

Chapter 20
Continental Touring: Toussaint's Prison, Venice, Illness
(1839)

Before leaving for the continent, Martineau received "a superb gold inkstand" from Lord Durham "with her initials in cipher on the lids of the cups, in acknowledgement of her essay on Strikes." Elizabeth was afraid to have it in the house, so it was put into a safe at Whitbread's.

Martineau's travelling party included Isabella Rankin, Elisabeth Reid, Julia Smith, "a maid-servant and a courier." John Murray had sent her a copy of his handbook for travelers in Switzerland begging for any fresh information she might find. Thanking him, Martineau doubted she could "throw much light on the subject of Switzerland." She was going "as nurse to an invalid cousin" and would probably be away for five months.¹

As during the plans for her American journey, Martineau's friends and acquaintances offered letters of introduction. To Mrs. Marcet, Martineau explained that Isabella would be more in Lausanne (where they had an offer of a place to stay) than in Geneva, and that the letter to Mr. Haldimand would be valuable. "M^r de Candolle [a courier?] & I shall get on very well, I have no doubt," she went on. "I am never at a loss in listening to French, though I have never attempted to speak it." Lord Murray had helped her to obtain from the Secretary of State "a copious and comprehensive passport" for herself and a *femme-de-chambre*, "as the Austrian interdict against my entrance into the empire might otherwise be still an impediment."²

Crossing to Rotterdam on the *Giraffe* on 17 April, Martineau and her party "went up the Rhine, and by the usual route to Lausanne." Unusually, Martineau failed to note in her autobiography any details of the romantic ruins, striking perpendicular vineyards, the Lorelei cliff and other spectacular views they must have passed along the Rhine. Perhaps revealingly one of her party commented as they walked up a hill in Germany (probably to a castle) that she must be "on the verge of some terrible illness." Yet Martineau apparently enjoyed the first two months of her holiday. At Zurich, she told Louisa Jeffery, she had seen "D^r Follen's brother," who was "prodigiously handsome [and held] in high esteem."³

En route to Lausanne, Martineau made a daring side excursion. Having written about the "fortunes and character of Toussaint L'Ouverture" in the *Penny Magazine* she was urged to write more about him. On the morning of 15 May as the party travelled from Fribourg to Payerne, Martineau realized they were not far from the fortress of Joux, "where Toussaint's bones lay," and she resolved to try to visit the remote site. Her friends lacked passports for France (under the autocratic reign of Louis Philippe) and they had passed through Berne the day before, "the nearest place where the necessary signature could be obtained." Providentially, Martineau had the "second passport . . . signed by the French minister in London." As recorded in her appendix to *The Hour and the Man*, one of Martineau's friends offered to cross the frontier with her as a *femme-de-chambre*, to "help in obtaining access to the prison of Toussaint" (this was almost certainly Julia Smith). Leaving their friends at Payerne, the two English ladies agreed to meet them at Lausanne "in two or three days."

Helped by their "courteous landlady at Payerne," they engaged a "double char-à-banc, with two stout little horses, and a *brave homme* of a driver" and set out next day. Traveling by way of Yverdun at the southwestern tip of Lake Neuchâtel, by five in the afternoon they reached Orbe, close to the foot of the Jura Mountains. "[F]ull of "expectation for the morrow," the ladies found rooms at the "Guillaume Tell," and before seven o'clock on 16 May they had "breakfasted, and were beginning the ascent of the Jura." After pausing on the eastern slope for a view of the Alps, the driver wound upward "among the singular defiles" to the valley "commanded by the Jougne." Before the town, "while the carriage was slowly dragged up the steep winding road," the travelers climbed on foot to the gate where the perplexed French custom house officers peered into their single bag and copy of Murray's *Handbook of Switzerland*. Hearing they "expected to pass the frontier again in the afternoon," he allowed them to pass.

Buying provisions, they were then carried upward through valleys, "each narrower than the last, more dismal with pines, and more chequered with snow," until entering the courtyard of the dreaded Fort de Joux. "The Commandant was absent," Martineau recorded, and his Lieutenant was reluctant to admit visitors. At last, a soldier agreed to guide them "through the vault and passages" to Toussaint's cell. Nothing, Martineau assured readers of her novel, was "exaggerated . . . the dim light, the rotten floor . . . the drip of water, the falling flakes of ice, were all there." Briskly jotting down facts and visual details of the fortress under "Miscellaneous Observations" at the back of her journal, Martineau speculated on Toussaint's thoughts.

From local people, she heard contradictory testimony about the capture of Toussaint and his treatment by the commandant. A widow, whose husband had served in Santo Domingo (i.e., Haiti), pointed to the site of a former church where Toussaint was supposed to be buried. Such tales might be expected, Martineau gathered, "in the case of a murdered or neglected prisoner." Julia noticed the dramatic contrast between the cold stones of the fortress and "the warm and living scenery of the tropics," Toussaint's home.

What time of year did he arrive? How much snow?

Make him speculate on how Napoleon would like to
be fixed on a rock,

Martineau appended to her notes.⁴

Retracing their route the two adventurers joined the others, who believed they had been "in Switzerland." Isabella was left in her "place of abode" at Lausanne, and with Elisabeth Reid they crossed the Alps into "the rich plain of Lombardy" (the term Martineau used for northern Italy in her notes for Knight's *The Taming of the Shrew*). At Bergamo, she "looked through the place for a sail-maker" (mentioned by Shakespeare in the first scene of Act 5) and at Verona she went "looking for Juliet." Next walking "through and through" Padua "for the shrewish Katherine's and delectable Portia's sake," Martineau was fascinated by "knots of students," servants buying in the market and "citizens' daughters" walking through the arcades.

