

VARIOUS

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THE MARTYR SEX

Ever since that unfortunate affair in which the mother of mankind was so prominently concerned, the female sex might say, with Shylock, 'Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.' They are, in fact, an incarnation of the Passive Voice—no mistake about it. 'Ah, gentle dames, it gars me greet,' as Burns pathetically says, to think on all the hardships and oppressions which you have undergone throughout the course of history, political and domestic. It is most wonderful that you can bear up your heads at all in the world. Most assuredly it could not be done except under favour of some inherent principle of fortitude, quite beyond all that your associate, Man, has ever displayed. For this reason, I propose to fix upon you the honourable style and title of the Martyr Sex.

As insanity is the more affecting when we observe its victim to be unconscious of the visitation, so does my heart bleed most particularly for the Martyr Sex, when I observe them undergoing severe oppressions without knowing it. So natural is suffering to the sex, or so accustomed are they to it, that they subject themselves spontaneously to enormous loads of trouble and torture, which no one would think of imposing upon them, and which they might easily avoid. It might almost be said, that suffering has a sort of fascination for them, drawing them placidly into it, whether they will or not. It seems in some mysterious way wrought up with their entire destiny.

Hence, at no period of the history of the Sex, do we find them free from some form of amateur affliction. At one time, it is one part of their persons, at another time, another, which is subjected to voluntary distress—but always some part. Not that the shifting is, so far as can be seen, designed as a measure of relief; it would rather appear the object simply is—to make every part bear its share in turn, and allow none to escape. Thus, about a hundred years ago, a lady went about with shoes that raised her heels three inches above the floor, and threw her whole person out of its proper balance, occasioning, of course, a severe strain upon certain muscles, attended by constant pain. A little later, her feet might have been found restored to their right level; but, as if to make up for this, and allow no interval of misery, a tower of hair, pomatum, flour, pins, and pinders, had been reared on the head, such as an inquisitor might have considered himself very ingenious in devising, as a means of undoing the convictions of heretics, or bringing round a Jew to Christianity. Verily, it was a most portentous enginery for the affliction of female humanity; but how heroically it was endured! A whole generation bore it without a sigh! It often cost them their night's rest merely to get it properly put in order—for, dressing being in those days very elaborate, the attendants had to prepare some ladies one day for a party that was to take place the next. They would sit, however, in a chair all night, in order to preserve the structure in all its integrity, sleeping only by snatches, and often waking in terror lest something might be going wrong. Talk of the martyrs of science—Galileo in prison, Bruno at the stake. These men had something of importance in view to sustain them in their trials. Give me the Martyr Sex, who sacrifice ease and convenience, without having any adventitious principle whatever to compensate for and support them under their sufferings.

In more recent times, we have seen the entire Sex submitting to torture in a middle ground—namely, the waist—with an equal degree of magnanimity. The corsets also formed an engine which would have perfectly fitted the purposes of the Inquisition; indeed, there were some ingenious devices of the Holy Office which did not greatly differ from it. It might almost shake the common-sense of admiration for martyrial sufferings, to find that every little girl in England was for some years

both able and willing to endure a regular torture, without apparently having the least idea of making any merit by her patience. Present pains, possible consequences—such as red noses, bad breath, permanent ill health, death itself—were made light of. There being no imaginable good end to be served by it, was nothing to the point. The corsets were, for a time, a proud symbol of the martyr power of the Sex. You would see an example set forth in each milliner's window, carefully disposed under a glass-shade, as indicating the pride they felt in it as a sort of badge of honour. It is to be hoped that a few special copies will be preserved in our antiquarian museums, and, if possible, they should be such as can be certified to have killed their wearers, in order to shew to future generations what the women of our age could submit to *in that particular line*—not *generally* of course, for it is to be expected that the women of the future will have equal sufferings in some other walk to boast of.

