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Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER VII.

"Here begins the first chapter of Alison's failures," whispered Alison, in a funny little voice, as she encountered Roger on her way downstairs on Monday morning, and she laughed merrily as she shook her key basket excitedly in his face. Roger opened his eyes very widely at this, then he stepped back a few paces and looked at her admiringly.

"How ever did you get possession of that thing?" he exclaimed. "Do you know, Allie, my dear, that shabby little brown basket has been a bone of contention between Miss Leigh and Missie for the last month. Miss Leigh clings to it as her sole hope, and refuses to give it up. It has ended by Missie's really abstracting it at night. She has done it three or four times."

"Yes, I know. People told me all about it. Well, in an amused tone, 'I have only paid Missie in her own coin. Thanks to my good habits, I was dressed before she thought of waking, so I stole in, got my key basket, and wanted Missie good morning at the same time. I am afraid she will come down dreadfully cross.'"

"As though that were anything new," returned Roger, contemptuously, as he took up the paper and retired with it to the window, while Alison busied herself with the coffee pot. Shortly afterward there was an unaccounted sound on the stairs.

"If it were not perfectly incredible, I should say that was Rudel's footstep," Roger observed, in a doubtful tone.

"Oh, yes, it is Rudel," returned Alison, brightly. "I woke him, and made him promise to get up. Miss Leigh says he has got into and says, 'Good boy,' as Rudel entered, looking very much pleased at himself, and he bore without making a very very face his sister's kiss on his forehead. Poppie, who came in a moment afterward with Miss Leigh, was not quite so reticent."

"What is that for?" she asked, with a child's innocence of grammar, but in much surprise, as Alison's face warmed, and said, "Good morning, Poppie, dear."

"Poppie means that we are not accustomed to these little civilities," put in Roger, as Alison looked perplexed for a moment, "nobody says good morning to anybody else at the Holms except Miss Leigh and I, we always do, don't we?"

"Father just gives an inclusive good morning at the door."

"I am afraid you are very much shocked, Alison," observed Miss Leigh, mournfully. "Mabel sets Rudel and Poppie such a bad example in this; no one thinks of such a thing except Mr. Roger, and he is always so very thoughtful."

When Mr. Merle came into the room a few minutes later he seemed quite surprised at the unwonted cheerfulness. He nodded to Alison, and then took up his letters, but she was not satisfied.

"You have not kissed me, papa," she said, as she carried him round his cup of coffee.

"Oh, I thought only Poppie cared for kisses," he said, good-humoredly. "Poppie never comes to me for one."

Poppie reddened, and bent over her plate in much confusion. Roger, who was next to her, saw the child's eyes were full of tears.

"I expect Poppie is afraid of bothering you," he observed. "You would like father to kiss you sometimes, as he does Missie," he said, kindly.

"Is that true, my little girl?" asked Mr. Merle, who had just caught sight of Poppie's quivering lip. The poor child, who was very sensitive, was on the point of bursting into tears, but Alison happily interposed.

"Papa is too busy to think about such things. You must go round to-morrow and ask him for one, as I did to-day; he won't refuse either of us," and she looked laughingly at him from behind her arm.

The brightness seemed to rouse him affectionally. He bent and gave her a warm kiss when he entered the room, but good-humor is infectious.

"You look very nice, dear," he said, approvingly. "I like to see you there, Alison."

"I like to see her there, too," observed Roger, boldly. "It is her proper place," Missie, who had just opened the door, caught both these remarks; they did not evidently conduce to her amiability. She gave Alison a withering glance as she passed by her, to greet her father, and, taking no notice of her or the others, desired Rudel rather crossly to give her more room, and began her breakfast rather sulky.

But for once her humors were disregarded. No one troubled themselves about her, and the conversation was renewed with scarcely a break. Perhaps both Roger and Alison were doing their best to carry it on, but their sense of effort was lost in the general good.

