Littleton D. Teackle


# DORCHESTER AURORA.

"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.)

'Hardy,' said Colonel St. Helen, addressing his groom, whom he had sent for as soon as he reached his own room at General Ogilvie's and putting two guineas into his hand, 'go directly and station yourself at the corner of —— Street and watch number ——, which is Lord Seckington's. Say not a word to any body, but be on the look-out night and day; and the moment that you see a travelling carriage—or any thing of the sort—go up to the door, presently inquire who it is that has come; and if you hear that it is Lord Seckington, come off to me at the top of your speed—it shall be the best half-hour's work you ever did in your life—ask quietly—quietly, mind to see me and tell me your news.—To nobody but *me* sir.'

Hardy was a deen and faithful fellow; and in about an hour's time he was to be seen lurking about —— street, in exact obedience to his master's orders.

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What I subsequently learnt from several quarters I may state here, in order to keep up the course of the narrative, and the better to explain the events which remain to be described.

I was right in supposing that Captain Alverley and Mrs St. Helen went direct to the Continent; but of their movements when there I scarce know any thing. Her wild and frantic agonies of remorse at the step she had taken were scarcely calculated to increase the attachment of her heartless companion, whose satiated eye beheld the beauty which had so long fevered his soul daily disappearing. Even had it been otherwise—had she retained all the fascination and loveliness of her manners, the novelty of the affair had wore off; he had gained his object—and she perceived his altering feelings. To her guilty affrighted soul, indeed,—

"The hollow tongue of time——
——was a perpetual knell,—Each stroke
Pealed for a hope the less: the funeral note
Of love deep buried without insurrection,
In the grave of possession."

When he discovered the incurable nature of her mental sufferings,—that whirling her about from one scene of amusement to another failed of its object—he began to complain that his funds were running low. He had in truth, long been greatly embarrassed and involved,—yet had he contrived to appear possessed of all the wealth and to enjoy all the luxuries and elegancies that pennyless young men of fashion so mysteriously secure for themselves. Now, however, the money he had obtained from Mrs. St. Helen, as well as a few hundreds that had been supplied to him by a brother reprobate in order to carry on the intrigue, had almost disappeared. He began to feel himself placed in very awkward circumstances. What a pennyless man of fashion in Paris? Captain Alverley besides was burdened with the perpetual presence of a woman who was weeping bitterly from morning to night—frequently in very violent hysterics—and who vehemently reproached him with being the author of all her misery. He soon began to sicken of all this. Was it for this that he had quitted all the pleasures of London, and lost all his hopes of advancement in the army? Paris was a very pleasant place, and he could have enjoyed himself there but for his unfortunate and—as he soon felt and expressed it—most disgusting affair. He therefore began to loathe the very sight of his miserable companion. It was unquestionably with a feeling of keene regret that he found her brought home one night dripping from the Seine, after an abortive attempt at self destruction, to which his cold sarcastic reproaches had impelled his half-maddened victem. The poor Captain was to be pitied; his bold and dashing adventure had turned out most unfortunately! Instead of the brilliant beauty he had reckoned on having secured for at least a year or two in Mrs. St. Helen, he beheld it suddenly withered and gone, and there was ever with him a haggard woman, tearing her hair, wringing her hands and frantically taxing him with being her destroyer. In vain he sought to escape from it—she would never leave him! He had returned to London to endeavor to raise funds; his unlucky uncounter with the Commander-in-Chief sent him back in fury to Paris. He had never felt himself in such an extremity and he determined, after much bitter reflection, that could he but once get extricated from this unfortunate adventure, he would never again undertake one on so extensive a scale.

Of a sudden, however, an express from London brought him news that electrified him with delight,—a delight which, in the enthusiasm of the moment, he attempted to communicate to his gloomy companion. By the death of his aged uncle he had become Lord Seckington; the proprietor of Seckington Castle, in ——shire; one or two other houses in different parts of the country; and a splendid mansion in —— street; with a rent roll of upwards £25,000 a year, and not less than £200,000 in the funds. At the first impulse of his generous feelings he determined to settle upon Mrs. St. Helen, the sum of £500 a year, which he permitted her to spend wherever she chose—offering to give her a thousand pound in addition if she would not return to England. She began, however, now to be unreasonable; and affected to receive his liberal proposal with consternation!

