

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine
of the Family

CHAPTER XVII.

Dr. Greenwood had given Alison strict injunctions that she was to keep her sister as quiet as possible, but it seemed impossible to check the storm of excited talk. Mabel's only relief was to accuse herself, and put all her conduct in its blackest light. A weight of intolerable misery lay on her mind; she felt her own pains were richly deserved, but the thought that she had risked her father's life by her disobedience was more than she could bear. Every hour she questioned Alison about his state. Would he recover? Was he in any danger? What did the doctor fear? Alison at last called Roger to her aid.

"What shall we do?" she exclaimed, half crying. "Missie will not get any sleep to-night; she is working herself into a fever, and Dr. Greenwood does not wish to give her an opiate. It breaks my heart to hear her going on about papa. I think if she could only see him she would be more contented."

"Shall I go to her?" he asked, hesitating a little, for Missie had expressed no wish to see him.

"Oh, yes, perhaps that will be best," she said, brightening a little. "I am so tired and harassed that I probably do not say the right thing."

"I will come presently; but, Allie, I am so sorry you are so tired. Miss Hardwick is downstairs, and she says she must see you; she seems very much upset. Do you think you could speak to her for a moment?"

Alison made a gesture of repugnance. It was plain that she did not wish to see Miss Hardwick, but Roger was bent on carrying his point.

"I have to go to my father now," he said, quietly, "but in about a quarter of an hour I shall be ready to see Missie. I will wait for you here. Miss Hardwick will not detain you many minutes; go, dear Allie." And Alison reluctantly obeyed him.

Eva was pacing up and down the long drawing room, and came up to Alison quickly, holding out both her hands.

"Oh, Alison," she said, and the tears were running down her face unchecked. "I know you do not want to see me, but I begged so hard of Mr. Roger to send you. Of course, you hate the sight of me. You think I am the cause of this; but, indeed, indeed, I never knew Mr. Merle would be so angry!"

"You tempted Mabel to deceive and disobey her father," returned Alison, severely, for her heart was hard against the girl. "You knew that he disapproved of Captain Harper, and then you encouraged and planned this scheme. How could any father fail to be angry when his commands are so entirely set aside?"

"You must not speak against Anthony, Alison," returned Eva, in a subdued voice. "I am engaged to him; he is only my half-cousin. Mabel knew this, and she thought it would not matter coming with us. Mamma would have told you, only I did not wish it to be made public. All this has quite spoiled my happiness. Poor, dear Mabel; if I could only see her, and help you to nurse her. But Mr. Roger says it is quite impossible." And she wiped away some fresh tears.

There was so much feeling in Eva's words and manner that Alison's coldness relaxed a little.

"You must not see her," she said, gravely. "I believe papa has forbidden that for the present, but I can give her your love, and tell her that you asked after her."

"Tell her I shall come every evening to inquire; tell her, too, that I shall not have a moment's peace, thinking that I am partly to blame for this. It was wrong of us, Alison; I see that now. I deserve to have something to bear as well as she, poor darling! You and Mr. Roger must not be too hard on me, for, indeed, I am as unhappy as possible; Anna will tell you so."

"I will try to forgive you," returned Alison, with a warm kiss, that evidently surprised and gratified her. "It does not make things better to be hard and bitter against people. We need not add to our own unhappiness in that way. Now I must go, please. Give my dear love to Anna; I know she will be fretting about us." And with a quick nod Alison ran upstairs.

"Well?" observed Roger, interrogatively, as she came to his side.

"I am glad you told me to go down," was her reply; "there is good in every one, and Eva certainly appeared to advantage this evening. She is really fond of Missie, and she cried so about it all. She is not a bad-hearted girl."

"No; and all this will do her a great deal of good. 'Evil is wrought by want of thought, as well as want of heart,' Allie. Now let us go to poor Missie." Missie flushed up very much when she saw Roger, but the next moment her face grew wan and pale.

"Well," he said, cheerfully, taking her hot little hand, "this is a sad affair; but at least we may be thankful it is not worse. I almost think father looks a little better to-night; Mrs. Meyrick thought so, too. There was certainly a slight concussion of the brain last night, but this evening he seems more like himself."

