

The Joy of Living

By Sidney Gowing

CHAPTER XVII

LADY DIANA

SYNOPSIS—Distilling the prospect of a month's visit to her am-tertore aunt, Lady Erythea Lambé, at Jervaulx abbey, and her cousin, Alexander Lambé, Almee, vivacious daughter of the Very Reverend Viscount Scroope, meets a young man who laughingly introduces himself as "Billy," American. The two ride on his motorcycle, the "Flying Sphinx," and part. With Georgina Berners, her cousin, Almee sets out for Jervaulx. She forces Georgina to impersonate her at Jervaulx, and she goes on a holiday. Almee again meets Billy. He tells her his name is Spencer, and she gives her as Amy Snooks, at present "out of a job." Billy offers to take her into partnership in selling the sphinx. In a spirit of madcap adventure, she accepts. The two proceed to the town of Stan-hoe, taking separate lodgings in Ivy cottage. While Almee is secretly visiting Georgina at Jervaulx, the place is burglarized, and the famous Lambé emeralds are stolen. Almee escapes. Police de- scribe the thieves as "Jack the Climber" and "Calamity Kate," who travel on a motorcycle. Billy, who has shadowed Almee to Jervaulx, follows the thieves. He is knocked out, but emerges from the fight with the Lambé emeralds. He meets Almee, with the police in pursuit. In a secure hiding place, a cave among the crag pits, Almee tells him the whole story. He urges her that she make a frank confes- sion to her father, but on reflection both realize Almee's good name has been compromised. As- suring Almee he has a plan to save her, Billy leaves her in the cave and, proceeding to Jervaulx, re- stores the emeralds to the astonish- ed Lady Erythea. Billy tells a story that satisfies the police, re- fuses a reward and accepts a chauffeur's job from Lady Erythea. Almee gets the place of parlor maid at Jervaulx. Alexander thinks she recognizes Almee as "Calamity Kate." Georgina divulges Almee's identity. Hearing her story, Alex- ander consents to keep the secret. Alexander finds himself very much in love with Georgina.

CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"What was that? A dog?" he said confusedly.

Georgina, pink to the ears, had risen to her feet; her eyes shone somewhat violently.

"It sounded to me more like a cat!" she said in acid tones, and walked away down the path.

CHAPTER XVII

Complications.

"Either you are working too hard, Alexander," said Lady Erythea, in- specting her nephew through her lorgnette, as they rose from the luncheon table. "or the burglary has been a greater shock to your nerves than I should have suspected. I do not like to see you wearing that pallid and constrained expression. Your sister will be quite concerned about you. She arrives, you remember, by the evening train."

"Diana!" said Mr. Lambé. "I had quite forgotten that she was due here." Georgina started slightly, and looked perturbed.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Cold Lambé!"

"She is coming," said Lady Erythea, "to investigate the Jervaulx ghost. Certainly, she might have done it before. But I believe she has only recently become a member of the Psychical Research society. She is quite enthusiastic about it—so far as Diana can be enthusiastic about anything. Indeed, her letter is so technical as to be unintelligible to me."

"I did not know there was a ghost here," said Georgina, wide-eyed.

"I should not like to say that there is. But it is a tradition in the family, and has been well vouchered for. I have never seen it. Diana seems to imply," added Lady Erythea a little acidly, "that only those who are advanced, and in tune with the infinite, see such things. If she thinks she is more spiritual than I, she is welcome to try. She will discover nothing whatever." Lady Erythea turned to her nephew. "Bertrand de Jussac is coming also."

"De Jussac?" cried Alexander, start- ing at her.

"Yes. You know him, I think."

"I have met him, of course," said Mr. Lambé dryly. "I should have thought this was the last house that so frivolous a person would wish to visit. Why is he coming? Surely he is not interested in the ghost?"

"In the ghost—no," said Lady Ery- thea, with a faint yet serene smile, "but possibly his interest may arise. I approve him. A young man of excel- lent standing and irreproachable de- scent."

