

## Aunt Diana The Sunshine of the Family

### CHAPTER XX.—(Continued.)

The next few weeks passed happily for Aunt Diana; she had her dearest friend with her, and what more could she ask for?

Aunt Diana had settled down quite comfortably in her niche, as though she were one of the family. Without making herself unduly prominent, or in any way trenching on the young housekeeper's privilege, she yet contrived, with quiet tact, to lighten Alison's burden and procure the rest she so much needed.

Alison resumed her walks with Roger, while Aunt Diana amused Missie or read to Mr. Merle. During the day Alison was too much engaged to enjoy much of Aunt Diana's company, but Miss Carrington insisted that she should resume her painting lessons as soon as Missie was able to be with her father; and she also contrived that she and Alison should have one of their old refreshing talks as often as possible. Nothing rested Alison so much as intercourse with Miss Carrington's strong, vigorous mind.

Aunt Diana quickly found her way into Missie's wayward little heart, and she soon turned her influence to good account. One afternoon, when Alison had been spending some hours at Maplewood, she found on her return that Missie had gone back into her old room. All Alison's books and pictures had been moved; Aunt Diana's loving hands had evidently been employed in her service—no one else would have arranged the bowl of dark chrysanthemums on the little round table, and the pretty, fresh croquette on the couch and easy chair spoke of the same taste.

Alison's voice trembled as she thanked Missie.

"You ought not to have done it, Mabel; it is very good of you, but I would have waited until you were really well."

"I always meant to do it," returned Missie, solemnly. "I thought about it every night, and then I made up my mind to speak to Aunt Diana, and she said she would help me. Have you seen the beautiful illumination she has painted for you?"

Yes, Alison had seen it.

"Be not weary in well-doing"—that was the text that Miss Carrington had chosen—"for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Well, was not Alison reaping a rich harvest? Would she ever repent that she had come back to her own people for loving service and ministrations, when she had won Missie's affection, and found her way to her father's heart? That he loved and trusted her, that she was growing daily dearer to him, Alison, with all her humility, could not doubt; but Missie was still his petted darling—the very suffering she had caused him brought them nearer together.

It was a lovely sight, Miss Carrington thought, to see Missie sitting for hours patiently beside her father's couch reading or talking to him. But for her aunt's vigilance her health would have been permanently injured by her devotion to him; before she left she made Missie faithfully promise to take her daily walk and to resume her singing.

"You must leave something for Allie to do," she said, with a smile; "I can not sanction monopoly. We must watch against selfishness, dear child, even in our best actions: we must not be over-exacting in our affection—love sometimes compels one to efface one's self for love's sake."

Anna was a constant visitor to The Holms, during Miss Carrington's stay; they had taken a great fancy to each other. Anna told Alison privately that she thought Miss Carrington was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen.

"I don't know about her features," Alison had answered; "I don't think people consider her handsome, but it is a dear face, and that is all I care about."

"I am never tired of looking at her," returned Anna, with girlish enthusiasm; "one sees the thoughts coming before she speaks; her eyes talk to one, even when she is silent. There is something harmonious, too, in her voice, and even in her walk; she never jars on me; I am sure there are no discord in her nature."

Alison repeated this speech; she thought it so prettily worded, and so true. But Miss Carrington shook her head over it and let it pass; she knew much better how the chords of her being had once been jangled roughly out of tune. "No discords in her nature!" when every note had been dumb and tuneless until the Divine Hand had brought the jarred chords into harmony.

"When God's will is our will, then we shall know peace," she said to herself: "I have learned that now." But she spoke very kindly of Anna, and praised Alison's discernment in the choice of a friend. "She is a simple, lovable little soul," she said once; "it is quite a treat in this decided age to meet with a girl who distrusts her own judgment, and believes other people's experiences before her own."

"Anna is really very clever, Aunt Di."

"I am sure of that, my dear; and she shows her cleverness by not advertising her best wares. In talking to her one is not dropping over buckets into empty wells—there is good sense and a clear knowledge of facts at the bottom. Living in an uncongenial atmosphere has made her shy and awkward; she is like a poor little plant brought too suddenly into the light; in another year or so she will be less pallid and depressed; she will have learned to believe in herself a little."

"I am afraid you think her plain," observed Alison, anxiously; for her artistic taste made her lay rather an undue importance on beauty; "but really, when she talks and brightens up she is quite pretty."

"She has a lovely look sometimes. You are wrong, Allie; I do not think her plain. Missie's apple blossom face makes her a little colorless, but there is a delicate white rose bloom about her that is not without beauty. I like her face, my dear."

"Do you know, Aunt Di?"—hesitating a

little, as though she feared how her words might be received, for Miss Carrington had a horror of gossip—"I am half afraid that there is a new trouble in store for poor Anna."