When breakfast was over, and Rudel had rushed off to school, and Mr. Merle and Roger had gone over to the mill, Alison asked her sister pleasantly how she proposed to spend the morning.

"That is my affair," she answered, very rudely. "I am not accustomed to give an account of myself to gratify people's curiosity. I may as well tell you, once for all, that I dislike interference."

Alison felt inclined to laugh—there was something comical in Missie's mode of showing her temper, but she knew nothing

provokes people more than to laugh at them, so she prudently refrained from showing her mirth. "I am just going round the house with Miss Leigh while Poppie prepares her lessons," she returned, as coolly as though Missie had given her a fair answer. "In another hour I shall be quite at your convenience, if you would like to practice with me."

"Thank you," returned Missie, with freezing politeness. "I have no need to trespass on your valuable time; Eva will be here soon."

"Oh, very well," returned Alison, still in perfect good-humor; "then I will get my easel ready in the school room and paint a little, if Miss Leigh will allow me."

"Of course you must paint in the school room," returned her sister, tartly. "I suppose you do not intend to litter up the room with that great ugly easel, and Eva and I will be in the drawing room."

"I dare say when I have finished you will let me join you there," replied Alison, in a conciliatory tone. As she was bent on making Miss Hardwick's acquaintance for her own purposes she took no notice of sundry remarks in an undertone, that were fully meant to reach her ears, about people never knowing when they were not wanted.

Alison was soon too busy to remember Missie's enviousness. Miss Leigh, who was desirous of resigning her household duties into Alison's hands, keeping herself in the background and only acting as aide-camp, was soon explaining to the bewildered girl all her little pet theories with regard to kitchen and store room.

When Miss Leigh and Poppie went back to the school room, Alison settled herself and her painting apparatus in the furthest window, and tried to forget all her perplexities in hard work, but while Poppie drouned over her lessons, Alison's thoughts would stray to a far different scene—to a shady room full of sweet flower scents, with a tall figure standing before an easel. "Oh, Aunt Di, if I were only painting beside you now!" she thought, with a sharp, involuntary pain.

"Oh, how beautiful! If I could only paint like that!" The words were spoken, with a sigh, just behind her. Alison started; she had been dreaming indeed; the midday sun was streaming into the room. Poppie had put away her lesson books, and had run off, and Miss Leigh's place was empty, and standing just behind Alison's chair was a young lady dressed very simply in a gray linen dress and a broad-brimmed hat. At Alison's obvious start the young lady blushed and seemed confused.

"Oh," she stammered, "I am afraid I startled you. You were so busy that you did not see me come in. I have been watching you ever so long."

"I must have been painting in my sleep," but as she put aside her palette and rose, she cast a scrutinizing glance on the young girl beside her.

She was a slight, pale girl, evidently a little younger than herself; somewhat plain in feature, but with a pleasing, gentle expression, though a painful hesitation in her speech, almost amounting to a stammer, marred the effect of a singularly sweet voice. Even in that first moment Alison, who had a true artistic taste in all matters pertaining to dress, wondered at the bad judgment that could select dull, neutral tints for a complexion like that of the large but overshadowed her features, and hid the soft hair that was her only beauty.

"You are Miss Hardwick, I suppose?" observed Alison, with a shrewd guess that this was the young sister of whom Miss Leigh spoke.

"Not Miss Hardwick," corrected the girl. "I am only Anna. Eva and Mabel sent me here because they wanted to talk to each other, and they always find me in the way. Will it trouble you if I stop here a little and watch you painting?"

"Oh, no; not at all. We shall be nice company for each other," returned Alison, in a friendly voice. "I have only this little bit of background to finish, and then I shall be free to talk to you."

Alison painted for a few minutes silently; she was thinking. Then she laid aside her brush.

"If you will excuse me a moment I want to speak to your sister and Mabel," she said, rather quickly, "and then, if you like, we will go and sit in the garden until luncheon is ready."

CHAPTER VIII.