And it was really then possible that, after all he had said, and done, she was not to become Lady Seckington! Even if Colonel St. Helen should take successful proceedings for a divorce? Horror—horror unutterable!

* * * * *

The next communications that reached Lord Seckington consisted chifly of pressing entreaties from his solicitor, and that of his lamented uncle the late Lord Seckington, that he would lose no time in coming to London, as there were many matters requiring his immediate attention. He was glad to see their letters accompanied with one that bore the hand-writing of his intimate friend, Captain Leicester. He opened it and read thus,—

'Dear Seckington—

—Pshaw, how odd it looks! Of course I congratulate you, as every body does. Don't cut your old friends, that's all. But I wish chiefly to say—wait a'read a little, only till the excitement of the story has a little gone down. That d——d unhappy devil St Helen is in town; but I hear he's going back to India in double quick time.—Would it not be well to wait till he's off, and the coast clear?

'Eternally yours,

'F. LEICESTER.

'*To the Right Hon. Lord Seckington.*'

On perusing this well-timed and friendly letter, it suddenly occurred to Lord Seckington that he had certainly various matters of importance to settle in different parts of the continent; and so he wrote to his solicitors—infinitely to astonishment and vexation. He was preparing to set off for Brussels two or three days afterwards, when another letter reached him from the same friendly and vigilant pen.

'*London, Aug.* 8*th* 18—, (*Private.*)

'Dear Seckington—

'What the deuce is in the wind, perhaps you can better guess than I can tell; but I lose no time in writing, to say that Colonel St. Helen, who had appointed to sail to India, (as I told you in my letter of the other day,) and taken leave of every body in a gloomy way, to seek an honourable grave, &c. &c. has suddenly changed his mind, countermanded all his arrangements, and stops in London! Every one is amazed at this queer move. I have reason to know that he had actually engaged his passage by a ship that started two or three days ago, and has forfeited all the passage money. This certainly looks cursedly unpleasant—are we to look out for squalls? Do you think he has seen that offensive impertinent paragraph about you in the papers, and is *waiting for you!* If so, you are in a d——d awkward predicament, and I really scarce know how to advise you. It will hardly do to keep out of the way a little longer, will it? Ask ——, and ——, and above all, Count ——.

'Ever yours, more and more, F. L.'

As Lord Seckington read this letter, his face gradually became as white as the paper he looked upon. Several letters lay on the table before him, unopened and unattended to. With Captain Leicester's in his hand, he remained motionless for nearly halt an hour; at the expiration of which period he was on the point of going into his bed-room and putting the muzzle of a pistol into his ear. Probably what he endured in that brief interval counterbalanced all the pleasure of his whole life. Lord Seckington was a frightful reprobate, but he was no coward; on the contrary, he was as cool and brave a man as as ever wore epaulettes. But consider his situation.

Here he was, scarcely thirty years old, suddenly become a pear of the realm, having succeeded to a very ancient title; and with all appliances and means to boot—all that could secure him.

'Honor, wealth, obedience—troops of friends;' in short, occupying as brilliant a position as man could well be placed in: yet, amidst all the dazzling prospect that was opened before him, his eye lit and settled upon one fell figure only—that of Colonel St. Helen, standing at ten or twelve paces distance from him, his outstretched arm steadily pointing a pistol at his head. It was perfectly frightful.

What would he have cared for for it in the heydey of his career as Captain Alverley, or rather as he was only a few short days before, desperately in debt, driven from the army, disgusted with the presence and stunned with the shrieks of a woman he had long loathed; but NOW—Perdition!—The cold sweat stood upon his brow, and he felt sick to death. *What was to be done?* He could not keep out of the way—the spirit of a man could not endure the idea, of such cowardice; no, his coronet should never be defiled by the head of a *coward*. So there was no alternative. To London he must go, and that without delay, with the all-but certainty that within a few hours of his arrival, Colonel St. Helen would have avenged all the wrongs he had suffered, by sending a bullet through the head of him who had inflicted them. These were the dreadful thoughts that were passing through his mind, when the spectre stood suddenly before him, Mrs. St. Helen, who then happened to enter his room—all her beauty gone, a truly lamentable object.