"Oh, Roger!" and Missie's eyes were filling in a moment, "do you really think so?" But the last word became a sob.

"Yes, dear, and Nurse Meyrick said the same; he spoke more clear and articulately. Now," kissing her forehead, "you

will be easy about him, and will try to sleep?"

"There is no sleep in my eyes," she returned, with a little of her old excitement. "Oh, Roger, you don't know what it is to be bruised and battered all over, and not to be able to turn without pain. If it were not for that I would go to him."

"Perhaps you will be able to go to-morrow," he returned, humoring her, for her flushed face and excited look made him anxious. "You will try to lie patiently until the morning, Mabel dear, will you not? Alison is so worn out, she must sleep to-night, and, indeed, we are all overtired and harassed."

"Yes, and I am the cause," she returned, restlessly. "Oh, Roger, I will not ask you to forgive me; Alison has, but then she is different. But you, of course, you can never care for me again!"

"Indeed, you are wrong, my dear little sister," he said, soothingly. "I do care for you very much, all the more that you are so unhappy. When you get well again you shall see how proud I shall be of my two sisters, and what nice times we shall have."

"Oh, no," she returned, bursting into tears. "I never expected any one to be fond of me again. I have made your life miserable, Roger; I have tormented you just for love of teasing. If I were not so wicked I should like to die, and then perhaps you would be sorry for me. If anything happens to papa, I could not live. Oh, if I could only see him, and ask him to forgive me!"

"My dear, he has forgiven you over and over again," returned Roger, in rather a husky voice, for he found all this very trying; "that is the best of it. One need never be afraid of losing a father's love, it is not to be lost, Mabel; the thing is against nature. If I aimed against father ever so, I know he must forgive me, just because I am his son."

"I will arise and go to my father," murmured Alison, half to herself, but Missie heard it.

"Yes, read that to me; I have been repeating fragments of the verses all day; that is, if you are not too tired, Alison," with renewed thoughtfulness.

"Roger will read it," returned Alison, feeling the task would be good for her brother, and distrusting her own voice; and though Roger looked a little shy over it, he did not refuse.

Missie lay with closed eyes and listened, and he harassed expression passed from her face.

"Thank you; that was beautiful," she said, when he had finished. "How nicely you read, Roger! Now I will try to be good and not wake Alison. Perhaps when the light is shaded, I may drop off to sleep."

Alison was in sore need of rest by this time; her head ached as well as her limbs; but she had one more duty to perform before she laid down in the little bed that had been prepared for her in Missie's room, and that was to bid her father good-night.

He welcomed her with a smile. "I feel easier to-night," he said, and his voice was stronger. "My good nurse has made me very comfortable, and I dare say we shall both be able to sleep a little. How is Pussie?" the old name escaping from his unawares.

"I do not think she is any worse," she replied, cautiously; "but she still suffers a great deal, and she is making herself so unhappy about you."

"Tell her not to do that," he replied, with a little effort; "he need not take the blame of the accident on herself; she has enough to bear without that."

"May I give her your love, papa?"

"Oh, yes," he said, as though surprised by the question, for he knew nothing of the child's misery. "Tell her I hope she will have a good night." And then, as he seemed weary, she left him.

Missie received the message in silence, and, as the light was dim, Alison could not see her face. She fancied that just as she was dropping off to sleep there was a sound as though some one was crying; but her senses were too drowsy to take in the fact that it might be Missie sobbing in the darkness. Her last recollected thought was about Aunt Diana. Roger had promised to write a few lines from the office, and she had wondered if he had done it.

"How shocked Aunt Di will be," she thought, "and how sorry for us all!" The half-finished sentence was completed in her dream, for she dreamed that Greville was rowing them both among the water lilies, and Aunt Di was gathering roses and throwing them into her lap.

