

“NEWS FROM ‘HOUR’ FAIR CITY”

A new Hope for Victorian Manners

Cordelia Lancaster

With Victoria Times Staff

With so many Visitors in our fair city in recent weeks, it might seem that our Way of Life is drowning under foreign influences, but not so! Only recently, one Cordelia Lancaster has opened the doors to a new Finishing School. This marvelous establishment seeks not to teach graciousness and elegance to our already fine young ladies, but rather to tutor those whose upbringing has been sadly deficient in the gentler arts. Thus far, it appears the Machines have been the chief beneficiaries of this lady’s time and patience.

In the chambers of a modest building, men and women who, before, could scarcely have been described as ladies and gentlemen take instruction in Victorian manners. The sounds of waltz music float delicately through the windows as the ever-conscientious instructor counts a refined “1-2-3, 4-5-6” to aid her pupils in their tentative steps.

What will come next? Lessons in proper forms of address, the art of casual conversation, and table manners are all planned.

“It seems to me that many of the problems Our City associates with the Machine presence come from tragic misunderstandings,” Miss Lancaster reported. “I have been teaching Machines for several weeks now, and they seem to be a goodhearted, though unrefined, lot. It is my hope that Manners will allow these Visitors to integrate into our society instead of providing a locus for fear and hostility.”

“I would very much like to turn my Finishing School into a model for cultural exchange, but these things must occur in small steps. For now,” Miss Lancaster continued, “I will concentrate on the waltz.”

If you know someone in need of tutoring, or even a gentle refresher, in deportment, the *Victoria Times* urges that you contact Cordelia Lancaster. Private lessons and specific topics available upon request.

Coil: Medic Angel of Victoria

Victoria Times Staff

Recently, the Times has had the honor to interview the sagacious Coil, late of the Ivory Tower, now happily—and no doubt irrevocably—ensconced in our own Community. Given the noble nature of her recent deeds, it seems correct to bring the Our Readers’ attention to them; to that end we were fortunate enough to be granted the following Interview.

Victoria Times: It has come to our attention that you have performed some truly remarkable services to the City in recent weeks. Perhaps you could describe them for the benefit of Our Readers?

Coil: Well, I of course am simply doing my job as a medic—what you would call a Physician. But, firstly: several weeks ago, I and my friend and associate, Switch/Sprocket, opened a clinic where we assist anyone in need of medical attention regardless of ability to pay, Victorians and Visitors alike. More recently I’ve worked with Dr. Ashburn to restore the Baron of Blood’s eye after that dreadful business with the Goblin, brought Reginald Durling back from the brink of death, and taken care of several other less severe emergencies.

VT: That is quite a list of accomplishments. Some of your procedures seem to border on miraculous, in fact. How do you perform them?

C: I’m a specialist in Applied Bioelectrical Morphology—part of the Ivory Tower’s Anatomy Department *in absentia*, actually. Really the only such specialist: the field is derived from my own Researches.

VT: There are some who say your ministrations involve mechanical implantations. Is this part of your Bioelectrical Morphology? And would you answer their concerns that this is not a Healthful form of care?

C: No, I don’t use any implants at all; my methods are purely biologically derived. To simplify the theory considerably—well, it’s a known fact that many bodily functions, including the modulation of the heart rate and the workings of the brain, are electrical in nature. I’ve discovered that in fact the entire form and health of the body are maintained by naturally occurring bioelectrical fields. With the help of an amplifier-projector, I’m able to affect those fields in other people and thus perform non-invasively many otherwise difficult and risky medical procedures. It’s actually much safer than more traditional surgical Medicine, as there’s far less risk of infection.

VT: Could you tell Our Readers more about your heroic rescue of Reginald Durling? What Chance brought you to the scene in time, and how were you able to save him?

C: It was in fact pure Luck that brought me there in time to save him, but as soon as I realized his condition I rushed to his side—just in time, too, as he was very close to being past saving. He’d been attacked, on account of his previous kind articles about us, by the same ghost which has recently been so viciously attacking and killing Machines. He was very severely injured and was thus unable to maintain his own biomorphic field, which injury disrupts; I was able to repair it and sustain it long enough for his own natural processes to take back over.

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On the Census

Conradin Crane

His Temperance Lord Mark Sweeney, Baron of Blood, reports that Victoria's census program has met with considerable but not complete success. Victorians and visitors alike are commended for taking the time to register with Ms. Carlyle. The Baron, however, has noted that a number of the city's worthies have chosen not to wear the ribbons he has issued.

