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## Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

### CHAPTER XVII.

Dr. Greenwood had given Alison strict injunctions that she was to keep her sister as quiet as possible, but it seemed impossible to check the storm of excited talk. Mabel's only relief was to accuse herself, and put all her conduct in its blackest light. A weight of intolerable misery lay on her mind; she felt her own pains were richly deserved, but the thought that she had risked her father's life by her disobedience was more than she could bear. Every hour she questioned Alison about his state. Would he recover? Was he in any danger? What did the doctor fear? Alison at last called Roger to her aid.

"What shall we do?" she exclaimed, half crying. "Missie will not get any sleep to-night; she is working herself into a fever, and Dr. Greenwood does not wish to give her an opiate. It breaks my heart to hear her going on about papa. I think if she could only see him she would be more contented."

"I will come presently; but, Allice, I am so sorry you are so tired. Miss Hardwick is downstairs, and she says she must see you; she seems very much upset. Do you think you could speak to her for a moment?"

Alison made a gesture of repugnance. It was plain that she did not wish to see Miss Hardwick, but Roger was bent on carrying his point.

"I have to go to my father now," he said, quietly, "but in about a quarter of an hour I shall be ready to see Missie. I will wait for you here. Miss Hardwick will not detain you many minutes; go, dear Allice." And Alison reluctantly obeyed him.

Eva was pacing up and down the long drawing room, and came up to Alison quickly, holding out both her hands.

"Oh, Allice," she said, and the tears were running down her face unchecked. "I know you do not want to see me, but I begged so hard of Mr. Roger to send you. Of course, you hate the sight of me. You think I am the cause of this; but, indeed, indeed, I never knew Mr. Merle would be so angry!"

"You tempted Mabel to deceive and disobey her father," returned Alison, severely, for her heart was hard against the girl. "You knew that she disappointed of Captain Harper, and then you encouraged and planned this scheme. How could any father fall to be angry when his commands are so entirely set aside?"

"You must not speak against Anthony, Alison," returned Eva, in a subdued voice. "I am engaged to him; he is only my half-cousin. Mabel knew this and she thought it would not matter coming with us. Mamma would have told you, only I did not wish it to be made public. All this has quite spoiled my happiness. Poor, dear Mabel; if I could only see her, and help you to nurse her. But Mr. Roger says it is quite impossible." And she wiped away some fresh tears.

There was so much feeling in Eva's words and manner that Alison's coldness relaxed a little.

"You must not see her," she said, gravely; "I believe papa has forbidden that for the present, but I can give her your love, and tell her that you asked after her."

"Tell her I shall come every evening to inquire; tell her, too, that I shall not have a moment's peace, thinking that I am partly to blame for this. It was wrong of me, Alison; I see that now. I deserve to have something to bear as well as she, poor darling! You and Mr. Roger must not be too hard on me; for, indeed, I am as unhappy as possible; Anna will tell you so."

"I will try to forgive you," returned Alison, with a warm kiss, that evidently surprised and gratified her. "It does not make things better to be hard and bitter against people. We need not add to our own unhappiness in that way. Now I must go, please. Give my dear love to Anna. I know she will be fretting about us." And with a quick nod Alison ran upstairs.

will be easy about him, and will try to sleep."

"There is no sleep in my eyes," she returned, with a little of her old excitement. "Oh, Roger, you don't know what it is to be bruised and battered all over, and not to be able to turn without pain. If it were not for that I would go to him."

"Perhaps you will be able to go to-morrow," he returned, humoring her, for her flushed face and excited look made him anxious. "You will try to be patiently until the morning, Mabel dear, will you not? Alison is so worn out, she must sleep to-night, and, indeed, we are all overworked and harassed."

"Yes, and I am the cause," she returned, restlessly. "Oh, Roger, I will not ask you to forgive me; Alison has, but then she is different. But you, of course, you can never care for me again!"

"Indeed, you are wrong, my dear little sister," he said, soothingly; "I do care for you very much, all the more that you are so unhappy. When you get well again you shall see how proud I shall be of my two sisters, and what nice times we shall have."

"Oh, no," she returned, bursting into tears. "I never expected any one to be fond of me again. I have made your life miserable, Roger; I have tormented you just for love of teasing. If I were not so wicked I should like to die, and then perhaps I should be sorry for me. If anything happens to papa, I could not live. Oh, if I could only see him, and ask him to forgive me!"