"Descent is the word," said Mr. Lambé rather curtly, and left the room.

"How long is—Diana going to stay here?" Georgina asked anxiously.

"Two days—but it is possible she may be persuaded to prolong her visit," said her ladyship placidly.

"What is the Vicomte de Jussac like?"

"D'Artagnan—in the flesh. With a touch, perhaps, of Porthos. The type which it is a good woman's mission to reform. But this is outside your province, Almee," she said abruptly, and laid a hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Go, my dear child, and get your cousin away from his books. Take him for a drive and some fresh air."

Georgina left the room obediently. But instead of seeking Alexander, she hunted, with an agitated face, for Almee.

"Hullo! What's the trouble now?" exclaimed Almee. "I say, Georgie, dear, I'm beastly sorry about being in the arbor. I couldn't help—"

"Oh, never mind that now!" broke in Georgina distractedly. "A much worse thing's happened. I know how it would be. Lady Diana Lambé is coming; she'll be here in an hour or two."

Rapidly she repeated the news concern- ing the two expected guests. Almee received it with consternation.

"Cold Lambé!" she exclaimed. "Coming here? As if I hadn't enough to bear without that! It's the worst news yet."

"Wh-what did you call her?"

"It's what everybody calls her in London—Cold Lambé. It fits her like a glove. A beautiful, frigid beast!"

"Almee! She knows you, doesn't she?"

"Of course. She lives in town. She's the only one of the Lambés I do know. And Diana hates me, and— well, I've never pretended to like her, either. She's perfectly pitiless; she'll give me away like a shot, and flatten me out. She'll be all over it!"

"Let us hope," said Georgina breath- lessly, "that Monsieur de Jussac will—er—distract her attention; keep her occupied. Lady Erythea says—"

Almee sat on the bed and exploded with laughter.

"That aunt of mine is incorrigible!" she gasped. "I tell you it's perfect rot. You might as well try to melt an iceberg fresh from the Pole. This French vicomte won't stand the slight- est chance."

"Do you know him, too?"

"I've heard of him. They say he's rather a—a rip. I expect that means he's a good sort. But Diana—heaven preserve us! Well, she probably won't know me in this rig, but she'll know you're the wrong horse. And then zizz! boom!—up we all go in the air! You and Billy, and me—and Alexander!"

Georgina sat down and pressed her hand to her forehead.

"Almee," she said faintly, "the bur- glary, and all the rest of it, has upset me. I don't feel well. I—I have head- ache, and I can't come down to dinner. I shall go to bed."

"What a trump you are!" said Al- mee, kissing her with intense affec- tion. "It's the very thing. I'm so

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

Copyright 1922 by Sidney Gowing

sorry, Georgie. It'll be beastly dull for you in bed, dear."

"I shall like a little dullness," said Georgina pathetically, as she left the room. "It will be restful. Goodby, dear. You will have to keep out of Diana's way as best you can."

"I'll take jolly good care I do," mur- mured Almee fervently, as she put her cap straight. "Even Billy can't help this time!"

CHAPTER XVIII

"Cold Lambé!"

Lady Diana might have been the original of that tedious young woman who was described by the poet as "divinely tall and most divinely fair." She was without doubt strikingly beautiful, a type of the large and very pale blonde. But an atmosphere of frigidity surrounded her, which many people found repellent.

"My dear aunt," she said calmly, entering the drawing room and kiss- ing Lady Erythea, "so good of you to have me for this flying visit. Alex- ander, how are you?" She touched her brother's cheek with her lips.

"You will have a clear field for your investigations, my dear," said Lady Erythea, "and I hope the advances you have made in psychic science will—ah—bring you to terms with the ghost. But I doubt it. By the way, your cousin Almee is here, as I told you. But she is unwell and is keep- ing her room. I am rather anxious about her. Incidentally, we shall have another guest; I expect Monsieur de Jussac today."

Alexander left the room.