It is not always, indeed, that the Sex have a master torment, like tight stays, to endure; but certainly they are never without some source of either anguish or inconvenience to keep their martyr power in exercise. For one thing, they are sadly afflicted with over-large shoes. Strange to say, though there are artists pretending to be ladies' shoemakers, the sex never get shoes sufficiently small. Every now and then, they are receiving some monstrous affront, in the form of a pair of shoes that might hold sufficient meal for a pudding besides their feet. From this cause flow certain pains and penalties in the form of corns and bunions, insuring that they shall never take a step in life without being reminded of the doom of suffering which has been passed upon them. To speak of the simple incommodations which they suffer from dress were endless. At one time, they are all blown out into sleeve, so that a miscellaneous dinner-party looks like a series of men and women with feather-beds stuck between each pair. At another time, the sleeve, while moderate in the region of the upper arm, is fashioned wide at the bottom, as if to allow of the fair wearers laughing in it—the joke, however, being all against themselves, seeing that the pendulous part is a source of continual trouble and worry, from its trailing through every sauce and tart that may be at table, till it becomes a kind of geological phenomenon, in the illustration which it affords of the succession of deposits and incrustations. Or the swelling falls mainly into a lower part of the dress, taking the form of a monstrous prolongation of skirts, and insuring that the fair Martyrs shall act as scavengers upon every street in which they promenade. I hardly know a more interesting sight than that of a young lady going to school on a wet day, with books to carry in one hand, and an umbrella to sustain in the other. To see the struggles she makes in such circumstances to keep her skirts from dragging in the mud, or the patience with which she submits to their unavoidably doing so, and to think of the sad condition of her lower extremities all the time—to reflect, moreover, that all this trouble and suffering could be avoided by merely having skirts of a sufficient, but not over-sufficient length—presents such an affecting picture of evils voluntarily encountered and heroically sustained, as but rarely occurs in the course of human life. It is justly held as a strong proof of patience, that you should calmly submit to be spat upon, or have mud thrown upon you by some infuriated crowd; but here is a gentle creature who literally goes out every day to endure the certain contact of these nuisances, and comes home to dinner not in much better plight than one who has sat (unpopularly) in the pillory for an hour. I really must give such martyrdom the meed of my admiration; and the more so, that I feel myself, under the hardening effects of worldly common-sense, totally unprepared to go through such hardships without some useful end to be served by it.

The last example of what may be called the Martyrdom of Inconvenience which the Sex have shewn, is to be found in a form of bonnet adapted for summer wear, in which the front comes only to about an inch behind the forehead, so as to leave the face fully exposed to the attacks of the sun (when there is one) and the unmitigated gaze of the beaux. There is something very remarkable in this fashion, for a great number of ladies find it absolutely indispensable to add to this abbreviation of a bonnet a sort of supplement of silk called an *ugly*, wherewith to screen the face from becoming an absolute photograph. A couple of inches added to the bonnet itself would serve the end; but this would give a regular and not inelegant protection. It would, therefore, entirely prevent inconvenience,

and so thwart the Sex in their martyrial propensities. Such a thing is not to be thought of. On the contrary, either to suffer from sunlight without an *ugly*, or to suffer from clumsiness with one, enables the unfortunate Sex to indulge in its favourite passion to the fullest extent possible in such cases. Admirable portion of creation! what merits are yours, what praise is called for fully to requite you! But, indeed, it must be quite impossible ever to make sufficient acknowledgment of that wonderful power of endurance for its own sake which you shew in the most trivial, as in the most important phases of life!

I therefore quit the subject with a humiliating sense of my utter incompetency to do it entire justice. I weep and wonder—my very soul thrills with the pathos of woman's martyr position on the earth and her volunteer sufferings above all. But I would vainly attempt to utter all I feel. I must leave it to each bearded fellow-creature, as he walks through the wilderness of this world, to behold with a sympathising eye and spirit an endurance so affecting, and endeavour to compensate it, to the individual sufferers within his reach, by every consolation and every reward he may have it in his power to bestow.

