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Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER IV.

It was finally settled. Alison felt that duty called her home, and soon the day came when she had to part from Aunt Diana. It was a sad leave-taking, and the tears were in Alison's eyes long after the train steamed slowly into the Cheberton station. Alison gathered up her numerous articles of traveling gear, and looked out with some eagerness, but Roger's tall figure was nowhere in sight, and much disappointed and perplexed, she gave a porter instructions about her traveling boxes.

"Will you fetch me a cab, please?" faltered Alison, feeling ready to cry again at her loneliness, and wondering at Roger's unkind desertion, and then all at once she encountered a pair of round blue eyes, very wide open. She started; yes, there was the wide-mouthed, droll, freckled face that she remembered so well; of course it was Rudel, grown, but not otherwise altered, grinning affably at her.

"Why, Rudel, she exclaimed, reproachfully, "why did you not speak to me? I was looking for Roger, and nearly passed you by."

"Oh, but I should have hallooed all in good time," he returned, with another grin, shaking hands with her, but refraining from any warmer fraternal greeting.

As soon as she was seated in the cab he got in after her, and proceeded to put down both windows. "You would not like me to go outside, I suppose," he said, in a good-humored, dawdling voice; "these cabs are so stuffy they make a fellow feel queer."

"Go outside if you like," returned Alison, willing to humor him, but rather disturbed at the boy's conduct.

"Oh, it does not matter," was the contradictory response; "we have not far to go, and cabbies is so unusually stout there would not be room for Otter. Oh, by the bye, Roger told me to tell you that father told him that somebody else must come to the station, as he could not be spared. Roger was awfully put out for he said I should be no help, and I have not been much, eh?" with another grin that threatened to become a laugh.

"I wish dear old Roger could have come, but I am glad to see you, too," was Alison's polite reply. "I thought you would have kissed me after two years' absence."

"Oh, I never kiss girls," reddening visibly.

"Not your own sisters?" exclaimed Alison, in a pained voice. "Oh, stude! you used not to be so stiff and unkind."

"I ain't one of the other," rousing up at this reproach. "I think it is first-rate your coming, I mean—and you are no end of a brick to do it, and," with a sudden burst of confidence, "I shouldn't mind giving you a kiss now and then, when you wanted it particularly, if you would promise not to tell Missie; I would not give her one—no, not if she were to ask me on her benighted knees—a stuck-up little mix."

"Oh, Rudel, for shame! Mabel is as much your sister as I am."

"No, she isn't, and never shall be," growled the lad. "I tell you what, Alison, you are an out-and-outter, and no mistake, and I will help you fight all your battles, that I will, as sure as my name is Rudel, and that is better than ever so many kisses."

"Dear Rudel, I am sure you mean kindly, though you have such a funny way of showing it; but I have no wish to fight any one."

"Oh, but you will be obliged to fight Missie, whether you wish for it or not," was the cool rejoinder; but Alison was spared any further argument on this subject, as they had reached The Holmes, and in another moment were driving up the gravelled sweep between rows of dusty evergreens.

The Holmes was a singularly built house. A square, stone hall, uncarpeted and chilly looking, led to the kitchen and other domestic offices, all on a large scale and unusually roomy; a wide flight of stone steps, differing from the modern staircase by being also uncovered, led to the sitting rooms, dining room, drawing room, school room, and study, all opening on to a narrow corridor, fitted from end to end with bookshelves—literally lining it from floor to ceiling.

As Alison wearily ascended the steps, a thin ladylike woman in a black gown, with a depressed, gentle face, came to the head of the staircase.

"I am so glad to see you, my dear," she said, kissing her affectionately. "Why, I do believe you are grown, Alison; you are taller than I expected to see you, but you are looking pale."

"Oh, that is nothing," returned Alison, hastily. "I am tired with the journey." For just then she did not wish her looks to be too keenly criticized. "Where are the others, Miss Leigh—father, Mabel and Poppie?"

"I am so sorry, Alison, that I am the only one to greet your homecoming. Mabel and Poppie are out; they had an invitation to an afternoon party at the Browns'; it is little Stacy's birthday. I wanted Mabel to stay at home and let Poppie go without her, but she would not hear of it."