Missie looked up with a frown as her sister entered the room, but Alison took no notice of her. She walked up straight to Miss Hardwick, and held out her hand with one of her pleasant smiles.

"I have just made acquaintance with your sister," she said, with quiet tact; "we are going in the garden, as the house feels so close this lovely day. I shall be so glad, and I am sure Mabel will be, too, if you will both stay with us to luncheon."

"I thought you knew better, Alison," Missie interrupted, pettishly, before her friend could speak. "Dear papa is so nervous and worried about business and Roger's wretched management that he is not able to bear luncheon visitors. Eva understands this, don't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes, darling," returned Miss Hardwick, with effusion; "but perhaps your sister, being a stranger and not quite used to all the ways at The Holms, has made a mistake. That is very natural."

"Oh, no," returned Alison, trying to keep cool. "I am making no mistake. Papa will not be in to luncheon, or my brother either, as they have business a little way out of town. So I thought, as we should be quite alone, that it would be a good opportunity, Mabel, for you to have your friends."

Missie's pink cheeks became crimson with vexation; it aggravated her to see Alison taking upon herself so quietly the duties of the mistress of the house; and she was still more injured that her father's movements had not been first notified

to herself. She took no notice of her sister's remarks, and added no word, as Miss Hardwick accepted the invitation with great alacrity. When Alison left her, after a few more words, she listened reluctantly to Eva's criticism.

"I had no idea your sister was such a stylish person," she said, when the door closed on Alison; "she has fine eyes and a good figure, and she knows how to suit her own style in dress. She is not as pretty as you, darling, of course, but she has some claims to good looks."

Alison did not return these moderate compliments; she was not at all attracted by Miss Hardwick. She was a large, heavy looking girl, rather handsome, but her face had no play of expression, and her manner was decidedly artificial.

Alison spent a pleasant hour with her new friend under the lime trees. She soon grew interested in Anna's artless talk. She was evidently very young for her age; though she was seventeen, she was still childish in manners. Probably she had been repressed and kept in the background by her mother.

"It is so good of you to let me talk to you," Anna said. "Mamma and Eva say I am such a chatterbox, when I begin to ask them questions. I think I am fonder of talking than most people. Anthony says that makes me so troublesome."

"Who is Anthony?" queried Alison, a little curiously.

"Oh, he is our cousin; he is staying with us now. Eva says it is so nice, because we have no brothers, and he can take us about. Eva and he are great friends; she always calls him Tony. He is such a handsome fellow, with a big black mustache like a cavalry officer. He is in the army, you know. I am dreadfully frightened of him, because he laughs at me, but it is only his way, he means to be good-natured."

Alison prudently refrained from all comments, but said, lightly, "Now we have talked all this time, and I wonder what has become of your sister and Mabel?"

"I propose that we have afternoon tea under these trees, and that you and I, with Sarah's help, should prepare a little surprise for them. Will not Poppie be delighted?"

Anna might have been a child from the way she clapped her hands; she had never enjoyed herself so much in all her life as during the next half hour, as she and Alison dragged chairs across the lawn, and arranged the little tea table with the nice basket of hot cakes that old Nanny had prepared, some fresh strawberries, and a little vase of roses in the center. Even Missie looked pleased when, on returning from their hot walk, she caught sight of the snowy cloth under the trees.

"This is really a good idea," she observed, in a grudging tone, however; but Eva very nearly made her cross again by saying:

"How delicious of your sister! I really would hug her for this. What a pity we never thought of this before, dear, and then Tony might have joined us!"

When Roger returned from his work, an hour earlier than he expected, he stood quite transfixed on the gravel walk; for certainly such a pleasant little picture had never been seen before in the garden of The Holms.

"You may have my chair by Miss Leigh," he exclaimed Poppie, eagerly. "The cakes are so nice, Roger, and there are tea left."

"I must make you some fresh tea, you poor tired day laborer," observed Alison, as Roger threw himself into the wicker chair and removed his hat.

"Oh, let me do it!" exclaimed Anna, eagerly. "I know the way to the kitchen quite well."

