

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

"Oh, Mabel, my poor dear!" And Alison knelt down by her. She had not noticed how helplessly the left arm hung down, and how Missie would not let her touch it.

"It is all bruised and cut," she said, her forehead contracting heavily with pain. "The doctor must see it presently, when he has finished in the other room; not now. Oh, Alison, where are you going? You shall not disturb them. What does it matter? If only—" But here her fast whitening lips refused to utter her fear.

"Let me go, darling," returned Alison, anxiously; "I will not disturb them, you may quite trust me." And without waiting for Mabel's answer she slipped away.

As she entered the dressing room, the stranger, a dark, grave-looking young man, came out of her father's room. He listened to Alison's account, and promised to attend to her sister as soon as possible.

"We must finish the examination," he said, dismissing her, "but I will come as soon as I can. I thought there was something wrong, but she deceived us by hiding her arm under her mantle. She was bruised, that was all, she told us. Keep her quiet, and I will be with you directly."

Missie was leaning back in her chair, with her eyes closed, but as Alison entered she opened them full on her sister, and the blank miserable look in them convinced Alison that she was dreading the worst.

"Do not look so, Mabel darling," she said, kissing her softly. "Indeed we do not know; they have told me nothing. Dear papa is in the hands; we must leave him there, and hope for the best."

A low groan broke from Mabel's lips.

"Oh, it is easy for you; even if the worst comes, you can bear it; you have nothing with which to reproach yourself. If he dies, I shall have killed him. How am I to go on living, and know that? And here she burst out into hoarse sobs.

"Mabel, my poor dear, oh! how am I to comfort you?" exclaimed Alison, unable to restrain her own tears at the sight of her sister's anguish.

"You can not comfort me," returned the unhappy girl. "What is the pain of my broken arm and my helpless compared to what I shall feel if he dies, and I am not able even to tell him that I am sorry for my deceit and disobedience? and I would not say so, because he was angry. Oh, papa, papa, and I loved you so!"

And the poor child hid her face on Alison's shoulder. It seemed a relief to her to pour out her feelings. He had been so angry, and she would not own herself in the wrong, and then the horrible accident had happened, and she thought at first her father was killed. When they said he was alive, and they must bring him home, and see what could be done, I thought I would not add to the trouble, and so I managed to hide my broken arm."

But here she broke off, as Mr. Cameron entered the room.

"Papa?" she said, faintly, as he came up to her.

"His consciousness is returning; we shall know more to-morrow. It is not the head, as we feared," he said, evasively; "but now I must look at your arm, please. Your friend Dr. Greenwood will be here directly, and we will soon put it right." But, in spite of his cheerful words, "Poor child!" came pityingly from his lips as the blackened shoulder was revealed to his view. Missie made her suffer exquisite pain during the drive home. The arm was broken, and the shoulder dislocated, and the bruised condition of the flesh filled Alison with horror.

It was a painful ordeal for Alison, but she bore it as bravely as she could. Roger had remained with his father; Miss Leigh was not in a condition to render any assistance; the sudden confusion had brought on accession of pain, and she could only lay her throbbing head on the pillow, and lie there in utter helplessness. There was no one but herself to wait upon the doctors and receive their directions, and the very urgency of the case made her helpful. Her one thought was that she must not hinder their work; there was little for her to do. At the first touch of her wounded arm Mabel had fainted again. Alison could not have borne to witness the poor child's sufferings. Perhaps Dr. Greenwood knew this, for he contrived some errand that detained her for a few minutes out of the room. When she returned the worst seemed over, but the faintness continued, and it was only slowly and by degrees that Alison, with Sarah's help, could assist her to undress and lie down, after which a sedative was to be administered, as the pain of the bruises and the misery of her mind would effectually hinder sleep.

As soon as she could leave her in Sarah's charge, Alison stole into her father's dressing room. Dr. Greenwood came to her at once.

"My dear," he said, taking her hand, for he had known her from an infant. "This is a sad business, but, thank God, things are not so bad as they seemed at first. Your father must have received a blow; he was stunned, but consciousness has returned, and he has spoken. What we fear now is something different. He seems unable to move; but this may be due to the shock and temporary exhaustion. There are symptoms that make us hopeful that the full extent of mischief may not be realized. We shall know more in a few days; but he will require the greatest care. To-morrow I shall send in a nurse from the infirmary. Do you think you and your brother can manage to-night?"

"Oh, yes," returned Alison, with a painful catch in her breath; it seemed to her as though she were passing through some hideous nightmare; the very horror seemed to numb her sensibilities. She understood that night how people could live through terrible scenes; the very intensity of pain deadened the anguish.

Dr. Greenwood thought her a very

brave girl. She listened quietly to his directions, but he took her hand once, and felt her pulse, and then he kindly bade her take some food and wine before she went into her father's room, and as Roger came out that moment he repeated the charge to him.

"Come, Allie," said Roger, taking her arm. "Dr. Greenwood will stay with father until we come back." And he led her away.

Alison noticed with some surprise that there was a sort of meal laid in the dining room; she had forgotten the early supper had been placed there a couple of hours ago in preparation for her father. Roger carried some chicken and brought it to her.