"My dear, he has forgiven you over and over again," returned Roger, in rather a husky voice, for he found all this very trying; "that is the best of it. One need never be afraid of losing a father's love, it is not to be lost, Mabel; the thing is against nature. If I sinned against father ever so, I know he must forgive me, just because I am his son."

"I will arise and go to my father," murmured Alison, half to herself, but Mabel heard it.

"Yes, read that to me; I have been repeating fragments of the verses all day; that is, if you are not too tired, Alison; with renewed thoughtfulness."

"Roger will read it," returned Alison, feeling the task would be good for her brother, and distracting her own voice; and though Roger looked a little shy over it, he did not refuse.

Mabel lay with closed eyes and listened, and he harassed expression passed from her face.

"Thank you; that was beautiful," she said, when he had finished. "How nicely you read, Roger! Now I will try to be good and not wake Alison. Perhaps when the light is shaded, I may drop off to sleep."

Alison was in sore need of rest by this time; her head ached as well as her limbs; but she had one more duty to perform before she laid down in the little bed that had been prepared for her in Mabel's room, and that was to bid her father good-night.

He welcomed her with a smile. "I feel easier to-night," he said, and his voice was stronger. "My good nurse has made me very comfortable, and I dare say we shall both be able to sleep a little. How is Pussie?" the old name escaping from his unwarlike.

"I do not think she is any worse," she replied, cautiously; "but she still suffers a great deal, and she is making herself so unhappy about you."

"Tell her not to do that," he replied, with a little effort; "she need not take the blame of the accident on herself; she has thought to bear that out."

"May I give her your love, papa?"

"Oh, yes," he said, as though surprised by the question, for he knew nothing of the child's misery. "Tell her I hope she will have a good night." And then, as he seemed weary, she left him.

Mabel received the message in silence, and, as the light was dim, Alison could not see her face. She fancied that just as she was dropping off to sleep there was a sound as though some one was crying; but her senses were too drowsy to take in the fact that it might be Missie sobbing in the darkness. Her last recollection thought was about Aunt Diana. Roger had promised to write a few lines from the office, and she had wondered if he had done it.

"How shocked Aunt Di will be," she thought, "and how sorry for us all!" The half-finished sentence was completed in her dream, for she dreamed that Greenville was rowing them both among the water lilies, and Aunt Di was gathering roses and throwing them into her lap.

"Do not cry, child, it will all come right in time," Alison heard her say; "there is a silver lining behind every cloud, you may be sure of that." And then she woke with a start. Something, she did not know what, had disturbed her; she sat up and looked round in bewilderment. The moon was shining full into the room, and Mabel's bed was empty.

not stay in bed, I could not sleep until I had seen papa. Let me stay and look at him; I will be good and not wake him." But the nurse shook her head at this.

"You must not stay," she whispered, not daring to raise her voice; "your feet are bare, and you look as bad as possible. Come, my dear, let me carry you back to your room; it will scare your father to see you standing there."

"No, no," returned Mabel, shrinking still more; "I must stay with papa. Why does he look so pale, and lie so still? Is he dead? No one told me he was dead. Papa!" she cried out, for she was bewildered by the dim light and her own feverish fancies. "Speak to me only one word, just to tell me you are alive."

"Oh, hush!" exclaimed the nurse; but she was too late. Mr. Merle woke up; but in his weak condition his daughter's presence did not seem to startle him.

"My dear," he said, feebly; "they ought not to have allowed this. You will make yourself ill leaving your warm bed."

"But I could not sleep," she sobbed; "I could not rest. I thought they were hiding things from me. If you had died, and I had never told you I was sorry, I should have died, too. Oh, papa, it must have killed me!"

He smiled faintly, and gathered the hot little hand in his.

"You were sorry all the time, my pet, were you not?"

"Yes, I am sorry now," creeping still closer. "I could not ask God to forgive me until you had forgiven me. Oh, papa, why do you look so kindly at me, when you know it is all through my wickedness that you are lying here? Of course, no one can love me any more."

"Not love you, Pussie! Come, come my child, fathers are not like that. I forgive you freely; everything is right between us. But, my poor darling, you are ill and suffering, and if you care to please me let nurse carry you back to bed."

"Will you let me kiss you first?"

