

Aunt Diana

The Sunshine of the Family

CHAPTER XIV.

Missie's feelings were decidedly mixed when Roger related at the breakfast table the whole story of the previous night. Alison was a little surprised by the attention she received. Her pale cheeks were heavily suffused with a good deal of pink. Mr. Merle questioned her anxiously whether she had caught cold; Miss Leigh fairly overflowed with tender inquiries; Roger waited on her assiduously; and Rudel sat staring at her, to the obvious neglect of his breakfast. Missie shrugged her shoulders a little over the whole affair. Alison had done very little after all, but they were all making such a fuss over it, she was doubly vexed when Miss Hardwick came in full of sympathy for that dear, clever Alison. She had met Roger, and he had stopped and given her and Anna a full account. Missie had to listen to more eulogiums, though Alison modestly disclaimed all praise. Miss Hardwick quite frightened her when she assured her the whole thing would be soon all over the town.

"Very well," she sighed. But she lay awake a long time revolving what words she would use. Alison awoke with a strange oppression upon her—a sense of difficulty, that made the daylight seem less bright. She became nervously conscious that she might fail. What if her severity were of no avail, and Missie should persist in going? She was a little later than usual in going down. Roger had already had his breakfast and had gone to the mill, and the meal was half over before she suggested that Popple should knock at Mabel's door. "Oh, I forgot," returned Popple, in a stricken voice, laying down her slice of bread and jam. "Missie came into my room before I was dressed, and told me to tell you she would not want any breakfast—she was going to have it at Maplewood. She looked so smart, Alison, in her new blue dress. It was rather funny of her to put it on for breakfast." "Miss Leigh, will you come into the school room a moment, if you have finished?" said Alison, quietly; but the governess noticed that she looked rather pale, and rose at once, but she was even more shocked than Alison when she heard the whole story.

"My dear, your papa will never forgive us if we do not prevent it," she said, very solemnly. "You none of you know how particularly he is; and this will seem dreadful to him. You must go to Maplewood yourself, Alison, and speak to Mrs. Hardwick. She is the only one who can do anything. Anna can go in Mabel's place, but you must insist on bringing Mabel home. I will not answer for the consequences if this affair comes to your father's ears," continued the governess, who was in a fresh instance of Missie's self-will. Alison thought this such good advice that she put on her hat at once and walked over to Maplewood. It was not a pleasant errand, she felt, and she hardly knew what she would say to Mrs. Hardwick. She only knew she would refuse to return without Missie, even if she had to brave the obnoxious Captain Harper himself. But her face fell when she entered the morning room and found Mrs. Hardwick and Anna alone; the others had just driven from the door. Seeing that her visit was useless Alison returned home. Roger met her at the gate with the news that Mr. Merle had returned. "I have not seen him yet, Alice; I have only just come across from the mill," he continued. "Would you like me to tell him, dear, or do you think you can do it better?" "We will go together," returned Alison, unasily. "I am so afraid that he will put himself out to see that you will know what to say," And Roger acquiesced.

"No, no," and she gave a quick gulp, and the color came back to her lips. The sparrows were twittering sleepily in the eaves. "And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father," seemed to come into her mind, like the sudden flash of a sunbeam out of a passing cloud. He was in the line of hands she must remember that. As Roger went down to open the gates she compelled herself to return to the house. "Sarah, there has been an accident," she heard herself say, only her voice did not seem to belong to her. "Send Eliza to the school room, to keep Miss Popple out of the way, and you and Nancy be in readiness for what is wanted. Hot water—I suppose they will want that, and I don't know what besides." And here her voice suddenly failed, for wheels were evidently coming up the gravelled sweep. The next few minutes were simply horrible to Alison. The two doctors and Roger, and some man from the railway, were all helping in removing her father's inanimate figure from the vehicle. Alison recognized the family practitioner, Dr. Greenwood, but the other was a stranger. There was nothing to do; her father's room was in readiness, and Roger was there to show them the way. She could only lean against the wall as they passed with a feeling consciousness that her father's eyes were still closed, and that there was something terrible in the inert, heavy droop of the limbs. "Very gently," she heard Dr. Greenwood say. "Yes, I know the room; that is the door, Cameron." And then it closed after them, and she felt some one grip her arm.