"Monsieur de Jussac?" exclaimed Diana. She paused. Lady Erythea watched her somewhat keenly. "What brings him here?" said Diana.

"He is very anxious," said Lady Ery- thea glibly, "to examine the Lambé collection of armor. We have a suit of mail which is believed to have been captured at Crécy; there is a tradition that it belonged to one of the De Jus- sac family."

Lady Diana looked incredulous.

"And I understand he is interested in psychic matters, and anxious to im- prove his knowledge."

"That is something in his favor," said Diana with suspicion.

"I expect that is his car," said Lady Erythea.

A rakish automobile of semi-racing type was observed sweeping along the park drive. The Vicomte de Jussac had motored direct from town.

A minute later he presented himself. Bertrand de Jussac was tall, and for his age, rather full-bodied. His com- plexion was healthily ruddy, he had a little black mustache and a jolly, roving dark eye. In spite of his very material appearance, he had undoubt- edly the bell air. He raised Lady Ery- thea's skinny fingers to his lips.

"Enchanted, dear lady, to pay hom- age to you sur vos terres. How very amiable of you to invite me!"

Lady Erythea bestowed on him the smile she reserved for elder sons. "Charm'd to have you. You know my niece, surely?"

Bertrand's little start of surprise was admirably done. He bent low over Diana's hand, but refrained from kissing it.

"But this is delightful!" exclaimed Bertrand. "You told me in town, Lady

armor than I do. Why not show it to Monsieur de Jussac, so that he may commence his studies. You will find most of it in the hall."

"I think Monsieur de Jussac had better pursue his own investigations, for I shall be fully occupied with mine," said Diana, "and for the present I will retire to my room, if you will excuse me, Aunt."

She glided majestically through the doorway.

The Vicomte's eyes followed Diana's departure.

"Adorable blonde!" he mused. "The invincible phlegme britanique. But it is the icy, inaccessible peak that spurs the courage of the mountaineer!"

He sat down and made himself particularly pleasant to Lady Erythea.

When the party of four assembled for dinner, Lady Erythea was amiable and resplendent in purple, Diana frigid and ethereal in pale yellow, while Alexander at first wore the air of the Jackdaw of Rheims molting under the abbot's curse. But Ber-trand de Jussac, looking like a re- vived d'Artagnan in evening dress, contrived to chase heaviness away.

His merry, infectious laugh and quick sallies uplifted the spirits of the others. He made a deeper im- pression than ever on Diana Lambé, and with the usual perversity that seized her when in mixed company, she felt it due to herself to become the more openly hostile.

"I do not understand how you can defend the spirit of the age," she said coldly, in answer to a sally that made even Alexander smile. "The days of chivalry are dead. What romance can one attach to the modern young man? But in the days of heraldry, when men were splendid in helm and gor- get and camail—ah, then," she ex- claimed, with a rare touch of enthu- siasm, "romance flourished indeed—"

"Talking of mail," said Lady Ery- thea blandly, "the ghost always ap- pears in a complete suit of it, though his coming is noiseless as a breath of mist. I regret to tell you, Vicomte, that he came to a bad end through a romantic passion."

"Why regret?" protested Bertrand. "I will wager 'twas worth it."

"Because he was reputed—or disre- puted—to be an ancestor of yours; a De Jussac taken as hostage by Sir Piers Lambé—after a most gallant resistance," said Lady Erythea smiling. "While here he engaged the affections of a daughter of the house, and being discovered, was permitted to don his armor and debate the matter with Sir Piers. His end was—tragic."

"No end can be wholly tragic, if reached by the path of a great pas- sion. To every rose its thorn. I ap- plaud him!" Bertrand raised his glass. "To you, nameless ancestor!"

He replaced the glass appreciatively, and Mr. Tarbeaux retitled it. "Touch- ing this ancestor, Lady Diana—"

But his hostess had given the sig- nal, the ladies rose, and the two men were left alone—a custom that still lingered at Jervaulx. De Jussac did not find Mr. Lambé a very exhal- rating companion, but Alexander, though drinking only water, kept him at the table an unconscious time. When eventually they reached the drawing room Alexander departed at once to his library, and Bertrand found that Diana had retired.