"Never mind, returned Alison, quietly, but she was conscious of a hurt, chilly feeling as Miss Leigh brought out this lame excuse. This was her return home after two years' absence, and yet Roger could not be spared to meet her at the station, and Mabel could not give up an

afternoon's amusement to welcome her sister. Her father was busy as usual, probably he had forgotten her existence at this time.

"You are very tired, my dear," continued Miss Leigh, disturbed at the young girl's sudden gravity and paleness. "Shall I take you to your room, and send you up a cup of tea? I dare say you would like to be quiet a little."

"Thank you," replied Alison, gratefully. Rudel skipped up after her, three steps at a time.

"I suppose you do not want to see Suky now, Alison?"

"No, no," interrupted Miss Leigh, "your sister is tired, Rudel; you had better go down and leave her to rest."

"Oh, I was not talking to you, Mother Leigh," was the boy's rude retort; and as Alison turned round to shake her head at him, she discovered him in the act of making one of his favorite faces at the back of the unamused governess.

"I say, missus," he observed, when he had sufficiently relieved his feelings, "have you told Alison about her room?"

"No, not yet, Rudel," returned the much-enduring Miss Leigh.

"Then I shall. I call it a mean trick of Missie's; no one but a girl would do such a thing; here she has been and taken your room, Alison, with mother's things in it; and nothing the missus can say will get her to give it up. Missus is awfully wild about it, ain't you, missus?"

"Oh, Rudel! do be quiet," remonstrated Miss Leigh, in the old worried voice Alison knew so well. "What a tiresome boy you are! I wanted to tell your sister quietly. Alison, my dear, I am very sorry, but Mabel has appropriated your room, and most improperly refuses to give it up. I spoke to your father about it last night, but he only said it did not signify, that he expected you would not be in your room, as your visit to us might not be a very lengthy one. I think you had better speak to him yourself."

"I will see about it," returned Alison, quickly anxious to stem the governess' nervous flow of words. "Am I to sleep here to-night?" as Miss Leigh opened the door of a back room.

"I have made it as nice as I can," returned Miss Leigh, apologetically, "but I am afraid you will think it an ugly room; it wants repapering, and the carpet is dreadfully old."

"Oh, it will do very well," observed Alison, quietly; but she looked round her with a sinking heart nevertheless. It was Mabel's old room, and very shabbily furnished, and looked over the kitchen garden and the sawmills.

She listened with well assumed patience as Miss Leigh pointed out the various little improvements she had effected. Though Alison did not know it, the easy chair and little round table were taken from Miss Leigh's own room; the fuchsia and geraniums in the blue vase were Roger's gift; and even Rudel had contributed the big green fern that stood on the window ledge.

"Now, I will send you up your tea," observed Miss Leigh at last, when the boxes had arrived, and Rudel had assisted to unstrap them; "there is no hurry, my dear; you will have nearly two hours to yourself to unpack and rest."

Alison tried to answer cheerfully, but her head was aching in earnest now; the tears were very near the surface again, but she battled with them bravely.

CHAPTER V.

A cup of excellent tea was very restorative in its effects, and when Alison had freshened her tired face with cold water, and brushed her disheveled locks, and exchanged her traveling dress for a light, cool-looking, ready-made costume, she felt less reluctance to present herself to the critical eyes of her father and Mabel.

"May I come in?" questioned a voice that she knew at once was Roger's, and in a moment she had sprung joyfully to the door.

"Oh, Roger, you dear old fellow, I am so glad to see you again!" she exclaimed, forgetting all her troubles in the sight of his familiar face. Evidently her pleasure was reciprocated; a pair of strong arms almost lifted her off her feet, and bore her across the room toward the window, and, after a hasty kiss or two, Roger put his hand under her chin and gravely inspected her.

"I suppose you are glad to see me," he observed at length, "as you have been crying evidently at the pleasurable anticipation. No you are sorry to come home, Alison, eh? and yet—rather reproachfully—"you are wanted very badly here."

Alison's only answer was to lay her face down on his arm; this was a little too much for her jaded spirits, a few more tears would come. Roger had found her out, as she knew he would.