THE YOUNGEST BRITISH COLONY

Which is the youngest British colony? Simple as the question seems, it may be doubted, considering the remarkable increase of late years in the number of John Bull's colonial progeny, whether the most experienced red-tapist of Downing Street could answer it without some hesitation. At least a dozen infant communities occur at once to the recollection. There is Port Philip, lately rechristened by the royal name of Victoria, and now seemingly in a fair way to be smothered in its cradle by a deluge of gold-dust. There is the Hudson's Bay Company's little Cinderella of Vancouver's Island, with its neglected coal-mines, and other mineral riches. Then we have the precocious 'Canterbury' pet, the 'young Virginia' of New Zealand. Nor must we forget the storm-vexed colony of Labuan, ushered into existence amid typhoons and parliamentary debates—nor the small castaways, growing up in secluded islets and corners—in the Falkland Islands, the Auckland Islands, on the Mosquito Shore, and in the far Eastern Seas. It is in one of these directions that most persons would probably be inclined to cast an inquiring glance before attempting to answer the question with which these remarks are prefaced. It is not likely that many would at once be able to recall to mind the fact, that an important British colony, dating its official existence from the 22d of March 1851, has suddenly sprung up in the interior of Africa—a colony already possessing an efficient legislature, a handsome revenue, and several flourishing towns, with churches, schools, a respectable press, and other adjuncts, of civilisation. A brief description of this remarkable colony may serve to awaken for it an interest which its future progress, if at all corresponding with the past, will probably keep alive.

There is some difficulty in describing the 'Orange River Sovereignty'—for such is the long and rather awkward name by which this settlement is now known—so as to convey a correct idea of its situation without the aid of a map. That the Cape Colony occupies the southern coast of the African continent, and that the colony of Natal is on the south-eastern coast, are facts of which few readers will need to be reminded. Will it, then, be sufficient to say, that the 'sovereignty' in question is situated in the interior, between these two colonies, having the Cape on the south, and Natal on the east? It will be necessary to refer briefly to the manner in which it acquired its rank as a colony, and its peculiar name. Just two hundred years ago, in the year 1652, the Cape Colony was founded by the Dutch; and about fifty years ago, it came into the possession of our own government. During these two centuries, the colony has been constantly extending itself towards the east and north, just as the British settlements in North America, which were founded about the same time, have been ever since extending their borders towards the west and south, or as the settlements of Eastern Australia have been spreading to the west, south, and north. It is a natural movement of colonisation, and there seems to be no means of checking it, even if any advantage were to be gained by doing so.

As the American backwoodsmen, in their progress westward, reached at last the boundary-streams—as they were once considered—of the Mississippi and the Ohio, so the South-African colonists gradually found their way to the great Orange River, which, flowing nearly across the continent, from east to west, formed a sort of natural limit to the old colony. But beyond this boundary, extensive plains and undulating downs, covered with nutritious herbage like the American prairies, spread out invitingly towards the distant northern horizon. The exterminating wars among the native tribes had left these grassy plains almost wholly unoccupied. You might travel over them for days without meeting a human being, or any traces of human possession, except here and there the decaying huts and bleaching skeletons of the former inhabitants. The feeble remnants of these tribes had sought refuge in the recesses of the neighbouring mountains, where some of them, in their dire extremity, sustained a horrid existence by cannibalism, which revolting custom still further diminished their numbers, and has only recently been suppressed. The Cape 'boers,' or farmers, rich as the patriarchs of old in cattle and sheep, and straitened like them for pasture, gradually found their

way over the river into these fruitful and vacant plains. At first, they crossed only in small numbers, and with no intention of remaining permanently. But the abolition of slavery, the mismanaged Caffre wars, and some unpopular measures of the Cape government, suddenly gave a great impulse to the emigration.

