

AIKENSIDE

BY
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CHAPTER XII.

It struck the doctor a little comically that one of Guy's habits should offer to turn school teacher, but Maddy was so glad that he was glad, too, and doubly glad that across the sea there was a Lucy Atherstone. How he wished that she was there now as Mrs. Guy, and he must tell Guy so that very day. Seated in Guy's library, the opportunity soon occurred, Guy approaching the subject himself by saying:

"Guess, Hal, what wild project I have just embarked in."

"I know without guessing; Maddy told me," and the doctor's eyebrows were elevated just a little.

"And so you don't approve?" was Guy's next remark, to which the doctor replied:

"Why, yes; it's a grand thing for her, providing you know enough to teach her; but, Guy, this is a confounded gossiping neighborhood, and folks will talk, I'm afraid. She's too handsome, Guy, for Madam Grundy to let alone. If Lucy were only here, it would be different. Why, in the name of wonder, are you two not married, if you are ever going to be?"

"Jealous, as I live!" and Guy's hand came down playfully on the doctor's shoulder.

"I did not suppose you had got as far as that. You are afraid of the effect it may have on me teaching a sweet-faced little girl how to conjugate amo; and to cover up your own interest, you bring Lucy forward as an argument. Honestly, doctor, I am doing it for you. I imagine you fancy her, as well you may. She'll make a splendid woman, but she needs educating, of course, and I am going to do it. You ought to thank me, instead of looking so like a thundercloud," and Guy laughed merrily.

The doctor was ashamed of his mood, and could not tell what prompted him to answer:

"I am obliged to you, Guy; but, as far as I am concerned, you may spare yourself the trouble. If my wife needs educating, I can do it myself."

Guy was puzzled. Could it be that, after all, he was deceived, and the doctor did not care for Maddy? It might be, and he hastened to change the conversation to another topic than Maddy Clyde. The doctor stayed to dinner, and as Guy watched him closely, he made up his mind that he did care for Maddy Clyde, and this confirmed him in his plan of educating her for him.

Magnanimous Guy! He felt himself very good, very generous, very condescending, and very forgiving, the early portion of the afternoon; but later in the day he began to view Guy Remington in the light of a martyr, said martyrdom consisting in the scornful toss of the head with which Agnes had listened to his plan, and the open opposition of Mrs. Noah.

"Was he beside himself, or what?" this worthy asked. "She liked Maddy Clyde, to be sure, but it wasn't for him to demean himself by turning her schoolmaster. Folks would talk awfully, and she couldn't blame 'em; besides, what would Lucy say to his being alone in a room with a girl as pretty as Maddy? It was a duty he owed her, at any rate, to tell her about it, and if she said 'twas right, why, go to."

This was the drift of Mrs. Noah's remarks, and as Guy depended much on her judgment, he decided to write to Lucy to see if she had the slightest objections to his teaching Maddy Clyde. Accordingly, he wrote that very night, telling her frankly all he knew concerning Maddy Clyde, and narrating the circumstances under which he first had met her, being careful also to repeat what he knew would have weight with an English girl like Lucy, to wit, that though poor, Maddy's father and grandfather Clyde had been gentlemen, the one a clergyman, the other a sea captain. Then he told of her desire for learning, and his plan to teach her himself, of what the doctor and Mrs. Noah had said about it, and his final determination to consult her. Then he described Maddy herself, feeling a strange thrill as he told how pure, how innocent, how artless and beautiful she was, and asked if Lucy feared aught from his association with her.

"If you do," he wrote, "you have but to say so, and though I am committed, I will extricate myself in some way, rather than wound you in the slightest degree."

It would be some time before an answer to this letter could be received, and until such time Guy could not honorably hear Maddy's lessons as he had agreed to do. But Maddy was not suspicious, and accepting his trivial excuse, waited patiently, while he, too, waited for the letter, wondering what it would contain.

At last the answer came, and it was Maddy who brought it to Guy. She had been home that day, and on her return had ridden by the office as Guy had requested her to do. She saw the letter bore a foreign postmark, also that it was in the delicate handwriting of some female, but the sight did not affect her in the least. Maddy's heart was far too heavy that day to care for a trifle, and so, placing the letter carefully in her basket, she kept on to Aikenside.

The letter was decidedly Lucy-ish in all that pertained to her "dearest darling," her "precious Guy," but when she came to Maddy Clyde, her true, womanly nature spoke; and Guy, while reading it, felt how good she was. Of course he might teach Maddy Clyde all he wished to teach her, and it made Lucy love him better to know that he was willing to do such things. She wished she was there to help him; they would open a school for all the poor, but she did not know when mamma would let her come. That pain in her side was not any better, and her cough had come earlier that season than last. The physician had advised a winter in Naples, and they were going before long. Then followed a few more lines sacred to the lover's eye, lines which told how pure was the love which sweet Lucy Atherstone bore for Guy Remington, who, as he read, felt his heart beat with a throb of pain, for Lucy spoke to him now

for the first time of what might possibly be.

