

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER XIV.

Missie's feelings were decidedly mixed when Roger related at the breakfast table the whole story of the previous night.

Alison was a little surprised by the attention she received. Her pale cheeks and heavy eyes secured a good deal of petting. Mr. Merle questioned her anxiously whether she had caught cold; Miss Leigh fairly overflowed with tender inquiries; Roger waited on her zealously, and Rudel sat staring at her, to the obvious neglect of his breakfast. Missie shrugged her shoulders a little over the whole affair. Alison had done very little after all, but they were all making such a fuss over it. She was doubly vexed when Miss Hardwick came in, full of enthusiasm for that dear, clever Alison. She had met Roger, and he had stopped and given her and Anna a full account. Missie had to listen to more eulogiums, though Alison modestly disclaimed all praise. Miss Hardwick quite frightened her when she assured her the whole thing would be soon all over the town.

"You will be a nine days' wonder, my dear," she said, graciously. "People will stare at you when you walk through the streets. Fancy looking the witch in! It was quite horrible and romantic. I must run home and tell mamma and Anthony all about it."

All this was rather a trial to Alison. Perhaps the greatest pleasure the day afforded was when Roger showed her a letter he had written to Aunt Diana.

"Oh, you foolish boy," she said, coloring with gratification as she read the glowing sentences, written straight from Roger's warm heart. But the tears were very near the surface too. There was a little space left, and she wrote hurriedly across it, when Roger had left the room a moment; "Don't believe all Roger says, dear Aunt Di. I never felt more frightened in my life; heroines are not made of such cowardly stuff; they do not act in a panic. They all make a great deal too much of it."

Alison would have been quite happy during the next few days except for the depressing effect of Missie's ill-humor. Missie was plainly suffering from a bad attack of jealousy. Missie sought consolation in Eva's flatteries. Her visits to Maplewood were now of daily occurrence. Alison once ventured to remonstrate.

"I do not think papa would be quite pleased, Mabel, if he knew you were so much in Captain Harper's company," she said, very gently.

"Captain Harper, indeed!" returned Missie, haughtily. "You need not trouble yourself, Alison. My visits are not to him."

"No, dear, of course not," replied Alison, in a pleading tone. "But, all the same, you are going every day to Maplewood, and that throws you necessarily into his company. Miss Hardwick can not well banish her cousin from the room; and, Mabel, I do feel that it is not quite honorable to papa. He trusts us to carry out his expressed wishes, and in this you are setting them aside."

"I wish you would mind your own business, Alison," she said, angrily. "You have no right to lecture me because you are the eldest. Eva says I am quite justified in asserting myself. I hope I know my duty without your always pointing it out to me, and you may leave papa to me. We have always understood each other perfectly and there is never anything wrong between us unless you choose to go and tell tales."

"Mabel how can you be so disagreeable?" began Alison, hotly. But she cooled down on remembering Aunt Diana's advice—"Never get warm over an argument, Allie. When you begin to feel angry it is time to hold your tongue." And Alison held hers.

She would have been a little comforted if she had known how ill at ease Missie really was. Her high complexion and cross speech only proved that the arrow had gone home. She knew in her secret heart that she was behaving dishonorably. Her father trusted her, and very next day she was betraying his trust. The first day she had planned to join Eva and her cousin in a pleasure excursion, though she knew it was an act of tacit disobedience, but self-will only gains strength by indulgence.

Alison's vague uneasiness that led to her speaking was changed into positive alarm when Roger came into her room that night. He was in evening dress, having just returned from an early party. Alison was waiting up for him. She had put off her dress, changing it for a dainty pink dressing gown. She looked up brightly at him as he entered.

"Allie," he said, sitting down by her. "I am so bothered about something I have heard to-night. Did you know that Mabel was going down to Durban with Miss Hardwick and Captain Harper tomorrow?"

"Why, no!" she said, starting a little.

"What place did you say, dear?"

"Durban. It is about twenty miles from here. There are woods there where people go for picnics. I meant to have taken you and Mabel one day, only we should have gone by train. Miss Anna was at the Merediths', and she told me all about it quite innocently. It seems that Captain Harper has sent for his dog cart and he means to drive them over. They are to have dinner and tea at the Castle Inn; so they mean to be away the whole day."