"Yes, and I will go, too," added Poppie. "There are some more strawberries, I know."

"Bring me a big plateful," called out Roger, as Poppie tripped away; but he looked after them both rather curiously. His little friend looked different, somehow, he thought. Was it Alison, he wondered, who had put those coquetting looking rows into the little gray gown? Anna's face looked dimpled and smiling. Her blue eyes quite shone when she came back. She and Alison and Roger had a long talk, while Miss Leigh listened and knitted industriously. Missie and Eva had wandered away again—most likely to avoid Roger. He had addressed Miss Hardwick with studied politeness, but she had tossed her head and hardly answered him. She would make no terms with the enemy who had wounded her vanity so grievously.

"We will take one more turn, darling, and then we must really go," she had said to Missie; and in a few more minutes they heard her calling for Anna.

"Come, Anna, don't dawdle. We must really go now."

"Good by. I have had such a happy afternoon, thank you so much," whispered Anna, with a timid kiss that Alison warmly returned. "One day you will have me again, will you not?"

"Come whenever you like, dear. I am sure we shall be good friends," returned Alison, forgetting the necessity of lowering her voice.

Miss Hardwick laughed affectedly as she heard the speech.

"You are a lucky girl to have got a friend so quickly. Is she not, Mr. Roger? Oh! I forgot; you are her friend, too," with a little spice of venom in her tone.

"I shall be most happy to be considered Miss Anna's friend," and I am sure Alison will say the same," rejoined Roger, in his downright manner. "Good by, Miss Anna."

(To be continued.)

Roumania is said to hold the prize for illiteracy. Two-thirds of the population can neither read nor write.

A giant blue crab of Japan measured 12 feet across the nippers.

EVENTS OF THE DAY

Newsy Items Gathered from All Parts of the World.

PREPARED FOR THE BUSY READER

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

The strike of cabmen and chauffeurs has been declared off at New York.

Montana is in the grip of a severe blizzard with the temperature below zero.

More earthquake shocks have occurred at Messina and still more are predicted.

The first division of the American battleship fleet has been ordered to Naples.

Half the business portion of the town of Kensington, Kan., has been destroyed by fire.

Elections in France resulted in the selection of senators who are favorable to the administration.

The German emperor, afraid to ask parliament for more money, has asked his family to economize.

The Union Exchange bank, of Los Angeles, has been placed in the hands of the state bank commissioner.

The mines of Tonopah, Nev., have milled during the year 1908 a total of 241,296 tons of ore, of value estimated at \$6,388,980.

Plans have been announced for a big stock yard at New York rivaling those of the West. The organization will be capitalized at \$10,000,000.

The Italian earthquake will not affect the fruit trade.

Honey says Harriman is behind all San Francisco grafters.

Local opinion people expect that a large part of Indiana will go dry this year.

All hope of American Consul Cheney having escaped the earthquake has been given up.

Lack of funds may cause the investigation of New York's financial condition to stop.

Night riers of Tennessee made an unsuccessful attempt to kill Attorney General Caldwell.

A Japanese steamer was wrecked off the coast of China and the survivors murdered by Chinese.

Roosevelt has cabled the Italian government offering the use of the battleship fleet, which is near there.

Poisoned candy has been sent through the mails to two families at Denver. The police are entirely at sea.

Roosevelt has sent two cargoes of supplies to the earthquake sufferers and will ask congress to give \$500,000.

All lines of the Milwaukee road have been reorganized under the name of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad company.

Honey says he is not seeking public office.

The Italian government has reduced relief work to a system.

The first step in restoring independence in Cuba has been taken.

A volcano at sea and a field of boiling water is reported off the coast of Georgia.

Ex-Consul Price, of the United States, and his entire family perished in the earthquake.

The Baltimore water front had a fire which for a time threatened the entire district. The damage is placed at \$200,000.

The Chinese imperial railway has displaced almost all foreign employes and hereafter the road will be operated by natives.

