Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

It was a lovely evening, as Missie said—one of those rare September evenings that come when summer and autumn seem blending into each other. Alison stood for a moment in the hall, debating whether she was too tired to seek Roger in the timber yard, or whether she should indulge in solitary musing under the lime trees. A free half hour was a delicious boon, and she must employ it to the best advantage. She decided after a moment that she was too dull for even Roger's company to cheer her—for she was in one of those moods that the masculine mind finds so difficult to understand—and she was just taking down her garden hat from the peg when a figure came between her and the evening light, a familiar voice spoke her name, and the next moment Alison was in Aunt Diana's arms.

Miss Carrington's kisses were very grave and tender. They spoke volumes, but she seemed to have no words at the moment. But Alison's "Oh, Aunt Di!" was more than eloquent—the quiver of her voice meant ecstasy. But the next moment Miss Carrington put her at arm's length, and, still holding her, scrutinized her face almost pitifully.

"Allie, my poor, dear child, what have they done to you? Oh, dear, what thin cheeks, what heavy eyes!" And suddenly closing her face between her hands, she kissed her again and again, and Miss Carrington was not a demonstrative woman—her caresses meant something out of the common. They brought Alison's soft color back, and the happy tears came into her eyes.

"I am glad I did not tell you," returned, unsteadily; "I shall be quite well and rested now I have seen your dear face again. Oh, Aunt Di, how I have wanted you," her voice sinking still lower.

"Yes, I know," replied Miss Carrington, almost abruptly—all the more because her feelings were not so well under control as usual. "Allie, what must you have thought of my silence? Come, let us sit down somewhere where I can talk to you without interruption. I don't want to see any other face but yours for the present—not even Roger's."

"I think my room will be best," returned Alison, hesitating a little. "Miss Leigh is in the drawing room and Rudel in the dining room, and Roger generally sits in the study when he comes in of an evening. Wait a moment, Aunt Di, please; I must ask Sarah to make some tea for you—supper will not be ready for an hour. Oh," smiling archly, "I know your taste—Aunt Di can not go without her tea."

Miss Carrington offered no remonstrance; perhaps she was in need of refreshment. She waited to see the cabman deposit her luggage in the hall, and then she followed Alison upstairs.

"My dear," she observed, looking round her as she entered, "this is not your old room; I thought this was Missie's?"

"Yes, but Missie had mine, and I did not like to turn her out—it would only have caused unpleasantness. Please do not look so grieved, Aunt Di; I have got used to it, and do not mind the crane so much as I did at first—at least, it does not make my head ache."

"And you never told me. I could not have borne to have thought of you in this room, Allie. Well, you have spared me many a heartache. I should have wanted my child back in her little nest, and have been unhappy because I could not get her." And Miss Carrington positively shuddered as she looked at the grim lines of the crane, and round the dark, heavily furnished room.

"I am glad I did not tell you," returned Alison, gently, as she unfastened Miss Carrington's mantle and waited on her. Perhaps Aunt Diana loved to feel the soft little hands busy about her, for she offered no resistance as Alison smoothed her hair, and brought her a footstool, of which she took possession herself.

"That is right," observed Miss Carrington, stroking the brown head that laid itself in child fashion on her lap. Alison was so very tired there was utter abandon in her attitude, and yet she was so happy, too.

"Now we will have one of our cozy talks—don't look at the door, Allie—I am in no hurry for my tea. My dear, I am longing to tell you how it is your letters have miscarried; I read them all for the first time last night."

"Aunt Di, do you mean that you have flown to us—only telegraph wires could have done it," laughing incredulously.

"You may be sure that I should have flown to you if I had the power," returned Miss Carrington, seriously. "Allie, I was not in Switzerland, as you thought. I was recalled suddenly, a fortnight ago by Mr. Moore's sudden illness. Greville telegraphed for me, and I came home at once."

"Mr. Moore ill!" exclaimed Alison, with a fast paling face.