"Oh, Roger! what shall we do?" ex-

claimed Alison. "If papa were only here I would go to him at once. Mabel has no right to deceive him in this way, and I should certainly get him to put a stop to it at once, but now he will not be home until to-morrow."

"He may possibly come by an earlier train, he told me so as we walked to the station. It will depend on how long business will detain him. Of course we should tell him, Allie; the thing is beyond a joke. Fancy that fellow having the audacity to propose such a thing. I wish I knew what I could do about it, Allie, but father's absence obliges me to be in the office. I must be in the yard early, too. I shall not even be able to speak to Missie."

"I will tell her what you say, and then, of course, she will be obliged to give it up," returned Alison, not relishing her task at all, but counting, nevertheless, on an easy victory. Missie had put herself so completely in the wrong that no choice but submission was left to her. Roger, who knew Missie perfectly, was not so sanguine.

"Tell her that if she goes I shall certainly inform father, and then he will put a stop to her visits to Maplewood, and tell her, too, that I am perfectly disgusted at her conduct. I am afraid you must do it, Allie."

"Very well," she sighed. But she lay awake a long time revolving what words she would use.

Alison awoke with a strange oppression upon her—a sense of difficulty, that made the daylight seem less bright. She became nervously conscious that she might fail. What if her severity were of no avail, and Missie should persist in going? She was a little later than usual in going down. Roger had already had his breakfast and had gone to the mill, and the meal was half over before she suggested that Poppie should knock at Mabel's door.

"Oh, I forgot," returned Poppie, in a stricken voice, laying down her slice of bread and jam; "Missie came into my room before I was dressed, and told me to tell you she would not want any breakfast—she was going to have it at Maplewood. She looked so smart, Alison, in her new blue dress. It was rather funny of her to put it on for breakfast."

"Miss Leigh, will you come into the school room a moment, if you have finished?" said Alison, quietly; but the governess noticed that she looked rather pale, and rose at once, but she was even more shocked than Alison when she heard the whole story.

"My dear, your papa will never forgive us if we do not prevent it," she said, very solemnly. "You none of you know how particular he is; and this will seem dreadful to him. You must go to Maplewood yourself, Alison, and speak to Mrs. Hardwick. She is the only one who can do anything. Anna can go in Mabel's place, but you must insist on bringing Mabel home. I will not answer for the consequences if this affair comes to your father's ears," continued the governess, moved to tears at this fresh instance of Missie's self-will.

Alison thought this such good advice that she put on her hat at once and walked over to Maplewood. It was not a pleasant errand, she felt, and she hardly knew what she would say to Mrs. Hardwick. She only knew she would refuse to return without Missie, even if she had to brave the obnoxious Captain Harper himself. But her face fell when she entered the morning room and found Mrs. Hardwick and Anna alone; the others had just driven from the door. Seeing that her visit was useless Alison returned home. Roger met her at the gate with the news that Mr. Merle had returned.

"I have not seen him yet, Allie; I have only just come across from the mill," he continued. "Would you like me to tell him, dear, or do you think you can do it better?"

"We will go together," returned Alison, uneasily. "I am so afraid that he will put himself out, and then you will know what to say." And Roger acquiesced.

They found Mr. Merle in his study, looking somewhat fagged and weary, but he held out his hand with a smile, as though he were pleased to see them after his brief absence.

"Where is Pussie?" he asked; "she is generally the first to welcome me." And he looked round as though he were disappointed.

"Dear papa," returned Alison, bravely, "I am afraid you will be vexed about something. We have none of us seen Mabel this morning; she breakfasted at Maplewood. Roger met Anna at the Meredith's last night, and she told him that Mabel had promised to join Eva and her cousin in an excursion to Durban. I went over to speak to Mrs. Hardwick and bring Mabel back, but they had already started."

"What?" thundered Mr. Merle, and the blackness of his brow was dreadful to Alison, "do you dare to tell me that Mabel has gone over to Durban in that man's company, when I forbade any intercourse with him?"

