the sum we received from Simmonds Brothers."

"Oh, Roger, how blind your father is! What are you to do to open his eyes?"

"I am going to watch Fergusson," returned Roger, with a frown of anxiety. "Allie, I never meant to have told you this. I have been about the town gleaning facts to-day, but I mean to keep them to myself for the next four-and-twenty hours. Fergusson has arrived at some sort of crisis in his affairs. I am afraid he will do something desperate. A sum of money has come into our hands to-day after banking hours, in notes and gold. I wanted my father to bring it up to the house, but he scouted the idea as ridiculous, as though any thief could open an iron safe; but, Allie, I am not comfortable in my mind. Supposing Fergusson has a duplicate key? My father is so hopelessly duped that it is no use saying any more to him. I have made up my mind to watch the office to-night."

"But not alone, dear?"

"Yes, of course. Timothy will be there, if I need help; but I don't mean to take him into confidence. There is a barge that passes at ten to-night. The barge is an acquaintance of mine. I told him to look out for me by the bridge. I will get him to land me at the lower end of the yard. Timothy will be in his shed by that time, thinking about his supper. I don't want him to see me, or he will enlighten Fergusson. There is a handy wood-pile just outside the office where I can lie snug."

"Roger!" exclaimed Alison, in a quick, determined voice, "you shall not go alone; I shall watch you." And as he was about to interrupt her she went on quietly: "You know Missie and Miss Leigh will be out until half past ten. Papa is always in his study. They will think I am in bed. I can lock my door and put the key in my pocket, and you have the latch-key. I will be no trouble to you. I will be as quiet as a mouse, and not hinder you. I could not rest—I could not sleep, knowing you were with that bad man. I will be useful as a witness. You must take me, Roger."

"Are you sure that you mean it—that it will not hurt you?" he asked, slowly.

"What should hurt me on a summer's night? And the barge will be such fun."

"Very well, you shall come if you like. You are a plucky girl, Allie."

CHAPTER XIII.

It was still early in the evening when the young conspirators returned to the house, and the next two hours passed very slowly to Alison.

At half past nine Mr. Merle was shut safely in his study. Alison went quickly into her room and made her little preparation. A brown hat she had discarded as being too shabby would just suit her nocturnal purpose; her dress was dark, and a warm jacket was all she needed; and, carefully turning down her gas and locking her door, she crept quietly downstairs,

to find Roger waiting for her in the dark entry.

He nodded and held out his hand to her without speaking, until they were outside the gate and were walking rapidly down the road that would lead them to the bridge.

"I have brought this plaid," he observed presently, showing it to her. "I was so afraid you would find it cold if we should have to watch many hours. I don't think I ought to have brought you, Allie."

"I could not have stopped at home," was Alison's quick answer. "Is this the bridge where we are to wait, Roger? How black the canal looks!"

"I am afraid we are going to have rain," he returned, in a vexed voice. "I do not mind the moon being absent; the darkness is in our favor. But what am I to do with you, Allie, if we have a wet night? You will catch your death of cold."

"Nonsense," replied Alison stoutly. But nevertheless she felt an inward twinge of discomfort. Neither of them had thought of the weather. How weird and eerie everything looked in the obscure light, the dark towing path and the sluggish canal, the tall factories, and beyond them the dim woodpiles and sheds stretching away into the distance. The very barge that came floating toward them out of the darkness seemed to hold dark, grisly shapes upon it.

In a few minutes Roger was helping her to scramble on shore. They were now at the extreme end of the timber yard, and had some way to walk.

Long before they had reached their destination the heavy patter of rain drops warned them to make haste; but in the uncertain light, and with so rough a path, their speed was greatly retarded.

"Here we are at last," whispered Roger; "follow me closely, Allie." And she obeyed, holding his coat to give her courage. A pitchy blackness was round them; Roger's groping only led them still further into the darkness. Alison experienced a sense of suffocation until a ray of murky light showed her where she was—at the further entrance of one of the wood piles, with the office windows within a few yards of them.

Alison breathed more freely when she recognized her position. The interlaced planks formed an arched chamber, where they could move with comfort and be sheltered from the rain. Roger spread the plaid near the entrance, and bade his sister make herself as comfortable as circumstances permitted, while he went a little way to reconnoiter.

"I hope I have not brought you on a wild goose chase," he said when he returned. "Timothy is eating his supper. We shall have to be careful when he goes with his rounds. Hush! What is that?" as a slight sound was plainly audible. "Don't move, I implore you, Allie!" And Roger cautiously raised himself on his hands and knees and crept a few paces nearer to the entrance, but in a moment he returned and bade Alison to move further into the darkness.

