# DORCHESTER AURORA.

"PRINCIPLES AND MEASURES, AND MEN BY THEIR PRINCIPLES."

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*DORCHESTER AURORA,*

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**WM. H. BARROW.**

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FROM THE DIARY OF A LATE PHYSICIAN.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

## THE DESTROYER.

Fair and innocent readers! how many, many thousands of you will read this narrative with beating and indignant hearts! Shrink not from its sad—its faithful details; consider them, if it be not presumptuously spoken, in somewhat of that spirit in which you ponder the mournful history of Eve and Ellen—of her, our first mother, who, weakly listening to the serpent temper was ignominiously thrust out of her bright abode, degraded from her blessed estate, and entailed innumerable ills upon her hapless progeny!

With kindly and fervent feeling, my conscience bearing testimony to the purity of my intentions, have I drawn up, and now thus commend to you,—to readers, indeed of both sexes, and of all classes of society, but those especially who move amidst the scenes from which its incidents have been taken,—this narrative, the last *Passage from the Diary of a late Physician;* of him who, having been long acquainted with you, now bids you fare well and could his eye detect among you one whose trembling foot was uplifted to deviate from the path of honor and of virtue, he would whisper amidst his reluctant adieus—BEWARE!

Mrs. St. Helen, a young, a fond, and beautiful mother, having one morning in June 18— observed a faint flush on the forehead of her infant son,—her first born and only child, and ascertained from the nursery-maid that he had been rather restless during the night, persuaded herself and husband that matters were serious enough to require immediate medical assistance from London. The worthy Colonel, therefore ordered his phæton to be at the door by ten o'clock; and, having been scarcely allowed by his anxious wife to swallow a cup of coffee and finish his egg, presently jumped into his vehicle and dashed off as rapidly as Mrs. St. Helen, who remained standing on the steps, could have wished. Though the distance was nearly nine miles, he reached my house by a little after eleven, and was at once shown into my room, where I was arranging my list of daily visits. It seemed clear, from his hurried statement, that his little son and heir was about the perils of scarlet fever or measles, at the very least; and such were his importunities, that though I had several special engagements for the early part of the day, I was induced, at his suggestion, to put two hacks to my carriage, & drive down to Densleigh Grange, accompanied by the Colonel, who ordered his servant to remain in town till the horses had been rested.

This was the first time that my professional services had been required in Colonel St. Helen's family—in fact, I had never been at Densleigh, though previous to their marriage, I had been rather intimately acquainted with Mrs. Helen. We had never once met even since the day of her marriage, three years ago. When I last saw her—upon that happy occasion—I thought her certainly one of the loveliest young women the eye could look upon. I really think her person and manners were the most fascinating I ever witnessed. When I first saw her she was only seventeen, and dressed in the deepest mourning; for her father the Honorable Mr. Annesley, beneficed clergyman in the West of England, had recently died, leaving to the care of his brother the Earl of Hetheringham, whose family I was then attending. Her mother had died about a year after to this her first and only child; and her father left nothing behind him but his daughter—and his debts. The former he bequeathed, as I have already intimated, to his brother, who accepted the charge with a very ungracious air. He was a cold, proud man—qualities, however, in which his countess excelled him—by no means rich, except in children; of whom he had three sons and five daughters, who instantly recognized in their beautiful cousin a most formidable competor for the notice of society. And they were right. The form of her features were worthy of the rich commingled expression of sweetness, spirit, and intellect that beamed in them.—What passion shone out of her dark blue eyes! Her figure, too, was well proportioned and graceful, just budding out into womanhood. She was sitting, when I first saw her, at a little rose-wood table, near the Countess, in her bourdoir—one hand hung down with a pen in it, while the other supported her forhead, from which her fingers were pressing aside her auburn hair—evidently in a musing mood, which my sudden entrance through the door already standing wide open, put an end to. "You deed not go,' said the Countess, coldly, seeing her hastily preparing to shut up her little desk—'my niece—Miss Annesley, Doctor!' I knew the Countess—her character and circumstances well, this exquisite girl, her niece, and she with five daughters to dispose of!—Miss Annesley, after slightly acknowledging my salutation, resumed her seat and pen. I could hardly keep my eyes away from her.—If she look so lovely now, in spite of this gloomy dress, thought I, what must she be, when she resumes the garb of youthful gaiety and elegance! Ah, Countess you may well tremble for your daughters, if this girl is to appear among them. 'You see,' continued the Countess, in a matter-of fact manner, while these thoughts glanced across my mind—'we are all thrown into sables through the death of the Earl's brother, Mr. Annesley.'