"You mean Eva's marriage. I think that will be a good thing for her; there is no real sympathy between the sisters."

"No, I meant something quite different. I have been at Maplewood a great deal this week, and Dr. Forbes is always there. I am afraid, from what I see, that Anna will soon have a step-father, and, Aunt Di!"—in a voice of strong disgust—"Dr. Forbes is such an ugly, disagreeable man, I must say I do wonder at Mrs. Hardwick."

"Do you, Allie? Well, wonder sits on young people. I hate to see them taking everything as a matter of course. Your wonder will not hurt you, my dear."

"But if it should be true, 'Aunt Di' very solemnly.

"There are no fools like old fools, Allie, and there is certainly no accounting for tastes. Now, in my opinion, one husband is enough for any woman; but I do not pretend to regulate the world. Don't trouble your little head about it. I have a notion that step-father or no step-father, Anna will have her share of God's sunshine." And Miss Carrington smiled a queer little smile that mystified Alison, but she said no more.

"There were some things of which Miss Carrington never spoke to young people. She often said: 'A girl's mind ought to be as clear as crystal and hold no secrets—a crystal reflects everything. I wish older people would remember that.' And nothing displeased her more than the careless talk of some mothers. 'They don't seem to care what they put into a girl's mind,' she would say, indignantly, 'and then they wonder that it is choked up with rubbish.'"

### CHAPTER XXI.

Miss Carrington took a great deal of notice of Roger, and sought every opportunity to be with him; she had a great desire for his character, which, she said, was a most uncommon one.

"Roger differs from the young men of his generation," she said once to Alison; "he cares little for other people's opinions, unless he knows them to be in the right—mere criticism does not influence him in the least."

She took a great interest in his work, and made herself acquainted with the details of the business. Roger wondered a little at the quiet pertinacity with which she questioned him; she even followed him to the mill, and sat in the timber yard watching the men at work.

After a few conversations with Roger she spoke very seriously to her brother-in-law; she told him Roger was very good for such a responsibility. "He is a good lad, and would wear himself out in your service, Ainslie, and that without a word of complaint, but he looks too old and careworn for his age; you must remember he is only two-and-twenty yet—he must have his play time, like other lads."

"But how am I to help him, Diana?" asked Mr. Merle, frantically. "It is my fault that I am lying here like a log. The boy must work, or what would become of us all?"

"My dear Ainslie, you misunderstand me," she replied, gently. "Of course Roger must work, but surely he needs help for so large a business. Have you not put one in your last manager's place?"

"No, not yet," he returned, evidently struck by her practical good sense. "Roger never proposed it, and I was too indolent to think about it; but there is Murdoch, a Scotchman—he has been with us a long time, and he is an honest fellow. I dare say he would be glad of a rise in his salary; he has a large young family. I will ask Roger what he thinks of putting Murdoch in the manager's place. I think he would watch over our interests."

"I wish you would do so," she returned earnestly; "Roger is rather too hard worked for his age. He tells me he has no time for cricket or tennis, or for skating in winter. I—I have set my heart, Ainslie, on his bringing Alison for a long visit to Moss-side in the spring. You will be better by that time, and if you have a manager Roger will be able to enjoy a holiday; he tells me he has not left Chertester for two years."

"I am afraid I have been very remiss and neglected his interests," returned Mr. Merle, rather sadly. "You shall have your wish, Diana; I will manage to spare Roger for month."

"Come, now, that is generous of you," she replied, brightly; "I shall owe you a good turn for that. Supposing I promise to come and spend my Christmas and New Year with you; shall you care to take me to Moss-side in the spring?"

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"When we come it must be with a quiet conscience, and not with a burden of unfilled duties, dear Aunt Di," wrote Alison at last. "Missie can do without me, but Roger can not leave at present; there is such a pressure of business at the mill; and if you do not mind, I would rather wait for him."

Miss Carrington's reply was curt, and to the point: "Wait for Roger, by all means. I am not young enough to fear deferring an unexpected pleasure, or old enough to dread that 'by and by' may mean never. There is danger in hurrying on things too much; we need not crowd our lives. I will have neither of you until you can put your ears in your pockets, and take the full meaning of these sweet, sunshiny days."

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Aunt Diana's unselfishness and patience were rewarded when at last the desired letter from Alison arrived. Its bright sentences sounded to her like a ripple of soft laughter from youthful lips. "We are coming, coming, coming!" Could any repetition be sweetier than that?