"It is Fergusson; I heard his voice," he whispered. "Come a little further; Timothy has his lantern, and he might turn it on us; and now not a word if you can help it. Are you frightened, dear?"

"No," returned Alison, a little unsteadily, but at that moment she was certainly wishing herself and Roger safely at home. Roger's caution was not in vain; a sudden flare of light penetrated the entrance of the wood pile; they could see two men; but at the moment the lantern was lowered and Timothy's face was turned to his companion.

"A wet night, master," he said, in a grumbling voice. "I'll just go on my beat, and then back to the shed again."

"All right, Timothy," returned the manager, briskly. "I must just hunt for the paper I told you about. Possibly I may be a quarter of an hour in the office; but I will call out to you when I am ready for you to let me out of the yard."

"Ay, ay, I will let you out, sure enough. Master Fergusson, if so be as you strike upon the little window in the shed." And the old man moved on slowly.

"Don't move, Allie; I'll be back in a moment," whispered Roger in her ear.

And Alison remained where she was, feeling the dampness all around her, an unpleasant moisture beginning to trickle down her neck. The rain was pouring in torrents outside; its very violence promised short duration. Presently Roger crept back to her.

"It is just as I said," he began, hurriedly. "He is unlocking the safe; he has a duplicate key—I was sure of it. There is not a moment to lose. I dare not trust Timothy. I must go for my father. Allie, may I leave you here? You are perfectly safe—no one would harm you. But one of us must watch Fergusson; which shall it be?"

"You must go, Roger," she exclaimed. "You will go more quickly, and will know how to avoid Timothy."

"Very well, keep up your courage, Allie, and do not lose sight of the villain," he returned. "I will bring father back in no time. Wait where you are until Timothy has passed again."

Alison's reply was inaudible, but her mute assent testified obedience. That moment she was literally beyond speech; the horrid darkness seemed to swallow her up again; a nervous oppression made her heart beat with distressing quickness. It was quite a relief when Timothy passed again; the familiar figure in the heavy watchman's coat gave her a comforting sense of human support.

She stole cautiously across the open path, and in another moment she was standing outside the office window. There were two windows, for this one was necessarily darkened by the woodpile, but over the other the blind had been lowered to shut out prying glances. Alison supposed, as Roger had, that he had locked himself in to carry on his unhallowed work. The dark background of piled-up

planks quite overshadowed the white girl's face peering in at the uncurtained window.

She was frightened at her own daring, but she remembered that she was Roger's witness; it was necessary for her own eyes to testify to Fergusson's dishonest doings. Now there could be no mistake; the open safe was conclusive, and so were the notes and gold that he was stowing away in that great black bag. Alison watched, half fascinated by horror. He had nearly finished; yes, he was locking his bag and closing the safe, the candle stood fluttering beside him on a chair, not on the table; he almost pushed against it as he went to the door and set it open. Yes, he had locked himself in, for she could see him take the key out and fix it carefully in the outer lock, and then he went back into the room. Oh, what had become of Roger? In another moment he could have escaped with his booty. The main entrance to the timber yard was in the opposite direction to the private door opening into the garden of The Holms. Even if Roger and her father were coming in this moment, Fergusson would have no difficulty in eluding them. It was true the door was locked and Timothy had the key, but he could easily swim across the canal and reach the towing path unseen.

Alison's agony was rising to a pitch that almost justified rashness. She was becoming desperate in spite of her terror. A sudden thought came to her, thrilling her with horror—could she do it? Yes, for Roger's sake she would try. Another second she was gliding round the little building and passed the curtained window with a gleam of light shining through the crevice. As she passed it there was sudden darkness; he had extinguished the candle. In another instant Alison had shut the door almost knocking Fergusson back, if she had known it, and had turned the key in the lock. Alison had felt a quiver, a hysterical sob rise in her throat as she heard the key turning under her hand. Had she really done it? Had some unseen presence beside her given her the needful strength? Was the dishonest servant a prisoner, and she his captor? But Alison had no time to do more than ask herself these questions, for Timothy came out of his shed, and was hobbling toward her, and the next moment the key was in Alison's pocket, and she was standing at bay.

"What does this mean, miss? How came you here?" exclaimed the old man, suspiciously.

"I have locked Mr. Fergusson in; he is stealing papa's money out of the safe," returned Alison, turning her white face to Timothy, and the sob rising in her throat again. "I will not give up the key until papa comes."

A fierce kick at the door behind her drove her from it a few paces.