The government has secured evidence that meat packers have been soliciting rebates from railroads in the form of damage claims.

The Hamburg-American steamship line is preparing for a direct line from Europe to the Pacific coast through the Panama canal.

Every state and city in the United States, led by the government, has hastened to raise relief funds for the stricken earthquake sufferers.

Postmasters throughout Great Britain have started paying old age pensions, by which the government will distribute \$35,000,000 annually.

Venezuelan students burned Castro in effigy.

For a second time vandals have looted a Jewish temple at San Francisco.

Cracksmen broke into the Fowler, Cal., postoffice safe and secured \$1,300.

All nations are hurrying aid to the Italian earthquake sufferers.

UNITED STATES LEADS.

Ahead of Other Nations in Relief of Earthquake Sufferers.

Rome, Jan. 5.—The United States is far ahead of other nations in the relief work. Yesterday Ambassador Griscom succeeded in finding an Austrian Lloyd steamer of 8,000 tons, capable of carrying 1,200 passengers. He has chartered the steamer for two weeks, and she is being loaded with medical supplies and provisions. This will cost \$50,000. It is expected that the steamer will sail from Civita Vesali, about 50 miles from Rome, on Thursday. It will be placed under the orders of the Italian government.

In addition to supplies, the American relief vessel will embark six doctors and twenty male and female nurses, three of the latter being American girls from New York who volunteered their services.

American energy has been strongly manifested in the work looking to relief of the earthquake sufferers. Ambassador Griscom and the members of his committee have assumed personal responsibility for the expenses of the expedition, relying upon the American public for funds.

Prior to engaging the steamer the ambassador visited Foreign Minister Tittoni and asked him if it would be a real service to send south a vessel properly equipped. Signor Tittoni answered that it would be most appreciated, for medical and supplies were urgently needed.

GUNBOAT TO NICARAGUA.

Report of Revolution Said to Have Caused Action by Uncle Sam.

Washington, Jan. 5.—Reports of expeditionary movements in Central America have led to a close watch of the situation by the Washington government and, acting under orders from the Navy department at the request of Secretary Root, the gunboat Dubouque today sailed from Havana for Bluefields. The Dubouque will touch at Key West for supplies. Her presence in the neighborhood of Nicaraguan territory will have a reassuring effect in the event that any trouble occurs in that section.

At the State department it was stated that there was no fresh news from Central America and no official explanation of the gunboat's dispatch to Nicaraguan waters was forthcoming.

Senator Corea, the Nicaraguan minister, said there might be some friction, but that he did not believe that there was any revolution forming.

Reports connecting John Moisan, of Salvador, with a revolutionary organization claimed to be fitting out in Nicaragua against Salvador, attracted some attention here. It was recalled that he is one of the two men claiming to be naturalized American citizens who were imprisoned in Salvador and whose lives were barely saved through the intervention of the government.

STORM KING GRIPS ALASKA.

Temperature Low and Several Lives Reported Lost Near Nome.

Nome, Jan. 5.—The worst storms which have ever swept the peninsula are in progress. The glass is steadily falling and much suffering results. Ice last night backed up into First street and merchants were forced to move their goods.

During the storm four Eskimos were stranded on an ice floe. Rescue was impossible, and they perished almost in sight of the city. One team of Freighters J. E. Rowe is missing, with the driver, and much alarm is felt for his safety.

A searching party left last night to seek seven miners, believed to have perished in the storm. Neither miners nor searchers have been heard from. From reports received there has been much suffering everywhere in the storm zone except at Nome.

Married Men Excluded.

Manila, Jan. 5.—According to an announcement just made, none but unmarried men will be accepted by the government in future to serve as officers in the consular force on the islands, and officers already in the service will not be allowed to marry without the consent of the government. This decision has been reached because of the isolation of many of the consular posts and the great difficulty that has been encountered in providing transportation and shelter suitable for women.

Riot at Rome Meeting.