'Indeed!' I interrupted, with a look of sympathy towards her niece, who spread her hand over her eyes, while the pen that was in the other slightly quivered. 'This young lady is in fact, all my poor brother-in law left behind him; and' (adding in a lower tone) 'she now forms one of our *little* family!' I felt infinitely hurt at the scarce-concealed sneer with which she uttered the word 'little.' Poor Miss Annesley. I feared, had received it; for, after evidently struggling ineffectually to conceal her emotions, she rose and stepped abruptly towards the door.

'You'll find your cousins in the drawing room, I've! go and sit with them,' said the Countess, endeavoring to speak affectionately. 'Poor thing!' she continued, as soon as Miss Annesly had closed the door, after which I fancied I heard her run rapidly up stairs—doubtless to weep alone in her own room—'her father hasn't been dead more than a fortnight, and she feels it acutely!—shockingly involved, my dear Doctor—over head and ears in debt! You've no idea how it annoys the Earl! My niece is perfectly penniless! Literally, we were obliged to provide the poor thing with mourning! I insisted on the Earl's making her one of our family;'—a great falsehood, as I subsequently discovered, for she had suggested and urged sending her abroad to a nunnery, which, however inclined to do, he dared not for appearances' sake. 'She'll be a companion for my younger daughters, though she's quite countryfied at present—don't you think so?'

'Pardon me, my dear Countess—she struck me as extremely elegant and beautiful,' I answered, with sufficient want of tact.

'Rather pretty, certainly—she's only seventeen, poor thing,' drawled the Countess, immediately changing the subject.

I could not help feeling much interest in the poor girl, thrust thus, in the first agonies of her grievous bereavement, into a soil and atmosphere ungenial and even noxious—into a family that at once disliked and dreaded her. What a life seemed before her! But I reflected the conflict may be painful, it cannot be long. Lady Hetheringham cannot utterly exclude her niece from society; and *there*, once seen, she must triumph. And so, indeed, it happened; for in less than six months after the period of her arrival at her uncle's, she began to go out freely into society with his family; it having been considered by her prudent and affectionate relatives, that the sooner this young creature could be got off their hands the better. The Earl and his Countess, indeed began to feel some apprehension now and then lest one of their niece's *male* cousins the eldest possibly, might feel rather more attachment towards her than mere relationship required. She was directed therefore, to apply herself diligently to the completion of her education, in which she had already made rapid progress, which, together with her natural talents, soon rendered her independent of the fashionable instructors who taught her cousins. Miss Annesley was, in truth, a creature of much enthusiasm of character; of a generous & confiding nature, a sanguine temperament—fond withal of admiration, as who is not, of either sex? She felt in her element in the glittering society in which she now incessantly appeared, or rather into which she was forced. She breathed freely, for glorious was the contrast it afforded to the chilling, withering restraint and coldness that ever awaited her at her uncle's. *There* she but too sorrifully felt herself an intruder—that her aunt and uncle were stirring heaven and earth to get rid of her.—Many a bitter hour did she pass alone when she reflected upon this, and saw no course open to her but to second the exertions of her heartless relatives, and be emancipated from her bitter thraldom by almost any one who chose to make the attempt. Her anxieties on this score laid her open to the imputation of being little more than a brilliant flirt or coquette—than which certainly nothing could be more distant from the wishes or repugnant to the feelings of poor Miss Annesley. She saw that her uncle and aunt could have encouraged the advances of any one that seemed likely to propose for a beautiful but penniless orphan, and was almost disposed to gratify them.—What sort of life would not be preferable to that of her present bitter dependence? Alas, how generous, how noble a heart was thus trifled with—was thus endangered, if not even directly betrayed, by those whose sacred duty it was, whose pride and delight it should have been to regard and cherish it! However pure, however high-mingled, a girl of Miss Annesley's youth and inexperience, of her eager and fervent temper and character, could not but be exposed to imminent danger when thrust thus into such scenes as are afforded by the fashionable society of the metropolis. Poor Emma! No eye of zealous and vigilant affection follow thee when wandering through these dazzling mazes of dissipation and of danger! Anxious however, as were Lord & Lady Hetheringham to get rid of their lovely charge, their efforts were unsuccessful. Two seasons passed over, and their niece, though the admired of all beholders, utterly eclipsing her impatient and envious cousins, seemed unlikely to form an alliance, whether owing to the incessant and widely propagated sneers and injurious falsehoods of her five rivals, the ill-disguised coldness and dislike of the Earl and Countess, or, above all, to her want of fortune. Many who admired her, and felt disposed to pay her decisive attentions, were deterred by the fear that a young woman, of her family, station, beauty, and accomplishments, was an object placed far beyond their reach; while others sighed—