"Yes, very ill, but, thank God, my dear old friend is better now. It has been an anxious time for us, darling. Greville is cast down and unhappy—you need not look at me so reproachfully. I would not write to you—it would have given you useless pain, and I was so engrossed with nursing that letters were impossible luxuries. Little did I think in my night watching that Allie was anxious and unhappy, too."

"Aunt Di, that is why you look tired."

"Tired! Nonsense, child. It is a blessed thing to wear out one's self for one's friends. I love that sort of fatigue. I could not have left my patient until he was out of danger, but now I can safely trust him in Greville's charge. He is a capital nurse, in spite of his boyishness, and he has Burton to help him. By the bye, Mr. Moore sent his love to Sunny. Stay, I must try and remember his message; he bade his little sunbeam remember her mission, and not to be afraid of cloudy days."

"Did Mr. Greville send me a message, too?" asked Alison, a little timidly. Miss Carrington hesitated.

"Well, I think he sent his love, too—in fact, he sent a great many messages, but I told him I could not be a carrier of nonsense, and should only deliver one—'That he had kept his promise, and had been working famously.'"

"Oh, I am so glad," returned Alison, brightening at this. "Aunt Di—it was not good of you to keep Mr. Moore's illness from me; I should have liked to have shared your anxiety. Dear old man, I am so thankful he is spared."

"His character seemed lovelier than ever in his hours of suffering," observed Miss Carrington, thoughtfully; "he was so patient, so grateful to us all for our care of him. I understood then what being like a little child meant—it seemed as though it were we who were blind, not he—he seemed so steeped in the light of heaven."

"Do you think he wanted to die?" asked Alison, in an awestruck voice. "How strange it seems that he should be so willing to go."

"Why not?" replied her aunt. "Death has no terrors for him. Why should he fear the summons from the Master whom he loved and tried to serve here, and who died on the cross for his redemption? And yet he was resigned to stay, for Greville's sake. 'The lad wants me a little longer,' he said once. 'Well, I suppose I can spare my boy a year or two out of eternity; I mean to have no will of my own about it. When the Master calls I shall be ready, but perhaps—for who knows His graciousness?—He may be thinking of my boy, too.'"

"How I should love to see him again!" exclaimed Alison with a sigh.

"So you will by and by, I hope. He missed you dreadfully, Alison."

"And you, Aunt Di?"

"I am not going to tell you about that." Then, as Alison's eyes looked pleading, she continued earnestly: "Child, I believe we are a sort of necessity to each other—at least, I find my life will not shape itself properly without you. I am always thinking how Allie will like this or that. Your absence quite took away the pleasure of my trip. You naughty child, you look delighted; but there comes my tea—please pour me a cup, and then tell me all about your poor father."

Alison was soon narrating the story of the last fortnight. Miss Carrington had received hers and Roger's letters late the previous night, and Mr. Moore's had put her in possession of the latest news; still there was much that she wished to hear. She listened attentively, and without interruption, as the girl poured out the history of her hopes and fears. Her grave, interested face, and now and then a tightened grasp of Alison's hand, spoke in mute sympathy, but otherwise she said little.

"It has been a dreadful time," finished Alison. "Roger and I were so afraid of papa, and then Missie was so unhappy and ill. That is Roger's whistle, Aunt Di—he is wondering what has become of me. Shall I call him in?" And Miss Carrington nodded.

Roger's look of intense surprise amused them excessively, but he welcomed his aunt with evident satisfaction.

"Now Allie will be all right again," he observed, with a smile at her; "she has been sick for months, Aunt Diana. You are not going to take her away from us just at present, are you?"

"No, not just now," returned Miss Carrington, quietly. "I am going to stop until you are tired of me, and then Allie and I must say good-by to each other for a little longer. What should you say to bringing her for a few weeks in the spring, if your father gets better? You look in want of a change, Roger; they are working you too hard, my boy."

"You must not tempt me, Aunt Diana," he returned, rather gravely. "There will be no holiday for me next year. The whole concern rests on my shoulders at present, and our manager is a defaulter. Alison shall go with you, and welcome."

