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Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER XI.

Maplewood owned a garden of very tolerable dimensions, but it was already crowded when the Merles made their appearance at the fête on Thursday afternoon. The lawn was covered by gaily dressed people, tennis had not yet begun, but the band was playing. As soon as Alison had greeted her hostess she looked round anxiously for Anna. She had no desire to linger beside Mrs. Hardwick; the handsome, talkative widow had already excited her aversion. As she turned away in search of her friend, Miss Hardwick came up to them in company with a tall, dark man.

"Mabel, dear," she said, almost ignoring Alison, "I must introduce Tony to you—my cousin, Captain Harper. Tony, this is my special friend, and I shall expect you to pay her a great deal of attention, on peril of my displeasure."

"I am too happy to perform such a pleasing duty, I am sure," replied Anthony, but his bold black eyes passed over Missie's smirking pretty little face to Alison's.

"Is this another special friend of yours, Eva?" he observed, twisting his mustache and looking full at her as he spoke. Miss Hardwick made the introduction somewhat reluctantly; Alison bowed a little brightly; she was not prepossessed with Captain Harper's appearance, and she determined to have as little as possible to do with him; he seemed about to speak to her, but she turned suddenly to Miss Hardwick.

"I do not see your sister," she said, in a low voice.

"Oh, I dare say not," she answered, carelessly. "I never knew Anna ever ready for anything; she is not half dressed, I suppose. Now, Tony, you must take Mabel for your partner in the first set, and Edgar Dawson and Miss Freeland will play against you."

"We had better take our places then," drawled Captain Harper, and, left to herself, Alison turned to Roger and asked him to walk with her to the house.

"I am going in search of Anna," she said as she left him, and she asked one of the servants who was just entering the tea room to take her to Anna's bedroom. The maid looked surprised, but she put down her tray at once and preceded Alison upstairs.

"That is Miss Anna's room," she said, pointing to the door; "she is dressing, I believe. A hamper of flowers came, and she has only just finished arranging them."

"I dare say I shall be able to help her," returned Alison, knocking at the door.

"My dear child," said the doormaid, in a surprised voice, as she entered, "why, you have not begun to dress, for Anna was standing at the window in her gray linen gown, evidently watching the gay scene, but the tears were rolling down her cheeks."

"Oh, I can not dress now," she sobbed as Alison kissed her. "It is so late, and I am so tired; Eva said the flowers must be done, and I have only just finished them. I saw Mr. Roger and you and Mabel come in, and I did so long to come out, but now I am just tired out, and I can't stop crying."

"Oh, you will cheer up directly, and I am going to stop and help you," returned Alison, brightly. "But the your eyes with some eye-decologne and water; I will be back in a moment." And running downstairs Alison made her way into the tea room, and after a few words with the good-natured maid she had already accosted, she was soon provided with a cup of coffee and some delicious looking cake.

"Now you are to leave off crying and take these good things," she replied, "you," returned Alison, "and then I will help you to dress. You are tired and worried, but the coffee will refresh you." But Anna's answer was a fresh burst of tears, as she threw her arms round her neck.

Alison assented rather coldly, but her reluctance vanished when she found Roger and Anna meant to oppose them. She almost forgot her dislike to her partner during the long, well-contested game, which soon drew a crowd of spectators round them; her skill and animation delighted Captain Harper. Missie was watching them rather curiously.

"I did not know Alison was such a good player," she said at last, when Eva joined her. "Captain Harper did not exert himself quite so much when he played with me," with a displeased frown of her head.

"He knows we are watching him, darling, and that puts him on his mettle," returned her friend, soothingly.

"Really, Eva," Mabel said presently, "I never saw Anna look so well."

Miss Hardwick turned her long neck appreciatively, and regarded her sister with surprise.

"That must be Alison's doing," she said with evident pleasure. "Anna never did her own hair, I am sure of that." But her handsome face clouded still more when Missie proceeded to take her to task.

"You ought to look after her a little more, Eva," said Missie. "You have so much taste yourself you ought to help her choose her dresses. I should be ashamed if my sister looked as dowdy as Anna generally does."

The rest of the afternoon passed like a happy dream to Anna. She played another game with Roger, who seemed bent on having her for a partner; and afterward, when Alison had succeeded in shaking off Captain Harper by infusing into his manner a fine degree of girlish hauteur and coolness not easily to be mistaken, the three sat together, passing kindly remarks on the rest of the company.