"Let me out, Timothy!" thundered Fergusson. "The girl is mad; she must be out of her mind to say such things. Mr. Merle desired me to look over some papers for him; they are most important, and there must be no delay."

"You hear what he says, miss," returned Timothy, rather roughly; "we must not keep the master's manager locked up. I warrant you it is all right; they keep them papers in the safe. Give me the key and I will open the door for the gentleman."

"Not until papa comes," was Alison's reply; and, in spite of Timothy's surly remonstrances and Fergusson's imprecations, she remained firm. Timothy was driven to his wits' end, when suddenly footsteps were heard, and Alison darted forward to meet them.

"Papa, I saw him at the safe; he was putting the gold and notes into his bag. I saw him do it!" she cried excitedly. "He blew out the candle, and then I locked him in. Here is the key."

"Timothy, go at once to the police station!" exclaimed Mr. Merle, in a voice they had never heard before; it was so hoarse with indignation. "Roger, take your sister into the house. There is a fire in my study; I will wait here."

"No, no; I can go alone," returned Alison. "Roger must not leave you, papa."

But he repeated in the same curt way: "Take your sister away, Roger, and be back as soon as you can." And Roger, who understood his father, hurried her across the yard and the garden, and did not leave her until she was in the warm, brightly lighted study.

"Take off your wet jacket, Allie," he charged her, as he left her; but there was no time to say more.

Alison obeyed him. She took off her dripping hat also; and then she sat down on the rug and laid her head against her father's chair, and a flood of tears relieved her overwrought nerves. Roger found her still in the same position when he came in half an hour later; but the tears were flowing more quietly. In his boyish exuberance he lifted her up as though she were a child.

"Here she is, father, crying her pretty eyes out! And no wonder, when she is so cold and tired. Allie, do you know you are a perfect heroine! You have done a plucky thing, and no mistake!"

"Come and kiss me, Alison, my dear!" said Mr. Merle. "You are a brave girl, and have saved your poor father's credit. Roger and you have done nobly to-night. I have let myself be duped by a dishonest rogue. Give me your hand, boy; it does not become a man to ask his own son to forgive him, but I think we shall understand each other better from this day."

(To be continued.)

Apt Comparison.

"When I see what Barlow accomplishes I am forced to admiration," said Bunting. "He has great physical endurance."

"Yes," replied Gargoyle. "That man has the constitution of a debutante."—London Telegraph.



Chili Con Carne.

Cut a round steak into inch pieces and put it into the frying pan with a tablespoonful of hot drippings, a cup of boiling water and two tablespoonfuls of rice. Cover closely and cook steadily until the meat is tender. Remove the seeds and a part of the rind from two large dried red peppers, cover these with water, add garlic and thyme to taste, simmer until soft, then squeeze all the water from the peppers and throw them away. Season the water with onion juice and pepper, add to the cooked meat-and-rice mixture, boil up and serve. If not thick enough add a little flour.

Scotch Shortbread.

Cream one cup of butter and then beat in one-half cup of sugar, using a light brown soft sugar, for granulated or white sugar will not make the cake or bread as it should be. Work in flour in which is mixed a level teaspoon of cinnamon, until a dough is made that can be flattened out. Cut the edges with a pastry jagger to leave a crimped edge.

Cheese Cake.

Cream well together a pound each of fresh butter and of granulated sugar, beat into it the yolks of six eggs, whipped light, and put over the fire in a perfectly clean pan. Stir constantly until smooth and thick, add a grated nutmeg and set aside to cool. When cold pour into small pans lined with rich pastry and bake until the crust and filling are brown.

Onions in Cream.

Remove the brown skins from the onions and soak in cold water for ten minutes. Drain, cover with boiling salted water and boil until very tender. If the onions are strong change the water once while cooking. When done drain thoroughly, add enough thin cream to moisten well and season with butter, salt if necessary and pepper. Heat but do not boil.

Corn Fritters.

Drain the liquor from a can of corn and turn out the contents for several hours before using. Chop the corn fine. Make a batter of a cupful of milk, one beaten egg, salt to taste and enough flour to make a thin batter. Into this beat the chopped corn and whip hard for several minutes. Cook on a hot griddle as you would pancakes.

Cheese Omelet.

Break six eggs into a dish and stir them gently. Add one-half cupful of grated or chipped cheese, salt and pepper to taste, and one-fourth teaspoonful of extract of beef dissolved in one tablespoonful of boiling milk. Melt two tablespoonfuls of butter in the pan, turn in the mixture and cook slowly. Cut in quarters and turn when brown.

