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

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FROM THE DIARY OF A LATE PHYSICIAN.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

THE DESTROYER.

(CONTINUED.)

Mrs. St. Helen had not been in London half a year, before Captain Alverley felt that he was triumphing—that his long-continued and deeply-laid scemes were conducting him to success. The first—the very first step, he felt to be every thing: it had gained him an interest, however faint, in her feelings, and he cherished it with the most exquisite skill, the most watchful assiduity. He kept *himself* ever in the back-ground. He would excite her feelings with his generous and eloquent eulogies of Colonel St. Helen's conduct abroad; in the middle of one of them he suddenly became confused, heaved a faint sigh, and resumed his conversation will ill disguised embarrassment. He busied himself—he took infinite pains—at least he led her to think so—in procuring the return home of Colonel St. Helen; thus, in short, and in a thousand other ways, he at length disarmed Mrs. St. Helen by lulling her suspicions. or rather preventing their being excited. Consummately skilled in the workings of the female heart, he guided his conduct according to the indications he discovered. In handing her one night to her carriage from the opera, he made a point of insulting a gentleman, who, with a lady in his arm, was hurrying on before Captain Alverley and Mrs. St. Helen. A hurried whisper between the two gentlemen satisfied Mrs St. Helen that there was mischief in preparation. 'For Heaven's sake!' she whispered, in excessive trepidation—but he gently forced her into the carr age, and permitted it to drive off without his uttering a word. He gained his end The evening papers of the ensuing day duly announced an 'affair of honour,' between the 'Marquis of * * * *,' attended by, &c, and Captain A.B.C., attended, &c. 'The meeting arose out of an alleged affront offered by the noble Marquis to a 'young and beautiful lady,' &c. &c., whom the Captain was conducting to her carriage, &c. Very strange to say, neither party did the other any harm!—Captain Alverley, on the next opera night, found his way to her box.

'Captain Alverley! how *could* you'—commenced Mrs. St. Helen, very earnestly.

'My dear Mrs. St. Helen!' was the only reply, with a look that none could give but Captain Alverley. He knew the amount of his gain, and was in ecstasies.

In the progress of 'the affair,' Captain Alverley's next step was to accustom Mrs. St. Helen to hear herself called a flirt, and to have his name, on such occasions, always judiciously coupled with hers. The first time that ever she waltzed with him—which he justly regarded as an open triumph—was in consequence of a very heated altercation she had with Mrs. Ogilvie, who had freely charged her with culpable lightness of conduct with reference to Captain Alverley; the consequence of which was, that Mrs. St. Helen went, as she had angrily threatened, to a ball, where casting a look of defiance at her sister-in-law, she instantly accepted Captain Alverley's invitation, infinitely to his astonishment. He saw his position, and behaved with prudence. After one or two rounds, he led her, with an air of the properest deference in the world, to a seat, and paid her no marked attentions whatever during the evening He perceived that her lynx-eyed sister watched his every movement, and for upwards of a fortnight he suspended all but the most ordinary and casual civilities and attentions to Mrs. St. Helen. Why did not the infatuated woman at once break through all the meshes with which she was now conscious of being surrounded? Why did no sudden alarm of virtue—no Heaven-inspired strength—enable her to 'flee like a bird from the snare of the fowler?' Alas, that I should have to write it! *She did not now wish to do so.*—Not that yet even she contemplated the idea of positive guilt—vastly far from it. She was so conscious of her own strength, as to prevent all apprehensions on *that* score. It is true she was occasionally sensible, with a heart-flutter and cheek suffused, of an interest in Captain Alverley, that was inconsistent with the undivided affection due to her husband; she went not further consciously, but how far was this! She consoled herself with the notion that it was certainly rather coquettish—and that was almost universal. The plain truth was, she began to indulge towards Captain Alverley feelings which she no longer dared to scrutinize. Her vanity, again, would not suffer her to part with so gay and dazzling a follower—'she was surely able to take care of her-self!'