"Captain Harper is driving them in his dog-cart," rejoined Roger, coming to his sister's relief. "It seems a very silly affair, and I begged her to stop it; it is no fault of hers or of mine, father. Missie slipped out of the house while they were at breakfast, and though Alison started off to Maplewood as soon as she could she was just too late."

"No, it is not your fault," returned Mr. Merle, gloomily. "Mabel must bear the brunt of her own disobedience. Miss Hardwick shall never enter this house again."

"Would you like me to take an early afternoon train to Durban?" interrupted Roger, who had already conceived this plan, "and when I could join them; there is a vacant seat in the dog cart."

"Look out a train in the time table," he said, suddenly; "I will go myself, Roger. Mabel shall not return in the dog cart; I shall bring her back by train."

CHAPTER XV.

Alison passed an anxious and solitary afternoon, and as she sat alone at her needle work she could not divert her mind of all sorts of gloomy anticipations. She knew her father to be a man of strong passions; she dreaded the effects of his displeasure on Mabel. His severity would be tempered with justice, but still the weight of his anger would be crushing. Alison's tender heart was full of compunction and pity for poor Missie.

Toward evening she seated herself under the lime trees within view of the gate. Poppie had come home from her walk, and was playing about the lawn. Now and then Poppie claimed her attention. The time passed unheeded, and she woke up with a start to the conviction that it was nearly eight, and the early autumn twilight was creeping over the garden.

So late, and they had not arrived, and what could have become of Roger? She called to Poppie hurriedly to run into the house, as it was bedtime and her supper was waiting in the school room, and the little girl had hardly left her before the latch of the gate was raised, and in another moment Roger came rapidly toward her.

He looked heated, as though he had been walking fast, but it was a white heat, and it struck Alison suddenly that he was ill, or that he had heard something.

"Don't be frightened, Allie," he said, in a quick, nervous voice, that certainly did not reassure her, neither did the touch of his cold, damp hand. "I have come first to prepare you; be as brave as you can, for your help is wanted."

"Something dreadful has happened. Oh, Roger, be quick."

"I have no time to tell you much," he returned, still more hurriedly. "They came back by train—oh, why did he not send me?—there was an accident. I was down at the station and saw them come in. They are both hurt; at least, I am afraid Missie is, only she will not say so, but father is the worst."

"Oh, Roger!" and Alison's figure swayed for a moment on his arm until he made her sit down, for the sudden shock had turned her lips white. She could not say more at that moment.

"We do not know yet," he half whispered; "there are two doctors with him, and they are bringing him home. He had a blow, and was insensible, but you can not tell yet; there is no wound. There, I hear them coming, Allie; pull ourselves together; we must not think of anything but him."

"No, no," and she gave a quick gulp, and the color came back to her lips. The sparrows were twittering sleepily in the eaves. "And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father," seemed to come into her mind, like the sudden flash of a sunbeam out of a passing cloud. He was in the Divine hands; she must remember that. As Roger went down to open the gates she compelled herself to return to the house.

"Sarah, there has been an accident," she heard herself say, only her voice did not seem to belong to her. "Send Eliza to the school room, to keep Miss Poppie out of the way, and you and Nanny be in readiness for what is wanted. Hot water—I suppose they will want that, and I don't know what besides." And here her voice suddenly failed, for wheels were evidently coming up the gravelled sweep. The next few minutes were simply horrible to Alison. The two doctors and Roger, and some man from the railway, were all helping in removing her father's inanimate figure from the vehicle. Alison recognized the family practitioner, Dr. Greenwood, but the other was a stranger. There was nothing to do; her father's room was in readiness, and Roger was there to show them the way. She could only lean against the wall as they passed with a fleeting consciousness that her father's eyes were still closed, and that there was something terrible in the inert, heavy droop of the limbs. "Very gently," she heard Dr. Greenwood say. "Yes, I know the room; that is the door, Cameron." And then it closed after them, and she felt some one grip her arm.

"Help me upstairs, Alison," said Missie, hoarsely. She had crept out of the fly unaided, and now stood by Alison's side in the dark hall. Alison had almost forgotten her in that moment's agony; but when Roger had said surely she was not much hurt, yet there she was clinging to her sister with a white, stony face.