"I must apologize for my niece, Vi- comte, but she has gone to her room; to achieve the proper psychic attitude, or whatever she calls it, for her in- quiries as to this absurd ghost," said Lady Erythea. "She can, of course, do nothing tonight. And as it is late, and you will not wish to sit up talk- ing to an old woman—"

"Most spirituelle of hostesses," pro- tested the Vicomte, "I should like to sit and talk to you all night, if you will allow me—"

Diana put her head inside the door. "I told you, Aunt," she said, "that my stupid maid lost herself at the terminus, and I cannot retire unat- tended. May I have yours?"

"My own incumbrance has been away for two days," said her aunt, "but we have a parlor maid who really attends to one's hair very soothingly; she did mine last night." Lady Ery- thea pressed the bell.

The butler appeared. "Tarbeaux, you will tell Snooks to attend Lady Diana in her room."

"Very good, m' lady."

Mr. Tarbeaux found Almee on her way upstairs to bed, and gave her the order. Almee was astonished, and secretly panic-stricken.

"This has absolutely finished it!" she reflected. "I might as well bolt at once." Suddenly she came to a resolution. "But—I'd better go. I shall run against her sooner or later. And anyhow she'll be alone. Di's such a fool she may not know me."

Almee reached the bedchamber, where Lady Diana had just arrived. She scarcely glanced at the parlor maid, and donning a light wrap, seated herself before the mirror.

"Take down my hair," she said curily, "and if your fingers are cold, warm them first at the fire. I abhor being touched by cold fingers."

Almee's fingers itched to warm themselves by a totally different method. But she held them to the fire, and then set about her task. She had hardly commenced when Diana's pale blue eyes, catching sight of her

retired. Almee made her way to Georgina's bedroom door, and rapped stealthily for some time, for the door was locked. It seemed impossible to arouse Georgina, and after a lengthy effort Almee desisted. Lady Erythea's room was next door, and even the deaf hear when they are not wanted to.

Finally, Almee crept down into the hall, where the suits of armor loomed grimly in the half-light, a silent, threatening host. It was impossible to get out of the house. All conceiv- able outlets were secured, since the burglary. Almee passed through the paneled dining hall. The darkness got on her nerves. She switched on a single electric light, and looked round her hopelessly.

"Two or three more days, and I believe Billy would have pulled me through," she said dully. "I know her world. Now, it's all up. I'm done. And I can't get to Billy."

Almee dropped into an armchair, buried her face in her hands, and be- gan to cry. She cried like a child that has hurt itself.

A large figure stole into the room with a remarkably noiseless step. It was the Vicomte de Jussac. He start- ed as he caught sight of the forlorn figure in the chair, and stared in sur- prise. The spectacle of a damsel in distress at once roused generous sen- timents in the beau sabreur.

He crossed the room and seated himself on the arm of the chair.

"Away, dull care," murmured Ber-trand. "Such eyes as those—I cannot see them but I am sure they are adorable—were never made for weep- ing. Tell me your sorrow, ma pe- tite," he said gently; "it shall be swept away!"

"I'm in awful trouble!" sobbed Almee.

"Alas! But let me help you. Here am I, a big, gross fellow, but very capable, sent by the gods to aid you. It is what I am for!"

Almee dropped her hands and stared at him, startled.

"Are you Monsieur de Jussac?" she stammered.

"Infinitely at your service, ma- demoiselle."

Almee's eyes searched his face. It was rather closer to hers than ap- peared necessary, but it was undoubt- edly sympathetic.

"Tell me!" he murmured.

Almee hesitated.

"Well, I will tell you. I've got to tell somebody, or I shall go mad!" said Almee with a rush. "Anyway they'll know it tomorrow. I'm not the parlor maid; I'm Almee Scroope—Lady Erythea's niece."