Once or twice I called upon Mrs. St. Helen, in pursuance of the promise I made, but without seeing her, as she had just gone out. This might, or it might not be true. If she was denying herself to me, it must have been on account of what had taken place on the occasion alluded to; and was it that she was ashamed of her frankness—of the extent of her admissions, or that she regretted having made them from other considerations? I was driving, one afternoon, through the Park, on my way to a patient near Cumberland Gate, when I happened to overtake the open carriage of Mrs. St. Helen, driving very slowly she being in conversation with an equestrian who walked his horse along side,—and I soon detected in him Captain Alverley. I perceived with a hurried look in passing, that she was listening intently to what he was saying—looking down, and slightly colouring. I felt sick at heart for her! The next time that I saw her at home, she seemed very calm and sensibly colder in her manner towards me than I had ever seen her before. She made not—nor of course did I—the slighest allusion to our late deeply interesting conversation. In answer to my enquiries, she said that she was in very good health, except that she did not now sleep so soundly as heretofore and her appetite had also declined—the usual consequences, I told her, of a life of London dissipation—of irregular hours, excitement, and fatigue.

'As I fell rather solitary in this large house,' said she, 'I have invited a Miss Churchill, a distant relation of the Colonel's to pay me a visit. She's a sweet good girl, and I have no doubt we shall be inseparable.' While she said this, a slight color mounted into her cheek, which set me speculating upon what she had just told me. Was then her summons to Miss Churchill a signal of distress? Was it that she began to feel her danger—that she wished a protector—some one should be indeed, as she said, inseparable from her—ever by her side—whose presence might check, if not prevent the increasing ardour and attentions of Captain Alverley?—Faint effort of endangered virtue!—But it was an effort, and I rejoiced to see it made.

'When do you propose leaving town?' I enquired.

'Leaving town!' she exclaimed quickly—'why, dear doctor, *should* I leave town? The season not yet at its height even? Besides, I hate the country—I never heartly liked it.'

'I thought, Mrs. St. Helen'——

'Oh yes,' she interrupted hastily, 'I know what you mean. Densleigh was certninly a pleasant place enough, but we've lost it.'—She paused for a moment, and added—'but I suppose that about August we must go down semewhere or other'——

'The sea-air will do wonders for you, and for the children.'

'Yes—I dare say it would,' she replied, with rather an indifferent air—'but at present they are very well; I always have them taken to the Park;—and where can there be a finer air?' Here some visitors were announced, the servant at the same time laying down six or seven notes and cards of invitation upon one of the tables.

About a month afterwards, I received the following note from Mrs. St. Helen:—

'Dear Doctor,—Will you call in here, in the course of the morning, to see one of the children, who, I fear, is poorly? Jones tells me she thinks it is the measles? I hope it is not any thing worse—the scarlet fever, for instance, or small pox. But you can soon tell. I shall wait at home for you till two.

Ever yours,
E. ST. HELEN.

P. S.—I have never had either of these horrid complaints myself, and feel rather nervous."

What a dismal contrast this notice afforded, I thought, laying it down with a sigh, to the eager, alarmed summons she had sent on a former occasion from Densleigh! A little after two o'clock I was at —— Street, and was shown immediately into the nursery Mrs. St. Helen's pony-phæton was at the door, and she was sitting, ready dressed for a drive, on the corner of the bed in which lay her younger child. Her handkerchief, saturated with Eau de Cologne, was every now and then lifted to her face, as though she dreaded infection. She looked very beautiful—her dress infinitely became her—and not particularly agitated.

'I was beginning to get fidgety, Doctor; I was afraid I should not see you,' said she rising to meet me. I assured her I had been unexpectedly detained. 'And what do you think of the little love? I was afraid he was ailing a little yesterday—his eyes looked very heavy yesterday evening, didn't they, Jones?' turning to the maid.

'Yes, ma'am,' she replied eagerly, directing an affectionate and anxious look at the child. 'You may recollect ma'am, I asked you yesterday afternoon if we hadn't better send for' ——

'Oh yes—I dare say—I think you did, Jones,' interrupted Mrs. St. Helen, quickly, and with rather a displeased air. 'Jones is always terrified with every change in the child's face! But do you think there is any thing really the matter?'