"Sighed and looked, sighed and looked,
and sighed again;'

and feared that if she brought her husband no fortune, she nevertheless was perfectly able and disposed to spend *his*. Conquests, in the ordinary phrase, she made innumerable, and was several times mentioned in the newspapers as "likely to be led to the hymenial alter" by Lord———,Sir———,the Honourable Mr———,and so forth. As far, indeed, appearances went, their was some ground for each of these rumours. Miss Annesley had many followers, most of whom were sufficiently gratified by having their names associated in fashionable rumer with that of so distinguished a beauty. The only one however, of all these triflers who ever established any thing like an interest in her heart, was the elegant and wellknown Alverley: a man whose fascinating appearance and manners soon distanced the pretensions of all those who aimed at an object he had selected. Alverley was, when he chose, irresistible. He could inspire the woman he sought with a conviction that he loved her passionately, throwing a fervour and devotion into his manner which very few women, and no young woman could resist. Poor Miss Annesley fancied that this envied prize was hers; that he was destined to be led a "graceful captive at her chariot-wheels;" that he was the gallant knight who was to deliver her from her bondage. Here, too, however, she was destined to meet with disappointment; the distingished Alverley disappeared from among the throng of her admirers quite suddenly; the fact being, that in a confidental conversation with one of her cousins, in a quadrille, he had become satisfied that it was undesirable for him to prosecute any farther his disinterested attentions in *that* quarter. Miss Annesley felt his defection more keenly than that of any other of her transient admirers. Her eager feelings, her inexperienced heart, would not permit her to see how utterly unworthy was one who could act thus, of even a moment's regret. Alas! her high spirit had not fair play! His graceful person, his handsome and expressive features, his fascinating manners, could not so easily be banished from her young heart: and her grief and mortification were but little assuaged, however perhaps her wounded *pride* might be soothed, by the intimation Alverley contrived to have conveyed to her, from several quarters, that her regrets fell infinitely short of the poignancy of his own, in being compelled by others, on whom his all depended, to abandon the dearest hope she had ever cherished.

Thus it was that Miss Annesley and her heartless selfish relatives beheld two seasons pass away without any prospect of their being permanently released from one another's presence and society; an infinite gratification did the poor girl experience in being invited to spend the autumn of 18— with a distant relative of Lady Hetheringham's in a remote part of England. This lady was the widow of a General officer, and during her stay in town that season had formed an attachment towards Miss Annesley, whose painful position in the Earl's family she soon perceived and compassionated; therefore it was that her invitation had been given, and she felt delighted at securing the society of her young and brilliant guest during the tedious autumn and winter months.