About fifteen years ago, some thousands of Dutch colonists sold their farms, packed their household gear in their huge capacious wagons, and with their wives and children—in all, at least 10,000 souls—accompanied by myriads of cattle, sheep, and horses, crossed the Orange River, and plunged into the vast wilderness beyond. Some spread themselves over the rich pastures in the country lying immediately north of that river, and now forming the infant colony which is presently to be described. Others penetrated far to the north, forded the Vaal or Yellow River, and planted corn-fields and vineyards on the fertile slopes of the Kashan Mountains, where they still maintain themselves as a self-governed and thriving community. One small band of bold adventurers found their way to the verdant but fever-haunted plains about Delagoa Bay, whence the few survivors were presently driven by the destructive ravages of the pestilence. But the main column of the emigrants, turning to the right, crossed the lofty chain of the Drakenberg—the 'Rocky Mountains' of Africa—and descended into the well-watered valleys and woody lowlands of Natal. The romantic but melancholy story of the sufferings, the labours, the triumphs, and the reverses which filled up the subsequent years—how some of the emigrants were surprised and massacred by the jealous tribes of the interior, and others were treacherously slaughtered by their professed ally, the blood-thirsty chief of the Zulus—and how the exasperated survivors turned upon their assailants, broke their power, and scattered them; how they planted towns, formed a regular government, and set up an independent republic; all these, and many similar events, must be left for the future historians of South Africa to record. Neither is it necessary to refer here to the policy which led our government afterwards to extend its authority over the lands thus conquered and settled by the emigrants, or to the manner in which this authority, at first resisted, was finally established. Natal was thus made a British province in 1842. Many of the boors, naturally enough disliking the new government thus forced upon them, retraced their course over the Drakenberg, back into the upland plains of the interior. Here they were left pretty much to themselves, until the year 1848, when Sir Harry Smith proclaimed the extension of the Queen's supremacy over the whole of the territory situated between the Orange and Vaal Rivers; but, as has been already said, it was not until March of last year that this acquisition was finally sanctioned, and the new colony established by an act of the imperial government.

The Vaal River—sometimes called the Nu Gariep, and sometimes the Yellow River—is the principal tributary of the Orange River; indeed, it is so large an affluent, that some geographers have doubted, as in the case of the Mississippi and the Missouri, which should properly be considered the main stream. These rivers, the Orange and the Vaal, rising near together in the Drakenberg chain, take a wide circuit, the one to the south-west, the other to the north-west, and flow each a distance of about 400 miles before their junction. The territory which they thus enclose is nearly as large as England, comprising between 40,000 and 50,000 square miles. It is inhabited by about 80,000 natives, of various Bechuana, Namaqua, and half-caste tribes, and by some 15,000 or 20,000 colonists of European origin. Over all these inhabitants, colonists and natives, the British sovereignty has been proclaimed. Subject to this supremacy, the native chiefs and tribes are still left to manage their own affairs, according to their original laws and customs. But in order to indicate clearly and decisively the fact, that the royal authority is now paramount in this region whenever Her Majesty's government chooses to exert it, the name of the Orange River Sovereignty has been given to the whole territory.

The portion of this territory which is properly a British settlement—or, in other words, which is inhabited by Dutch and English colonists, is in extent about two-thirds of the whole. It is subdivided into four districts, for each of which a stipendiary magistrate has been appointed. These magistrates, with eight unofficial members of council—who are all respectable landowners—form, in conjunction with the 'British resident,' the legislature of the colony. The title of the Resident is borrowed from the

official system of India, and was originally given to him when acting as a government commissioner for the protection of the native tribes; but his office is at present simply that of a colonial governor.