After a little examination, I told her that I thought the child was sickening for the measles.

'Is he indeed, sweet little lamb!'—she exclaimed, looking really kindly at the child. 'You don't think it's scarlet fever, now?' after a moment s pause, turning anxiously towards me, and gently agitating her fragrant handkerchief.

'No,' I replied—"at present I think it decidedly the measles."

'Measles are not dangerous, are they?'

'La, ma'am!' interrupted Jones, who was kneeling at the side of the bed, near the child—her eyes filling with tears—'excuse me, ma'am, but my poor sister's child died of them only a twelvemonth ago.'

'Oh, nonsense, Jones—why do you try to alarm me in this way? There's no such *very* great danger, is there?'—turning towards me with more interest in her manner than she had hitherto manifested.

'I sincerely hope not! At present I can assure you there is every appearance of its being a mild attack.'

'Only feel how hot his little hand is ma'am!' said Jones.

Mrs. St. Helen did not remove the gloves but said to me—'Of course he is rather feverish just now!'

After giving a few directions concerning the temperature of the room, his food, and one or two other little matters, I left, and descended to the drawingroom, to write a prescription.

'I shall return home by four, Jones,' said Mrs. St. Helen, also quitting the room, and following me—'be sure you pay him every attention—Don't remove your eyes from him for a moment!'

'I'm quite delighted to find that there's no danger, Doctor,' said she, seating herself beside me, as I began to write.

'Indeed, my dear madam,' determined not to let matters pass so *very* easily, 'we must not be too sanguine. There are two forms of measles,—the one a mild, the other very malignant. At present I cannot undertake to say with certainty which of the two it is.' She continued silent for a few moments.—'I think I told you, in my note, that I believed I had never had the measles?—Are they really catching from a child to a grown-up person?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Heavens!—I—I'll have pastilers burnt all over the house all day? Dear me! it would be dreadful if I were to catch it,—because' (she added hastily) "of dear little Arthur!"

'Well, we must hope for the best,' said I, quietly folding up my prescription, and requiring that it might be sent to the druggist's w thout delay.

Hastily taking my leave, with a countenance that, had she been as sensitive as in former times, she might perceive somewhat clouded with disapprobation. Was the mother's heart, then, already so dulled towards her suffering offspring? Could I doubt the selfish nature of her anxieties? What infernal change had come over her? Why did she not instantly order back her carriage, undress, and betake herself to the only place that then became her—the bedside of her child? But it was otherwise. A few minutes after I had quitted, she stepped into her carriage, and drove into the Park. At my suggestion the elder child, Arthur, was sent off immediately to Mrs, Ogilvie's, who resided somewhere in the neighborhood of Chelsea; and I continued in daily attendance upon little George about a week, during which time the symptoms were of the milder description, and I anticipated the speedy recovery of my little patient. Mrs. St. Helen, whenever I was present, evidently—at least I was uncharitable enough to admit the idea—*acted* the fond mother *appearing* deeply interested in the progress of her child through his little perils I had reason to believe, from one or two little circumstances that fell under my observation, that she did not withdraw from the world of pleasure. The constant attendants upon little George were—not his mother—but Miss Churchill and his nursery-maid Jones, both of them most anxious and affectionate nurses—as, indeed, I heard Mrs. St. Helen herself, in the blandest way acknowledge.—Well, indeed, she might, having thus devolved the chiefest of her maternal duties upon the companion she had invited to partake of her pleasures only.

I think it was about ten days after I had been first called in to attend upon little St. Helen, that I was suddenly summoned, about eight o'clock in the evening, to —— Street, with the intelligence that he had become very suddenly worse, and that Miss Churchill was much alarmed. Thither I repaired as quickly as possible, and found that appearances justified her apprehensions. There was every symptom of the accession of the malignant form of measles. He had just had a fit of spasms, and was now breathing hard and quickly, and scorched up with fever. The symptoms were certainly serious.

