

Chapter 23 Correspondence (1841-1842)

"Authorship" for Martineau was a different matter from reading and correspondence. "I find, from my friend M^r Robertson," Martineau wrote again to Milman, that "nothing can be effected in England" about the pawn brokers "without an alteration of the law" -- and she switched to the topic of Adelaide Kemble at Peoria [Illinois], and the Lyells.

At Carlyle's request, Emerson had sent her a copy of his oration "The Method of Nature" and she raved to James that Emerson was delightful to read, "lucid as Addison, and bright and serene as Carlyle is dark and starry." Letters from Maria Edgeworth, on the other hand, proved "'curiosities,' from their erasures, interlineations, &c . . . with a good use here and there, but the morals low." Would James forward copies of *The Liberty Bell* (no doubt sent by Maria Chapman) to Edgeworth for her? Though Martineau followed James's affairs closely, she noted having seen him over the past year only when their grandmother died. On the basis of two of his latest sermons, she declared he was "too anti-republican for congenial life in America."¹

(James seemed shocked: in a memo to himself he wondered if this had caused "the change of Harriet's tone of epistolary address" from the "superlative 'dearest brother' to the positive 'dear brother', which commenced with September 6, 1841;" he knew of "no ground else").²

Though fretting to Milnes about her low morale and loss of mental power, Martineau's *letters* seemed to grow longer, while she wished to be alone like Carlyle, "'consuming [her] own smoke.'" Carlyle had "burned brightly & clearly" on his first visit to her that summer, but she deplored the "woeful bemoaning" he inflicted on his "jewel of a wife." In sending Martineau his (Anglican) "tract," Milnes had done a friendly thing even though she was as "hopelessly alienated from your church as any person in England." Milnes, she thought, must have seen "Stephens's Central Amer^a" featuring "real Amerⁿ talk." She heard "an Amerⁿ voice speaking, throughout," having "laughed more during those two years . . . than in all my life besides."³

"You may be sure I thought of you all on Monday ev^g," Martineau assured Catherine Macready on 29 December, congratulating her husband on the opening of the Drury Lane Theatre. "I find M^r & M^{rs} Dickens are just going [to America]," she hurried on. Knowing of "M^r D's having said repeatedly that he did not wish for letters," she was sorry not to have offered ones for her "quiet, domestic friends," but would "just ask a womanish question or two." Was "M^{rs} D. aware how severe the cold will be, within 200 miles of both shores?" She recommended "a stone bottle (flat on one side) . . . a wadded, quilted black silk cap, close-fitting, & trimmed with black lace . . . a wadded & quilted petticoat [and] horse-hair glove." And she rejoiced "at the spreading fashion of liking the Amer^{ns}!" Moreover, a "passing word" from Dickens against slavery "w^d do more . . . than years of action" by most others. The "present Amerⁿ Minister," Everett, was an abolitionist, but merely "a late convert, -- for political reasons."

At Tynemouth she was growing "narcissus, tulips, hyacinths & crocuses" in her window, sewing baby clothes for Ellen, studying Euclid, "& when sufficiently alone, drawing." Besides Emily Taylor, her nephews from Newcastle were there, and she meant to try the effect of a story on them (probably *The Crofton Boys*). Once they all left, she would be glad to be "quite alone," though her "good doctor & dear family" were "ever on the watch." Bright winter

weather helped too. "On Xmas Day . . . the sailing boats were gliding over the yellow sheeny sea, & the down was all sunshine and shadow," unlike "dreary weather" elsewhere. Though she had given up her diary, "whose origin M^r Macready wots of," she would take to heart "M^{rs} Opie's indignation at our wickedness in grumbling at our climate," and mark down sunny and wet days. Unlike the Macreadys' London concerns, her chief "domestic question" was whether the landlady's landlord would let her have a room from the next house, "& make a door thereto thro' my wall." Her little room, "crowded with conveniences by kind friends," seemed "a small space in w^h to spend years." Finally, she sent kisses to their children, including their (nine-year-old?) Willie. Willie Greenhow (a year older) did "not assert himself too old to be kissed yet."⁴

In her introduction to *The Crofton Boys. A Tale by Harriet Martineau* (dated November), Martineau confirms that a boy in Scott's "Life . . . did and bore what is here told." Touches of humor and details from Martineau's own childhood enliven the story of an eight-and-a-half-year-old boy who dreams of adventure and longs to go to the Crofton Boys' school with his elder brother. A stern and protective mother presides over the family dinner table, and Martineau deftly retails the courses, the actions of the servants and the children's behavior. The jovial and permissive father then reveals that the young hero is to go to school -- and he can hardly wait. Finally, the boy's tearful sister, the servants and a shop man bid him goodbye -- and he rides off on the top of a coach, looking out at country fields and flowering gardens. Met by his uncle, the boy is delivered to the school, where he makes friends but is teased and ignored by his brother. One snowy day he climbs on a wall to escape older boys, slips and crushes a foot so badly it must be amputated. Learning Christian endurance during his ordeal, he returns to school. Finally, he looks forward to a career in India, but no longer as an adventurer.⁵