"Well, well, we must see about it; winter comes before spring. There is plenty of time, and I don't mean to give up my plan of having you and Allie together. Now I must see your father; will you take me to him?" And Roger consented with alacrity.

In the passage she stopped and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Thank you for taking care of Allie; I know how good you have been to her."

"It is she who has been good to us," he returned, with a sudden flush. "Aunt Diana, you do not know the blessing she has been to us; we have to thank you for that. Alison would never have been the girl she is if you had not taken so much pains with her."

"Don't make me vain, Roger."

"Missie and I have proposed buying her a little red morocco book and presenting it to her," continued Roger, with dry humor; "the title will be 'Aunt Diana's Sayings,' for Allie brings out a fresh one every day. Missie says she is inventive, and coins them herself; but I have an idea that they are genuine."

Miss Carrington shook her head at him, and only bade him lead the way to his father's room. Alison had already prepared him for his sister-in-law's visit, and he held out his hand with a pleased smile.

"This is kind, Diana. I said the silence was not like you; my poor girl here has been fretting herself about it; but of course you never got the letters."

"No, indeed; Alison will tell you about it presently. It is too late for me to prolong my visit now. Invalids should be quiet at this hour. You see I understand all about it, Ainslie; but I am grieved to the heart to see you like this."

"You must not make yourself unhappy about it; it is only a case of patience, and I have good, attentive children. I wish their mother could see them; she was always so proud of them."

"Yes, indeed! Poor Florence, you must miss her, Ainslie." And Miss Carrington's lip quivered slightly, for her sister had been the object of her dearest affection; she had never felt so drawn to Florence's husband as she did now; her gray eyes rested upon him pityingly.

"Children, you must take care of your aunt; she must be tired with her journey. To-morrow you must come and sit with me, Diana." Miss Carrington felt herself gently dismissed, but she did not misunderstand him, and, pressing his hand kindly, she followed the others from the room.

CHAPTER XX.

Missie received the news of Aunt Diana's arrival with an exclamation of dismay, and a hot flush came to her face. "Oh, Alison, it will be dreadful to see her! I always was afraid of her, you know; she is one of those painfully good people who make one feel small and horrid. Please don't let her come in to-night." And Missie sat bolt upright in a panic.

Now, Miss Carrington had quick ears, and she caught the most of this speech and laughed to herself softly; for it is those who try hard to be good who are the most conscious of evil within, and Miss Carrington was one who had often cried with St. Paul, "The good that I would I do not." Her heart felt very soft toward the willful little girl who had brought such misery on herself and others, even before she entered the room, but her first sight of Missie gave her a feeling of surprise. She said afterward she ceased to wonder at Ainslie's infatuation for the child, for she was certainly a bewitching little creature.

The pink ribbons in Missie's dainty dressing gown were not pinker than her cheeks, her blue eyes shone with uneasy light, and the soft, fair hair lay in delicate rings above the pretty, childish face; her frightened, appealing look would have touched a colder heart than Miss Carrington's, and it was with real affection that she bent over her. But Missie's tender conscience made her shrink from her aunt's kisses.

"Please don't be so kind to me, Aunt Diana—every one is, and it is not right."

"My dear little girl, we none of us want to see our poor little butterfly broken on the wheel; we are far too sorry for you. Of course, you have been a naughty child; you have been setting your small world on fire, and have got your pretty wings singed. Well, now you have learned wisdom through painful experience, and we must all help you to get the lesson perfect."

"I don't think any one was ever so wicked as I, Aunt Diana," sighed Missie.

"Well, my dear," returned her aunt, briskly, "it is not my concern to go about weighing my neighbor's trespasses in a balance; I don't fancy human scales would be nicely adjusted; but I am quite sure of one thing—that I was a very naughty child myself—the red-cheeked apples I stole gave me moral indigestion still."

It was impossible to look grave over this; Alison's merry laugh was infectious. Miss Carrington stayed a few more minutes, questioning Missie about her arm, and talking kindly to her, until the poor child was quite happy and at her ease.