'Well, madam,' commenced Lord Seckington, bitterly and fiercely, 'I am going to London to be shot at by your d——d husband. He will certainly kill me; that is, if I do not first'——The latter part of this fiendish speech was lost upon Mrs. St. Helen, who had fallen down in a swoon. He immediately summoned assistance into the room and then quitted it, hastily gathering up his letters; but, by some fatality, leaving behind him the one which had occasioned him his horrible agonies—Captain Leicester's. It fell into the hands of Mrs. St. Helen's maid, who communicated its direful content to Mrs. St. Helen, but not till after Lord Seckington had quitted Paris. He hurried to his bed room, and after drinking off a large glass of Cogniac, he dressed, and set off to consult with one or two 'experienced' friends upon the only matter that now occupied his mind—whether the laws of duelling would admit, under the circumstances of his expected meeting with Colonel St. Helen, of his shooting at his antagonist, in the first instance, which would afford him, he considered, the only chance he had of saving a life he was just then particularly anxious to preserve.

'You must give him,' said Colonel ——, a considerable authority in such matters, 'two shots, in my opinion, and even a third if the first two have had no effect; and then you may do as you will.'

'Pho!' exclaimed Lord Seckington, with undisguised trepidation.

'Well,' replied the Colonel quietly, 'you may say pho! if you like, but you asked my opinion, and you have it. I have known it acted upon several times, and never objected to.'

'Is your friend a good shot?' enquired Count ——, 'a little fire eater as ever breathed.'

'I should say, in all probability, as good as myself.'

The Count shrugged his shoulders. 'Ah, that is very bad! I think you may shoot at your friend at the very first, *by accident*.'

'That's not exactly the way matters are settled in England, Count,' interrupted Colonel ——, sharply; the vivacious Frenchman retorted; one word led on another, and that evening they went through a little duel scene of their own; Lord Seckington being actually compelled to stand second to his countryman! On returning to his hotel he found the cards of almost every one of his most distinguished countrymen then resident in Paris, lying on his table. He turned sick at heart as he looked upon them. He found that Mrs. St. Helen was still in a state of insensibility; and he embraced the opportunity it afforded him of preparing for his immediate departure; but not before he had left sufficient funds to provide for her comfort till he could send her further assistance from London, if, indeed, she did not first receive the intelligence of his death. Early in the ensuing morning he set out, with much the same thoughts and feelings as those with which a man might pass through beautiful scenery on his way to the guillotine.

Perhaps it might not be exaggeration to say that he endured the tortures of the damned; and when his postchaise and four drew up opposite the frowning portals of the house in —— Street, he stepped out of it pale as death, and scarce able to conceal his agitation from the obsequious menials who lined the hall to receive their new lord. 'How long will they be *mine!*'

As soon as the bustle of his arrival was over, and while the emptied chaise was being led away from the door, a groom, who might have been observed loitering about the street, stepped up, gently pulled the area-bell, and inquired if that was Lord Seckington who had arrived? He was rather tartly answered in the affirmative by a bustling servant. The groom sauntered carelessly down the street; but as soon as he had turned the corner, he ran as if a pack of beagles had been at his heels, and scarce ever stopped till he reached General Ogilvie's. He succeeded in communicating his pregnant intelligence to Colonel St. Helen, without having excited the suspicion of any one in the house; which Colonel St. Helen quitted a few minutes afterwards.

About seven o'clock the same evening a gentleman knocked at the door of Lord Seckington's house. Having been informed that his lordship was very particularly engaged, the stranger desired to be shown into the library, where he would wait his lordship's leisure, as he had a very pressing engagement with him. The servant accordingly ushered him into the library, and took up to Lord Seckington the card of 'Major Darnley.' He had not long to wait; for in less than five minutes the door was opened, and Lord Seckington entered in his dressing room.

'Major Darnley, I presume?' he inquired, politely advancing towards his visitor, who rose and bowed. Lord Seckington, who looked pale and fatigued with travelling, apologized for his delay in attending the Major, and also for his dress, on the score of his having not yet had time to change it.