It is understood that mode and fashion make their demands; nonetheless, we are asked to "bear with" the Baron and participate in the Ribbon Program. In these days of tumult, it is felt, we must aid the High Aristocrats as they endeavor to provide municipal services to all who harbor within Victoria's bounds.

The hours pace and snarl. What's found is lost.
Giants trip on lesser men. Regret's
The order of the day. Nightmare besets
The Daydream-seeker: such is the ticket's cost.

Black symbols on the map of life embossed
Reveal the frailty of our epithets—
Titles and stations! Reading, a man forgets
The tithe he owes, what borders he has crossed.

Despair, Victoria: in this hour you drown.
Your hands know half of what their partners do;
Your eyes are caught in mirrors, glazed in mist.
Only from your chained heart may light break
through.
Despair, and gird yourself, misfortune-kissed:
The foe of joy is waiting. Face him down.

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Coil recounts her works

Victoria Times Staff

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VT: Such Serendipity. Can you tell Our Readers more about this dangerous ghost?

C: Certainly. Your Readers have heard, no doubt, about the series of bizarre and ritualistic murders in recent weeks. Detective Carlyle requested my assistance with autopsies of the victims, and we were able to ascertain that the perpetrator had significant medical training. When the ghost appeared to several of us to make threats—and then, after I saved Mr. Durving, manifested with scalpel in hand—it became clear that it was responsible, and we were able to confine it to the railways with the help of the Duke of Steel. I would advise your Readers to stay well clear of the railways until the matter is settled completely, as the ghost is extremely dangerous and quite Mad.

VT: I'm sure Our Readers will be grateful for the warning. Do you feel any conflict in treating Victorians when there have been so many conflicts between our two Cultures? Will you continue to run the clinic even if the slums of the city remain hostile?

C: No, no conflict at all; I certainly wouldn't hold all Victorians responsible for the actions of those few people whose fear of progress is so strong as to provoke violence. The clinic is meant in no small part as a gesture of Goodwill between our Cultures; it would be quite counterproductive and improper of me to shut it down now, assuming the High Aristocrats are so kind as to allow it to continue operating given the new laws.

VT: In light of all the aid you have rendered the City, how do you feel about the new laws? What has been the Machine reaction in general?

C: Well, it's hardly my place to speak for my superiors, but for myself—I'm not necessarily happy, but it's within the rights of a Sovereign state to make laws concerning its own lands, and given that there have been certain unfortunate cross-cultural Incidents, not only with us but with those from the Shining Kingdom as well, I can see why some people might consider them necessary.

VT: On that topic, do you have any comment on the "Extraction" incident and the upcoming trial?

C: It's my understanding that those who ordered the extraction did so after some form of Threat was made against us by the person in question. However, I'm not privy to the precise details of the situation. I certainly hope that the situation can be resolved swiftly and fairly, and I assure the readers of the Times that we have no plans to extract anyone else without express permission.

VT: Thank you for your candor, Coil, and the *Times* hopes you will continue to use your miraculous cures for the benefit of the City.

C: I'm pleased to have been of service to the *Times* and the City alike, and I shall most certainly continue to do so.

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Health Advisory:

Synovea Ashburn

Due to the rain, the Royal Physician advises those who can to carry an umbrella with them and shield themselves. In addition, to prevent the catching of chills or fevers that can lead to more serious ailments, remove all wet clothes upon entering your home or other acceptable location, and dry yourself off.

Another good preventive measure is washing your hands before meals, even if you regularly wear gloves. Lastly, make sure to drink warm liquids in the cold weather: tea will soothe your sinuses and throat, as well as having other health benefits.

Happenings About

Victoria Times Staff

Since the last issue of the Times, glimpses of a most unusual Apparition walking the streets of Victoria are frequently reported. The nightmares which have for so long plagued the city have declined precipitously, however, freeing many to return to their occupations and other pursuits. This catharsis coincided with several days of oily, chilly, unpleasant rain, during which few went outdoors if they could avoid it. The homeless, and those visitors to the city who lack permanent domiciles, suffered particularly badly from this turn of events.

Word has gone out about a new Finishing School for remedial education in proper Victorian behavior, overseen by Cordelia Lancaster. It has a good reputation, considering its evident lack of funding.

