

Chapter 24
Martineau Grows Weaker but Her Letters Grow Longer
(1841-1842)

After visits from her Rankin aunts and Catherine Turner at the end of January, Martineau wrote to her cousin Eliza that Ellen had given birth to a baby girl -- and the baby caps not ready! Meanwhile the avid reader of *The Hour and the Man* had written again, causing Martineau to burst out:

Poor Miss Howe! Her near interest in these S^t Domingo matters makes her testimony untrustworthy . . . You see she derived her impression of Toussaint as did all who brought charges agst him, from dispossessed masters & their class.

Toussaint had never sanctioned massacres or set whites to field labor. Martineau's reading of James Stephens's work on "Russia & Turkey" convinced her that "the degradation of the negroes" in America was solely owing to their position, hence Toussaint's "moral elevation" mystified whites as well as blacks. In a high quality American newspaper, John Quincy Adams had recently called Toussaint greater than Washington. Other examples of revolutionaries unjustly judged by their contemporaries included Luther, Franklin, Washington, Cromwell and Lafayette. Miss Howe's information had been "very valuable & interesting in its way," and she was "greatly obliged" to her and to Eliza. The *Examiner*, moreover, found fault on another point, that Martineau failed to show how his nephew "rebelled agst Toussaint" -- but she was far from sure about those facts. The story "of Dessalines & the blood bath [i.e., of bathing in the blood of children] was told of divers old eastern despots . . . more lately of Louis XV." Did Miss Howe really believe it? Martineau wished Howe would calmly read the records of the time and write an account of her life.

While Catherine was there, Martineau went on, Lissey's husband had let *her* come to Tynemouth for two days. On those days Martineau "took morphia in her honour" that enabled her to "eat & be comfortable." She had pressed Greenhow to prescribe it, and now her "worst hours, -- of sinking, sickness, & streaming perspiration" were cured, and she was able to eat food "brought up unexpectedly at 1/2 past 2."¹

Next Martineau wrote to nine-year-old Snow Wedgwood that she was *glad* her stories were liked, for there were "not to be any more." *Reading* now satisfied her, and she told Snow about an incident in Sir George Grey's journals of discovery in Australia that showed aborigines should be morally treated. She *wished* Snow could see her "ten tulips in full blow, and three noble hyacinths . . . a few crocuses [and] fine narcissus." Did Snow do what she could not, "walk out to the gardens?"²

Satisfyingly, in early March Moxon proposed to bring out cheap editions of both Martineau's novels. But could anything be done, she queried, about "giving the world the benefit of M^r Godwin's papers," as regarded his life? Now that "dear old M^{rs} Godwin" was gone, nothing should "prevent the publication of a person so important in his age & to society." Of "M^{rs} Shelley's conduct," she would rather not speak.

Next Martineau begged Geraldine Jewsbury to forward a letter of condolence to Jane

Carlyle for her mother. Quoting the hymn "When virtuous friends shall meet," Martineau assured Jane *she* was cherished. After a week of not hearing from Jane, Martineau repeated her condolences adding that a "fortnight's vomiting" had pulled her down until cured "by means of blistering the stomach, & large opiates." She thanked *Carlyle* for writing.³

When Louisa Barwell (née Bacon) forwarded her book about the progressive school at Hofwyl near Berne in Switzerland, Martineau stated her objections to the "aristocratic spirit" of the English boys who had conducted *their* visiting party and "did not even know the name of one rural scholar." She doubted "the sufficiency of classical training" for all, and while she valued the "force & beauty of M. Fellenberg's mission," she objected to "the German tendency to theorize & plan about *everything*." The best education for boys she knew was the new "Proprietary School" at Birmingham. Yet Fellenberg's was a divine mission, and "*you* have helped," she assured Barwell.⁴

On 26 March, Martineau sent off another letter of condolence, this time to Anna Jameson for the death of her father, Denis Brownell Murphy. A miniaturist, Murphy had painted a "precious likeness" of Martineau's "most loved brother" (Tom), who died in 1824. She hoped Jameson's father knew of the success of his daughter's "Handbook" (a two-part guide to art galleries in and near London), of which Martineau had seen the laudatory review in the *Athenaeum*.⁵

Martineau's sympathetic letter may have prompted Jameson to come to Tynemouth. Jameson recorded that Lady Byron had been urging her to go -- though she left London "with a pain & swelling in my throat which 13 hours travelling & the foggy morning air" did not help. At Tynemouth, Jameson thought *Martineau* at times dangerously ill. On her first visit to the "little humble lodging" she found Martineau's "countenance & Manner" softened, yet cheerful and lively. Everything Martineau said seemed worth recording. Even on a bad day, Jameson told Lady Byron, Martineau "talked almost incessantly, for 2 hours, with extreme vivacity." Her books and "luxuries" from friends included the "beautiful telescope on a brass stand, with a map of the flags of various nations, from Mrs. Reid;" another friend was to pay for "throwing down the partition wall [to give her two rooms] and a third will pay the rent of the additional room." Martineau had planned where each table and chair would fit, but "could not bear any more air & light, [as] the expanse of blue sky & the wide horizon" made her "*sea-sick*." On an income of £120, Martineau paid £6 10s tax, which seemed "monstrous," yet she supported the income tax and praised Sir Robert Peel.