"I've dreamed about it nights," she said. "I've thought about it days, and tried so hard to be reconciled; to feel that if God will have it so, I am willing to die before you have ever called me your little wife, or I have ever called you husband. Heaven is better than earth, I know, and I am sure of going there, I think, but oh, dear Guy, a life with you looks so very sweet that sometimes your little Lucy shrinks from the dark grave which would hide her forever from you. Guy, you once said, you never prayed, and it made me feel so badly; but you will when you get this, won't you? You will ask God to make me well, and maybe He will hear you. Do, Guy, please do pray for your Lucy, far away over the sea."

Guy could not resist that touching appeal, "to pray for his little Lucy," and though his lips were all unused to prayer, bowing his head upon his hands he did ask that she might live, beseeching the Father to send upon him any calamity save this one—Lucy must be spared. Guy felt better for having prayed, it was something to tell Lucy, something that would please her well, and though his heart yet was very sad, a part of the load was lifted, and he could think of Lucy now without the bitter pain her letter first had cost him. Was there nothing that would save her, nobody who could cure her? Her disease was not hereditary; surely it might be made to yield; had English physicians no skill, would not an American do better? It was possible, and if that mother of Lucy's would let her come where doctors knew something, she might get well; but she wouldn't; she was determined that no husband should be burdened with an ailing wife, and so, if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, why, Mahomet must go to the mountain, and Guy fairly leaped from his chair as he exclaimed: "I have it—do!"—he's the most skillful man I ever knew, I'll send him to England; send him to the Atherstones; he shall go to Naples with them as their family physician; he can cure Lucy; I'll speak to him the very next time he comes here; and with another burden lifted from his mind, Guy began to wonder where Maddy was.

He knew she had returned, for Flora had said she brought the letter, and he was about going out, in hopes of finding her and Jessie, when he heard her in the hall, as she answered some question of Mrs. Noah's; stepping to the door, he asked her to come in. Then he told her that the time had come when he could give those promised lessons, asking if she would commence to-morrow, after she would prefer to take up first.

"Oh, Mr. Remington," and Maddy began to cry, "I am afraid I cannot stay! They need me at home, or may, Grandpa said so and I don't want to go, though I know it's wicked not to. Oh, dear! dear!"

Here Maddy broke down entirely, sobbing so convulsively that Guy became alarmed, and wondered what he ought to do to quiet her.

Controlling her voice as well as she was able, Maddy told him how the physician at the asylum had written that as Uncle Joseph would in all human probability never be perfectly sane, and as a change of scene would do him good, Mr. Markham had better try taking him a while; that having been spoken with upon the subject, he seemed as anxious as a little child, even crying, when the night came around, and he was not at home, as he expressed it. "They have kept him so long," Maddy said, "that grandpa thought it his duty to relieve them, though he can't well afford it, and so he's coming next week, and grandpa will need some one to help, and I must go. I know it's wrong, but I do not want to go, try as I will."

It was a gloomy prospect to exchange Aikenside for the humble home where poverty had its abode, and it was not very strange that Maddy should shrink from it at first. She did not stop to ask what was her duty, or think how much happiness her presence might give her grandparents, or how much she might cheer and amuse the weak imbecile, her uncle. She was but human, and so, when Guy began to devise ways of preventing her going, she listened, while the pain at her heart grew less as her faith in Guy grew stronger. He would drive down with her to-morrow, he said, and see what could be done.

As Guy had half expected, the doctor came around that evening, and inviting him into his private room, Guy proceeded at once to unfold his scheme, asking him first:

"How much he probably received a year for his services as physician."

The doctor could not tell at once, but after a little thought, made an estimate, and then inquired why Guy had asked the question.

"Because, doc, I have a project on foot. Lucy Atherstone is dying with what they call consumption. I don't believe those old fogies understand her disease, and if you will go over to England and undertake her cure, I'll give you just double what you'll get by remaining here. They are going to Naples for the winter, and, undoubtedly, will spend some time in Paris. It will be just the thing for you. Lucy and her mother will be glad of your services when they know I sent you. Lucy likes you now. Will you go? You can trust Maddy to me. I'll take good care that she is worthy of you when you come back."

At the mention of Maddy's name the doctor's brow darkened. He was sure that Guy meant kindly, but it grated on his feelings to be thus joked about what he knew was a stern reality. Guy's project appeared to him at first a most insane one, but as he continued to enlarge upon it, and the advantage it would be to the doctor to travel in the Old World, a feeling of enthusiasm was kindled in his own breast; a desire to visit Naples and France, and the places he had dreamed of as a boy, but never hoped to see, Guy's plan began to look more feasible, and pos-

sibly he might have yielded but for one thought, and that a thought of Maddy Clyde. He would not leave her alone with Guy, even though Guy was true to Lucy as steel. He would stay; he would watch; and in time he would win the young girl waiting now for him in the hall below, waiting to tell him 'mid blushes of shame and tears of regret how she had meant to pay him with her very first wages, but now Uncle Joseph was coming home, and he must wait a little longer.