"Do not cry, child, it will all come right in time," Alison heard her say; "there is a silver lining behind every cloud, you may be sure of that." And then she woke with a start. Something, she did not know what, had disturbed her; she sat up and looked round in bewilderment. The moon was shining full into the room, and Missie's bed was empty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Nurse Meyrick was sleeping on a couch in the dressing room. It had been placed so near the door of communication that she had a full view of her patient. He had just sunk into a tranquil dose, and she had followed his example, when a faint sound, like an opening door, roused her, and a moment after she caught a glimpse of a white-robed figure with long, fair hair. A young girl in a loose dressing gown was standing by Mr. Merle's bed. Nurse Meyrick's quick eyes discerned that one arm was bandaged and in splints. It must be the young lady, she thought, who had been injured in the accident; perhaps she was light-headed. The next minute she touched her softly.

"Come, my dear, come," she said coaxingly; "you ought not to be out of your bed at this time of night; let me help you back, there's a dear young lady." For Missie's wide, feverish eyes alarmed her.

"No, no," returned Missie, recoiling from the nurse's gentle touch. "I could

not stay in bed, I could not sleep until I had seen papa. Let me stay and look at him; I will be good and not wake him." But the nurse shook her head at this.

"You must not stay," she whispered, not daring to raise her voice; "your feet are bare, and you look as bad as possible. Come, my dear, let me carry you back to your room; it will scare your father to see you standing there."

"No, no," returned Missie, shrinking still more; "I must stay with papa. Why does he look so pale, and lie so still? Is he dead? No one told me he was dead. Papa!" she cried out, for she was bewildered by the dim light and her own feverish fancies. "Speak to me only one word, just to tell me you are alive."

"Oh, hush!" exclaimed the nurse; but she was too late. Mr. Merle woke up; but in his weak condition his daughter's presence did not seem to startle him.

"My dear," he said, feebly; "they ought not to have allowed this. You will make yourself ill leaving your warm bed."

"But I could not sleep," she sobbed; "I could not rest. I thought they were hiding things from me. If you had died, and I had never told you I was sorry, I should have died, too. Oh, papa, it must have killed me!"

He smiled faintly, and gathered the hot little hand in his.

"You were sorry all the time, my pet, were you not?"

"Yes, I am sorry now," creeping still closer. "I could not ask God to forgive me until you had forgiven me. Oh, papa! why do you look so kindly at me, when you know it is all through my wickedness that you are lying here? Of course, no one can love me any more."

"Not love you, Pussie! Come, come my child, fathers are not like that. I forgive you freely; everything is right between us. But, my poor darling, you are ill and suffering, and if you care to please me let nurse carry you back to bed."

"Will you let me kiss you first?"

His only answer was to stretch out his arms to her; but he wondered to see how slowly she came to him. How could he guess each movement was agony to the poor child? How she had ever managed to crawl from her bed and across the passage only she herself knew.

"I have only one arm to put around your neck," she whispered, as her long hair fell over his face. "Dear, dear papa, if I could only bear it all!" And as he felt her tears upon his cheek he understood how her young heart was wrung with remorse and sorrow, and holding her a moment tried to comfort her, and besought God to bless his pet.

Alison was just sitting up in afright, looking around the empty room, when Nurse Meyrick appeared, carrying Missie in her arms.

"Oh, Mabel, where have you been? You have frightened me so!"

"Go to sleep, Alison," returned Missie, in a happy voice. "I have only been to see papa, and he has forgiven me, and now I can rest."

"She will be quiet now," whispered the nurse. "I have covered her up warm, and she will rest until morning." And she was right. Though Missie lay awake, feverish and full of pain, she gave no more trouble, and poor Alison was allowed to sleep undisturbed until morning.

For the next few days Missie was very ill. Her agitation of mind brought on a slight feverish attack, and when this had yielded to the doctor's remedies her weakness was excessive. Her nerves had been jarred and unstrung by the accident; and the least noise, the slamming of a door, or even a louder voice than usual, made her change color and burst into tears. It was impossible for her in her shattered state always to repress irritability. Again the old sharp tones and words recalled Missie's faulty temper. But there was this improvement—she struggled bravely against her besetting sin, and would ask pardon quite humbly of Alison. "I have been so cross to-day," she would say, with tears in her eyes; "I wish you would not be so sweet and patient with me."