Jameson heard about Julia Smith's "heroic conduct" on the continent and about Martineau's condition, which seemed "painfully interesting; in some points absolutely sickening," but she "would not have lost a word of it." Martineau, she revealed, blamed her disease on the mental agonies she had suffered in London, just when she was most "prosperous, flattered & admired." One day when even the "nervous distress arising from the displacement of important organs & the perpetual pressure on the intestines & vertebrae . . . combined with the effects of the opiates," did not stop her talking -- mainly of Sarah Austin and Catharine Sedgwick -- Jameson had spent three hours by Martineau's "sofa." She then left her to rest or read *Consuelo* (George Sand's daring novel), though Martineau complained about the book's "*sexual* tone." Her ideas on the subject had changed. "Love, as a passion," she declared, was "merely one of many -- on a par with love of fame, ambition, love of money, power & *equally* capable of being managed, resisted [and] modified." Martineau had never

been in love, she told Jameson. Her present "great resource" was needlework -- "netting, worsted work &c." Every post brought her letters, and the *Spectator* came weekly. She did not suffer from ennui, Jameson asserted, and showed "perfect good nature & faith in humanity." How far Martineau's defective senses had modified her perceptions and intellect Jameson could not say, but Lady Byron could appreciate the sad loss of not inhaling "the fragrance of the rose" or tasting strawberries and cream. As to her "future prospects," Martineau believed in "necessity" and not "Freedom of will." On one occasion, Martineau averred that "we are immortal thro' the affections." Yet, Jameson exclaimed, she had faith in the marvels of "Somnambulism . . . Clairvoyance -- & all!"

Jameson had more to report. On education, Martineau stressed "the use of classical literature to girls." When Jameson gave Martineau a copy of the *Examiner* sent by Lady Byron, she read it eagerly (Jameson was shocked by an article on the terrible conditions in prisons). Finally, Martineau showed Jameson her letters from Channing, Milnes, Carlyle "& particularly from Bulwer." A letter from the "wife of Talleyrand's secretary," Madame Colmache, who lived near Paris, thanked Martineau for *Deerbrook* and *The Hour and the Man*.

As Jameson left on Thursday night, she thought Martineau's "physical distress . . . dreadful & [that] the effects of the Laudanum seemed to *hurry* her mind." The following week, however, Martineau rallied and read Jameson her notes of childhood memories to be used for a "singular autobiography." When she was shown Lady Byron's comments on her case and heard that Lady Byron might come to see her, Martineau exclaimed "O bless her -- bless her," and began netting a handkerchief for Lady Byron to wear round her neck. During her time at Tynemouth, Jameson concluded that Martineau was "one of the "most extraordinary & gifted women" she had met.⁶

Martineau now reported to James that Isabella Rankin was at Rouen "sketching, walking, and enjoying pictures &c." Yet sad news had come from Emily Taylor at Norwich: the Martineaus' aunt at Bracondale was seriously ill, probably from the gallstones endemic to the region. Martineau herself was having fits of violent sickness caused by "even small disturbance[s]." Yet she was hardly idle and wanted James to help sell fifty copies of Follen's "Works and Memoir." She had (again) taken rooms next door for their mother, who had "too little variety and sociability in Liverpool at Alfred's [Higginson]."

(After Emily Taylor's happy time at Tynemouth, James recorded, her "heart turns thither more and more," and she would probably settle there "for a considerable time" [an ominous plan].)

Martineau now focused on politics, and she scoffed to James that "Sir Robert Peel's exposition in Parliament of the simplest principles of free trade policy" excited amazement, "as if there had never been a Huskisson. Quoting a clever squib of Milnes's, Martineau then noted that the Queen was "pitied for the condition of her maternity and defiance of elevated culture."