"Lean on me, dear!" exclaimed Alison, passing her arm tenderly round her; but to her alarm Missie uttered a sharp cry of pain.

"No, don't touch me, not that side; I will hold your arm. I want to be in my own room if I can only get there." And leaning heavily on Alison's shoulder, she toiled slowly up the staircase, her faintness and difficulty evidently increasing at every step, but her strong will supporting her until they reached the threshold, and then she suddenly tottered, and if Alison had not caught her in her arms, she would have fallen. Alison dared not call loudly for assistance, for they were close to her father's room; but she was young and strong, and she just managed to drag Missie to a chair and summon one of the frightened servants, when Missie revived.

"I am so bruised all over," she said, with a sort of sob. "I did not want them to know; they had to look after papa; but I am afraid my arm is broken."

(To be continued.)

Had It Reasoned Out.

"You said you thought there was no malaria around here," said the indignant stranger.

"I did think so," answered Farmer Cornthouse. "After all the summer boarders took away I didn't see how there could be any left."—Washington Star.



LOUISIANA RICE BREAD.

Put two cupfuls of boiled rice into a bowl, add two cupfuls of milk and the well-beaten yolks of two eggs. Stir in gradually one cup of flour, add one-half teaspoonful of salt, two tablespoonfuls of melted butter and the whites of the eggs beaten to a stiff froth; then turn into a well-greased shallow pan, bake thirty minutes in a moderate oven.

Pepper Balls.

Two and one-half pounds of flour, one-fourth pound sirup, one-half pound sugar, one-fourth pound lard, one-fourth pound butter (lard and butter melted together), two eggs, teaspoonful baking powder, one-eighth ounce cloves. After the sirup has been boiled take the foam off, then let it cool. Then mix the other things with the sirup.

Bean Pate.

After once making baked bean soup it will be tried often. Moistens a cup or more and put through a puree strainer; add a minced onion and cook in a pint of water or stock until tender, adding water as needed. Then proceed as for any cream soup, making the beans for the base. Bean soup needs to be nicely seasoned.

Apple Salad.

Pare, quarter and core six tart apples. Cut the quarters in halves lengthwise and then slice. Wash and crisp the lettuce and arrange it in a salad bowl. Add the apple and sprinkle over it a finely chopped Spanish pepper and a cupful of chopped walnuts and almonds. Pour a French dressing over all and serve.

Never Warm Over Mushrooms.

Never warm up a dish containing mushrooms, is the caution which physicians give. The process of cooking them is in itself proper, but when mushrooms become cold they sometimes develop injurious properties, which are very hurtful; therefore throw away any mushrooms that may be left over.

Soap.

All bar soap for household purposes should be kept for a few weeks before being used. It should be placed in the sun and air as much as possible, when it will last twice as long as if used at once. This applies equally to cake soap for toilet purposes.

Vinegar with Eggs.

Housewives and amateur cooks who worry about the whites of poached eggs not remaining in shape should put a few drops of vinegar in the water. This will not add any taste to the egg, but it will keep the whites in perfect condition.

To Remove Stains.

Fruit, vegetable, coffee and tea stains may be removed from white goods as follows: Heap salt on the spot, rub hard, then rinse in hot water in which a good amount of borax has been dissolved and the stain will disappear immediately.

Grease Spots.

Obstinate grease spots can be removed by placing them in benzine, placing them on a double pad of blotting paper and after laying another pad of the same over the top, pressing with a moderately hot iron.

To Soften Hard Water.

Put 1 ounce of quicklime into four gallons and a half of water. Stir it thoroughly and allow it to settle. Then pour off the clear solution, which will be enough to add to four barrels of hard water.

To Extinguish Burning Oil.

Burning oil is spread by water. To extinguish it throw down flour, sand or earth. The idea is to prevent the oil spreading.

In Washing Flannels.

A couple of spoonfuls of glycerine in a tubful of water in which flannels are washed will do much to soften them.

Short Suggestions.

Cheap canned corn is improved by the addition of a little sugar.

Egg stains can be removed from silver by means of a dry cloth and common table salt.