"I will promise to scold when you are well enough," Alison would say, in her most cheerful manner, for she knew Missie must not be encouraged to be morbid. "Just now, darling, I can only remember you are ill, and that your poor arm is giving you trouble. I know I should be cross if I had so much to bear."

But in spite of Alison's assumed cheerfulness she was growing pale and thin. Her close confinement in Missie's room tried her; no one but Alison suited the sick girl's fancy—no one else seemed to understand her little ways. Miss Leigh's gentle mournfulness irritated her; she had never cared much for Anna, and she had lost all desire for Eva's companionship, and though her father had generously withdrawn his prohibition, Eva had only once been admitted to her room. The interview had been a little embarrassing. Eva had cried and begged Missie to forgive her, and Missie had been kind and magnanimous in her answer; but after the first few agitating minutes their talk had drifted into silence; Missie was languid and out of spirits, and Eva did not possess the art of soothing—the bond of sympathy between them seemed broken. Both of them had yet to learn that similarity of tastes and the boisterous spirits of youth do not lay the foundation of a lasting friendship. While Alison and Anna seemed to cement their intimacy more every day, as the good qualities of each became more apparent, there were symptoms that Missie and Eva would drift still further apart.

(To be continued.)

A Bad Blunder.

She—Cook has given notice.

He—Why?

She—She says you spoke in a brutal manner to her on the telephone yesterday.

He—Yesterday? I thought I was speaking to you!—London Opinion.



Boston Pumpkin Pie.

Select a medium sized pumpkin, solid substance, and dark orange color. Cook in water enough to prevent burning, which should be evaporated in the end, to leave all the sweet flavors with the pulp. Then for a deep pie use one cupful pumpkin, a pinch of nutmeg, clove and salt, one-quarter teaspoonful of cinnamon, one-half teaspoonful of ginger, with one-half cup of sugar; add this to the pumpkin with one beaten egg and three cups of rich milk, which should be heated. Bake in a moderate oven about one hour.

Sea Foam Fudge.

Two cups of light brown sugar, one cup of water, the white of one egg, flavoring to taste. Boil the sugar and water until it will mold, but not until it is brittle and yet not as soft as for ordinary fudge. Have the white of an egg beaten stiff and pour in the syrup slowly, beating constantly again until stiff. Drop on pans from the point of a spoon, giving a pointed appearance to the top of each of the candies.

Beans, Spanish Style.

Soak over night two cups of white or pink beans. In the morning boil with a pinch of soda fifteen minutes and drain. Fry one large sliced onion with a piece of pork or bacon. Add these to the beans, also a cup of canned tomatoes, two shredded chili pepper, salt and sufficient hot water to cover well. Boil briskly for ten minutes on the stove before putting in the cooker. Leave in for five hours.

Southern Cornbread.

Sift one quart of white corn meal with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, add three tablespoonfuls of melted lard, salt to taste, beat three eggs, add a pint of milk, or enough to thin batter. Beat all hard for two minutes and bake rather quickly in a not well-greased pan, in which a little dry meal has been sifted. Eat immediately.

Marshmallow Candy.

Three cups of light brown sugar and one-half cup of milk. Boil slowly, but do not stir. Boil until it forms a soft ball in cold water. Remove from the fire and beat in one-half pound of marshmallows and one cup of coarsely-chopped English walnuts. Beat until thick and creamy, spread in a buttered tin and mark in squares before cold.

Potato Entree.

Slice thin three medium-sized raw potatoes into a baking dish, slice one medium sized onion, put in a layer of potatoes mixed with the onion, a few cracker crumbs, cover with cheese sliced thin. Do this until dish is full, then pour over all a little milk; bake slowly one hour.

Mexican Stuffed Peppers.

Select large green peppers, remove seeds, and wash; put meat previously cooked, through the grinder; chop raisins and nuts and add to the meat. Season to taste. Stuff the peppers with the mixture, dip them in an egg and flour batter, and fry in hot fat.

Fried Parsnips.