Removing Acidity from Fruit.

Not every person knows that if a pinch of baking soda be added to a rhubarb pie or pudding it not only improves the flavor, but also economizes the sugar. The soda, immediately the rhubarb commences to cook, mixes with the acid, and the two start to effervesce. Most of the acid is then counteracted, and so less sugar is required.

Floating Island.

Into a pint of rich cream, sweetened to taste, stir sufficient currant jelly to make it a pretty color. Spread slices of sponge cake with marmalade, pile them evenly in a glass dish and pour the pink cream over them. Flavor another pint of rich cream with lemon, sweeten it, and whip to a stiff froth, then heap on the cake.

Fried Cakes.

One cup of sugar, one egg, two cups of sour milk, four tablespoonfuls of melted shortening, two teaspoonfuls of soda, one-half teaspoonful of nutmeg, a quarter-teaspoonful of salt, flour to make a soft dough. Mix and roll out, having the dough as soft as it can be handled. Fry in deep, boiling fat.

Mulled Cider.

Heat the cider to the boiling point, sweeten to taste, thicken with flour to the consistency of cream, beating out all the lumps. To make this properly moisten the flour with a little milk. Put over the fire again, bring to the boiling point and remove and serve.

Pudding Sauce.

Cream together one cup of sugar, two tablespoonfuls of butter and two tablespoonfuls of flour, then add a pint of boiling water, put over the fire and boil for three minutes, stirring. Add the juice of a lemon and serve.

Cabbage Meat.

Take one and one-half pounds of round steak ground, two pounds of pork steak ground, one cup of soaked bread crumbs, two eggs, salt, pepper to taste. Mix well and shape into balls. Roll into a boiled cabbage leaf and fry in hot butter.

CECIL RHODES' MEMORIAL.

Typical Statue Erected to the Great Empire Builder.

There was recently placed in position in South Africa a monument to Cecil Rhodes, the great empire builder, who conceived the Cape to Cairo railroad, and whose ambition was to paint all of South Africa a British red. More than any other man of his time he foresaw the possibilities of South Africa, and had he lived the federation which is now being discussed would probably long ago have been an accomplished fact. Rhodes was a man of almost reckless daring and of indomitable energy, and the monument erected to him is truly typical. In the statue of rider and horse the artist, G. F. Watts, depicts physical energy—the leading



MEMORIAL TO CECIL RHODES.

characteristic of the great colonial developer.

The statue is erected at Groot Schuur (great barn), which was Mr. Rhodes' favorite residence at the Cape, and in which he lived when he was premier of Cape Colony. The building was burned, but was restored, all of its original details being preserved. It is not at Groot Schuur, however, that Rhodes is buried, but far away among the Matoppos hills, of Matabeleland, in a region which he rescued to civilization.

TURKISH ARMY OFFICERS.

They Are Neither Loved Nor Respected by Their Men.

Very seldom if he can help it does the Turkish army officer appear on horseback, and when not on duty he looks upon his horse merely as a method of locomotion. He has no affection or understanding for the horse. The superior officers have no horses of their own, and, being generally bad riders and without military qualities which would raise them in the estimation of their men, they are neither loved nor respected by them. Married officers keep entirely to themselves, such things as invitations to one another's houses being unknown, and the only occasions upon which officers meet together at all are on the days of assembly, when they are called together for the sultan's birthday or accession celebrations.

The pay of the lower ranks is as small as that of the superior officers is high. The young cavalry officer who makes a good impression on his entry into the service soon falls to pieces through want of occupation either of mind or body. The greater part of the morning and evening he sits over his coffee and cards or dominoes. There are but few newspapers, and those that do exist are so severely censored by the governments that they contain little but weather statistics, gazettes and announcements of the bestowal of decorations.

What the Turkish officer really thoroughly enjoys is a gramophone. Instruments playing the waltzes and reproducing the music hall songs of all the cities of Europe are in the greatest possible request, chiefly because they make music without any personal trouble.—Chicago News.

Above, Over and On.

The three words, above, over and on are nearly synonymous, but there is a clear distinction between them when they are used literally. The stars are above us, but they are not always over us, as a cloud is over the sea; nor are they on us, as a man's hat is on his head. The hat and the cloud are above, but the stars are not over, nor are the clouds on us.

A Paradox.

"Since Footlight inherited a fortune he is a paradox."

"What's the answer?"

"He is both the richest and poorest actor on the stage."

Every time a woman gets a new gown she goes around with a chip on her shoulder.

When a man's house burns down, seven men out of ten believe he set it on fire.