Miss Annesley proved herself to be possessed of a warm and affectionate heart in addition to beauty and accomplishments, and every day increased the attachment between them. These six months were the happiest Miss Annesly had ever known. Before returning to town, an event she dreaded, a very eligible offer of marriage was made to her by a relative of her hostess, who happened to be quartered with his regiment in her immediate neighborhood, Major St Helen. He was an amiable, high-spirited man, of excellent family, in easy circumstances, and with considerable expectations. His features, though not handsome, were manly and expressive; his figure was tall and commanding, his manners frank, his disposition affectionaie; his suit was supported by Miss Annesley's kind hostess, and before her returning to town he gained the promise of her hand. The more, indeen, she knew of him, and learnt of his character, the more confidently she committed herself to him; she became sincerely and affectionately attached to him, who loved her so evidently with fervour, and enthusiasm. In about a twelve month's time she was married to him—in her twentieth year, he being about ten years her senior—from the Earl of Hetheringham's. I was was present, and never saw a lovelier bride; how distinctly, even at this distance of time, is her figure before my mind's eye! As her uncle, who felt as if a thorn had been plucked out of his side, led her down to the traveling carriage that was in readiness to convey them away, I was one of the last to whisper a hasty benison into the ear of the trembling, blushing girl. Gracious Heaven! could either of us at that moment have lifted the veil of futurity, and forseen her becomming the subject of this last and dreadful passage from my Diary!

About three years afterwards was born the little patient I was now on my way to visit. During this considerable interval I had almost lost sight of them; for Major, since become Colonel St. Helen, after a year's travel on the Continent, purchased the delightful residence to which we were so hastily driving, and where their little son and heir was born. Here they lived in delightful retirement—only occasionally, and for very short periods, visiting the metropolis; the chief reason being Mrs. St Helen's reluctance to renew her intercourse with Lord and Lady Hetheringham, or any member of their family. It was evident, from our conversation as we drove down, that their attachment towards each other continued unabated. The only drawback upon their happiness was a fear that he might be, ere long, summoned upon foreign service. When within about a mile of Densleigh, our conversation, as if by common consent, dropped—and we leaned back in the corner of the carriage in silence; he, doubtless, occupied with anxieties about his little son, and the probable state of matters he should meet on reaching home; I sinking into a reverie upon past times. I was anxious to see again one in whom I had formerly felt such interest—and felt happy at her good fortune, not only in escaping the dangers to which she had been exposed, but in making so happy a marriage.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the Colonel, suddenly, who had been for the last few minutes incessantly putting his head out of the window—look—they are"—his keen eye discovered two females standing at the outer gate opening upon the high road—"Drive on, coachman, for God's sake!"

"Don't alarm yourself, Colonel"—said I; adding, as we drew near enough to distinguish one of the figures pushing open the gate, and stepping into the road towards us—"for one of them can be no other than Mrs. St Helen; and the other is her maid, with my little patient in her arms—positively! Ha, ha, Colonel! That looks very much like scarlet fever or measles!"

"Certainly you are right," replied the Colonel, with a sigh that seemed to let off all his anxiety. "That is my wife, indeed—and the child; there can be no mistake—but how can they think of venturing out till, at all events, they are"——

Though I was at the moment rather vexed at having come so far, at such inconvenience, too, I soon made up my mind to it, and felt glad at the opportunity of seeing how the beautiful Miss Annesley would show in the character of Mrs. St Helen—a mother.

"You must give these poor beasts a little refreshment, Colonel, before I can take them back, and me a little luncheon," said I, with a smile, looking at my watch.

'Certainly—oh, of course? Forgive me, dear Doctor, for having been so nervous and precipitate! But you are a father yourself. 'Tis all my wife's fault, I can assure you, and I shall tell her she must make the apology due for bringing you down from London for nothing. The fact is, that I never thought there was any thing the matter with the child;'—which was I though a very great mistake of the Colonel's.

'I assure you I am infinitely better pleased to have the opportunity of seeing Mrs. St. Helen again, and in health and spirits, than to see her plunged into distress by the illness of her child—so pray say no more about it!'

As we approached, Mrs. St. Helen hastily gave her parasol into the hands of the maid, from whose arms she snatched the child, and walked quickly up to the carriage door, as we drew up

For a moment I quite forgot the errand on which I had come, as close before me stood the Emma Annesley of a former day, a thousand times more lovely, to my eye, than I had ever seen her. She wore a light loose bonnet, of transparent white crape, and her shawl, which had been displaced in the hurry of seizing the child, hung with graceful negligence over her shoulders, to infinite advantage, displaying a figure of ripening womanhood—the young mother, proud of the infant she bore in her arms—her expressive features full of animation; altogether she struck me as a fit subject for one of those airy and exquisite sketches with which Sir. Ths. Lawrence was then occasionally delighting the world.