The extensive country which is thus governed, cannot be better described than in the words of Sir Harry Smith, who, in a dispatch written in January 1848, gives the following account of the whole region, which he had just traversed, on his way from the Cape to Natal. He describes it as 'a country well fitted for the pasturage of cattle, and covered in every direction with large game. It is,' he adds, 'strongly undulating; and although badly watered, well adapted for the construction of dams; and, the soil being generally rich, it is capable, if irrigated, of producing every species of grain. It is miserably destitute of trees, frequently even of bush, and is thickly studded with abrupt and isolated hills, whose height frequently approaches that of mountains. Over the greater part of this tract of country, not a single native is to be seen; nor for many years, if ever, has it been inhabited by one. The gardens of the emigrants (boers) are in many places very good; their houses miserable, as they have been deterred from exhausting their little remaining capital by building on a doubtful and precarious tenure. That objection to the increase of their comfort, if the word be applicable, will now, I trust, be happily removed.' The absence of trees, of which Sir Harry speaks, is believed to have originated from the same cause which occasions a similar want in the prairies of America—that is, the native custom of burning down the grass every winter, to fertilise the soil. Where trees have been planted recently, they have grown well. The apple, pear, peach, and other fruit-trees of temperate climates, are found to thrive and produce abundantly. The whole country, it should be added, is a great plateau, elevated 2000 or 3000 feet above the level of the sea. The climate is, therefore, cooler than in Natal, which is situated in the same latitude, but at a lower elevation.

It was not till Sir Harry Smith had thus proclaimed the royal supremacy, in 1848, that English colonists began to establish themselves in any considerable numbers in the country. But they then soon found their way thither, principally as traders, and settled in the new towns which quickly sprang up in the several districts. Bloem Fontein, the capital, is now almost wholly an English town. It has its municipality; its weekly newspaper—printed in English and Dutch; its English and 'Dutch Reformed' churches, and Wesleyan Chapel; its government school; its market; and various other appurtenances of a flourishing town, all of which have come into existence since Sir Harry Smith made his flying visit to the province in 1848, and proclaimed it subject to Her Majesty's supremacy. Such magic resides in a British governor's proclamation!

But the growth of Bloem Fontein, rapid as it has been, is not so striking as that of another town. There is a well-known story of a traveller, in a newly-settled part of North America, inquiring his way at a lonely hut to a 'city' which made a conspicuous figure in some land-speculator's map, and receiving the startling information, that he was then standing in the principal square. An adventure of much the same nature befell a traveller in South Africa, who, in February 1850, attempted, while on his way from Bloem Fontein to Natal, to discover the newly-founded town of Harrismith.

'At length,' he writes, 'having reached the eastern side of the mountain, I halted, and determined to go in search of this new-born town—a future city in our vast empire. Taking my attendant, Andries, with me, we proceeded to an elevation, where I felt sure it must come into view. We were disappointed. Not a spire, nor chimney, nor hut could be seen; and so we walked on towards another elevation. On our way, we came to an emigrant settler, busily employed in brick-making; and from him I learned that we had taken the left-hand road instead of the right, after we passed the last stream. We were about a mile from the spot marked out as the town, *but no houses are built, nor are any persons residing there*; so I did not deem it worth while to proceed further in that direction.' In May of the same year, 'two or three houses' are reported to have been built; in 1851, they are springing up rapidly; and at the latest date, the 9th of last January, we hear of an actual flourishing little town, with school-house, flour-mill, and bustling and increasing trade.

The progressing town, however, had its difficulties, both physical and political, to contend with. The correspondent has to report, that 'the postal arrangements still continue unsatisfactory