"Hein!" exclaimed the Vicomte. He rose to his feet, staring at her, and twisted his moustache—a habit in mo- ments of bewilderment.

Almee plunged into her tale breath- lessly. She made it brief; it was also very jumbled. But the thread man- aged to unravel itself. Before she finished, Bertrand turned away. His shoulders quivered and shook, the back of his neck was crimson.

"You're laughing!" cried Almee ac- cusingly.

"But no!" gasped the Vicomte, choking. "It is grief. Grief and sym- pathy—for you—mademoiselle."

"You are laughing!" said Almee stepping in front of him. "Go on then—laugh! If you can laugh at that, you're—you're all right! Billy says— She checked herself, and suddenly began to laugh, too; a very rainbow of laughter and tears. "But what's to be done? It's the finish!"

Bertrand turned and caught her by the hands.

"We shall find a way!" he cried. "Courage! Bah! but that is an im- becile remark. If you had not courage you would not be here. Who should betray you?"

"Diana." Almee told him of the en- counter in the bedroom.

"It cannot be! She has a heart. Under that lily exquisite exterior, a warm heart beats. It must be softened."

"A heart? Di? She's a—" Almee stopped just in time. "I'm afraid it's quite hopeless. I only told you be- cause I was in despair."

"A De Jussac never despairs! Es- pecially when there is a charming little lady to be rescued from the Philistines. The difficulty must be overcome at any cost. Ah!" he ex- claimed, coming near to her. "I be- lieve I have it! Listen—"

"Oh!" said Almee with a gasp. She had become conscious that they were not alone.

Alexander stood before them, in a black dressing gown, a candle in his hand. He only needed bell and book to be the very image of an abbot in the act of pronouncing excommunication. De Jussac started violently, and frowned. Alexander took no notice of him; his eyes were fixed on Almee.

exploded with laughter.

Diana, that you were interested in the ghost. Happy ghost! I, too, am de- veloping rapidly an interest in the psychic. I hope—"

"I thought it was armor that at- tracted you here," said Diana frig- idly.

"Hélas, mademoiselle," said Ber-trand, allowing his dark eyes to meet her pale blue ones, "there are weap- ons against which armor is of no avail."

"With your bent for ancient his- tory, Diana," interrupted her aunt, "you should know more of the Lambé

in the mirror, opened in a stare of amazement.

"Who did they say you were?" she said in a grating voice.

"Snooks, m' lady," said Almee, dropping a curtsey.

"Snooks! You are Almee Scroope! Don't deny it!" said Diana fiercely. "Don't attempt to deceive me. I should know you in a thousand. What is the meaning of this—masquerade?" Almee surrendered.

"Yes, Di—it's me! For goodness' sake don't shout." For once Almee lost her head. "Aunt doesn't know I'm here, you see. Don't give me away. I'll try and explain—"

"I don't want your explanation. You will explain to Aunt!" rasped Diana. "I can see by your manner there is something more in this than mere folly! I've had my suspicions, from what Aunt has said—"

"Di," exclaimed Almee imploringly, "there's no use trying to hide it now—"

CHAPTER XIX

Arms and the Man.

The housekeeper looked bewildered. Diana's wrath agitated her. Almee was standing quietly in the middle of the room, her hands behind her.

"I dare not disturb her ladyship now that she has retired for the night and her room is locked," said the housekeeper; "my orders are strict. May I suggest that you see her your- self, my lady? If there is anything else I can do—"

Diana paused, and appeared to re- flect.

"No," she said curtly. "You can go." When the housekeeper had left the room, Diana turned to Almee.

"You will come with me now—to Aunt!"

"I'll do nothing of the sort," retorted Almee defiantly. "Go and speak to her yourself, if you want to. Rouse her out of bed now, and tell her all you know. I shall get it hot; I'm used to that—but there's one consolation, she'll jolly well flatten you out, too!"