"You must try and eat, Allie, and I will do the same," he said, with some attempt at cheerfulness. "We have a long night before us, and we must husband our strength."

Alison felt the force of his argument; nevertheless, the food remained on her plate.

"Roger, how had you looked?" she said, suddenly; "but I do not wonder at it. Oh! what a dreadful evening we have had; and I can not imagine how it happened."

"Dr. Cameron was there, and he told me," returned Roger, shading his face from the light, as though it hurt him. "It was not a collision; something must have given way—the coupling chain, they think—and they were going down a steep incline at express speed. Dr. Cameron says some of the carriages went over the embankment, and were completely wrecked; one or two were turned entirely over. He was in the same compartment with father and Mabel. They felt a jolting sensation, and the next moment they were thrown from their seats, the carriage side was completely smashed, and they were all flung in a heap. Dr. Cameron was on the top, and was happily unhurt, with the exception of a few bruises; father was underneath him; Mabel struggled up somehow unhurt, and came to father, and no one knew she was much hurt."

"Oh, Roger, how terrible!"

"Yes, it does not do to talk of it, and hardly to think of it. Now, Allie, if you have finished, we will go upstairs. By the way, where is Miss Leigh?"

"Oh, I ought to have gone to her," explained Alison. "How dreadful for her to lie there, and not to be able to help us! She has been suffering from one of her sick headaches, and, of course, all this will make it worse. Wait for me a moment, dear. I will just speak to her."

"Is that you, Alison?" asked the governess, in a feeble voice, as the girl came to her bedside. "I know all about it, dear, Eliza has told me. Poor children, poor children! and I can not help you."

"Roger is good and thoughtful; we shall manage nicely to-night, and Sarah will watch Mabel. You must not trouble, dear Miss Leigh; to-morrow you will be better and then we shall be sure of your help."

"You must not stay now. Thank you for coming, my dear, but you must go to your father." And Alison was thankful to be dismissed.

In another moment she was leaning over her father. He unclosed his eyes as he heard her light footsteps, and a faint smile came to his lips.

"How is your sister?" he whispered.

"Dear papa," she returned, tenderly, "how happy Mabel will be to know you asked after her! She is lying quite quietly, the sedative is lulling her, but she is not asleep."

"Poor child!" was all his reply, and then he closed his eyes again, but as Alison withdrew into the shadow of the curtain tears of thankfulness came to her eyes; there was no bitterness in her father's heart against poor Mabel. "As a father pitieth his children," the words came to her mind, and she thought of Heavenly Father who pities them."

CHAPTER XVI.

The dreary night watching was a new experience in Alison's life, for she had been too young at the time of her mother's last illness to share in the long and tedious hours; the silence and inaction made the nursing a dreary thing. Roger, faithful with his day's work, was sleeping heavily with his head against the wall. Alison pitied his weary position, and fetched a pillow from the other room and put it gently behind his head.

Once or twice she went across the passage to look at Missie. She was glad to find her sleeping. Sarah was at her post, sitting blot upright and nodding. Now and then her father spoke a few words; Alison was thankful that they had not informed him of their fears.

"You do not seem to know, papa," she returned, gently; "they think you have a great shock, and you are suffering from nervous exhaustion. They will tell better by and by."

"There seems something wrong with my limbs," he muttered uneasily; "you are sure you do not know what they think?"

"Quite sure, dear papa," she replied, so earnestly that he could not disbelieve her, "but I hope and trust, for her lips quivering a little, "that you may soon be better."

"You are a good girl, Alison; your mother always said so, and if I am spared—" He sighed heavily, and turned his face away; and Alison, remembering the doctor's injunction, dared not say any more, lest it should increase his agitation; she only took his hand and softly laid her cheek against it, as though she would show by this action a child's love and devotion. Her touch seemed to quiet him, and by and by he dozed a little.

Morning came at last, and Roger roused himself with difficulty.

Alison felt weak and jaded; the strain was beginning to tell even on her vigorous vitality. She was glad the night's inaction was over, but she felt too weary for the day's work. But Roger had not forgotten her; he came back presently with a refreshed look on his face, and told her that breakfast was all ready in the dressing room.

"A strong cup of coffee has made me a different man," he said, cheerfully; "you must try my recipe, Allie." And Alison found the benefit of his prescription.

Her hands were soon full of business. Dr. Greenwood came early, bringing the new nurse with him, and Alison had to make arrangements for the stranger's comfort. She seemed a pleasant, capable woman, with a neat figure, and a bright face that prepossessed Alison in her fa-

vor. She took possession at once of her patient, after a feeble protest on his part that he objected to nurses, but after the first five minutes he ceased to grumble. Dr. Greenwood soon convinced him that Roger was too busy; besides, the chief care of her sister must devolve on her.

Missie's sleep had not refreshed her as they hoped; the pain of her bruises was making her feverish. She could not turn in her bed without suffering, and her anxiety for her father added to her discomfort. Alison tried to console her, and Miss Leigh, who was sufficiently recovered to sit in her room, spoke reassuring words to her; but it was evident that Missie could take no comfort; only when Alison was alone with her, miserable, self-accusing words came to her lips.