In June, Martineau laughed at Carlyle's "attributing . . . a quotation from Hebrews to an English author and when corrected, looking for the Letter to the Hebrews in the Old Testament." Carlyle was "deeply engaged," in his "Cromwell," she added, "visiting Naseby Field, &c., and not very brightening as a companion" to Jane, who was depressed after the death of her mother. Carlyle had answered a complaint of having ignored "well-attested" gruesome facts of the execution of Louis XVI (in *The French Revolution*) that they were "too tragic." (Carlyle later quipped to Milnes: "Miss Martineau will surely make me happy, one day,

and able to eat a dinner with satisfaction. If Ilium could have been saved by human logic, then had *this* logical faculty done it!") For James's interest, Martineau added anecdotes of Sydney Smith, Milnes, Sir Charles Napier, Lord Melbourne and Whewell, "then melancholy instances and results of the prevalence of Puseyism and about Shields."⁷

Although as "close a prisoner as ever," Martineau soon fired off a barrage of comments to Fox on local church intrigues and American affairs. Tynemouth was in a Puseyite district, which caused anxiety to the Bishop of Durham and where dissenters were compelled to countenance "poor Methodists under persecution." In the U.S., Channing had shown that Webster in the North and Clay in the West were "finished" in consequence of compromise with slavery. Speculating freely, Martineau predicted that the North would petition for dissolution, the "deteriorated States, -- Virginia, the Carolinas, & about 5 more" would join the North and abolish slavery, while the "fruitful and semi-barbarous, -- from Alabama to Tennessee" -- would join Texas and preserve slavery. Yet she was haunted by the stirring words from Fox's collection, *Hymns and Anthems*: "The ark of Moses is afloat/And Christ is in the temple standing." At Tynemouth, Emily Taylor had seemed "a dearer friend than ever." While they *disagreed* in views, Emily possessed "zeal for education, & the good of the Workers."

To Fox's evident reply, Martineau explained that Lizzie Flower (to whom she no longer wrote) might see her view on their "plan of life" in her letters to him. Deploring his "uncalled for" step (i.e., leaving his wife and putting Lizzie in charge of his household), she nevertheless repeated her "gratitude for the accession of *life*" she had received through him. Just now she was expecting Tennyson's *Poems in Two Volumes*, but had not seen Bulwer's *Zanoni*, recommended by Fox. In America her friend Margaret Fuller, who edited the *Dial*, had produced Goethe papers. Emerson's serenity after the death of his son seemed admirable. And George Ripley's community, only 7 miles from Boston, was "perfect."⁸

In June, Martineau thanked Dr. Andrew Combe, the physiologist and phrenologist (traveling for his health), for his "Heidelberg enclosure." She had ordered his *Treatise on the Physiological and Moral Management of Infancy* (or possibly the latest edition of *The Principles of Physiology applied to the Preservation of Health, and to the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education*) and would be honest in her "*opinion*" of his views. Generally she agreed with him about *results* while differing from him in fundamentals and philosophy. Yet the fall of public men in America she felt he would agree was retribution for slavery.⁹

Congratulating James in late June on the birth of a daughter, Edith, Martineau sent cheerful news of their mother, who nevertheless needed "a constant companion." *She* was expecting Elisabeth Reid and Anna Jameson; and Elizabeth would go "to Eldon Square" to stay with Fanny Greenhow. In America, Henry Ware had been "inspired by the Memoir of Follen" and cast "himself and family adrift." There too the response to her American books had altered, and (in James's words) "the public feeling, as shown by the periodicals," had become so favorable, "as to create a desire to offer her some tribute in reparation for past wrong, of which she could not hear for a moment."¹⁰

Next day, Martineau wrote happily to Milnes, that she had heard his "Poems" were coming to her. On her moral and mental state, she compared herself to Emerson and Carlyle. Emerson's life had been "crowded with calamities," but he could bear even the loss of his son. She wished Carlyle "could rise into the same upper air" rather than "forever tossing in Chaos." Milnes had ordered Follen's "Memoir and Works," and she was pleased -- Follen's life having

been that "of a true Xⁿ man in a half-regenerated world." She had read Milnes's defense of Tractarianism, "One Tract More, by a Layman," four times, "with strong sympathy, though not agreement." On political matters, she hoped he "& all legislators" were fully concerned about public affairs and prepared "to part with a good many of your social privileges." At Tynemouth she had ordered "a well dug in the garden" for the maids plus other improvements, all the while "taking part against the intolerable bigotry of the clergy here."