"Come now, this won't do, Allie," he said, with a sort of soothing roughness; "we shall pack you back again to Aunt Diana, if you are going to fret. I looked for rather a different greeting after two years' absence."

"I can't help it," she said, trying to dismiss her tears; "I am tired, and everything seems strange to-night, and I do miss Aunt Diana."

"Yes, she has spoiled you for us; you have grown a dainty little lady, Allie."

"Oh, no, I am not spoiled in that way," she interrupted him breathlessly. "You can not quite understand, Roger; but there is such a mixed feeling. I have wanted you all these two years; you have never been out of my mind a single day."

"Well, I am glad to have you back to scold you properly. What color are your eyes generally, Alison? They are as pink as an Albino's to-night."

"It is my turn to look at you," she returned, trying to pluck up a little spirit. "Why, you have grown a mussache, Roger. How well it suits you!"—but Roger only broke into a merry laugh.

"Did you ever see such a handsome fellow? Really, Rudel and I are marvelous specimens of manly beauty. He beats me in freckles, though, ha, ha!" And Roger quite rocked himself in merriment.

"I like the look of you very much," returned Alison. "Your hair is a little rough and, oh! your boots are muddy. You have wanted me to keep you in order."

"I don't seem to match you, somehow," he observed. "Do you always look as though you were just turned out of a bandbox? I wish you would take Missie and Poppie in hand; they drive Miss Leigh crazy with their untidiness. Oh, we are a happy family, Allie—nothing but billing and cooing, and that sort of thing going on from morning to night. You might take Rudel and Missie for a couple of love birds, the sweet young creatures are so fond of each other, and as for Poppie and Missie—look, there is a specimen of the home-made daisy strains floating up the staircase. There goes Missie."

Alison's brow knitted with some perplexity as she listened. "Flora, will you go into your own room? I insist on it—you are not fit to be seen in that torn frock in a sharp, girlish voice. I will tell you, if you are so naughty, and then he will not let you come down to tea."

Here an expressive roar on Poppie's part interrupted the discussion. Alison, who could bear no more, moved quickly to the door and opened it. A pretty looking, fair-haired girl, dressed somewhat untidily and in bad style, with rather a vicious expression on her flushed face, was standing just outside Alison's room, and behind her a somewhat plain little girl between eight and nine years of age, rather small in stature, and with a droll, freckled face like Rudel's, only it was just now puckered up with crying.

A red, inflamed spot on one cheek was evidently the result of a smart blow on her sister's part in payment for the torn trimming.

"How do you do, Mabel?" she said, with a somewhat cold salute of Missie's cheek. "Please do not prevent Poppie coming to me. I could not help hearing, it spoke so loud, and I do not mind one bit how she looks. Come here, Poppie, dear, but the child, evidently shy and upset by the late fracas, hid back in an embarrassed manner, until Missie gave her a rough push. "Why don't you go to Alison, you stupid little thing?" she said crossly, for she was put out at her sister's sudden appearance on the scene.

"Please do not favor her, to come to me; we shall be very good friends directly," returned Alison, sorry for the poor child's awkwardness. "Come with me, Poppie dear; Roger is in my room, and I will show you the pretty new game I have brought for you."

The child's face brightened in a moment, and she moved instantly to take Alison's hand, again Missie interposed.

"She must change her frock, Alison; tea is just ready, and I hear papa's step in the garden. He will be very angry if Poppie looks rough or untidy; and I can not allow him to be vexed," pursuing up her lips with a virtuous expression.

Alison controlled a quick retort with some difficulty. She had fully expected to find Missie the most aggravating little person, or why should Miss Leigh complain of her so bitterly? But the reality was worse than she anticipated.

"Never mind," she said, calmly; "we must not vex papa, must we, Poppie? I will help you change your frock, and perhaps after all we may have time to look at the fish ponds." And without another glance at Missie, Alison made Poppie cheerfully lead the way, as she did not know her room.

As Alison, after dressing Poppie, came down the staircase with the child still clinging to her, Mr. Alison's sudden made his appearance from the study. He almost started at the sight of his daughter, and an expression of pain crossed his handsome, careworn face. In the dim light Alison recalled her mother too plain to his eyes.