and vexatious, no post having been received from Bloem Fontein for the last two months; and,' he indignantly adds, 'to make matters worse, the late magistrate's clerk and postmaster has resigned, owing to grave charges having been preferred against him by a party faction who would rule public opinion.' But he consoles himself with the judicious reflection, that 'time and imported respectable intelligence will remedy this unhappy state of things, in the changes which small communities undergo.' It is satisfactory to learn, that in spite of the machinations of faction, the citizens managed to enjoy themselves when a suitable occasion offered. 'New-Year's Day,' we are told, 'was celebrated with more than ordinary spirit. A shooting-match took place, after which a public supper and quadrille-party came off; which finished the pleasures of the day. The next day, lovers of the turf had their enjoyment in the establishment of races.' And then we have, duly recorded in the well-known *Racing-Calendar* style, the fortunes of the competitors, for the 'Untried' Cup, the 'Harrismith Plate,' the 'Ladies' Purse,' and the 'Hack-Race' and it is stated that 'one of the horses was sold immediately after the races for L.40,' which would seem to be considered a high figure in that region. It is further announced, 'that another year will probably see the establishment of a fair, which will give our interior farmers and friends an opportunity of rendering a journey to Harrismith both profitable and pleasurable, as such an occasion will doubtless attract buyers of cattle, horses, sheep, wool, butter, tallow, grain, &c., from Natal.' And the correspondent is 'happy to state, that several farmers are settling upon their farms in the neighbourhood of the town, which will tend to give confidence, and increase the value of land in its vicinity.'

Thus, in less than two years, a real, bustling, hopeful little town had sprung into existence, with all the genuine characteristics of an English community. Education and trade, races and quadrilles, were already flourishing. The well-known political parties, the Buffs and the Blues, the foes of corruption and the friends of established institutions, were already arraying themselves in hostile ranks. In two years more, we may expect to receive the first numbers of the *Harrismith Gazette* and the *Harrismith Independent*, the 'organs' of the respective parties; and to learn through their valuable columns, that the 'Harrismith Agricultural and Commercial Bank' has declared its first annual dividend of 10 per cent., and that the new 'Harrismith Assembly-Rooms' were thrown open, on the auspicious anniversary of the royal birthday, to a large and select assemblage of the rank, fashion, and beauty of the city and its neighbourhood.

The writer from whose letter some of the foregoing quotations are made, strongly recommends that the government should offer 'unstinted encouragement and liberal assistance' to promote emigration from Great Britain; and considers that, if this were done, 'thousands of hardy English and Scotch farmers would avail themselves of the advantages which the country offers.' This is possible; but at the same time, it should be known, that the excitement among the native tribes, caused by the war in Caffreland, had extended across the Orange River into the sovereignty, and that much confusion, and, unfortunately, some bloodshed, had ensued. These disorders, it is true, were only local; but it is evident that the neighbourhood of some 80,000 barbarians must, for some time to come, be a source of considerable embarrassment and danger to all settlers in the new colony. In time, no doubt, with the progress of civilisation, this danger will be removed; and the natives may become, as in New Zealand, a source of wealth to the colony, as useful labourers—like the 'skipping Caffres' under the brickmaker's instructions, or peaceful cultivators of the soil. At present, however, the peril from this source is so evident and so serious, that a warning reference to it could not with propriety be omitted in any description of this otherwise promising settlement.

THE SECRET

Jean Baptiste Véron, a native, it was understood, of the south of France, established himself as a merchant at Havre-de-Grâce in 1788, being then a widower with one child, a young boy. The new-comer's place of business was on the south quay, about a hundred yards west of the custom-house. He had brought letters of high recommendation from several eminent Paris firms; his capital was ascertained to be large; and soon, moreover, approving him self to be a man of keen mercantile discernment, and measured, peremptory, unswerving business habits, it is not surprising that his commercial transactions speedily took a wide range, or that, at the end of about fifteen years, M. Véron was pronounced by general consent to be the wealthiest merchant of the commercial capital of northern France. He was never, albeit, much of a favourite with any class of society: his manner was too *brusque*, decided, unbending—his speech too curt, frequently too bitter, for that; but he managed to steer his course in very difficult times quite as safely as those who put themselves to great pains and charges to obtain popularity. He never expressed—publicly at least—any preference for Royalism, Republicanism, or Imperialism; for fleur-de-lis, bonnet-rouge, or tricolore: in short, Jean Baptiste Véron was a stern, taciturn, self-absorbed man of business; and as nothing else was universally concluded, till the installation of a *quasi*

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