'Oh, doctor ————,' she commenced, in the same rich voice I so well remembered, holding out one of her hands to me as I descended the carriage steps—'I am so delighted to see you again—but really,' looking at her husband, 'Arthur did so frighten me about the child, and I am not a *very* experienced mother—but I suppose it's the same with all fathers—alarmed at *such* trifles?——

'Really, Emma, this is capital,' interrupted the Colonel, half piqued and half-pleased, while I could not help laughing at them both—'so it was *I*—but who was it, Emma, that came rushing into my dressing-room this morning—her hair half *en papil-lote!*

'Arthur, don't be absurd—there's no need.'

'Well—I forgive you! It was all my fault; but thank God! here's the young hero, seemingly as well as ever he was in his life—many, many happy returns.'

'Tis his birth day, Doctor'—interrupted Mrs St Helen, eagerly, with a sweet smile.

The Colonel took the child out of his mother's arms, and kissed him heartily. 'But what apology can we make, Emma, to Doctor ————?'

'Oh, don't say a syllable! I am sincerely glad that I have come, and more so, that there was not the necessity for it you supposed. My dear Mrs. St. Helen, how glad I am to see you,' I continued, as she took my arm, the Colonel proceeding on with the child in his arms, who seemed, however, anxious to get back to his nurse. 'I have often thought of you, and wondered where you had hid yourselves! But before we talk of past times, let me hear what it was that so alarmed you about that sweet little child?'

'Oh—why, I suspect it's all my own fault, Doctor—I was very foolish; but we do so love him, that we are afraid of the least thing. He's so beautiful, that I fear we shall lose him—he's too good—we should be *too* happy.'

'All mothers, Mrs. St. Helen, say that; but I want to hear whether we are right in dismissing all anxiety about the appearances that so alarmed you this morning.'

'I'm quite ashamed of it. It was evidently nothing but a little redness on his forehead, which was occasioned no doubt, by the pressure of the pillow—and it quite disappeared before the Colonel had been gone half an hour—and the nurse did not tell me till afterwards—and we had no man here at the time to ride after the Colonel—and so'—pushing about the end of her parasol upon the grass, and looking down, as we slowly followed the Colonel towards his house. I laughed heartily at the kind of sheepish air with which she confessed the slight occasion there had been for her alarm. She began again to apologize.

'Pho, pho, my dear Mrs. St. Helen this has happened to me more than a hundred times! but never when I less regretted it than I do now. I have had a delightful drive, and I have seen you looking so well and happy—you cannot think how rejoiced I am on your account! What a contrast is your present life to that you led at the Earl of Hetheringham's!—you must be as happy as the day is long!'

'And so indeed I am! I never, never knew what real happiness was till I knew Colonel St. Helen. We have never had a difference yet! He worships the very ground'——She paused, hung her head, and her eyes filled with tears.

'He looks quite the soldier,' said I, glancing at his tall and erect figure.

'Oh yes, and he *is*. He has the noblest disposition in the world! so generous, and as simple as the little creature that he carries. You would hardly think him the same man when he is at home, that at the head of his regiment looks so cold, and stern, and formal. And he is as brave as'—— her beautiful features were turned towards me, flushed with excitement—'Do you know he's been in three engagements, and I have heard from several officers that he is one of the most desperate and fearless ——

'Ah, you recollect these beautiful lines Mrs. St Helen,' said I—

"The warrior's heart when touched by me,
Can as downy, soft, and yielding be,
As his own white plume that high amid death
Through the field has shone, yet moves with
a breath!"

Her eyes were fixed intently upon me while I repeated these lines, filled with tears as I concluded, and she spoke not. 'Where are these lines?' she began at length; but ashamed of her yet unsubdued emotion, she quickly turned aside her head, and left the sentence unfinished. Her little dog that came scampering down towards us, happily turned her thoughts.