"Oh, papa," she said, hurrying to him, and putting up her fair forehead to his. He kissed her kindly, patted it, told her that she had grown into a woman since he had seen her, and questioned her with some interest about her journey.

The dining room, a large, handsomely furnished room, looked sufficiently cozy as they entered. It was Missie's in the seat of honor; she gave a little simper, but as Alison entered with her father, she said, "I suppose this will be your place to-morrow," she said, for, as Alison replied simply, "I suppose so, but I need not disturb you to-night," a vexed look crossed Missie's face, but as Rudel was already grinning in hopes of a row she promptly dismissed him.

When they rose from the table, Missie's first words were a peremptory order for Poppie to put away her toys and go to bed. This led to a feeble protest on Miss Leigh's part.

"It is not so very late, Mabel, and Poppie has not seen her sister for two years. I think she might wait a little longer."

"I am not going; there now!" observed the child, defiantly, quite oblivious of her father's presence.

"Go it, Poppie, I'll back you," whispered Rudel, rubbing his hands; "she sha'n't touch you as long as I am here."

Mabel's eyes flashed. "You horrid, rude boy, Poppie!" But here Alison gently interposed.

"You will go to bed now, dear, will you not?" she whispered in the child's ear, "and I will come and tuck you up, and wish you good-night." And thus propped, Poppie's sullenness vanished, and she trotted on at once.

(To be continued.)

Cancer of the stomach causes about 9,000 deaths a year in the United States and nearly 5,000 in England and Wales.

EVENTS OF THE DAY

News Items Gathered from All Parts of the World.

PREPARED FOR THE BUSY READER

Less Important but Not Less Interesting Happenings from Points Outside the State.

Bryan is lecturing in Pennsylvania. A red-hot senatorial fight is expected in Indiana.

The house committee is almost unanimous for free lumber.

The new Democratic governor of Nebraska opposes radical measures.

The president has vetoed the measure changing the Colorado boundary.

Hill has secured an outlet to the Gulf by the purchase of the Colorado & Southern.

Taft denies that any cabinet appointment beside that of Knox has been decided.

The gunboat Hist, which grounded in the Delaware river, has been floated undamaged.

The Standard Oil company denies the government's right of appeal in the big fine case.

Robbers raided the State Bank of Ceres, 18 miles from Lincoln, Neb., and secured \$3,000.

All immigrants to the United States from Japan are to be inspected jointly by officials of the two countries.

The British house of lords has passed a measure reducing the work day from 10 hours to nine hours for miners. The time is counted from the time they leave the surface till they return, which makes practically an eight-hour day.

Taft says he will visit the Panama canal annually.

A death resulted in Philadelphia from a prizefight.

Holland is angry with Germany for the welcome accorded Castro.

The American consul stopped a mutiny at Puerto Cortez, Honduras.

A slight earthquake shock was felt in France, but not much damage was done.

British papers censure Roosevelt's outburst of vituperation and alienists say he is mad.

Attorney-General Bonaparte thinks the government should have the right to appeal in anti-trust cases.

A Montana man has been found guilty of blackmailing. The evidence was secured through his bad spelling.

The Canadian government seized a fishing vessel from Tacoma for violating the laws. A fine of \$1,900 was imposed.

A schoolhouse at Altoona, Pa., burned, causing a damage of \$100,000. At the time there were 600 children in the building, but all escaped.

Count Boni's family is reduced to poverty.

Castro refuses to believe that his people have rebelled.

Officers of the battleship fleet were banqueted by the governor of Ceylon.

Los Angeles business men have organized to eradicate racketeering in California.

Turkey has passed into the family of free nations, the sultan opening parliament amid popular enthusiasm.

Blizzards are raging along the Atlantic coast. Heavy snowfalls are reported and the temperature has dropped.

The principal of a Washington girls' seminary accuses Roosevelt of being ungrateful, but the president denies the charge.

Representatives of leading copper interests of this country and Europe will meet in New York to organize a world copper trust.

A North Carolina negro about to be hanged refused the attention of a minister, saying he wanted to go to hell for a special purpose.