'I need only mention the name of Colonel St. Helen, my lord,' said Major Darnley, in a low tone, 'to apprise your lordship of the painful nature of my errand.'

'Certainly—I perfectly understand,' replied Lord Seckington, rather hastily.

'Of course, my lord, the sooner this affair is settled the better!'

'By all means,' replied Lord Seckington, calmly. 'I have no doubt that my friend, Captain Leicester, whom I know to be in town, will act with you immediately on my behalf.—Probably he is at this moment at ——'s, where you could hardly fail of meeting him,' looking at his watch.

'Perhaps your lordship will favour me with a line addressed to Captain Leicester intimating the nature of my application?'

'Undoubtedly,' replied Lord Seckington; and sitting down, he wrote a few lines to the desired effect, and folding up the note, directed it, and gave it to Major Darnley.

'Probably Captain Leicester will be with your lordship shortly—shall I tell him that your lordship waits 1 er for him?'

'I beg you will do me that favour. Pray, Major Darnley, let no time whatever be lost,' added Lord Seckington, with a smile which it would have been a luxury to a fiend to witness. He rang the bell, and Major Darnley took his leave. The instant that the door was closed, Lord Seckington, after a sickening glance round at the spacious and splendid apartment, threw himself upon the sofa in a state of mind that it would be in vain to attempt describing.

Having agreed to dine that evening with one of his old friends who had succeeded to a dukedom since they had met, and who had quitted Lord Seckington only half an hour before Major Darnley's arrival, it became necessary to write off immediately, and announce his inability to be present. He did so, and stated it to be owing to very pressing engagements, and the thought which had since occurred to him that he ought not to dine out till after his uncle's funeral—well knowing that his own funeral might probably take place at the same time. It may be easily understood that he was in no humour to renew the business details which Major Darnley's arrival had interrupted. He sent a message to that effect up stairs to his solicitor to whom he had promised to return, begging him to be in attendance in the morning; and, ordering dinner to be prepared and served at a moment's notice, he again threw himself upon the sofa. He was roused from his dreadful reverie about a quarter before eight oclock by Lieces-ter. He was in full dinner dress, having been met by Major Darnley, just as he was preparing to go to the Duke of——'s, where he was to have been surprised by the appearance of Lord Seckington. After his hurried interview with Major Darnley, he had come off direct to——street.

'Well, Alverley—Seckington, I mean—you see it's just as I suspected,' said he, hastily stepping up to Lord Seckington

'Yes,' he replied, shaking him cordially by the hand, and unconsiciously sighing. 'May I recon on your services!

'Oh of course—I am here on the business now.'

'Where were you going when Major Darnley found you?' inquired Lord Seckington, alluding to Captain Leicester's dress.

'The Duke of——'s.'

'Ah, I was to have been there too,' said Lord Seckington. 'They'll suspect that something's wrong by our both so suddenly sending refusals.'

'And let them—they're not likely to send us peace officers, if they *do* suspect. They'll only be devilish sorry to lose the company of two deuced good knives and forks—that's all.'

'I have ordered dinner here, to be ready at a moment's notice,' said Lord Seckington, as the servant brought in candles He *must* have observed the troubled and pallid countenance of his Lord as he placed them upon the table near which Lord Seckington and Captain Leicester were standing. 'You can stay to dinner?'

'I think, perhaps, I have half an hour to spare,' replied Captain Leicester—for duellists, like lovers, *must* eat, it would seem;—but I can't spare one second more, for I've engaged to meet Darnley at——'s by a quarter to nine o'clock. Lord Seckington rang, and ordered dinner to be served immediately.

'This blood thirsty devil, St. Helen,' said Lord Seckington, as the servant closed the door, 'must have been watching for my arrival—Major Darnley was with me in less than an hour after I had got into the house.'

'Very probably. No doubt he had hired some fellow to lurk about and bring him word of your arrival. You know, my dear fellow' added Captain Leicester, 'there's no disguising the thing; we are likely to have d——d sharp work on our hands in the morning.'