It was one of the loveliest evenings in June when Alison and Roger arrived at the Riverston station, and stood for a moment looking round them in a pleased uncertainty whether any familiar face would greet them. Miss Carrington had hinted that she preferred receiving her guests in her own porch—she hated the bustle and noise of a railway station. But still Alison's dark eyes would scan the platform and the sunny station room, half in delight, half in admiration.

Of course, the true sheath, with its tight side, has not been worn. The tapering effect of the sheath is the thing.

Women tall and small have fallen victims of the craze. The natural lines of the human form must disappear under the lacing and the kneading of this iniquitous fashion. The woman who cannot compress her hips into smaller space than her shoulders will be looked upon as hopeless from the point of view of fashion, and this imposes torture upon the great majority.

What is to come out of it all? Petticoats are to be discarded, so that the mummy effect may not be destroyed. To move easily, in the new skirts is an impossibility, and the knock-kneed woman will find herself at an advantage over her straight-limbed sister. The ways of fashion surely are as strange and mysterious as woman herself.

### Combination Costume.

"You are punctual to a minute," he said joyously, "rather before your time, for I have only just driven up. Miss Carrington told me I might bring the dog cart, and your luggage might go up by the omnibus. How are you, Miss Alison? You do not seem at all fatigued by your long journey. I expected to find a pair of jaded travelers."

"It is Greville Moore," she said, hurriedly, and a bright look of pleasure crossed her face at the sight of her old friend, which was certainly reflected in the young man's countenance as he came forward and greeted them.

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"I believe I should not have known you," replied Greville, with a quick, scrutinizing glance. "You don't look first-rate—does he, Miss Alison? He has an overworked appearance. We must give him plenty of tennis and boating, and make him look younger."

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," laughed Roger. "Two of three weeks of idleness and fresh air will make a different fellow of me. I mean to forget that there are such things as sawmills in existence."

"Come, that is sensible," returned Greville, heartily. "Miss Alison, will you take the front seat? Merle, the groom is going to look after the luggage, so you need not trouble your head about it."

And springing lightly to his place, he touched the mare, and in a moment they were driving rapidly down the shady road.

(To be continued.)

### Fair Lesson in Spelling.

Students in a London school were recently asked to write this from dictation: "A glutinous sibyl with her glutinous head complacently seized a seive, a phthisical rheumonum, a noticeable supercilious irascible and cynical seaman, an embarrassed and harassed chrysalis, a shrieking sheik, a complaisant proselyte and an anonymous chrysotile." These all suddenly disappeared down her receptive esophagus. She simply said: "Pugh! not saccharine!"

"She then transferred a billion of billions, mosquitoes, an unusable bouquet of fuchsias, lilies, dahlias, hyacinths and phlox, a liquefied odellium, an indelible defamatory inflammatory synchronism and a debatable syllogism to the same capacious receptacle.

"Peaceably surrendering her daughter to the ecstatic aeronaut, she descended with her parachute—a synonym for barouche—and grievously terrified the stolid, squaid yeanling who already tormented by the heat, 101 Fahrnheit."

"You must not look so pale over it, Allie," Miss Carrington said to her anxiously; "you know if I had the power I would willingly take you back with me."

"Yes, but I could not leave you lying there. There can be no question now about my duty; it is a comfort to know

that there is a little longer; they could not spare you to me yet. Do you know, I sometimes doubt whether the old days will ever come back."

"Oh, Aunt Di! Do you mean I shall be never able to live with you again?" asked Alison, in an alarmed voice.

Miss Carrington looked at her in a strangely moved way.

"I do not think you will live at The Holms always; Missie will replace you by and by. I am quite sure we shall be together, even if it be not in the old way. Don't look so perplexed, Allie, darling; in this life, with its manifold changes and chances, things are seldom quite the same."

"You and I will never be different—I am convinced of that," exclaimed Alison, not in the least understanding the drift of Aunt Diana's strange speech. "Oh, Aunt Di, how delicious the spring will be! To think that we shall be rowing on the river again to Long Island, to hunt for forget-me-nots, and that we shall hear the cuckoo in Aspy Woods, and I shall be sitting in the studio watching

you painting, and Roger will be with us."

## FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN

Woman's Servility to Fashion.

There is nothing more abject in the social state than the servility of women to the dictates of fashion, declares a New York writer. Nothing more in artistic or barren of all harmony or beauty could be devised than the feminine figure which prevails at present just because it is "fashionable." Of course, in this respect fat, even mildly plump, women are left out of the reckoning, though they are struggling as best they can, to compress themselves into the shape of an Egyptian mummy.

To be in line with fashion now every woman must find her greatest width at the shoulders. From that point she must taper to her heels, and she must be prepared to knock her knees together when she walks. It is a fashion that is preposterous in every way, and it is not to the credit of the great army of women that its introduction was brought about by three dressmakers' models.