Charcoal absorbs all dampness, for which reason it should be kept in boxes with silverware to prevent rust.

A pinch of sugar added to freshly-made mustard not only makes it much more tasty, but keeps it fresh much longer.

Milk toast and cheese is a tasty luncheon dish. When trying to think of something a little different for lunch make some rich milk toast and place it in a flat pan. Cover with a thick layer of grated cheese and put in the oven till the cheese melts and browns.

BROKE AND IN NEW YORK.

Playwright Turns Demonstrator Instead of Going to Palm Beach.

She is a mighty clever actress, and something of a playwright, too. At least, she wrote a play not long ago that was good enough to be produced and while it was taken off the road for repairs it's going back again, the New York correspondent of the Cincinnati Times-Star writes. In the meantime the actress had blown in all her money, had no job and it began to look as though she would have to turn a neat and modest stunt of panhandling. The flat rent was due, the butcher had begun to forget her orders, and the case looked desperate all around. A few days ago visitors to her apartments found a card tacked on the door: "Gone south for brief rest." So every one rejoiced. And the fact got into the papers that make a specialty of theatrical news. And one used her picture in a highly alluring low-necked gown. And the man who was putting on her play asked all her friends for her address. He wanted her consent to a few changes. And no one knew where she had disappeared to. But there are two or three in the secret now. For the other day a young matron happened into a department store and was attracted by the demonstration of a new-fangled coffee pot. Having always murdered the Arabian berry, she liked the new plan of assassination proposed. She watched the demonstrator's deft hands as the latter filled the pot, and took out the completed article, and poured it in dainty little cups. And she might never have noticed the demonstrator herself until the latter got mixed in her cues. And at last gave it up altogether, and burst out petulantly. "Well, is this a joke or an insult?"

And there was the missing playwright. "I had to do it or starve," said she, with a laugh; "but don't give me away. I'm supposed to be a piazza ornament at Palm Beach right now."

SHEAR NONSENSE

City Editor—Why do you say that this man "passed away," instead of "died"? Reporter—He owed me money and I don't like to feel that he is really dead.

She—I'm going to give you back your engagement ring—I love another. He—Give me his name and address. She—Do you want to kill him? He—No, I want to sell him the ring.

Horace—I can't understand you girls. Now, you hate Mabel and yet you just kissed her. Hetty—I know; but just see how the freckles show where I kissed the powder off.—The Tattler.

First Scholar—What's the lecturer doin' over at the school house? Second Scholar—Puttin' in a electric switch. First Scholar—Gee mully! If they's goin' ter do the lickin' by electricity I quit.

Miss Screecher—I wonder if Uncle Jim remembered me when he made his will? I used to sing for him. Lawyer—Yes, he evidently remembered you—at least your name isn't mentioned in the document.—Chicago Daily News.

"There are some points about your writings that resemble Milton," said the editor. "Do you think so?" cried the delighted author. "Yes," the editor continued, "you employ almost the same punctuation marks."—Stray Stories.

Mulligan — The byes say ye licked poor Casey. Shure, he niver hurt iny man's feelin's. Harrigan—He's a snake in the grass. The blackguard referred to me as his contemporary, and I'll be the contemporary to no man livin'.—Puck.

"Do you regard the stage as an educator?" "Not exactly," answered Miss Cayenne. "It would be unfortunate if we were to get our ideas of society from the problem play and our ideas of costume from the musical comedy."—Washington Star.

"The looking-glass is the only truth-teller that is universally popular with the fair sex," remarked the typewriter boarder. "That is because women interpret its reflections to suit themselves, and not literally," rejoined the scanty-haired bachelor.

"Why be so wrapped up in purely mercenary considerations?" said the persuasive campaigner. "Why not join us and fight for the cause?" "Young man," answered Mr. Dustin Stax. "I'm not fighting for causes; I'm fighting for results."—Washington Star.

Sunday School Teacher — Well Johnny, have you had anything during the week to be especially thankful for? Johnny—Yes, ma'am. Sunday School Teacher—What was it? Johnny—Billy Jones sprained his wrist yesterday and I licked him for the first time.