"I don't know what it is," she said that night, when Alison gave her the good-night kiss; "you all seem trying to make me believe that I have not been naughty at all, and that there is nothing to forgive."

"I thought forgiveness meant that," returned Alison, simply; "you know how the Bible speaks of sins blotted out—that means the page is white again—one can write freshly across the blank."

There never was a merrier supper table than the one at The Holms that night; late as it was, Poppie sat up for it, and no one rebuked her for her chatter. Rudel kept up the character of a bashful school boy; but even he relaxed his wide-eyed gravity when Otter was admired and kind inquiries made after Sulky. Aunt Diana knew the way to a boy's heart; though she never had a boy of her own; but there are some unmarried women whose large natures can embrace a whole world of little ones, and such a one was Aunt Diana.

But as she talked and laughed with the others, her keen gray eyes followed Alison's every movement. It seemed to Miss Carrington that her darling was changed somehow—some of the brightness that had always lighted her young face had faded a little; she was graver and more in earnest.

"Allie has laid aside her leading strings, and has learned to walk alone," she said to herself; "though she loves me as much as ever, she needs me less. I ought to be glad to know this, for I can not expect to live forever."

(To be continued.)

A Question of Honor.

Mother—Willie, you wicked boy, you haven't kept your word. You promised you would never steal jam, and here I find you at it again.

Willie—Well, it's no worse than you. You said you were going out this evening, and if you had kept your word you wouldn't have found me stealing jam.

Her Hero.

"Who's your ideal of bravery?" queried the old bachelor. Is it General Kuroki?

"No," answered the spinster desperately, "it's a Mormon."—The Tatler.

Farm Machinery.

In what kind of a shell are your farm machinery and tools? asks the Chicago Weekly Inter Ocean. Many farmers have a big machine shed with the sky for a roof. This is a roomy house, but it has the disadvantage of being leaky when it rains, and water is not the best thing for wood and iron.

So many complain that net profits of farming are small. No wonder, when they are compelled to purchase a new binder or cultivator nearly every summer. These machines ought to and will last for many ears if properly cared for.

Now is the time, if it has not already been done, to get all tools and implements carefully stored away in a dry buildings. On rainy days or at odd times all the wood and iron work should be coated with oil or axle grease to prevent rust and decay. This will not only make them last longer, but will keep them bright and sound for immediate and satisfactory use when they are taken out next spring. Rusty wheels and bearings will not run smooth, and the rusty plow is a vexation when the new season opens for rush work. A cent's worth of oil and a minute's work now will save an hour's work of scouring and swearing next spring.

Men who get rich and have money to lend make it a point to prolong the life of their farm implements by sheltering them and keeping them well oiled and painted. Why not you?

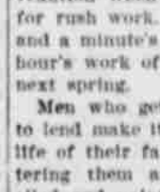
Overcrowding Chickens.

The great loss each year from overcrowding runs up into thousands of dollars. This can easily be remedied by spending a few cents each for a number of piano boxes. Two gunny sack partitions may be put in these boxes, and each one will accommodate several hundred small chickens. Fifty small chicks is the largest number that can safely be housed together. Most overcrowding is found in brooders, and the most common mistake made is not to consider the rapidity with which a chick develops and hence the necessity of more spacious quarters. The secret is to separate the chicks into small lots and never to let them pile up. Overcrowding results in lack of exercise, food and drink, which means bowel trouble and other diseases. Lack of pure air weakens their system; it is betetr to cull out half of your flock and raise the remainder in health and vigor than to overcrowd them and suffer the loss of your whole flock. Keep the quarters clean to rid them of mites and lice which sap the life out of them in a short time.

Never allow the young stock to be confined in houses and yards that are occupied by old birds, as they tramp and run over them, and thus stunt their growth. Stunted chickens are like stunted pigs—no good at all; they may pull through to maturity, but they can't develop into healthy birds.

New Type of Horseshoe.