But the crowning happiness of the afternoon to Anna was when Missie addressed her in the condescending manner of one who confers a benefit.

"You have not been to see us lately," she said, quite graciously. "I have told Eva that she must bring you sometimes to talk to Alison." And after this Anna's cup of joy seemed overflowing.

CHAPTER XII.

"Thank you, Mabel, dear, for what you have said to Anna," said Alison, gratefully, as she left the grounds of Maplewood.

"Oh, of course, I gave Eva a piece of my mind. She is always so reasonable and sweet-tempered that I never have any difficulty. Anna may come to The Holms as often as she likes." Then, with a perceptible effort to seem at her ease, she continued hurriedly, "Eva is going to bring her cousin to afternoon tea to-morrow. I hope it will be fine, and then we can set the table under the lime trees; our drawing room is such an ugly room."

"Do you mean Captain Harper is coming?" returned Alison. "Oh, Mabel! how could you ask him? I am sure papa will be pleased. I do not like him at all; his manners are so artificial and disagreeable."

"It is a pity you did not stop at Riverston," she returned, in an injured voice, "for none of our Chesterton folk, with the exception of that stupid Anna, seem good enough for you. I think Captain Harper charming, and I am sure papa will be pleased with him unless you set him against the poor fellow." And here Missie looked decidedly cross.

"You may be sure that I shall say nothing to papa," replied Alison, with so much dignity that Missie was silenced. But she was terribly annoyed all the same, and took Roger into her confidence, exacting from him a promise that he would be present at all risks.

"Perhaps I am wrong," she remarked, candidly; "I am always so ready with my likes and dislikes. But I can not bear Captain Harper, and it is odious to me to pour out his tea for him."

Alison's anxiety was soon set at rest. The party from Maplewood, including Anna, had not long been gathered under the lime trees before Mr. Merle made his appearance, greatly to her delight and Missie's discomfiture. Alison never found out if Roger had betrayed her trust and given his father warning of the expected guest. But there was no mistaking the coolness of his manner to Captain Harper. That unlucky individual was clearly not at his ease, and certainly no inducement was held out to him to repeat his visit.

As soon as the unwelcome visitor had departed Mr. Merle expressed himself as much displeased to find Captain Harper there; indeed, his severity quite overwhelmed Missie, and she retired in floods of tears.

"Papa is never angry with me," she sobbed; "this must be your fault, Alison. You have come home to stir up strife and turn papa against me."

"I am very fond of you, though you will quarrel with me about every trifling bit, but it takes two to quarrel properly, and I do not mean to take up the cudgels to please you." And here she gave her a playful shake, that so astonished Missie that she speedily grew more amiable, for her temper had never been so set aside before.

Roger had been looking very worried and careworn for some days, and Alison was afraid, from her father's grave face and silence with his son, that things had gone wrong again at the mill, and that, as usual, the blame had been laid on Roger. She was waiting for an opportunity to speak to him, for his engagements had taken him out several nights, when one evening she met him as she was returning from the town.

He was walking along rather moodily, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and did not see Alison until she called him by name; and then he looked up and his face brightened in a moment.

"Where have you been, Alie?" he asked, smiling at her; and Roger's smile was very pleasant. "The house felt dull without you, so I came out for a solitary stroll."

"Very well, you shall have your stroll; only it will be better if you go longer, for I am not tired in the least, and mean to come, too."

"Very well, then," he said, leading the way toward a quiet, shady road, "I am just in the right mood for a talk, and you are the right sort of company."

"I am so glad I satisfy you, Roger," she said, looking at him affectionately, "I wish all brothers were like you, and cared as much for their sisters."

"So they would, if all sisters were your sort," was his flattering answer; only Roger meant what he said. "Alie, of course I know you will go back to Aunt Diana one day, but you must promise me not to leave us just yet."

"Oh, Roger, of course not. How could I go while you wanted me?"

"My dear, in that case you would never leave us at all. No, no, I am not quite so selfish as that. One day you shall go, Alie, but not just yet, not till things are more settled, and we are all happier. Do you know, dear, I wonder sometimes how I held on those two years without you; your absence made me miss mother more." And Roger's lip trembled a little. Alison pressed his arm without speaking; there was no need for other words between them, they were so sure of each other's sympathy.