At last reading Bulwer's *Zanoni* -- about supernatural powers, idealistic self-sacrifice and the French Revolution, Martineau told Milnes she was thrilled by what she conceived to be the novel's deeper meaning. Scorning critics' obtuseness, she sent Bulwer an outline of the allegorical scheme of the work she had drawn up for her friends, and now even her "precious little niece" partly understood its symbolism. She then lauded Milnes's "immeasurable power in its deep sincerity" as compared to Tennyson's emendations of poems and suppression of "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind."¹¹

Bulwer now generously offered his services and suggested she try a German health spa or the "Somnambulistic doctors of Paris." She responded that the first "would not serve" but that she was "very far from despising the higher Somnambulists," two of whom had restored her cousin "from a perfectly hopeless state."¹²

(In July, Henry Crabb Robinson journeyed to Tynemouth to see Martineau, by chance traveling in the company of fellow Unitarian Elisabeth Reid, whose husband he had known. Reid planned "to reside a few weeks" at the elegant Bath Hotel [a few doors along Front Street from Mrs. Halliday's house] and found rooms for Robinson there too. They breakfasted together, walked till 4:00, dined together and at 6:30 went to Martineau's room for tea and to chat till 10:00. Robinson visited the iron bridge Martineau had seen in 1838, the height of which excited "wonder and admiration." Martineau looked well "under the salutary influence of laudanum," he thought; and she showed him the correspondence with Robert Hutton and Charles Buller on her refusal of a pension of £150 offered by Lord Grey. She had refused four times -- not caring to take money from taxes that others had better claim to. Robinson recorded Reid's telling Milnes that Martineau was really a feminine person who would have wished to be a wife and a mother but wrote for "bread." Martineau was an "excellent and most misunderstood" person, Robinson concluded. Nor did she seem to lack money. Her apartment contained luxuries like hothouse flowers and pineapples -- supplied all year by Lord Ravensworth.

While he stayed at Tynemouth, Robinson read through Martineau's *Playfellow* stories. *The Crofton Boys* he judged "wise and highly moral," and he liked the "perfect truth of the narrative." *The Settlers at Home* seemed affecting, but he objected to the "wilful cutting of the dykes." *Feats on the Fjord* he deemed "the most picturesque and agreeable by far").¹³

When Robinson left, Martineau wrote to Macready, and he noted in his diary: "What a truly great and excellent-hearted woman that is!" In July, she answered George Combe at Heidelberg, "via France," concerning her statement on female drunkenness in *Society*. Boston physicians would vouch for the fact, she claimed. In any case, whatever American women said did not affect her, she was too busy fighting the battles of the North, which had produced the best men and women like "M^r Furness & D^r Follen . . . M^{rs} Chapman & Lucretia Mott." As to health, she had "sinkings" but no severe pain, she told Combe. For his "Appendix" on sense, she repeated that she lacked smell and thus taste, except during bad headaches. Her loss of

hearing at about eighteen had meant she was old enough to see the effect on her "moral intellectual nature," and she would not be hurt by anything he wrote of her.¹⁴

¹ HM to Eliza Martineau, 30 January [1842], *CL* 2:107-109 (Eliza was the eldest of Martineau's uncle David Martineau's five unmarried daughters who lived together on Clapham Road); Emily Taylor (Martineau's partisan) had worried over the story that Toussaint made slaves of whites and asked Eliza the name of a Haitian girl rescued by a British naval captain who married her (Emily Taylor to Eliza Martineau, n.d., CRO[K] 2).

² HM to Snow Wedgwood, 17 February [1842], *HM/FW* 37-38 (Fanny Wedgwood may have been ill or too busy caring for her children to write, or perhaps like Jane Carlyle she had fled with relief after an autumn visit to Martineau [probably in 1841, Erasmus said jokingly that he trembled at the thought of Tynemouth as much as Fanny did: *HM/FW* 39, note 1]); George Grey, *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-west and Western Australia, during the years 1837, 38, and 39, etc.* (London: T. and W. Boone, 1841).

³ HM to Moxon, 6 March 1842, *CL* 2: 111 (for new publication of the novels, see chap. 25, note 14)); Mary Shelley published only a brief memoir of her father; HM to Geraldine Jewsbury, 6 March 1842 (in private hands); HM to JWC, 6 and 14 March 1842, *HM/FL* 56-57 and 57; TC to Charles Dickens, 26 March 1842, *Carlyle Letters* 14: 92-94; Carlyle may have written about Jane or about exhorting Dickens to press the American Congress for an international copyright law.

⁴ HM to Louisa Mary Barwell, 23 March 1842, *CL* 2: 112-15 (*Letters from Hofwyl, by a Parent, on the Educational Institutions of De Fellenberg* [London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1842] (Brougham's censure of Hofwyl [*ER* 31 (December 1818): 150-65] might have inspired Martineau's negative remarks).