Wash them carefully and scrape. Boil until tender. Cut into lengthwise strips. Dip these into molasses, drain well, drop into hot butter and fry brown on each side.

Carrots as Antiseptics.

An Italian physician has discovered that carrots act as an intestinal antiseptic, and will cure many forms of digestive disorders.

Short Suggestions.

Scaling fish is easier if first dipped in boiling water.

Try a little baking soda and hot water when cleaning kitchen utensils.

Dissolve a tablespoonful of rock ammonia in the bath. This makes the water soft and invigorating.

Wheat bran placed in coarse flannel bags is excellent for cleaning dust from delicate wall papers.

Pulverize a teaspoonful of borax; put it in your last rinsing water and your clothes will come out white instead of yellow.

To keep clothes from running where the colors are not "fast" use a cupful of salt to each gallon of water when washing them.

Do not use soap in cleaning marble table tops and mantels. It yellows them. Better results are had from washing with water softened with ammonia.

When cutting a tomato some prefer to pass the knife frequently over the freshly-cut surface of a large onion. The resulting flavor is indescribably delicate.

ANOTHER ROMANTIC TRAGEDY.

Paris Excited by Sensation Equal to Dreyfus and Humbert Affairs.

Paris has a real sensation, quite the biggest since the Dreyfus case, still so fresh in mind as to need no special mention, and the Humbert affair, which involved the obtaining of millions, loaned to a shrewd adventuress having a trunk full of alleged gilt-edged securities that were afterward found to be only worthless paper. The excitement produced in those instances pale to insignificance by comparison with the present incident, which, with its revelations pointing to the possible exposure of a national scandal, promises to attract world-wide attention. It is the recent arrest of Mme. Steinhell, following her confession that for months since the slaying of her artist husband and Mme. Japy, now known to have been her step-mother, who were found strangled in the home of the artist on the morning of May 31, her attempt to find the assassins and the innumerable fantastic clues furnished the police and the newspapers were only a desperate farce to conceal the real author of the crime, herself.

The crime in question was peculiar. Steinhell was a portrait painter and a grand-nephew of the famous Meissonier. The assassination of the woman,



Mme. Japy, is supposed to have been incidental to the killing of Steinhell. He was the man it was desired to get out of the way. Steinhell, his wife and Mme. Japy lived together. The wife was found bound and gagged in bed, and at first she declared that she had been thus treated by three men and a woman, all unknown to her.

It is now learned that Mme. Steinhell was receiving the visits of several wealthy men, among them a Maurice Borderel, and that she had promised each of them that she would marry him in event of her becoming widowed or divorced.

Testimony from every quarter seems to upset completely the charges of the royalist press that the late President Felix Faure was the victim of criminal dealing, but even M. Dupuy, his premier, does not deny that Mme. Steinhell was with him shortly before his mysterious death in 1899.

During her confession Mme. Steinhell was in great distress of mind and sobbed out: "I hope to justify myself before a man whose love I have now lost forever." This man is said to be a French nobleman and in his identity is believed to lie the key to this romantic tragedy.

A Queer Test.

The grocer said to the applicant: "Your references are good. Show me your style of weighing out five pounds of sugar. There's the scale."

The applicant wrenched his face in the amiable smile all salesmen wear and weighed out the sugar with dispatch and accuracy. He put on too little sugar at first; he added gently a full half pound before the scale balanced.

"You'll do," said the grocer. "You understand the scale trick. It is plain that you learned your trade in the thorough old school way."

"Yes, sir," the other answered. "I learned in the country, and almost my first lesson was that in weighing. You must add, add, add, till the beam tips, because all that adding pleases the customer—seems to him almost like a gift. But if, on the contrary, you subtract from the quantity on the scale the customer is affected in the opposite way—you seem to be robbing him. He goes away convinced that you are a stingy cheat."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Ambiguons.

"The baby has something the matter with his stomach."

"How do you know?"

"Because we had it taken out and examined."—Life.

The fountain of youth consists in working every day, eating regularly and moderately and sleeping nine hours at night.

If carelessness is a sin, we are all in the sinner class.