If horses had means of expressing their thanks they would probably unite and send a resolution of gratitude to the Pennsylvania man who invented the horseshoe shown in the sketch. And humans who have seen the patient beasts sliding about on slippery streets in desperate and often vain efforts to keep their feet will hope that the invention is a financial success. The horseshoe has a series of parallel ridges on its heel and toe portions. The ridges on the toe portion run parallel to the longitudinal axis of the shoe and those on the heel portion run transversely. These ridges form a series of recesses adapted to receive and retain snow or dirt, thus forming a bearing surface for the shoe and making the horse surer of his footing. Running in opposite directions, as they do, the corrugations act as a sort of brake in whichever way the animal's feet may happen to slip, and the whole effect is to prevent snow or dirt "caking" on the flat of the shoe.



BOON TO HORSES.

Long-Distance Farming.

A city man wants to run a big farm by means of a foreman who will execute orders sent him from the city office. He asks persistently: "Why cannot this be done?" The asking of the question is evidence that our friend does not understand farming and could not direct the work to best advantage even if long-distance farming were a feasible thing. The practical farmer knows the difficulties. He knows his plans change continually as weather changes and as plants and animals develop. He is watching, thinking and modifying his plans according to changed conditions. He makes progress by having some things forced upon his attention through daily contact. He gains expertness by daily experience. No man in a city office can farm successfully unless he goes to the farm almost daily or else has a foreman who is competent to do more than execute orders. The man who actually manages must be on the ground. — Alva Agee, in National Stockman and Farmer.

The Silo Theory.

After a series of painstaking experiments, for which he is noted, Professor Hoecker of the Minnesota station affirmed that there is a misapprehension among the silolsts about the quality and feeding value of silage by the presence or absence of ears on the stalks. The general opinion is that the silage is made more valuable by developing the grain. That is, a stalk without an ear will not store up as many units of feed nutrients as it will by forming an ear. This total, of course, includes the ear. Thus the effort is made everywhere to introduce a large growing corn and induce caring. The professor has found that the stalk that has never shown an ear—if left until mature—is the same as another similar stalk supporting the ear. This is not an argument to go back to some variety of corn; it is only this: the ear is not essential if full development and maturity of the plant are secured before solling. The fact was also found that the "expense" of digestion was much less to the animal where the food solids were in the structure of the plant than when in the grain, though the latter was "assisted" by the condition of the succulence as contrasted with grain dried. The discovery opens up new lines of culture. Shall we plant thicker to get more fodder; cultivate a little deeper to arrest too rapid growth and assist in promoting earlier and perfect maturity, which includes, of course, the maximum amount of nutrition?

Commercial Value of Cornstalks.

After numerous experiments the chemists of the Bureaus of Forestry and Plant Industry assert that paper can be made from cornstalks by very nearly the same process employed in making it from wood pulp. Moreover, they are confident that when machinery has been perfected the cost of making paper from cornstalks (at present such paper costs about a dollar a ton more to make than wood pulp paper) will be a little over half what it is now.

Two grades of cornstalk paper have been made, a white paper made from the outside shell of the cornstalk, and a yellow from the pith. It has taken fifty years to develop the present methods of making paper from wood pulp. Dr. H. S. Bristol, the head of the bureau, believes that when proper machinery is built and the farmers realize that a good revenue may be derived from the sale of cornstalks, paper will be manufactured from the new material at half the present wood pulp paper.

With wood at $8 a cord, paper is made from wood pulp at a cost of $13 a ton. Cornstalks can be bought for $5 a ton and the paper made with the present primitive machinery for $14 a ton.

The Feeding of Dogs.

A dog should not be fed on meat alone under any consideration. Besides making him a nuisance it makes him naturally carnivorous and often savage. If he is always fed at the conclusion of a certain meal—dinner, for instance—he will wait patiently until the prescribed time. It is a good plan to feed after one's midday meal, giving plenty of green vegetables, bread and potatoes, with a very few scraps of finely cut meat, the whole well mixed and some gravy poured over it. If two meals are given, one should be at breakfast time and one in the evening. One should consist of only a little oatmeal and milk or a piece of dry dog biscuit. At no time should the dog have more than he will eat, and if he leaves anything his allowance should be reduced or a meal omitted.—Journal of Agriculture.