'You must not, however, be too much alarmed, Mrs. St. Helen,' said I, hastily turning round—forgetting, at the moment, that she, the most interested, was not present. The child had been going on as well as usual,—rapidly recovering, in fact, till six o'clock that evening; about which time Mrs. St. Helen, after making particular enquiries about the child, went off to dinner at Lady ——'s, where she had ordered the carriage to call for her about nine, and convey her to the opera. In their fright, Miss Churchill and the servants forgot all this, and instintively sent off for me. After giving such directions as appeared proper, I quitted the room, beckoning out for a moment Miss Churchill.

'Dear, sweet little love! I'm afraid he's *very* ill, she exclaimed, much agitated, and bursting into tears, as she stepped with me for a moment into another room. I acknowledged to her that I considered the child to be in dangerous circumstances: 'Have you sent after Mrs. St. Helen? she *ought* to be here.'

'Dear! we have been all so flurried—but we'll enquire,' she replied, running down stairs before me. 'I really don't think she's been sent for—but I will send immediately. Let me see—nine o'clock. She'll be at the opera by this time.'

'Then I will drive thither immediately, as my carriage is here, and bring her back with me. It will not do to alarm her too suddenly, & in such a place. Let me see: on which side of the house is her box?'

'Number ——, on the left hand side of the stage. I think, at least, that you will find her in that box, which is the Duchess of ——'s, and she called here to-day to offer it to Mrs. St. Helen.' I drove off immediately, and had a twofold object in doing so—to acquaint her as soon as possible with an event of such serious importance as the dangerous illness of her child, and to endeavor, in doing so, to startle her out of the infatuation into which I feared she had fallen—to remind her again of the high and holy duties she was beginning to disregard. The sight of her dying child would rouse, I thought, the smothered feelings of the mother, and these would soon excite an agonizing recollection of her distant husband. On arriving at the opera house, I made my way, in my hurry, to the wrong side. I went into one or two empty boxes before I discovered my mistake; and when at length I perceived it, I determined to stay for a few moments where I was, and endeavour to see what was going on in the duchess of ——'s box. There sate, sure enough, in the corner of the box, her face directed towards the stage, Mrs. St. Helen, dressed with her usual elegance, and looking extremely beautiful. Her left hand slowly moved about her fan, and she was evidently occasionally conversing with some one standing far back in the box. I contemplated her with real anguish, when I thought of her husband—*if, indeed, she were not now a widow*—and of, perhaps, her dying child. My heart almost failed me, and I began to regret having undertaken the painful duty which had brought me where I was. I stretched myself as far forward as I could, to discover, if possible, who was in the box with her, but in vain. Whoever it was that she was talking to—her fan now and then fluttering hurriedly; he, or she, kept as far out of sight as possible. Just as I was quitting my post of observation, however, a sudden motion of a red arm, displaying the feather of an officer's cap, satisfied me that her companion was the execrable Alverley. I now felt an additional repugnance to go through with what I had undertaken; but I hurried round to the other side of the house, and soon stood knocking at the door of the Duchess's box. I knocked, and it was immediately opened by—Captain Alverley.

'Is Mrs. St. Helen here?' I whispered. He bowed stiffly, and admitted me. Mrs. St. Helen, on seeing me, reddened violently. Rising from her seat, and approaching me, she suddenly grew pale, for she could not but perceive that my features were somewhat discomposed.

'Good God! Doctor, what brings you here?' she inquired, with increasing trepidation.

'Permit me to ask, sir,' said Captain Alverley, interposing with an air of haughty curiosity, 'whether any thing has happened to justify the alarm which Mrs. St. Helen'—

'I don't wish you to be frightened,' said I, addressing her, without noticing her companion, or what he had said—I could not overcome my repugnance to him—'but I think you had better return home with me; my carriage is waiting for you.'

'O my child! my child!' she exclaimed faintly, sinking into her seat again; 'what has happened, for God's sake?'