"Roger, I wish you would tell me what has been troubling you for the last few days," she said. "Something has gone very wrong; you have been terribly grave all the week, and yesterday you were too worried to eat properly. I hope you mean to take me into your confidence, dear; perhaps I could find some way of helping you."

"I wish you could, Alie," he returned, sadly; "I wish I could see a way out of our terrible difficulties. Promise me you will be as secret as a statue, and I will tell you a little of what has happened."

"Oh, you may trust me," she replied, lifting her honest brown eyes to his face. "I believe I may, and it will be a relief to speak, Alie, Ferguson is going too far; I am convinced in my own mind that he has tampered with the accounts; we shall come to a crash directly."

"What do you mean?" turning a little pale, Roger spoke so vehemently.

"It would take too long to tell you all but something very unpleasant has happened this week. You know my father went to Lancaster the other day. Well, I checked in payment for a consignment of timber, and unexpectedly paid in during his absence. Of course I indorsed the check, wrote out a receipt, inclosed it in an envelope and put it in the usual rack for postage. I then made an entry in the ledger, and was just going to lock up the ledger and the check in the safe, as it was nearly time for closing, when the sudden cessation of the machinery told me some accident had happened, and of course I ran out of the office, and so did Ferguson, our manager."

"Oh, I know! when poor Mitchell was hurt," returned Alison, with a shudder. "I remember seeing both you and Mr. Ferguson standing bare headed among the men in the yard; you were sending Timothy for a doctor."

"Yes; I was detained for nearly half an hour. Ferguson must have gone back to the office—at least I missed him after the first few minutes. When they had taken Mitchell off to the hospital I went back to lock up things for the night. Ferguson was just coming out of the office and handed me the keys. Everything was locked up, he said, and the messenger had fetched the letters. I had put the check into my father's private drawer and had locked the drawer, but the ledger had been left open on the table, with my entry written on the top of a blank page. I had noticed the page was a little loose, as though the corresponding ones had been cut out some time previously, but I was in a hurry, and I thought it did not matter. When Ferguson told me everything was locked up for the night and handed me the office keys, of course there was nothing for me but to take them. Alie, what do you suppose were my feelings when we opened the private drawer the next morning and there was no check there? Neither was my entry in the ledger; the loose page was gone, and, to add to my perplexity, the firm who had paid in the check wrote to complain that there had been no acknowledgment or receipt; and yet I had written both myself and placed the stamped envelope among the other letters for postage."

(To be continued.)

An Indignity.

"I tell you, str, kissing the hand that smites you is nothing to what I saw in the hotel this morning."

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 Points Outside the State.

The father of Mrs. Corey died in poverty, ignored by his daughter.

The lid has been put on in the famous mining town of Deadwood, S. D.

The Nevada legislature has broken its rule and will allow female clerks.

It is understood that Taft has not yet selected his secretary of treasury.

Emma Goldman has been bailed out of the San Francisco city jail by Eastern friends.

Another blizzard is raging in the East and all railroads are tied up in the Dakotas.

The government arsenal near Philadelphia is running day and night making cartridges.

The American Red Cross fund for Italian earthquake sufferers has reached nearly \$1,000,000.

Ignorates of the head hunting tribes raided a village and succeeded in getting three heads before driven off.

The Federal Supreme court upholds Governor Peabody's act in arresting Moyer during the famous Colorado mine war.

Roosevelt has asked Governor Gillett, of California, to hold up anti-Japanese bills, lest national interests be injured.

The American consul estimates the dead at Messina at 90,000.

Harriman says college graduates as a rule make good railroad men.

An anti-gambling law is expected to be enacted by the California legislature.

President-elect Taft will install automobiles instead of horses and carriages.

The house proposes to investigate Roosevelt's barber drawing government pay.

Bonaparte has been summoned before a senate committee to tell what he knows of the steel merger.

The storm in California has abated. With the exception of the Sacramento, which is still rising, all rivers are falling.

Governor Stubbs, of Kansas, refuses to live in the executive mansion. Simple life on a farm appeals more to him.

Railroad officials place the blame for the wreck at Dotsero, Col., with the engineer, as the train was nine minutes ahead of time.

Three bankers and a business man of Pittsburg have received penitentiary sentences for wrecking a bank. Each will have to serve five years.

Separate statehood for New Mexico and Arizona seems assured.