"His only answer was to stretch out his arms to her; but he wondered to see how slowly she came to him. How could he guess such movement was agony to the poor child? How she had ever managed to crawl from her bed and across the passage only she herself knew."

"I have only one arm to put around your neck," she whispered, as her long hair fell over his face. "Dear, dear papa, if I could only bear it all!" And as he felt her tears upon his cheek he understood how her young heart was wrung with remorse and sorrow, and holding her a moment tried to comfort her, and besought God to bless his pet.

Alison was still sitting up in afright, looking round the empty room, when Nurse Meyrick appeared, carrying Mabel in her arms.

"Oh, Mabel, where have you been? You have frightened me so!"

"Go to sleep, Alison," returned Mabel, in a happy voice. "I have only been to see papa, and he has forgiven me, and now I can rest."

"She will be quiet now," whispered the nurse. "I have covered her up warm, and she will rest until morning." And she was right. Though Mabel lay awake, feverish and full of pain, she gave no more trouble, and poor Alison was allowed to sleep undisturbed until morning.

For the next few days Mabel was very ill. Her agitation of mind brought on a slight feverish attack, and when this had yielded to the doctor's remedies her weakness was excessive. Her nerves had been jarred and unstrung by the accident; and the least noise, the slamming of a door, or even a louder voice than usual, made her change color, and burst into tears. It was impossible for her in her shattered state always to repress irritability. Again the old sharp tones and words recalled Mabel's faulty temper. But there was this improvement—she struggled bravely against her besetting sin, and would ask pardon quite humbly of Alison.

"I have been so cross to-day," she would say, with tears in her eyes; "I wish you would not be so sweet and patient with me."

"I will promise to scold when you are well enough," Alison would say, in her most cheerful manner, for she knew Mabel must not be encouraged to be morbid. "Just now, darling, I can only remember you are ill, and that your poor arm is giving you trouble. I know I should be cross if I had so much to bear."

But in spite of Alison's assumed cheerfulness she was growing pale and thin; her close confinement in Mabel's room sick her; no one but Alison soothed the sick girl's fancy—no one else seemed to understand her little ways. Miss Leigh's gentle mournfulness irritated her; she had never cared much for Anna, and she had lost all desire for Eva's companionship, and though her father had generously withdrawn his prohibition, Eva had only once been admitted to her room. The interview had been a little embarrassing. Eva had cried and begged Mabel to forgive her, and Mabel had been kind and magnanimous in her answer; but after the first few agitating minutes their talk had drifted into silence; Mabel was languid and out of spirits, and Eva did not possess the art of soothing—the bond of sympathy between them seemed broken. Both of them had yet to learn that similarity of tastes and the boisterous spirits of youth do not lay the foundation of a lasting friendship. While Alison and Anna seemed to cement their intimacy more every day, as the good qualities of each became more apparent, there were symptoms that Mabel and Eva would drift still further apart.

(To be continued.)

## 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.

Austria is making secret preparations for a war with Servia.

A Mexican at Guadalajara has just celebrated his 139th birthday.

Women suffragist leaders are preparing to again storm parliament.

Chicago business men have protested to congress against a duty on coffee.

State wide prohibition in South Carolina has been defeated by four votes.

A San Francisco woman has secured \$7,000 damages for seven hours' false imprisonment.

The Maya Indians, of Mexico, are causing trouble and troops have been ordered to the scene.

Rocks in the Santa Barbara channel which were formerly 40 feet above the water have sunk until they will prove a menace to navigation.

During the last half of 1908 the Denver & Rio Grande railroad earnings showed a decrease of \$500,000 as compared with the same period of 1907.

Farmers and others interested have started another suit in an effort to stop the smoke nuisance from Montana smelters, which is killing vegetation.

The fact that Roosevelt will spend 11 days in Italy has caused on his way to Africa has caused a stir in Rome, and preparations are being hurried for a reception.

The Mexican volcano of Colima is spreading devastation.

Buchanan has signed a treaty with Venezuela settling all disputes.

The Montana legislature will take up the Japanese exclusion question.

Cleveland shippers say competition between the Harriman lines is a farce.

The order of Elks has asked congress to protect Wyoming elk from starvation.

The Waters-Pierce Oil company will fight the Standard in the Missouri courts.

Harriman has started on a tour of the South and West to inspect his railroads.