In the Pullman investigation at Chicago a number of women testified to the inconvenience of upper berths and inability to receive attention from the porter unless he was tipped.

Holland has seized another Venezuelan vessel.

The Western Maryland railroad is to be reorganized.

Government experts declare that paper can be made from cornstarch.

Steel magnates declare the cost of their product has greatly increased.

Baron Rosen, Russian ambassador to the United States, has started for his post, after an absence of several months.

A retired soldier at San Francisco has saved \$13,900 from his pay and will hereafter draw \$67.50 per month for retired pay.

Relations between Brazil and Argentine are strained. The trouble started over the merits of the respective navies of the two countries.

PROTEST AGAINST RATES.

Californians Will Refuse to Pay Railroad Rates More.

San Francisco, Dec. 21.—Shippers and importers of California are arranging to unite in a state-wide protest against the increase in transcontinental tariffs announced by the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads as effective on January 1. Opposition will take the form of a score of mass meetings, held in the leading cities on December 30, when representatives of leading industries will set forth the grievances of the business men against the carriers. An executive committee appointed some weeks ago to deal with the question yesterday announced this method of procedure as more desirable than a appeal to the courts, which was regarded as productive of delay, or to the interstate commerce commission, which is powerless to take action until such rate changes have taken effect.

The attitude of the protestants was set forth yesterday in a statement by C. H. Bentley, president of the San Francisco chamber of commerce and a member of the executive committee, who said:

"We deem it unjust that the traffic managers should have arranged these rates without consulting the shippers, and at a period most inopportune. We have canvassed the railroad situation thoroughly, and from the cost of fuel to the statement of earnings there is apparent no valid reason for such an increase of rates at this time."

SEEKING WAR INSTRUCTORS.

Berlin Paper Says Castro Will Add Army and Navy.

Berlin, Dec. 21.—The Berlin Neuste Nachrichten yesterday printed an article from a well-informed source, warning the German press against adopting an unfriendly attitude toward President Castro, of Venezuela. The writer says that Germany's business interests should cause the newspapers to refrain from offensive allusions such as "ex-cowboy" and "president of a robber state."

Castro, the article continues, is considering a large addition to the equipment of both army and navy, and is thinking of placing the orders in Germany. The Venezuelan president is also seeking instructors for his military academy, recently established in Caracas, and is likely to give preference to officers from the German army. All this leads the Neuste Nachrichten writer to hope that Germany will strive to obtain a permanent influence politically and economically in Venezuela.

Many of the newspapers in their weekly political reviews deal with Senator Castro's visit in connection with the Venezuelan situation. The Tageblatt says:

"The German government cannot much longer show favor toward the president unless he gives assurances that Venezuela will fulfill the obligations of a republic."

A notable fact is that the semi-official Nord Deutscher Allgemeine Zeitung uttered the presence of Senator Castro. Such a course has never before been adopted when the chief of a foreign state was visiting Germany, although in a private capacity.

SULTAN LIKE CRIMINAL.

Resembles Stage Shylock in Shabby Overcoat at Mosque.

Constantinople, Turkey, Dec. 19.—The scene before the mosque of St. Sofia at the opening of the Turkish parliament as the sultan reached the parliament house after his four-mile journey by land, exceeded anything that had been imagined beforehand. Thousands of persons were clustered on the roofs, pillars and buttresses of the ancient church, two mullahs even standing on the summit of the dome. Trees, windows and the flat roofs of houses were crowded with spectators.

No other such multitude has gathered in Constantinople in 500 years, yet throughout the entire day no disorder whatever was observed.

There was a deadly hush when the sultan entered his box and everybody stood up. Bent and clad in a shabby overcoat, without a single decoration, the sultan bore a remarkable resemblance to a stage Shylock, and looked rather like a criminal in the dock than a ruler blessing his people.

Robbers' Rendezvous Found.

Riverside, Cal., Dec. 21.—Evidence in the hands of government secret service agents leads to the belief that an organized gang of postoffice robbers is making its headquarters at either San Bernardino or Colton. Officers are running down clues and believe they will soon apprehend the criminals. Scores of small postoffices in southern California have been robbed recently, and in almost every case the robbers' trails have led toward San Bernardino or Colton. Suspicious characters are being kept under surveillance.