"Would he, could he be so good?" and unmindful of Guy's presence Maddy laid her hand confidently upon his arm, while her soft eyes looked beseechingly into his. Guy left them together in the lighted hall. Sitting down on the sofa, and making Maddy sit beside him, the doctor began:

"Maddy, you know I mean what I say, at least to you, and when I tell you that I never think of that bill except when you speak of it, you will believe me. I know your grandfather's circumstances, and I know, too, that I did much to induce your sickness, consequently if I made one out at all, it would be a very small one."

He did not get any further, for Maddy hastily interrupted him, and while her eyes flashed with pride, exclaimed:

"I will not be a charity patient! I say I will not! I'd be a hired girl before I'd do it!"

It troubled the doctor to see Maddy so disturbed about dollars and cents—to know that poverty was pressing its iron hand upon her young heart; and only because she was so young did he refrain from offering her then and there a resting place from the ills of life in his sheltering love. But she was not prepared, and he should only defeat his object by his rashness, so he restrained himself, though he did pass his arm partly around her waist as he said to her:

"I tell you, Maddy, honestly, that when I want that bill liquidated I'll ask you. I certainly will, and I'll let you pay it, too. Does that satisfy you?"

Yes, Maddy was satisfied, and after a little the doctor continued:

"By the way, Maddy, I have some idea of going to Europe for a few months, or a year or more. You know I do as a physician good to study a while in Paris. What do you think of it? Shall I go?"

The doctor had become quite necessary to Maddy's happiness. He it was to whom she confided all her little troubles, and to lose him would be a terrible loss, and so she answered that if it would be much better for him she supposed he ought to go, though she should miss him sadly and be so lonely without him.

"Would you, Maddy? Are you in earnest?" "Would you be the lonelier for my being gone?" the doctor asked, eagerly. With her usual truthfulness, Maddy replied: "Of course I should;" and when, after the conference was ended, the doctor stood for a moment talking with Guy, ere bidding him good-night, he said: "I think I shall not accept your European proposition. Somebody else must cure Lucy."

The next day, as Guy had proposed, he rode down to Honedale, taking Maddy with him, and offered so many reasons why she should not be called home that the old people began to relent, particularly as they saw how Maddy's heart was set on the lessons Guy was going to give her. She might never have a like opportunity, the young man said, and as a good education would put her in the way of helping them when they were older and needed her more, it was their duty to leave her with them. He knew they objected to her receiving three dollars a week, but he should pay it just the same, and if they chose they might, with a part of it, hire a little girl to do the work which Maddy would do were she at home.

Maddy was very happy after it was settled, and chatted gaily with her grandmother, while Guy went out with her grandfather, who wished to speak with him alone.

"Young man," he said, "you have taken a deep interest in me and mine since I first came to know you, and I thank you for it all. I have nothing to give in return except my prayers, and those you have every day; you and that doctor. I pray for you two just as I do for Maddy. Somehow you three come in together. You're uncommon good to Maddy. Tain't everyone like you who would offer and assist on learning her."

Grandpa felt relieved when he had said all this to Guy. On their return to the house grandpa showed Guy the bedroom intended for Uncle Joseph, and Guy, as he glanced at the furniture, thought within himself how he would send down from Aikenside some of the unused articles piled away in the garret when he returned to his home. He was becoming greatly interested in the Markhams, caring nothing for the remarks his interest might excite among the neighbors, some of whom watched Maddy half curiously as in the stylish carriage, beside its stylish owner, she rode back to Aikenside in the quiet autumnal afternoon.

(To be continued.)

Happy Thought.

Anxious Mother—You can't do any better than marry young De Scads, my dear. He is an only son and his father is very wealthy.

Pretty Daughter—But I don't love him, mamma; and, besides, his father is a widower and may marry again.

Anxious Mother—True, my dear; I never thought of that. Perhaps you had better marry his father.—Chicago News.

Perfectly Harmless.

The old bachelor was dining at the home of a newly married friend.

"Have a piece of this cake, Mr. Oldbach," said the fair hostess. "I made it myself."

"Thank you," rejoined Oldbach, "but I—er— seldom eat cake."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of it, Oldbach," said the host. "I tried a piece of it on a tramp this morning."

Where He Failed.

Mrs. Diggs—Yes, she is suing her husband for divorce on the grounds of failure to provide.

Mrs. Biggs—Doesn't she get enough to eat?

Mrs. Diggs—Oh, yes; but he failed to provide her with the diamond necklace she wanted.



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