Taft says the president and governors should work together for the good of the country.

A big reception is planned when the fleet arrives home from its voyage around the world.

Prominent Canadians also favor the exclusion of Japs from schools attended by white children.

A preacher in Wyoming stopped a train to get the crew to act as witnesses at a wedding.

Protracted drouth in parts of Texas have driven cattlemen to extremes to procure food for their stock.

Russia has violated the Portsmouth treaty and the United States and Great Britain may protest jointly.

Eastern wool buyers have formed a combine.

Several persons have been killed in Mexican riots against landlord rule.

A jury has been secured in the bribery case against Calhoun in San Francisco.

A tornado in Delaware and Pennsylvania killed two persons and destroyed many buildings.

California fruit raisers failed to get the increased rates on dried and canned fruit rescinded.

Taft's engineers say that a sea-level canal is out of the question, as the cost would be incalculable.

President Gompers, of the American Federation of Labor, says 2,000,000 men are now out of employment in the United States.

New Orleans is preparing a great welcome for the Taft party, the principal feature of which will be a typical Southern banquet prepared by Creole cooks.

A Chicago firm has been awarded a contract to supply the British army with corned beef for a period of three years. The first delivery, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 pounds, will be made next July.

As a result of a search he has been making in the Interior department, Representative Hawley has discovered that the Corvallis & Yaquina wagon road bill, recently introduced in the house, contains a joker which would operate to defraud the government out of several thousand acres of valuable land in Oregon.

## WORKS ON CABINET

Taft Says Most of His Advisers Have Been Tentatively Solicited.

Washington, Feb. 16.—As soon as President-elect Taft finds a suitable man for secretary of war, his cabinet will be complete; that is, tentatively complete. It will be subject to change any time before the 4th of March, if conditions arise which, in the opinion of Mr. Taft, justify modification.

But it can be said on the authority of one of Mr. Taft's closest advisers, that eight of the nine cabinet officers have been conditionally chosen, and seven out of the eight have signified their willingness to enter the cabinet if the formal tender is made.

It should also be said that, aside from the state and postoffice portfolios, none of the cabinet officers have as yet been finally and formally disposed of, and the incoming president can, without the slightest breach of good faith, make any changes in his present programme which to him seem proper. The selections so far are:

Secretary of State—Philander C. Knox, Pennsylvania.

Secretary of the Treasury—George M. Reynolds, Illinois, or some other Illinois man.

Attorney General—George W. Wick-ersham, New York.

Postmaster General—Frank H. Hitchcock, Massachusetts.

Secretary of the Navy—George von L. Meyer, Massachusetts.

Secretary of the Interior—Richard A. Ballinger, Washington.

Secretary of Agriculture—James Wilson, Iowa.

Secretary of Commerce and Labor—Charles Nagel, Missouri.

NIAGARA FALLS DRY.

Ice Piles Up on American Side and Two Men Cross on Rocks.

Niagara Falls, N. Y., Feb. 16.—Only a tiny rivulet, not deep or swift enough to carry a pulp log over the brink, is flowing over the American side of Niagara Falls. A strong northeast wind which has blown since Friday, has held back the water and allowed the ice to gain a foothold. Two employes of the American reservation walked from Prospect Point nearly to Bath Island this morning.

A great wall of ice runs from the head of Goat island to the American mainland, through which only tiny streams are able to trickle. This wall has even encroached on the Canadian channel, extending out some 200 feet beyond the Third Sister island and greatly diminishing the flow over the Horseshoe. Only the very apex of the Canadian falls is left, and that is robbed of half of its flow. The gorge below is choked and the rapids have lost their fury, while the whirlpool is barely in motion.

This is only the third time that this combination of wind and ice has thus affected the falls, since the white man came here. The other occasions were on March 29, 1848, and on March 22, 1903.

ITALY THANKS AMERICA.

Grateful for Aid Rendered to Earthquake Sufferers.

Baltimore, Feb. 16.—"My government has many things for which to thank the people of America since the earthquake in Southern Italy," said Baron des Planches, the Italian ambassador at Washington, in an interview today.

"Besides the great monetary assistance and the sympathy we have received, we are grateful for the scientific information which we have received and the valuable hints which have been given us by the United States geological survey. This information will be of more lasting benefit to Italy than even the great sums of money that have been sent to our people."