Resigning from "authorship" allowed Martineau more time for good works. For a second time, in early January, she wrote to Crabb Robinson about a "M^{rs} Stoker" she was trying to help, the wife of a tailor who spoke the Norfolk dialect. Julia Smith, meanwhile, was ill and staying at the home of her brother Samuel Smith. When Emily Taylor (possibly writing for Martineau) left, Martineau dashed off a note to Rev. William Harness. Did he know of "Miss Emily Taylor, -- author of 'Tales of the Saxons,' 'the Schoolmistress' & many other little books" and an expert on "schools & the poor?" Though she "rarely or never" called people angels, she would start with Emily when she did. Emily's brother was the late Edgar Taylor, "great & good lawyer, & champion of the Non Coms," a writer and a translator of works in German and French. Emily, not a dissenter, had read Harness's "two vo^ls of Sermons," and would like to know him; she was staying with her sister, who lived at 55 Guilford Street near Regent Square. As Martineau remembered, Harness had "such a voice," and *could* be so loud, he need not mind Emily's ear trumpet. How many tragedies had he written lately? Finally, she added that Robertson was grateful for Harness's interest in his scheme to help the poor against pawnbrokers.⁶

In January, Martineau begged James to arrange to have their mother stay either with him or with Rachel during Ellen's approaching confinement, as nothing was to her "so agitating and so great a cause of agitation to others, as a lying in." For *The Crofton Boys*, she felt a scruple in using traits of character she remembered of the child-amputee Emily Cooper. At Emily Taylor's suggestion she wrote to Emily Cooper and received "one of the noblest and sweetest letters." Now the "Manchester anti-Corn-Law people" had asked to use her name as a

patroness of their bazaar, which she allowed reluctantly. Chatting on, she praised Laing's descriptions of Norway (used for *Feats on the Fiord*). Carlyle, however, hated him and had "'gnashed his teeth' at the sight of his book on the table!" He was "writing a book on the Commonwealth [*The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*] and breaking all hearts about him with his jeremiads." On their last evening, he asked her whether she ever heard him complain and she "laughed in his face -- could not help it, but he forgave." The "Remains" of Richard Hurrell Froude had [in James's words] "unspeakably scared her with their horrid asceticism and 'dirty' self-analysis of sins," and she compared Milnes's "fine spirit" with the "sickly 'rest on the bosom' of a church of sacerdotal forms." Fox, temperamentally like Milnes, had written affectionately of James through Emily Taylor. Now Martineau herself was cheered by "many and secret" letters.⁷

Over the past year, praise for *The Hour and the Man* had continued. In late December, an acquaintance of Martineau's cousin Eliza Martineau, a Miss R.A. Howe, revealed that she had read *The Hour and the Man* "with intense interest," for

[e]very leading name, each marked incident, recalled the agitated & varying scenes of my childhood. Cristophe's eldest daughter was, for some years at School with me . . . at the Convent at Cap.

Moreover, she had

seen & known every character of note of that period up to 1803. At Cristophe's beautiful seat S^t Michel, I have spent some bright & merry days, -- brilliant sparks on an awfully dark canvas."⁸

(Henri Christophe succeeded Toussaint as president of Haiti.)

¹ HM to Henry Hart Milman, 12 November 1841, *CL* 2: 101; Emerson sent out printed copies of *The Method of Nature. An Oration Delivered before the Society of the Adelphi, in Waterville College, in Maine, August 11, 1841* [see *Carlyle Letters* 13: 297, note 2]; RWE to TC, 14 November 1841, *Emerson/Carlyle*, Slater 309-310; HM to JM, 6 September and 21 November 1841, *HM/FL* 490-91 and 491-92.

² HM to JM, 21 November 1841, *FL* 491-92.

³ HM to Milnes, 4 December [1841], *CL* 2: 102-103; Richard Monckton, Milnes, *One Tract More, or The System Illustrated by 'The Tracts for the Times', externally regarded. By a Layman* (London: J.G.F. and J. Rivington, 1841); John L. Stephens's now classic *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (London: John Murray, 1841 [including plates and a map]).

⁴ HM to Catherine Frances Macready, 29 December [1841], *CL* 2: 104-106; for comfort at sea, cf. chap. 9 (Dickens *had* accepted letters to prominent Americans).

⁵ Martineau's second use of amputation in a story for children (as in *Principle and Practice*) seems related to her current sense of incapacity as well as to early masochistic fantasies.

⁶ HM to HCR, 8 January 1842, DWL, Henry Crabb Robinson correspondence, 121a (partly pbd. *CL* 2: 106); HM to William Harness, 13 January [1842], *CL* 2: 106-107 (Harness was curate of Regent Square, St. Pancras; Emily's sister, widow of Martineau's second cousin John Martineau; for pawnbrokers, see above).

⁷ HM to JM, 17 January 1842, *HM/FL* 492-93; Richard Hurrell Froude, Oxford Tractarian, elder brother of James Anthony Froude; Laing, *Journal of a Residence in Norway for Feats on the Fjord*, see chap. 22; *Remains of the late Reverend Richard Hurrell Froude, M.A., Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford* [eds. John Henry Newman and John Keble] (London: J.G. and F. Rivington, 1838-39).

⁸ Mrs. R.A. Howe to HM, 25 December 1841, CRO(K) 1.