Sugar from Beets.

Beets now supply one-half of the total production of sugar, while twenty years ago they supplied about one-third of the total product.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Berlin has adopted luminous street signs.

The Norwegian army includes a corps on skates.

The pay roll of American railroads amounts to a billion dollars a year.

If each individual in New York City owned an equal portion of its real estate he would be worth in land $1,529, according to the assessed valuation.

While the British send on an average two telegrams a head each year, according to government statistics, the Americans send only one and one-tenth and the Germans nine-tenths.

Money is accumulating in New York City more rapidly than at any time in the last two years. Banks are receiving much faster than they are paying, and good investments are being diligently sought in every direction.

The new catalogue of Columbia University shows the total number of officers of the administration and instructors to be 670; the total number of resident students 5,683, as against 5,150 last year. Since the last catalogue was published eight special funds have been created by special gift or bequest.

Briquettes composed of calcium carbide have been prepared by H. K. Koffer of Vienna, and are claimed to be non-hydroscopic, keeping indefinitely, and do not continue to give off gas after withdrawal of water. They are made by intimately mixing finely granulated carbide with a binding material and compressing in molds.

Dr. William S. Bigelow, who is responsible for the cutting of the new United States gold coins in intaglio instead of in relief, a new departure in coinage, is neither a sculptor nor a numismatist, but the author of the recent book on "Buddhism and Immortality." He has given years of study to the literature of the Far East.

Discussion arose at a meeting of the Ballycastle (County Antrim) Board of Guardians on a letter from the local government board asking what order the guardians had made on a former letter from the board requesting that the papers should be supplied with forks at meals. It was decided to inform the local government board that the guardians did not consider forks necessary.—London Globe.

Two Russian sailors, wishing to desert from their ship lying in the Tyne, England, took a boat and rowed for the open sea. They took with them food and clothing and $300 in cash. The flood tide set them ashore again and they tried to land, but the sea was running too high. For many hours they drifted helplessly about, and finally their tiny craft was pitched upon the beach of Manhaven, near South Shields. Here they took refuge in a cave, where they lived four days and nights, until their food became exhausted. Hunger drove them into the open, and eventually they were arrested.

In times past a fashion lasted, with slight modifications, for years. Much the same fashion continued through the long reign of Louis XIV., and another through that of Louis XV., while the ladies of the middle ages never thought of varying their costumes. As for the Greeks and the Romans, generation succeeded generation with little change in female dress; and yet all these ladies of the past were more artistically dressed than those of to-day. Many, no doubt, spent more than they could afford, but when they had a costly dress they kept it, and did not throw it away to replace it with another.—Truth.

Some curious thermometers were made. Otto de Guericke, burgomaster of Magdeburg, made one which was twenty feet long and gorgeous with blue paint and gilt stars. It consisted of a large globe fastened to a tube, both of copper. The tube was bent upon itself into the form of a very narrow U, in which was placed the requisite amount of alcohol. One arm of the U was shorter than the other and open at the top. On the liquid was a float, to which was attached a cord passing over a pulley. At the other end of this cord was hung a gilt angel, its finger pointing to a scale on which the degrees were painted.

Poseidon, the newest Australian gold field, is producing some remarkable nuggets. One, shaped exactly like a cricket ball, was recently found there lying on the surface, the finder at first mistaking it for a mushroom. And now, from the same place, comes news of a nugget of 103 ounces closely resembling a nautilus shell. This was found by an Irishman, and on the adjoining claim a Scotchman named MacKenzie almost simultaneously impaled a thirty-eight-ounce nugget on the point of his pick. Furthermore, a boy driving a baker's cart over the Poseidon field saw the gleam of gold in the grass. He got down and picked up a nice little nugget of four ounces.