'The morning? I shall go mad if I have to wait all through the night!' exclaimed Lord Seckington, vehemently—'D——n me if I could not infinitely prefer fighting to-night—why could it not be at——'s? You really must arrange it so! I shan't have a chance, if we wait till the morning!'

'You know it can't be done,' replied Captain Leicester, quietly, as soon as Lord Seckington had ceased—'it's not *selon la regle*—there's a method to every thing, and duelling is nothing without it. Darnley would laugh at me if I proposed it.'

'Well, I am of course in your hands. You must do as you think proper,' said Lord Seckington, with a sigh.

'I'll parade you—let me see—5 or 6 o'clock—either will do,' said Captain Leicester, thoughtfully. 'However, we shall discuss every thing fully to night at——'s.'

'Did you ever know of such an unhappy devil as I am, Leicester?' exclaimed Lord Seckington, abruptly walking to and fro—*just now* to be shot.'

'Ay, and for such a cause, that's the ugly part of the story—but what does that signifiy? 'Twas an adventure carried on with the utmost spirit—you could not *command* success, you know—eh? isn't that the word?'

'It's d——d hard to part with all this?' exclaimed Lord Seckington, sadly, pointing to the fine library. 'Hell must be a joke to what I've suffered since I got your last letter.'

'I thought it would have that effect, when I was writing it. But,' shrugging his shoulders, 'the thing's done now, and you must try not to think of it. 'Tis worse than useless. Make your will, and snap your fingers at every thing and every body in the world. That's the way a man of sense and spirit should meet death, and then he conquers it. By the way, if you *were* to make your will it might be as well. There's an infernal heap of money in the funds you know—'

'O Leicester, don't torment me! I shall do what is proper, you may depend upon it.'

'Well, my dear fellow, don't take it ill. 'Tis no more than every second should do for his principle when he expects warm work! Of course, St. Helen you know, will try d—d hard to hit you; but after all there's no certainty, even with the deadliest shot in the world.'

'Oh curse the——!' groaned Lord Seckington coupeling Mrs. St. Helen's name with the vilest epithet that could be applied to a woman.

'No, no, Seckington—you forget yourself. I call that very unhandsome—nay, it's ungrateful—its d——d bad taste!'—said Captain Leicester seriously.

'You should only know the kind of life she's led me since we went abroad!' exclaimed Lord Seckington, vehemently.

'Poor devil, you ought not to speak of her in that way,' said Captain Leicester, with a grave air of displeasure. 'Pray remember, Seckington, that whatever she is, you have made her. It is not handsome to speak so of the woman that has denied you nothing, and lost every thing for your sake'

'Well,' exclaimed Lord Seckington, after walking violently to and fro—'I suppose I may say that I wish I had been in —— before I had seen her.'

'Ah yes—quite another matter; but we mustn't have any thing unkind said of poor pretty Mrs. St. Helen.'

'Pretty! By —, you should see her now! Pretty;'

'Well I hope you have settled something handsome on her.'

'Five hundred a year.'

'Devilish liberal, certainly. Would she speak to me, if we met at Paris.'

Lord Seckington made no reply, but, with his arms folded, he kept walking to and fro, heaving heavy sighs.

'Take my advice Seckington—make a brave effort, and throw it all off your mind. It can do you no good—it will do you infinite harm. Fancy yourself plain Charles Alverley—the dodged of duns—drop 'Lord,'—think nothing of your rentroll or your funded property;—they'll be all the more delightful if you escape to-morrow! Why do you provoke your fate? Hope for the best. Depend upon it you're too good a fellow to be ordered off just in the nick of time—oh, it's impossible!'

Lord Seckington grasped his hands and looked unutterable things.

'You know, Leicester, it is not *death* that I care for, come how or when it may,' said he, 'I'm a little above *that*, I should hope.'

'Don't fear Bogy, then eh?' interrupted Captain Leicester with a smile.

'Pshaw!—But, by the way, what am I to do? How often am I to receive his fire?'

'Ah, *I've* been considering that point, a little. Why, I think twice.'

'And I'——

'Fire wide the first time, of course'——

'But I don't think it *is* quite such a matter of *course* Leicester.'