'He is rather worse—suddenly worse—but I think he was better again before I left.' She looked eagerly at me, while her countenance seemed blanched to the hue of the white dress she wore. She began to breathe shortly and hurriedly; and I was glad that the loud and mery music which was playing, would, in some measure, drown the shriek I every moment expected her to utter. I succeeded, however, with Captain Alverley's assistance, in conveying her to my carri.ge, which I ordered on to ——Street as fast as possible, for Mrs. St. Helen's excitement threatened to become violent. She sobbed hysterically. 'What a cruel, cruel wretch, I have been,' she murmered, in broken accents, 'to be at the—the opera—when my darling is dying!'

'Come, come, Mrs. St. Helen, it is useless to afflict yoourself with vain reproaches. You thought, as we all thought, that he was recovering fast, when you set off.'

'Oh, but I should never—never have left his bedside! Oh, if I should lose him! I shall never be able to look my'——Thus she proceeded, till, overcome with exhaustion, she leaned back, sobbing heavily. As we entered the street in which she lived, she whispered, with evidently a great effort to overcome her agitation, 'Dearest Doctor—I see—I know what you must think—but I assure you—I—I—Captain Alverley had but that moment come into the box, quite unexpectedly to me, and I was extremely vexed and annoyed.'

I was glad that the carriage stopping spared me the pain of replying to her. Miss Churchill came running to the carriage, as soon as the hall-door had been opened—and almost received Mrs. St. Helen in her arms—for she could hardly stand, her agitation became so suddenly increased.

'Emma—Emma! I do assure you he is better—much—a great deal better!' said Miss Churchill, hurrying her along the hall.

'O Jane—I shall die!—I am very ill! I cannot bear it—can you forgive me?'

'Hush hush! what nonseuse you are talking—you rave!' exclaimed Miss Churchill, as we forced Mrs. St. Helen into the dining-room, where it was some time before she was restored to any thing like a calmness. Mr. ——, the well-known apothecary, coming at length into the room, to take his departure, strenuously assured us that the child was very greatly relieved, and that he did not now apprehend danger. This I was happy in being able to corroborate, after having stepped up stairs to satisfy my own anxiety; and left her for the night, hoping, but faintly, that a great effort had been made to snap asunder the infernal bands in which Satin, in the shape of Alverley, had bound her. It seemed, however, as though my hopes were justified; for morning, noon, and night beheld Mrs St. Helen at her child's bedside—his zealous, watchful, and loving attendant—for upwards of a week. She gave him all his medicine; with her own hands rendered him all the little services his situation required; ordered a peremptory 'not at home' to be answered to all comers except Mrs. Ogilvie; and doubtlessly banished from her busied bosom all thoughts of Captain Alverley!

The morning after I had brought her home, as I have described, from the opera, on stepping into my carriage I saw some paper lying between the cushions of the seat. Supposing it to be some memorandum or other of my own, I took it up, and with unuterable feelings read the following, hastily written, in pencil:

'Will you, angel! condemn me to a distant admiration of your solitary beauty? I am here fretting in old ——'s box; for mercy's sake rescue me. Only look down and nod, when you have read this, at —— s box—I shall understand—and rely upon it, will not abuse your kindness.' * * * * * * * * *