Wright Breaks Record.

Lemans, France, Dec. 19.—Wilbur Wright, the American aviator, today broke previous distance and duration records for aeroplane flight, going 61½ miles in one hour, 53 minutes, 59 seconds. Wright's feat was performed during a trial competition for the Michelin prize.

CASTRO'S RULE ENDS

Venezuelan People Rise Against Absent President.

MAKE BONFIRES OF PICTURES

Government Lottery Is Looted and Many Stores of Hated Supporters Are Gutted.

Caracas, Monday, Dec. 14 (via Willemstad).—Open revolt against President Castro and his supporters broke out here today. Defying the police, which was powerless against its numbers and fury, a great mob raged through the city. It wrecked the property of Castro's leading supporters and gathered together all of his statues and pictures which could be found and made a great bonfire of them on the Boulevard de Plaza.

Official action deposing Castro from the presidency is expected at any moment. His power is probably ended.

An enormous crowd of the inhabitants of the capital, swelled by people from the outlying country, gathered in the streets soon after daybreak. The people began marching up and down the main thoroughfares, and it was easy to see that the ill-temper would result in violence. The police stood by and made no attempt whatever to restrain the mob.

The first building to be attacked and looted was that of the lottery monopoly. The offices of the state enterprise that has enriched itself at the expense of the people were ransacked and pillaged. Furniture was broken and thrown into the streets and piles of lottery tickets were destroyed. The crowd then moved to the printing office of El Constitucional, the organ of President Castro, of which Gumersindo Rivas is editor, and pillaged it completely. A steam laundry belonging to Senator Rivas was wrecked.

The crowd then turned its attention to several drugstores belonging to Senator Thielens, a son-in-law of General Tello Mendoza, and turned them inside out. General Mendoza was at one time minister of finance under Castro, and one of his staunchest supporters. He is universally hated by the enemies of Castro and his unpopularity and his close connection with the president accounted for the anger of the populace against the property of his son-in-law.

Numerous inscriptions setting forth the virtues of Castro and extolling his powers next attracted the mob, and every inscription was hacked out and erased. Some of these legends were carved in the public buildings of the city.

It was after 1 o'clock by the time the crowd had got thus far in its depredations. It was then that a detachment of troops was called out for duty on the city streets, and Acting President Gomez issued a manifesto prohibiting further manifestations.

These measures had the desired effect, for the mob quieted down and then dispersed.

MAY OWN STEAMSHIPS.

Government Employees Inspecting Vessels at San Francisco.

San Francisco, Dec. 17.—An inspection board comprising Colonel J. B. Bellinger, superintendent of the army transport service, and Chief Engineer John Donnelly and Captain Scott of the transport service, is completing an inspection of the steamers Sierra, Sonoma and Ventura, of the ocean steamship line, with the probable purchase of them by the government in view. One of the officers admitted last night that they were making an inspection of the vessels and would forward the report of their investigation to the department at Washington.

The shipping men of this city believe the government intends to buy the vessels for use in the much-talked-of line between here and Panama. Recently the government purchased three vessels at Boston to be used between New York and Colon, and it is believed the three ships in the Pacific will link New York and San Francisco via Panama by a government-owned steamship line.

Mexico Buys Canadian Grain.

Winnipeg, Dec. 17.—A Mexican syndicate has sent H. H. Cooper to western Canada to buy an enormous quantity of wheat and oats for shipment to the south on account of a hitch in the rates for Atlantic sea-ports via New York or Halifax. About 16,000,000 bushels are going via Vancouver, B. C. Rates of 50 cents per hundred for wheat and 47 cents per hundred for oats have been made for Pacific ports, the railways refusing to quote an all-rail rate through the central states. Cooper says the hard northern is preferred to Kansas red.

Escaped Prisoner is Ghoul.

Seattle, Dec. 17.—George Williams, the red-haired prisoner who slipped a handcuff and escaped from Detective Jack Bark Monday, has been identified as "Kid" Barnett, who mutilated victims of the Galveston flood in 1898 and escaped a death penalty only through the tears of a broken-hearted mother.