"Help me up, Alison," said Missie, hoarsely. She had crept out of the doorway unaided, and now stood by Alison's side in the dark hall. Alison had almost forgotten her in that moment of agony; but when Roger had said surely she was not much hurt, yet there she was clinging to her sister with a white, stony face. "Lean on me, dear," exclaimed Alison, passing her arm tenderly round her; but to her alarm Missie uttered a sharp cry of pain.

"No, don't touch me, not that side; I will hold you myself. I want to be in my own room if I can only get there." And leaning heavily on Alison's shoulder, she tottered slowly up the staircase, her faintness and difficulty evidently increasing at every step, but her strong will supporting her until they reached the threshold, and then she suddenly tottered, and if Alison had not caught her in her arms, she would have fallen. Alison dared not call loudly for assistance, for she was close to her father's room, and she was young and strong, and she had just managed to drag Missie to a chair and summon one of the frightened servants, when Missie revived.

"I am so bruised all over," she said, with a sort of sob. "I did not want them to know; they had to look after papa; but I am afraid my arm is broken." (To be continued.)

NITROGLYCERIN CAN LEAK.

No Bowers Shot His Wagon as Well as the Oil Well. An explosion near Okemopolis the other day caused the residents to turn out to look for the remains of the oil-well shooter they supposed had been blown up by the nitro-glycerin he was handling, says a Franklin (Pa.) dispatch to the New York Sun. Investigation showed that William Bowers, a shooter from Romeville, had gone to shoot a well on the Trax lease with fifty quarts of nitro-glycerin and had discovered that one of the cans had sprung a leak and part of the contents had seeped into the bottom of his wagon.

After shooting the well Bowers removed his horses to safety and then attached a hose to the remaining can and blew a \$200 wagon to atoms. It was the only thing to do under the circumstances. Examined under a microscope, nitro-glycerin has the appearance of a mass of round globules, and these globules may be safely shaken in the can so long as one of them does not burst. When one does burst the entire load is sure to go off, taking shooter, wagon and all.

Leaking cans have probably been the cause of more nitro-glycerin explosions than any other thing, and the safer use every precaution to prevent leaking and jarring. The wagons are specially built for the trade. They are lined with cushions, in which each man sits singly, and the springs are made especially to take up the jar and concussion that must be met.

THE MAN OF FALLEN FORTUNES.

His Opinion of His Fellow Man as Deduced From Hard Experience. "Losing one's money," said the man of fallen fortunes, "is not without its compensating comforts; for instance, in the discovery of one's real friends."

"When I was rich I never knew for sure whether a man, being rich, was drawn to me because I was rich also or whether, being poor, he was drawn to me because he thought I could help him; but it was easy to tell after I had lost my money."

"The proudest gratification that I got then I found in the loyalty of my family. One and all, they stood by me with a gentle sympathy and unflinching devotion that has continued to the present moment and that I know will never fail—my strongest and more encouraging support."

"And then I began to make discoveries about my friends, to discover which were fair weather friends, which were friends only when I could help them, and which were friends through thick and thin; and I found friendliness to exist as a bed-rock enduring quality in rich and poor alike."

"There is this to be said about the rich man and his money: When a man has made money he hates to give it up. But I have known rich men who proved themselves stalwart staying friends indeed; who gave through the chances of the money ever coming back to them—if they thought of that at all—must have seemed very slim; men who gave with a prompt readiness that took all the sting out of the necessity of asking with a willingness that was itself most helpful and cheering."

"And then while I have had men draw me from their debts which I was able to pay off only very slowly I have had men to whom I owed big debts easy to me—and this out of sheer kindness and friendliness to me—to take away from me a bur-

den: "Forget it, old man; don't worry yourself over that. We'll just simply cross that off the books and call it square." And—and this is not the least of the things that have so-laced me—there are men, rich men and men not rich, with whom my relations in another day were friendly, who have treated me always ever since personally just the same, with absolutely unbroken kindness and consideration.