A huge construction site has gone up towards the outskirts of the city. What is being built appears to be a sphere, held upright by support struts, some hundred yards in diameter. It is clearly mechanical, and many fear that it might be some great weapon of the Machines.

This assumption seems to be part and parcel with a general increase in Victorians' xenophobia, especially among the lower classes. Those without "citizen" ribbons are occasionally discovered in back alleys, mugged and beaten, sometimes fatally; and at one point, a train containing a dozen Machines, outfitted with heavy weaponry, pulls into Victoria Station. They are all dead, their necks bearing neat, surgically precise incisions.

A Prayer for the City

Sir Treton Merze

People of Victoria (would that I could call you Good), it is evident that Dark Times have come upon us. The Sins of our Hearts, which our frail human frames and shallow minds have been insufficient to Repress, have for some time been made Manifest in that Foul Lake which pollutes our once Fair Victoria. For Yea, it was the seeds of our own wickedness and malfeasance that gave that Vile Canker the opportunity to Grow here and Fester.

And Lo, that loathsome pus now rises and walks the streets, threatening to Ruin and Consume all that we hold Sacred and Good. Our Doom is at hand, and it is not Undeserved. Let us Repent before we are Destroyed, if we are to even approach being Worthy of Salvation! For all of our Wickedness cannot save us now--it is our Burden and our Shame. Rather, we must Repent and Pray that the small bit of Goodness, the slight Purity that remains in this our City might still Overcome the Darkness that plagues us. We must not submit to our hearts and Wallow in Despair, but rather must Carry Out our Duties.

O Victoria, your Doom is at hand, and is richly Deserved, but let us not give up hope for Grace.

Upside-Down Duck: Mechanosopher

Conradin Crane

It has been the *Times*' pleasure to secure a moment with Dr. Upside-Down Duck, visiting academic, member of the Machine task force, and psychiatric counselor to Our City's mechanical guests.

Victoria Times: Am I correct, sir, in believing that you come to Victoria from the Ivory Tower?

Duck: Yes. I am a Machine psychologist, on a multi-year sabbatical from the Ivory Tower; I'm fortunate enough to continue my research here in Victoria. I still I send papers back now and then, although I haven't heard much lately—I guess Freud is too busy to read the papers of his old students. But no matter. All I need for my research is here. I have office space, which the head of Victoria University has graciously lent me, and I have my patients.

VT: Do you treat Victorians as well as Machines?

D: Oh no. Dr. Synovea Ashburn handles the psychiatric needs of Victoria. We'll offer each other our professional opinions now and then, but she is extremely capable.

No, I specialize in device psychology. Some devices are complicated and sophisticated enough to be essentially alive. And they have emotions and emotional problems, just like the rest of us. But who will see them? The Machines are utterly amazing at creating and rearing devices, but sometimes repairs have to be made to the heart, not to the wiring.

Initially, I ventured out from the Ivory Tower in order to examine how the Machines related to one another. To see how they relate to their devices, and to see how they handle emotional trauma. But what I found was much more. What I found was my academic calling in life!

While I do see the occasional Victorian or Machine now and then, they are not my primary patients. You will have to learn a little more bit more about my calling to know who my patients are.

VT: Pray elaborate.

D: As you well know, Synovea runs the Sanitarium. And without the Sanitarium, many undeserving people would end up in the Breaks. You don't need my professional opinion to realize that the Breaks is a terrible place to be sent to! But some people are redeemable, and that's where Synovea's Sanitarium comes in.

Now we Machines have our own analog to the Breaks. It's called "extraction." Like you, we use it only when necessary . . . but the details of "extraction" do not matter here. The point is that I am running a program, like Synovea's Sanitarium, to return redeemable people back to functional Machine society. In fact, one of my most interesting patients will be taking her first steps around Victoria in a few days! If you wish, I can introduce you to her.

VT: And you feel that she is rehabilitated enough to bear the present strains of Society?

D: What? Oh, don't worry. We Machines can ensure that—unlike someone released from the Breaks—the freed person is completely safe. You see, my patient's body is mechanical, and innumerable safeties are in place to ensure that she does not injure herself or others. She will not be completely autonomous for a little while longer, but she is ready to be introduced back into proper society. In fact, I cannot think of anything better for my patient than exposure to the proper values of Victorian life! And she is already acclimating wonderfully. She has a job lined up with the Marquess of Winds, and—

But here, now I am telling her story! I will let the success of my research speak for herself.