Again Diana hesitated. She saw herself roaring accusations into the ear-trumpet of an infuriated aunt newly aroused from slumber.

"I am tired, and I do not wish for a scene at this time of night," she said, fixing Almee with a malignant eye. "On consideration, I shall leave this affair till the morning. And now—you may go."

She stood away from the door.

"Won't you be decent about it, Di?" said Almee imploringly. "I don't care for myself, but it's going to be awful for Dad. I—I—if you'd only let me tell you—"

"I have no desire to listen to a dis- credible story, at which, no doubt, I could give a very good guess. As for your father, he must face the con- sequences of having allowed you to behave as you do. I have no more to say," replied Diana with cold dis- dain.

Almee's eyes blazed at her.

"You utter beast, Di!" she said, and lunged out of the room.

For half an hour Almee mused upon the situation, and mentally pro- nounced it hopeless. The dreary bed- room became impossible to her. She opened the door; the house was in darkness; everyone, apparently, had

"Explosion With Laughter."

Almee sat on the bed and exploded with laughter.

"That aunt of mine is incorrigible!" she gasped. "I tell you it's perfect rot. You might as well try to melt an iceberg fresh from the Pole. This French vicomte won't stand the slight- est chance."

"Do you know him, too?"

"I've heard of him. They say he's rather a—a rip. I expect that means he's a good sort. But Diana—heaven preserve us! Well, she probably won't know me in this rig, but she'll know you're the wrong horse. And then zizz! boom!—up we all go in the air! You and Billy, and me—and Alexander!"

Georgina sat down and pressed her hand to her forehead.

"Almee," she said faintly, "the bur- glary, and all the rest of it, has upset me. I don't feel well. I—I have head- ache, and I can't come down to dinner. I shall go to bed."

"What a trump you are!" said Al- mee, kissing her with intense affec- tion. "It's the very thing. I'm so

Who Did They Say You Were?"

I'm in trouble—real trouble. If you give me away now you'll get me into a fearful row with Dad. You don't want to do that, do you? It—it will simply finish him!"

"Very likely! It is high time he knew the truth about you. I know a little more of your character than he does, Almee. His absurd leniency to you up till now—"

She moved swiftly between Almee and the door, and pressed the bell.

"Let me out!" said Almee, rather white and her eyes gleaming. "Get away from that door!" She strode toward Diana.

"I shall not!"

There was a knock at the door. Diana opened it, and the housekeeper appeared.