"So my misfortune has revealed to me friends whose real friendliness I might otherwise not have known; and the world seems kinder to me than it did before. We must all look out for ourselves; self-preservation is the first law of nature; but still the fact remains that the run of men are a pretty good lot, ready to help others."

WHAT AILS OUR FARMS?

Chiefly, Say the Experts, the Great of the Farmers. In the closing decade of the last century the land values of Ohio shrank \$60,000,000. In Minnesota, the great wheat State, the average yield an acre has dropped one bushel in the last five years. In Kansas the retrogression is even more marked.

The census report gives the average annual product an acre of all the farms in the United States as worth \$11.33. This figure, poor as it is, must owe a great deal to the newly opened territories, for the great agricultural States of Minnesota and Illinois fell considerably below it.

With the most fertile land in the world, says the Craftsman, we are producing much less than other people extract from lands of poorer quality and longer subjected to tillage. During the ten years ending with 1906 we raised thirteen and five-tenths bushels of wheat to the acre. In Austria and Hungary the average was seventeen bushels; in France it was nineteen and eight-tenths; in Germany, twenty-seven and six-tenths; and in the United Kingdom, thirty-two and two-tenths bushels. The figures for barley, oats and other crops show the same contrast.

As an illustration of what can be done here under intensive farming, it may be stated that in Yellowstone county, Montana the following yields an acre have been secured: Wheat, 53 bushels, oats, 163 bushels, and potatoes, 1,213 bushels, while 1,420 tons of alfalfa have been grown on 200 acres.

The impoverishment of our lands has been brought about in the main by single cropping and the neglect of fertilization. Almost everywhere in the country it has been the practice of our farmers to select the crop which promised the best immediate return and to plant their fields in it year after year without rest or change, and in spite of the protests of scientists and the demonstrations of agricultural colleges and experiment stations.

Whereas arable land should under proper treatment grow richer and more bountiful year by year, our agricultural acres are deteriorating so fast that the owner derives from them an annual income equal to no more than what would be a moderate rental if they were in ordinary condition and properly cultivated.

The Early Bird. A very steady and serious country gentleman had joined a newly established metropolitan club which offered the usual advantage of bedrooms for country members temporarily in town. When next the country gentleman came to town he put up for the night at the club, which had in the meantime become extremely fashionable and its hours correspondingly irregular. The visitor went to bed at an early hour when all was orderly and the other members decorous and quiet.

The next morning he came down for breakfast at his usual hour—eight o'clock—but was surprised to find the room in the middle of the dusting process and not a cloth on the tables. While he was gazing helplessly around, a sleepy-eyed waiter came up to him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said apologetically, "but no supper can be served after half past seven."—Harper's Weekly.

With the Minstrels.

"Mistah Walkah, wot am de diff'rance 'tween a traveler startin' to Tangier an' a plate of veal hash?" "I give that one up, George. What is the difference between a traveler starting for Tangier and a plate of veal hash?"

"De one am Morocco bound, an' de uthah am half calf." "Ladies and gentlemen, the celebrated vocalist, Prof. Rox de Bote, will now sing that beautiful and touching sentimental ballad, 'Take Your Face Away, Clarence; You Have Been Using a Safety Razor.'"—Chicago Tribune.

The Overestimated Irishman.

"Dose Irish makes me sick, always talking about vat great fighters dey are," said a Teutonic resident of Hoboken with great contempt.

"Why, at Minna's wedding der order night dot drunken Mike O'Hooligan butted in, and me and mein brother and mein cousin Fritz and mein friend, Louis Hartman—why, ve pretty near kicked him out of der house."—Everybody's.

Summer Conventions.

Summer conventions promote good fellowship, stimulate patriotism, expand the mental horizon, refine manners and serve the good end of making the nation better acquainted with itself. Viewed in their commercial aspect, they increase railway earnings, swell the volume of retail trade and diffuse money into new channels.—New York World.

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