"Indeed, dearest, there is no need for you to speak so," Alison said to her once, with a strong yearning to console her. "Dear papa asked after you the first moment he saw me. You should have heard how tenderly he said 'Poor child!'"

"That is because my arm is broken, and he knows I am suffering such pain. If any one hated me they would pity me now," returned Missie, in a stifled voice.

"No, you must not take it in that way," exclaimed Alison, quite shocked, as she smoothed Missie's fair hair. She looked so pale and pretty, and the blue eyes had such a pathetic look in them. Alison had parted the soft fringe, and the soft curly ends lay quite smooth and showed the broad white forehead. A different Mabel lay there, with the poor wounded arm folded on her breast, and all the little vanities laid aside. As Alison stood looking at her, Missie raised her uninjured arm with a sudden movement toward Alison, and in another moment the sisters were clasping each other close.

"Oh, my poor dear, my poor dear!" whispered Alison, in the softest, most pitying voice. Missie kissed her hastily, and then seemed as though she would push her away, only Alison held her still.

"No, I don't deserve it; please don't be so good to me. I have been altogether horrid ever since you came home."

"Never mind all that now, dear."

"Yes, but I must mind it," turning restlessly away, and then uttering a low groan. "Oh, this pain, Alison! Shall I ever be able to move again without it? I thought you would be in my way, and that made me cross. I was jealous of you, and I did not want the others to care for you. Roger was never fond of me as he was of you, and I wanted him to be fond of me. And oh! how horrid and small it all seems now!" finished poor Missie, reading her past conduct under a new light. In the dark hours when one's strength is low, conscience sometimes flings a vivid torch into the recesses of one's being, bringing hidden faults to light.

"Dear Mabel, we will forget all that now," returned Alison, gently; "we will try and love each other more."

"Oh, it is easy for you to love people," returned Missie, almost pathetically; "every one is so fond of you, and you are never cross and disagreeable as I am. Roger makes you his companion, and Roger is less rough when you are in the room, and now papa will love you best."

"Hush, dear, what nonsense!"

"It is not nonsense," she returned, in a despairing tone. "I have forfeited his love. He will never forgive me now. He told me that he hated deceit; that he should never be able to think the same of me. He said I should never see Eva again if he could help it. Oh, he was so angry, so unlike himself! I suppose my obstinacy vexed him, for I would not say I was sorry. He took hold of my arm and almost shook me to make me speak, but I think I was like that man who had a drunk spirit."

(To be continued.)

HER FACE WAS NOT FAIR.

But there was one to whom she would always be beautiful.

The blind boy raised a rapt face to the light.

"And my mother?" he said questioningly. "Tell me how she looks again. I shall soon be able to see, and I know I shall find one more beautiful than all the rest and cry: 'Mother, mother! Why do you not speak?'"

His sensitive face was turned respectfully toward his father. "You have always told me how lovely she is. She is little—not taller than my shoulder—I know that."

The old man laid his arm over the lad's shoulders.

"You must know now what your blindness would have kept you from knowing," he said. "Your mother is not fair and beautiful in face, but her soul is what God made for a mother. When you can see, look for the face which holds the greatest love. You will not be mistaken. It will be your mother's."

The great surgeon looked for a moment or two into the slightest eyes and then turned and laid his hand on the father's trembling arm.

"Only God can make him see, my friend," he said kindly. "Your boy was born blind, and human skill cannot help him."

The blind boy was the first to speak, and he laid his arm around the suddenly aged form of his father.

"Come," he said, "let us go back to mother. She will always be beautiful to me now," and they turned and gave place to the others.

The Natural Inference.

"Ma, didn't the heathens have a god for everything?"

"Yes, my child."

"Well, who was the god that ruled over life?"

"I don't remember, but I think it was the great god Pan,"—San Francisco Bulletin.

The Next Question.

The impudent thing wanted me to marry him."

"When is the wedding going to be?"—Nashville American.

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When J. M. Barrie, the author of "Peter Pan," addressed an audience of a thousand girls at South College during his first American visit of last year, a friend asked him how he had found the experience.

"Well," replied Mr. Barrie, "to tell you the truth, I'd much rather talk a thousand times to one girl than to talk one time to a thousand girls."

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Tommy Tucker—Cleopatra was the colored woman who used to do our washin', ma'am. Her other name was Jackson.

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"Yes," said the policeman; "the con man in this town are lovin' their grip. I can remember when they wouldn't sell nothin' smaller than the Masonic Temple to a yahoo."—Chicago Tribune.

No Use.

"Anything I can show you, sir?"

"Yes; I want to get some kind of a cure for my 3-year-old boy. Have you anything that's indestructible? Something he can't break the first time he plays with it?"

"I think so. We have some toy flatirons."

"Have they got handles on 'em?"

"Of course."

"Well, they won't last him five minutes. Show me something else."

Beating His Pardon.
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Who in handing out talk was no miser;
He got a straight tip
To button his lip,
And now the kniser is wiser.
—Chicago Tribune.

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"Panning out? No. Next thing it'll be 'It's Petering out.'"—Chicago Tribune.

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