The Hughes direct primary bill in New York will probably fail.

Three jurors have been provisionally accepted in the Calhoun case.

Thornton Hains has been acquitted of complicity in the Annis murder.

A fire at Fort Omaha destroyed all supplies, the wireless apparatus and two balloons.

The United States and Great Britain have entered formal protest against the dismissal of Yuan Shi Kai.

W. I. Buchanan, special agent of the United States, will soon have terms of settlement arranged with Venezuela.

Harriman has issued orders for the building of a road which will parallel the Colorado & Southern, the new Hill line.

A 5-year old child has been taken from the ruins of Reggio, where it had been entombed since the earthquake. An officer was attracted by its cries.

A snowslide hit a Canadian Pacific train 100 miles east of Vancouver, B. C. The engine was knocked into the river and the engineer and fireman killed.

Admiral Rojestvensky, who was defeated by the Japanese in a naval battle, is dead.

The Great Northern has succeeded in getting some of its trains through the snow in Montana.

Rockefeller's physician says the oil magnate's health is perfect and that he will live to be 100 years old.

Los Angeles jobbers have given a hearing by the Interstate Commerce commission on switching charges.

OPIMUM CAUSES SUICIDE.

Poppy Drug Responsible for 500,000 Cases Yearly.

Cleveland, O., Jan. 19.—"Opium causes half a million suicides a year," declared Rev. A. S. Gregg, of the International Reform bureau today, with reference to the opium conference called by President Roosevelt, which begins its session at Shanghai February 1. The statement is based on letters and reports from Dr. E. W. Thwing, special secretary of the reform bureau who has been sent to Shanghai by the bureau to attend the opium conference.

Dr. Thwing will ask the conference to take action that will hasten the destruction of the opium traffic throughout the world. Dr. Thwing says he has obtained statistics from four Chinese provinces with a population of 580,000 in which he says the proportion of the population using opium is from 20 to 80 per cent, and the amount of money spent for the drug is \$200,000,000 a year.

President Roosevelt called the opium conference at the suggestion of Bishop Brent, of Manila, and delegates have been appointed by China, Japan, Siam, Persia, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Holland and the United States.

AFFAIRS SET RIGHT.

Gomez to Be Inaugurated President of Cuba January 28.

Havana, Jan. 19.—On January 28 at noon the Cuban people will come into their own for the second time at the hands of the American government. It was on May 20, 1902, that the American flag, hoisted after the war with Spain, was hauled down in favor of the blue-striped, single-starred ensign of Cuba.

Then, in September, 1906, a company of marines landed at the palace from the United States cruiser Denver, and halted a victorious revolutionary army on the outskirts of Havana, and American intervention, which first came against a foreign power, was once more a reality, this time to set things right among the Cubans themselves.

The members of the Cuban congress had become indifferent and for months prior to the revolution it had been impossible to secure the attendance of a quorum. This necessitated government by presidential decree, and it was quickly followed by the cry that President Palma was assuming the role of dictator. The American provisional governor, Charles E. Magoon, has done all that it was possible for him to do to prevent a recurrence of this state of affairs by decreeing that congressmen who do not attend the sessions shall not receive pay. These rules, however, have already been declared dictatorial by the congressmen, and an attempt undoubtedly soon will be made to repeal or amend them.

NEW RECORD SET.

Number of Mine Accidents Increased During Past Year.

Pittsburg, Jan. 19.—The year 1908 was marked by more mine horrors and by more loss of life underground than any other year in history. And the year 1909 apparently is going after 1908's record. Only last Tuesday 100 lives were lost in an explosion in a model mine near Bluefield, W. Va., and on the Sunday before death exacted another heavy toll in the Leiter mines at Zeigler, Ill.

"Science," said a mining engineer today, "has not yet solved the problem of preventing the formation of gas. We recognize three kinds of mine gases—the fire damp, after damp and white damp."

"Fire damp is the only one of the trio that is explosive. It is a gas given off by coal under the influence of the heat of the earth. When Davy invented the mine's safety lamp it was thought that all danger of mine explosions was over. The lamp has the flame surrounded with a metallic screen which does not permit the passage of the flame. But the screens burn out after long usage and the miners grow careless."