Messina was going to rebuild, he said, but profiting by the lessons of the San Francisco disaster, it would be done on different lines.

Wheat Men in Combine.

Hastings, Neb., Feb. 16.—Organization of the Winter Wheatgrowers' association of Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma was completed Saturday at the close of a three days' mass meeting of farmers of the three states. The purpose is to control the price of winter wheat. About 200 farmers signed a pledge agreeing not to sell their next year's crop for less than the price to be fixed at a delegate convention, except after 30 days' notice to the directors and failure to get the agreed price. A fund of \$500 was raised to push the work of organization.

Storms in Middle West.

Chicago, Feb. 16.—A heavy fall of sleet and snow, driven by a high wind, interfered with transportation and seriously interrupted wire communication over a large portion of the Lake Michigan district today. The storm was general through the central West, Northern Illinois, Northern Indiana, Missouri and Kansas had little communication with the outside world by wire tonight.

## DISASTER IN MEXICO

Films Theater Burns and Nearly 300 People Are Dead.

### CRUSHED AND ROASTED ALIVE

Panic Blocks Exits and Third of Audience Dies—Performance in Honor of Governor.

Mexico City, Feb. 16.—Between 250 and 300 people were burned to death and many others injured in a fire which destroyed the Flores theater in the city of Acapulco last night. The news of the disaster reached here this afternoon, telegraphic communication with Acapulco having been destroyed last night and today, owing to the fact that the telegraph office adjoining the theater was destroyed and all wires put out of commission.

The Flores theater was a wooden structure and last night more than 1,000 people crowded into it to witness a special performance given in honor of Governor Damian Flores, of the state of Guerrero. One of the numbers on the program consisted of a series of moving pictures. While the operator was exhibiting these, a film caught fire and the blaze was quickly communicated to some bunting which had been used for decorative purposes. In an incredibly short time the flames spread to all parts of the structure.

There were but three narrow exits and the panic stricken audience rushed to them, many persons failing to be crushed to death, their bodies choking the way to escape for others. The screams of those imprisoned were terrifying.

Owing to the rapidity with which the fire spread and its intense heat it was impossible to attempt rescue work, and those imprisoned were literally roasted alive, as the fire burned with little smoke and few were suffocated.

HURLS BOMB FROM TRAIN.

Black Hand Agents in Gotham Use Elevated Cars.

New York, Feb. 16.—The neighborhood of Second avenue and One Hundred and Sixth street, which is largely inhabited by Italians, was thrown into confusion late tonight by the explosion of a bomb dropped to the street from a passing Second avenue elevated train. The explosion wrecked the windows of a number of stores on Second avenue and caused slight injuries to passersby. This is the second time in less than three months that the neighborhood has been visited by bombthrowers. The same method of dropping the missile from a passing train was used.

The bomb is believed by the police to have been intended for Joseph Arana, whose apartments face along the elevated railroad structure and to whom a number of Black Hand letters have been sent recently.

PAY BIG FINE.

Missouri Courts Doubt Waters-Pierce Company Quitting Standard.

Jefferson City, Mo., Feb. 16.—Henry S. Priest, of St. Louis, and H. Clay Pierce, chairman of the board of the Waters-Pierce Oil company, today filed in the Supreme court of Missouri an acceptance of the terms imposed upon the company by the recent order of the court. The fine of \$50,000 was paid. The ouster decree provided that the company must show to the court that it had severed all connection with the Standard Oil company, and a statement to this effect may yet be required by the court. Judge Priest, however, said that he believed today's action covered the case so far as the Missouri corporation was concerned, and said he did not know of anything more that could be done.

German Immigration Increasing.

St. Paul, Minn., Feb. 16.—According to word received here, 45 families are scheduled to sail from Germany today to take up farms in Pine county, Minnesota. Their coming marks the beginning of a new immigration movement of German farmers into this state and results from the efforts of the Minnesota immigration bureau. The prospective settlers come from Galicia, where they have lived on small farms and have saved small sums, but have not enjoyed the political and religious freedom they desire.

Teton Tunnel is on Fire.

Great Falls, Mont., Feb. 16.—A fierce fire is raging in the Great Northern tunnel at Teton station, 50 miles east of here, and it will be completely burned out. A large force of men is at work in an effort to check the flames, but as there is no water available, they cannot accomplish much. It is expected that the road will be blocked several days.