'How very, very ridiculous!' she exclaimed, half-laughing, half-crying, pointing to a light blue riband tied round the dog's neck, in a large knot or bow, the little animal now frisking merrily about her, and then rolling about on the grass, evidently not knowing what to make of his gay collar. 'The fact is, Doctor, that this being our little boy's birth day, my maid has determined that even the dog—down, Fan! down! you little impudent creature—go and run after your young master;' and away bounded Fan, leaving us once more alone.

'When did you hear of the Hetheringhams last?'

'Oh, by the way,' she answered eagerly, 'only a day or two ago. And what do you think! Did you read that account of the elopement in the papers with such numbers of stars and initals?'

'Certainly, I recollect; but whom do they mean?'

'My fair proud cousin, Anne Sedley, and the youngest officer in Arthur's regiment.—Who would have thought it! She was always the most unkind of any of them towards me; but I am not the less sorry for her. Nothing but misery can come of an elopement; and how they are to live I do not know, for neither of them has any thing.'

'You see very little of the Earl and Countess, or your cousins, I suppose now?'

'We have scarcely met since we were married, and we don't regret it. Arthur does not like any of them, for I could not help telling him how they had treated me; and, besides, we see nobody, nor do we wish, for we are not yet tired of each other, and have plenty to do at home of one kind or another. In fact, we have only one thing that distresses us, a fear lest the Colonel may be ordered to join his regiment and go abroad. Oh! we tremble at the thought, at least I am sure that *I* do; especially if it should happen before November,' she added suddenly, faintly colouring. I understood her delicate intimation that she bade fair to become again a mother, and told her so. 'What should I do, in my situation, all alone here—my husband gone, perhaps never to return. I assure you, it often makes me very sad indeed—but here he comes.'

'Why, Emma! how serious! Positively in tears! What! have you been *regretting* to Doctor —— that you have not got a patient for him?'

'No, dearest Arthur—the fact is we have been talking over past times!—I was telling him how happy we were in our solitude here'——

'But, I dare say, Doctor——, with myself,' said the Colonel, quickly, observing Mrs. St. Helen not yet to have entirely recovered from her emotion—'will not think the worse of Densleigh when we've had a little lunch.'

'Well—I'll rejoin you in a few minutes,' interrupted Mrs. St. Helen, turning from us.

'Aha,' said the Colonel, as he led me into the room, where lunch was spread—'she's gone to look after Master St. Helen's dinner, I suppose; we shan't see her this quarter of an hour!—He must never eat a mouthful without her seeing it!—We won't wait, Doctor ——,' and we sat down—for I had really not much time to lose. Densleigh certainly was a delightful residence—happily situated, and laid out with much taste and elegance. The room in which we were sitting at lunch opened upon a soft green, sloping down to the banks of a pleasant stream, and commanded an extensive prospect,—of which Mrs. St. Helen had recently completed a very beautiful water-colour sketch, which was suspended near where I sat.

'You must come some day, Doctor, and see Emma's port-feuille—for she really draws very beautifully. I'll try to get a sight of the picture she has nearly finished of our little Arthur—by Heaven, 'tis perfection!'

Here Mrs. St Helen made her appearance; Master St Helen had made a very hearty dinner, and emma was again in high spirits, and I persuaded her to take a glass of wine with me—but not to give me a sight of the mysteries which the Colonel had spoken of. She would not for the world let me see her half-finished daubs—and so forth; and as for the others, she would show them all to me the next time I came, &c. &c. All lady artists are alike; so I did not press the matter. A pleasant hour I passed at Densleigh—thinking, where was happiness to be found if not *there!* I was not allowed to leave before I promised, never to come within a mile or two without calling upon them. They attended me to the door, where were drawn up my carriage and the pony phaton of Mrs. St. Helen, with two beautiful little greys, which also were bedight with the light blue ribands. Master St. Helen and his maid were already seated in it, and I saw that Mrs St. Helen longed to join them. Ah, you *are* a happy woman, thought I, as I drove off—you ought indeed to feel grateful to Heaven for having cast your lot in pleasant places.—I say you love the pride of your husband—other, it may be, of a race of heroes!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)