I tore it with fury into a hundred fragments, and then recollecting myself, regretted that I had not enclosed it to Mrs. St. Helen in an envelope, with 'my compliments,' so that she might be sensible of the extent to which I was aware of her guilty secrets. Could there be any doubt in my mind of the nature of the attentions this villian was paying Mrs. St. Helen, and which she permited? On reading this internal missive, she must have '*looked and nodded*,' and so summoned the fiend to her side. And now I recollected the falsehood she had had presence of mind euongh, in the midst of all agitation, to invent, in order to explain away his being with her—that it was 'unexpected, to her, and 'vexed and annoyed' her. I long debated with myself whether I should communicate to her the nature of the discovery I had made; but at length, for many reasons, thought it better to take no notice of it. I looked at her with totally different feelings to those with which I had ever before regarded her. I felt as if her presence poluted the chamber of suffering innocence. Her uncommon beauty had thenceforth no attractions for my eye; I felt no gratification in her gentle and winning manners. I did not regret the arrival of the day fixed for both the childr n, accompanied by herself, to go to the sea-side; it would releive me from the presence of one whose perfidious conduct daily excited my indignation and disgust. She returned from the sea side, I understood, as soon as she had seen her children settled; I say understood, for I had no direct knowledge of the fact. She gave me no intimation either of the safe arrival of her children at the sea side, or of her own return, or how they were going on. On our casually meeting in Oxford Street she certain-nodded, as our carriages met, but it was not the cordial recognition which I had been accustomed to receive from her. I saw that she did not look in good health—her face seemed clouded with anxiety. As, however, she had vouchsafed me no intimation of her return to town beyond the casual recognition just mentioned, of course I abstained from calling upon her. I wondered whether it had ever occurred to her as being possible that the note received from Alverley had been dropped in my carriage, and so come under my notice? She might have recollected that she did not destroy it, but rather, perhaps, determined *not* to destroy it; she might have asked Captain Alverley if he had seen it—they might have searched the box—and then Mrs. St. Helen's guilty soul may have alarmed and worried her with the possibility that such a document might have found its way into my hands;—*and if it had*, could I then do nothing to extricate her from the perilous circumstances in which I conceived her to be placed? What right had I to interfere, however keen my suspicions, however sincere my attachment to her—as she was—and to her husband?

But might I not endeavor to communicate with General or Mrs. Ogilvie on the subject? Yet I knew nothing whatever of him, and her I had seen but seldom, and only at Mrs. St. Helen's, and besides, from the evident recrimination that I had interrupted between the sisters in-law on a former occasion, it was plain that Mrs Ogilvie must be aware of the light conduct of Mrs. St. Helen—probably she knew and feared far more than I—and so my communication would not appear incredible. Still it might be taken ill—and I resolved not to attempt so dangerous an experiment. As for anonymous letters, that odious system was my abhorrence. Suppose I were to write directly to Mrs. St. Helen, braving all chances, and faithfully expostulating with her on the dreadful course upon which she was too evidently bent! but with what benefit had my former attempts been attended? Suppose she should return my letter with indignation, or even. in a fever of fury, lay it before Captain Alverley? So, seeing no possible way of interfering successfully between the victim and the destroyer, I withdrew from the painful spectacle, and endeavored to discharge it from my thoughts. Still, however, in my intercourse with society, I was from time to time pained by hearing rumours of the most distressing description concerning the degree of intimacy subsisting between Captain Alverley and Mrs. St. Helen. Scandal was indeed busy with their names—which at length found their way into the papers of the day. Could for instance, the following be mistaken?—'The *eccentric* conduct of the lovely wife of a very gallant officer is beginning to attract much notice in the *beau monde* It is rumoured to have been such as to call forth an intimation from a *very high quarter*,' &c., while in one or two less scrupulous papers her name, connected with that of Captain Alverley, was mentioned in the coarsest and most disgusting terms.

Alas, poor Colonel St. Helen!—If indeed, the chances of war had yet spared you,—was this the fond and lovely wife you left with such an agony of grief—the mother of your children—she to whom you had confided so much—from whom you were expecting so enthusiastic a welcome after all your brave, and dangerous, and glorious toils? Better would it be for you to fall gloriously before yon grisly array of muskets—amidst the bellowing of your country's cannon—than survive to meet the dismal scenes which seem preparing for you!

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Alas, that I should have to record it! Mrs. St. Helen at length grew so reckless—the consequences of her infamous conduct became so evident—that even some of the less fastidious of the circles in which she moved, found it necessary to exclude her. Public propriety could not be so outraged with impunity.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A lesson for American Jurors.—The coroner's jury at Hull, in the case of the dreadful explosion of the Union steamer, have returned a verdict of 'manslaughter against the engineer, Joseph Gamble,' who is committed for trial at the York assizes.