At Padua by sheer coincidence, Martineau's party met Adelaide Kemble (Fanny Kemble's sister) with her ailing father, actor Charles Kemble, in Italy to study singing.

On her birthday in Venice, Martineau scribbled a long entry in her journal. The party had arrived late the day before, her cold was "nearly gone" and she and "J." had been out between "six and seven" walking around "San Marco [and] over the bridge below the Bridge of

Sighs, examining the marbles." While the "Piazza was quiet," she noted the "three red pillars . . . of wood, with cords for raising the ensigns of Cypress, Candia, and the Morea," "the Lion's Mouth at the Ducal Palace" and "the two red pillars amid the white in the little piazza, whence criminal sentences were read." After breakfast, they decided the Campanile looked "mighty easy to climb [by] an ascending path around the four sides," the chimes being "so melodious as to make the noise tolerable." At the top, Martineau noted the old man who lived "all the year round," ringing "the quarters and hours." Gazing for an hour, she and Julia picked out details of the "shady, dim court-yards" of noble houses, the Ducal Palace, the royal gardens, the "myriads of pigeons," the bronze horses, the domes of St. Mark, water-carriers and tourists strolling or sketching. Farther off, they could see "the Lido, where Byron rode," and the city looking "vast, sun-dried, and old." Inside the Ducal Palace, they sat on the Golden Stairway "while the keys and permission" were sent for. In contrast to her investigative tour of America, Martineau did not go "to the common prisons, but to those of the Inquisitio." Finally, they saw the "many [splendid] rooms in the palace," full of paintings and stucco figures, and were home by twelve. "What a morning!" Martineau wrote in her journal.

Out again later, they wandered into "the Jew quarter," causing a "commotion." Thrillingly, they saw a house "old enough to have been Shylock's, with balconies from which Jessica might have talked." Also, for Knight's *Merchant of Venice*, Martineau took notes on the routes of ferries for Portia's meeting with Balthazar. Then at the arsenal, Martineau saw "what Othello meant by his business at the Sagittary." Finally, she commented on pranksters who would swim up to the door of a palacio, knock and then dive underwater -- and on the gondoliers, called "knaves."

Even her excitement at being in Venice, however, could not disguise Martineau's awareness of alarming physical symptoms, and she wrote to Greenhow about "sharp pain in the uterine region," frequent menstruation and "inability to stand or walk." At Venice, a Dr. Nardo "conjectured [but did not examine her] either Prolapsus Uteri or a Polypus tumour," an *unexpected* diagnosis that spoiled the travelers' plans. Julia and Elisabeth now became Martineau's "kind nurses" to escort her homeward on a contrived couch in the carriage, "by the straightest road, -- by the Via Emilia, and the St. Gotthard down the Rhine." Martineau wrote to Greenhow from Lucerne to say she could neither walk nor follow his instructions to relieve pain and irritation.

Dutifully, James and Alfred Higginson crossed the channel to meet and accompany Martineau home, taking passage from Antwerp and conveying her to her "mother's couch in Fludyer Street."⁵

At the end of July 1839, Greenhow recorded: "Miss H. M. arrived in Newcastle . . . suffering from . . . various morbid . . . sensations." In spite of the "great discomfort and inconvenience," she continued to walk moderately but could rest comfortably only in a prone position. In 1840, Greenhow "made a statement in writing" to Sir Charles M. Clarke, who agreed with his diagnosis of an "organic or functional derangement of the uterus."⁶

¹ HM to JM, 18 April 1839, *HM/FL* 484-85; HM to Murray, 30 March [1839], *CL* 2: 34; John Murray III, *A Hand-Book for Travellers in Switzerland and the Alps of Savoy and Piedmont, including the Protestant Valleys of Waldenses* (London: John Murray, 1838).

² HM to Jane Marcet, Saturday [April 1839], *CL* 2: 34-35; probably William Haldimand, a philanthropist and former MP from Ipswich settled near Lausanne; after publication of *French Wines and Politics, Illus. Pol. Econ.*, No. 12, Martineau's works were banned by the Austrian emperor; for trouble caused by their alcoholic courier, "Harris," see HM to Mrs. Joseph Parkes, 16 July [1839], *HM/FL* 43-44.

³ *Auto.* 2: 145; HM to Louisa Jeffery, 2 November 1839, JRUL.

⁴ *Auto.* 2: 145; Appen., *The Hour and the Man* 3: 256-63 (citing the surrounding "air of desolation" and "dreary settlements of the charcoal-burners"); in London, Catharine Sedgwick was expected and Carlyle commented to Emerson that Martineau's absence was a loss to her--not knowing Sedgwick's reaction to the *Westminster* article! (TC to RWE, 29 May 1839, *Carlyle Letters* 11: 119-21.

⁵ Martineau must have known Anna Jameson's popular *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1832) listing Portia under "Characters of Intellect" and Juliet under the "Characters of Passion and Imagination" (Jameson's choices were partly motivated by admiration for Fanny Kemble, who famously performed both roles); *Auto.* 2: 134-35 and 145-46 and 3: 222-23; *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare; Comedies* 1: 291-92, 409, 420 and 433; *Tragedies* 1: 274; HM to Louisa Jeffery, 2 November 1839, JRUL; T.M. Greenhow, *Medical Report of the Case of Miss H--- M---* (London: Samuel Highley, 1845) [henceforth Greenhow] 9-11 and 15-16 (Greenhow's pamphlet, written in English, was to end their friendship); Alfred Higginson, Martineau's future brother-in-law training to be a surgeon.

⁶ Greenhow 11 and 15; Sir Charles Mansfield Clarke (specialist in midwifery, physician to Queen Adelaide) had published *Observations on those Diseases of Females which are Attended by Discharges* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814, 1821).