Lynn, Mass., Jan. 5.—A mass meeting of Italians held in La Terza hall to raise funds for the earthquake sufferers, ended in a riot. The trouble was precipitated by a Socialist Labor speaker, who charged that funds raised for sufferers by a previous earthquake had been misappropriated.

Castro Very Sick Again.

London, Jan. 5.—The Daily Mail's Berlin correspondent says that Senor Castro, ex-president of Venezuela, has grown suddenly worse and will undergo an operation in a few days.

STANDARD WINS OUT

Supreme Court Sends Landis Case Back to Lower Court.

UNANIMOUS DECISION RENDERED

Refuses to Interfere Other Than to Return It Subject to Corrections of Judge Grosscup.

Washington, Jan. 5.—The famous \$29,240,000 fine case against the Standard Oil company will not be reviewed by the Supreme court of the United States, but will be retried before Judge Landis, who imposed the now famous fine. Such is the effect of the Supreme court's action in the matter.

The decision of the court to this effect was announced by Chief Justice Fuller soon after the court convened yesterday. The case came to the court on a petition filed by the government asking the court in a petition for a writ of certiorari to order up the record in the case for a review of the decision of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Seventh circuit, by which Judge Landis' original decision imposing a fine of \$29,240,000 against the Standard Oil company for accepting rebates from the railway companies was reversed. In the Supreme court the case turned largely upon the right of the court to interfere, in view of the fact that the case had been passed upon by the Court of Appeals, the government contending for such privilege as a right, while it was urged in behalf of the oil company that the precedents were all against such a proceeding.

The action of the court consisted in the announcement that the government's petition would not be granted. The effect of this announcement will be to leave standing the decision of the Court of Appeals, which was adverse to the government and favorable to the company.

The court's announcement was the barest formality. No reason whatever was given and the determination of the court was stated along with a number of other cases of comparatively little importance. The chief justice simply announced that the petition for certiorari was denied. Under this ruling the case will now go back to Judge Landis' court for a new trial, in accordance with the decision of the Court of Appeals.

It is stated at the department of justice that the decision gives the case its original status, subject to the views of Judge Grosscup, as contained in his decisions of July 22 and November 10, 1908.

DOWN TO SYSTEM.

Ample Supplies Now Available in Earthquake Country.

Naples, Jan. 5.—Although the Italian authorities were seemingly dashed at first by the magnitude of the disaster, the situation is now greatly improved. Ample supplies of all kinds are available. Foreign relief societies have been organized in several coast towns in Sicily. Forty-five English speaking inhabitants, under the direction of Mr. Wood, the American artist, are conducting an Anglo-American hospital at Giardini. Foreign officers who have explored the ruins on both sides of the straits give higher estimates of the loss of life than Italian reports. They believe that 90,000 persons have been killed or trapped in the ruins of Messina and 30,000 at Reggio, where the tidal wave rose to double the height that it did at Messina.

Signor de Nava, a Reggio member of the Italian chamber of deputies, has personally traversed most of the earthquake district on both sides of the strait. He estimates the total dead at 85,000, the wounded at 4,000. Of the dead Signor de Nava calculates that 50,000 are at Messina, 28,000 at Reggio and 7,000 at other coast and interior towns affected.

The ruins of destructed extends 30 miles north and south on the coast of Sicily and on the mainland for an equal distance from Radicensa, towards the south.

Ultimatum From Austria.

Vienna, Jan. 5.—The Austro-Hungarian government has instructed Count Forstner de Chymer, minister at Belgrade, to demand an apology from M. Milanovic, Serbian foreign minister, for his anti-Austrian utterances in a speech before the national assembly. Count Forstner will recall the opinion is held at Vienna that Serbia is bent on war.

U. S. Warship on Scene.

Canton, Jan. 5.—The American gunboat Helens has arrived here in consequence of the anti-foreign movement and the excitement among the natives as the result of a Portuguese seaman on the British steamer Falcham having kicked a coolie to death.