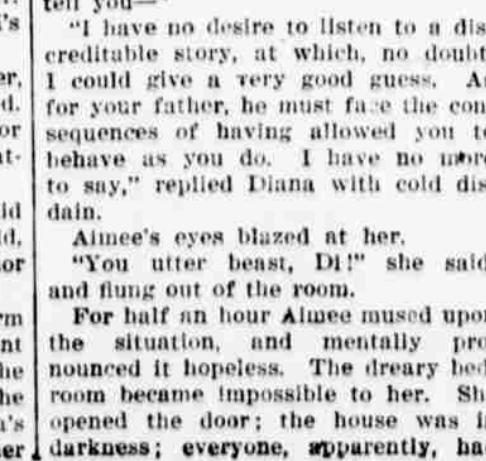
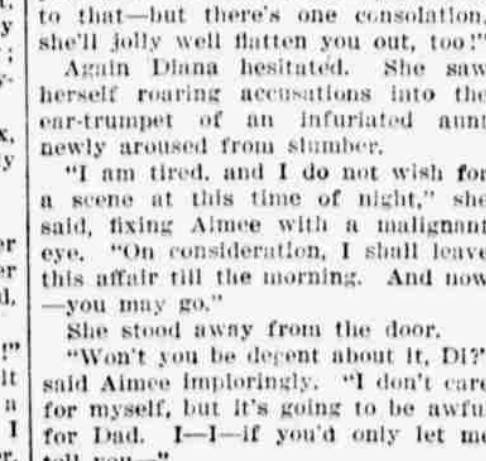
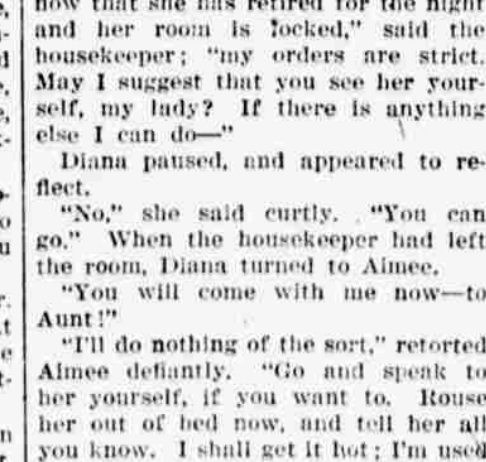
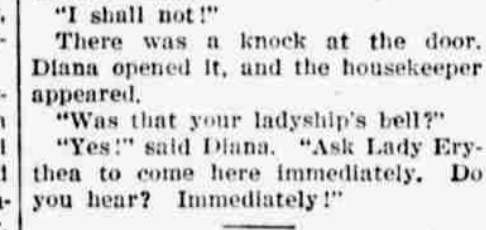
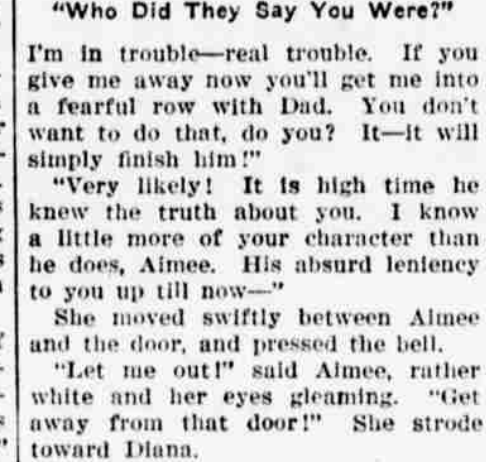
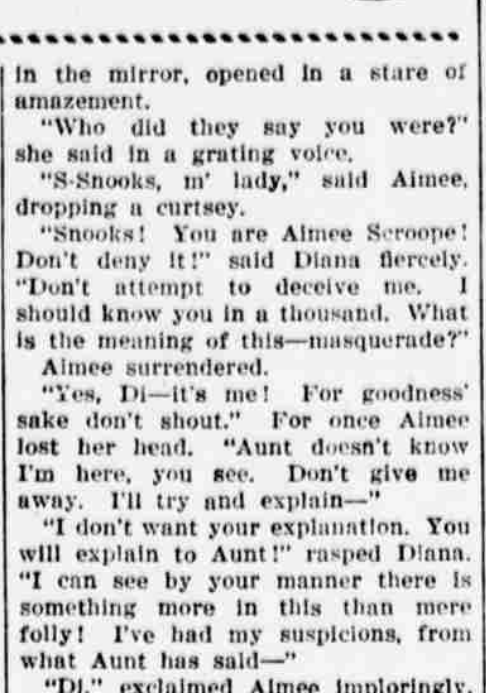
"Was that your ladyship's bell?"

"Yes!" said Diana. "Ask Lady Ery- thea to come here immediately. Do you hear? Immediately!"

An Ideal Revenge.

It was the morning after the heavy snow, and he drove into a downtown garage to have chains put on the rear wheels of his car. A negro was doing the work. A companion stepped up to him and told about being stuck in the snow, and asking a passing truck driver for help, and of being told by the driver to "dig his way out." "Dig yo' way out! Hot boy! Dat's good. Gee, man, how I'd aspire to meet dat fellow on a desert and he wid his tongue out pantin' fer a drop of gas-oline. Dig yo' way out!"—Detroit News.

You seldom find the fault-finder serving on any of the committees which are doing the work



"Yes," gasped Diana. Don't— speak so loud, Almee—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)