'Oh, nonsense, it's clear as daylight—trust me.'

'Really it's devillish hard—he'll try to take my life. It's throwing away my only chance It's going out to be clean murdered!'

'Seckington, put yourself into my place.—You know that what I say is the correct thing. It must be so, or *I* am not responsible. If nothing happens, of course he'll demand another shot: and then you may perhaps—hem! I don't say what *you* ought to do, but I think I know what I should do. And the same if a third is asked for.'

'Why the devil does not the fellow announce dinner?' exclaimed Lord Seckington, violently pulling the bell.

'Hush—don't be so feverish He announced it five minutes ago—I've been on the move ever since—I've now only a quarter of an hour.'

Here the servant made his appearance, and Lord Seckington in silence followed his companion to the dining room. Both of them cast a significant glance at the splendour of the side-board display—and, indeed, of every thing about them.

'The first time you have ever done the honours here, I presume?' said Captain Leicester, as he took his seat.

'It is probably the *last*,' thought Lord Seckington. Alas! what would he have given at that moment to undo what he had done—to have begun nothing of which he had not well considered the end—never to have blasted the happy home of his brother soldier—to escape from the mortal thraldom he was now enduring! Perhaps had he been calm enough, a lesson of his earlier days might have recurred to him before the fearful lesson of the ensuing morning!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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CURRAN.—When a boy, I was one morning, playing at marbles in the village ball alley, with a light heart and lighter pocket. The gibe and the jest went gaily round, when suddenly amongst us appeared a stranger, of a very remarkable and very cheerful aspect, his intrusion was not the least restraint upon our merry little assemblage. He was a benevolent creature, and the days of infancy (after all, the happiest we shall ever see) perhaps rose upon his memory. God blessed him! I see his fine form, at the distance of half a century, just as he stood before me in the little ball alley in the days of my childhood. His name was Boyse; he was the Rector of New Market. To me he took a particular fancy. I was winning and full of waggery; thinking every thing that was eccentric, and by no means a miser of my eccentricities; every one was welcome to share of them, and I had plenty to spare after having freighted the company. Some sweatmeats easily bribed me home with him. I learned from poor Boyse my alphabet and my grammar, and the rudiments of the classics.

He taught me all he could and then sent me to school at Middleton. In short he made a man of me. I recollect it was about five and thirty years afterwards, when I had risen to some eminence at the bar, and when I had a seat in Parliament, on my return one day from Court, I found an old gentleman seated alone in my drawing-room; his feet familiarly placed on each side of the Italian marble chimney piece, and his whole air bespeaking the consciousness of one quite at home. He turned round—it was my friend of the ball-alley, I rushed instinctively into his arms, and burst into tears. Words cannot describe the scene which followed: 'You are right sir; you are right. The chimney piece is yours; the pictures are yours—the house is yours You gave me all I have—my friend—my father—my benefactor?' He dined with me, and in the evening, I caught the tear glistening in his fine blue eye; when he saw the poor little Jack the creature of his bounty, rising in the House of Commons to reply to a Right Honorable. Poor Boyse! He is now gone; and no suitor had a larger deposite of practical benevolence in the Court above. This is his wine—let us drink to his memory!

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*An Incident.*—The New York Star, says: "In the crowded saloon of Mr. Carlin, at the Indian lecture, in the midst of an intensely interesting discourse, a person got up, and in a solemn manner, said, 'Mr. Carlin, will you have the goodness to stop for one moment?' The audience looked with astonishment, and the leturer paused: 'I have lost my little boy in the crowd, and wish to call for him.' A dead pause ensued in the 1200 persons present. 'Clark Potter!' cried the father.—'Here I am, father!' said a shrill voice in the corner, at which shouts of laughter and applause ensued, as the stripling was handed over benches to his anxious parent.'

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*Frederick Corporation Notes*—Forged checks purporting to be of the Corporation of Frederick, (Md.) and signed by Thomas Carlton mayor, are said to be in circulation in Philadelphia and on the Eastern shore of Maryland. The Herald, published in Frederick, states that all the genuine checks of the Corporation are signed by D. Kolb, as mayor, and that none have been issued above fifty cents.