⁵ HM to Anna Jameson, 26 March 1842, *CL* 2: 115; Anna Jameson, *A Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in and Near London, with Catalogues of the Pictures, Accompanied by Critical, Historical, and Biographical Notices, and Copious Indexes to Facilitate Reference* (London: J. Murray, 1842); [rev.] *Athen.*, 12 February 1842, 139-40.

⁶ Anna Jameson to Lady Byron, [1, 2, 4, 5, 6-7 and 10 (misdated 9) April] 1842, *Anna Jameson: Letters and Friendships* 206-20 (see also, Clara Thomas, *Love and Work Enough. The Life of Anna Jameson* [Toronto: Toronto UP, 1967] 158-59); an avid reader of contemporary literature and art criticism, Jameson differed from Martineau on many points; Martineau's obituary, "MRS. JAMESON." (*DN*, 29 March 1860: 2, cols. 2-3 [rptd. *BS* 429-36]), described her visitor as hard-working though sentimental and prejudiced, fond of society but lacking in repartee and humor (cf. "Mrs. Jameson" [obit.], *Athen.* 24 March 1860: 408-9); Martineau's correspondence with Madame Colmache over *The Hour and the Man* led to further ripples of interest in the novel (see below); William Taylor (of Norwich notoriety) proposed the term "autobiography" for the new genre of self-biography: see James Treadwell, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature 1783-1834* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 3.

⁷ HM to JM, 14 and 20 May and June 1842, *HM/FL* 493, 493-94 and 494-95; TC to JWC, 30 April 1842 and TC to Milnes, 13 July 1842, *Carlyle Letters* 14: 173-75 and 222.

⁸ HM to WJF, 7 and 16 June [1842], (first) BANC [Box 2] 72 (partly pbd. *CL* 2: 116-117) and (second) *CL* 2: 118; WJF, *Hymns and Anthems* [later title: *Hymns and Anthems, the words chiefly from Holy Scripture and the writings of poets*, 5 parts (compiled by W.J. Fox; 1841-46)] (London: Charles Fox, 1841), published for Fox's South Place congregation in 1841 with music for some

hymns by Eliza Flower (hymns by Sarah Flower Adams included No. 85, "Nearer, My God, to Thee," and two by Martineau: No. 47, beginning "All men are equal in their birth," and No. 59, beginning "Beneath this starry arch"); for Fuller's distinguished papers on Goethe in *The Dial: a Magazine of Literature, Philosophy, and Religion* (July 1841), see Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller. An American Romantic. The Public Years* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 61-63; Ripley's community was Brook Farm.

9 HM to Andrew Combe, 16 June 1842, NLS 7265, 42-44 (Combe's brother George was staying at Heidelberg); Andrew Combe, *A Treatise on the Physiological and Moral Management of Infancy* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart, 1840) or *The Principles of Physiology applied to the Preservation of Health, and to the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education*. Eleventh edition, revised and enlarged (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart, 1842).

10 HM to JM, 21 June 1842, HM/FL 495.

11 HM to Milnes, 22 June [1842], CL 2: 120-21; for "One Tract More," see chap. 22; for Milnes's poem "Christian Endurance," see *Auto*. 3: 238-41.

12 HM to Edward Bulwer, 2 July, 22 and 28 August 1842, CL 2: 122, 127 and 128; Edward Bulwer, *Zanoni* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1842); for Martineau's scheme of the allegorical significance of *Zanoni's* characters such as science, idealism, instinct, faith, etc., see "Zanoni Explained by ---; Argument," *Zanoni* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1853); for a lively discussion of the novel, see Webb, 199-200); for Milnes's poem "Christian Endurance," see chap. 22, page 1; Alfred Tennyson, *Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, [May] 1842).

13 HCR to Thomas Robinson, 15 July 1842, DWL, HCR corr. 1841-42 172b; *Robinson on Books/Writers*, Morley [diary entries for 6, 9, 10, 11 and 12 July 1842] 2: 619-21; Robinson's judgment was sound: by 1947 over thirty editions of *Feats on the Fjord* appeared in translations into Dutch, French, German and possibly other languages (see Rivlin); for Martineau's refusal of a pension from Melbourne, see HM to Charles Buller, 21 August 1841, CL 2: 92-94.

14 *Macready*, Toynbee [diary entry for 4 July 1842], 2: 180; HM to George Combe, 19 July 1842 [frag.], NLS, 7265, f. 44 (partly rptd. CL 2: 123-24); Combe's numerous appendices to his textbook on phrenology cited anecdotal evidence, even from Shakespeare: George Combe, *An Essay on the Constitution of Man, considered in Relation to External Objects* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan & Stewart, etc., 1847).