348 Autos Are Burned.

Boston, Jan. 19.—The most extensive automobile storage and repair plant in the city burned today, destroying 348 automobiles, valued at \$750,000. The fire spread to the old train shed of the Park Square railroad station, formerly used as the terminal of the New York, New Haven & Hartford railroad, and destroyed the bicycle track and a large pavilion used for exhibition purposes. The damage to the building will bring the total to \$800,000. There were six garages in the storage station.

Iroquois Claims Settled.

Chicago, Jan. 19.—It was made public today that after five years of litigation settlements had been made in the cases of 30 of the deaths caused by the Iroquois theater fire. It is stated that \$750 a case is to be paid.

UNCOVER BIG FRAUDS

Government Asks Million Dollars to Recover Stolen Lands.

VALUE REACHES \$110,000,000

Thirty-Two Thousand Cases of Fraudulent Holdings West of Mississippi—Many in Oregon.

Washington, Jan. 19.—Startling information of alleged astounding frauds upon the public lands has come into the possession of Secretary Garfield through special agents. The allegation is made that approximately \$110,000,000 worth of lands in states, principally west of the Mississippi river, have been acquired fraudulently within the last two years, by corporations and individuals.

With a view to recovering these lands, Secretary Garfield sent letters yesterday to Chairman Hale and Chairman Tawney, of the senate and house appropriation committees, respectively, asking for an additional appropriation of \$500,000, which, if granted, with that already asked for will give the department \$1,000,000 for that purpose.

Secretary Garfield also submits a statement of H. H. Schwartz, chief of the field service, showing over 32,000 distinct cases of alleged land frauds demanding further investigation. Of such cases awaiting investigation there are in Oregon 1,462; California and Nevada, 1,469; Washington and North Idaho, 1,325; Montana, 3,605; Colorado, 8,621; Arizona, 496; Wyoming, 21,155; Utah, 1,482; and New Mexico, 1,299.

Much Land in This State.

Washington, Jan. 19.—According to a statement sent congress yesterday by Secretary Garfield, the government is now endeavoring to recover title to \$1,835,000 worth of public lands fraudulently entered or sought to be entered in Oregon. This includes \$750,000 worth of timber land acquired by C. A. Smith, \$200,000 by Fred A. Kriba, \$435,000 involved in 123 fraudulent timber entries (names not given), \$250,000 worth of fine pine timber, and \$200,000 worth of coal land within forest reserves. He also hopes to recover \$559,000 worth of land in Washington and a large quantity in Idaho.

COSGROVE DELAYS JOURNEY

Washington's Governor-Elect Will Remain South a Month.

San Francisco, Jan. 19.—Acting on the advice of Dr. Sawyer, who is attending him at Paso Robles, Cal., Governor-elect Cosgrove, of Washington, has decided not to go North for at least a month. Cosgrove is improving every day and his physician is confident that he will ultimately be as well as ever. The reason for the postponement of the trip is that Dr. Sawyer does not believe Cosgrove strong enough yet to face a Northern winter, after having been in the warm climate.

ABE RUEF VERY HARD UP.

Decides to Sell His Big Maroon Buzz Wagon for Cash.

San Francisco, Jan. 19.—Former Boss Abe Ruef, now under sentence of 14 years in San Quentin for bribery, is very hard up and has decided to sell his fine maroon-colored touring automobile, in which he was wont to spin around town. Ruef's financial condition, insofar as available funds are concerned, has not been anything to boast of for some time. Nearly all his property holdings are tied up for bail. Since the shooting of Henev, the convicted boss has derived but little pleasure from his buzz wagon. The last time it appeared on the street was New Year's eve. Over at San Quentin Ruef will have less need for an automobile.

Get Six Black Hand Men.

Pittsburg, Jan. 19.—Word was received here today of the arrest yesterday of six members of an alleged Black Hand organization, after a desperate struggle at Ellsworth, east of this city. Three other members of the gang escaped, but two of them were captured today and a third was shot and wounded. Mrs. Yannaecia, a wealthy Italian woman, received a letter Saturday from a Black Hand society instructing her to give up \$400. Nine foreigners appeared to get the money and were met by the police.

Rescuers Fear Pestilence.

Rome, Jan. 19.—Owing to the miasmatic condition of Messina, the rescuers there have been sent a petition here asking that steps be taken at once to compel the survivors of the earthquake to abandon the city at once. The rescuers fear for their own lives and have asked to be withdrawn.