

**ELIZABETH BURGOYNE CORBETT**

# **NEW AMAZONIA**



**THE TALE OF FEMINIST UTOPIA**

**Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett**

# **New Amazonia - The Tale of Feminist Utopia**

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# PROLOGUE.

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It is small wonder that the perusal of that hitherto, in my eyes, immaculate magazine, the *Nineteenth Century*, affords me less pleasure than usual. There may possibly be some articles in it both worth reading and worth remembering, but of these I am no longer conscious, for an overmastering rage fills my soul, to the exclusion of everything else.

One article stands out with such prominence beyond the rest that, to all intents and purposes, this number of the *Nineteenth Century* contains nothing else for me. Not that there is anything admirable in the said article. Far from it. I look upon it as the most despicable piece of treachery ever perpetrated towards woman by women.

Indeed, were it not that some of the perpetrators of this outrage on my sex are well-known writers and society leaders, I would doubt the authenticity of the signatures, and comfort my soul with the belief that the whole affair has been nothing but a hoax got up by timorous and jealous male bipeds, already living in fear of the revolution in social life which looms before us at no distant date.

As it is, I am able to avail myself of no such doubtful solace, and I can only feel mad, downright mad—no other word is strong enough—because I am not near enough to these traitors to their own sex to give them a *viva voce* specimen of my opinion of them, though I resolve mentally

that they shall taste of my vengeance in the near future, if I can only devise some sure method of bringing this about.

But perhaps by this time some of my readers, who may not have seen or heard of the objectionable article in question, may be anxious to know what this tirade is all about.

I will tell them.

But I must first allude to the fact that my sex really consists of three great divisions. To the first, but not necessarily the superior division, belongs the class which prefers to be known as *ladies*.

Ladies, or rather the class to which they belong, are generally found to rest their claim to this distinction, if it be one, upon the fact that they are the wives or daughters of prominent or well-to-do members of the other sex.

They find themselves in comfortable circumstances. The money or distinction which may be at the command of their husbands or fathers enables them to pass the greater portion of their time in dressing, or in airing such charms as they may possess. They lead for the most part a frivolous life, and their greatest glory is the reflected lustre which shines upon them by virtue of the wealth or attainments of their husbands or other male connections.

It is always noticeable that the less brains and claim for distinction a lady possesses herself, and the less actual cause she has for self-glorification, the higher and the more arrogantly does she hold her head above her fellows, and the more prone is she to despise and depreciate every woman who recognises a nobler aim in life than that of populating the world with offspring as imbecile as herself.

*Il va sans dire* that there are thousands of ladies to whom the last remark is scarcely applicable. Gentle in manners, and yielding in disposition, they are perfectly satisfied with the existing order of things, and quite believe the doctrine that man in his arrogance has laid down, that he is the God-ordained lord of creation, and that implicit obedience to his whims and fancies is the first duty of woman.

They have all they feel necessary to their well being. They have husbands who regard them as so much personal property, and who treat them alternately as pets or slaves; their wants are liberally provided for without any anxiety on their part; they rather like the idea of having little or no work to do, and to their mind, independence is a dreadful bugbear, which every lady ought to shun as she would shun a mad dog or a leper.

They are not to blame, poor things, for they are what man and circumstances have made them, and their general amiability and vague notions of doing what they have been taught is right, at all costs, partly exonerates such of them as have been persuaded to sign the *Nineteenth Century* protest.

Although I am not disposed to regard *ladies* as the wisest and most immaculate members of my sex, I do not include in this category all those who would fain usurp the doubtful distinction of being regarded as such. For instance: a young friend of mine, on her marriage, found herself domiciled in a very pretty little house in the suburbs, her domestic staff being limited to one maid-of-all-work.

One day, while the latter was out upon an errand, a tremendous ring at the front-door bell put my friend all in a

flutter. She had but recently returned from her honeymoon, and wished to receive callers with becoming dignity. She would have preferred the maid to open the door, and show the visitor into her tiny drawing room; but as the maid was not at home, there was nothing for it but to officiate as door-opener herself.

She need not have been alarmed, for the individual at the door proved to be a big, fat, dirty, perspiring female, with a large basket of crockery-ware, some of which she tried to persuade my friend to buy. Finding her efforts in this direction fruitless, she began to wonder if she had been forestalled, and somewhat surprised my little friend by the following query: "If ye plaze, mum, can ye tell me if there's been *another lady* hawking pots about here this afternoon?"

No; decidedly this individual's claim to be regarded as a lady was somewhat too pretentious, and it must be understood that when speaking of *ladies*, I draw the line at hawkers.

The second great division of the female sex is composed of *women*. These do not sigh for society cognomens such as are essential to the happiness of their less thoughtful sisters. They want something more substantial. Many of them find it necessary to earn their own livelihood. Others possess a sufficient percentage of this world's good things to enable them to banish all dread of poverty in their own lives. Others, and I am glad to say that this class is ever on the increase, prefer to work, simply because they prize independence above all things.

No one will venture to suggest that these women are selfish egotists, for their aims and ambitions embrace the

welfare of half the human race at least, and, whatever may be the ultimate results of their gallant fight on behalf of "Woman's Rights," they will be only too thankful to see them enjoyed by every other woman on the face of the earth.

Widely different from these is the third division of the feminine genus *homo. Slaves* they are. Neither more nor less. When emancipation comes to them, it will not be as a result of their own endeavours, for custom, perverted education, physical weakness, and lack of energy all combine to keep them in the groove into which they have been mercilessly trodden for centuries.

Fortunately some of them go through life without feeling terribly discontented. Their wily subjugators, led by the priesthood, have for centuries played upon feminine superstition and credulity, until they have succeeded in making them believe that their physical weakness, with its natural concomitant evil, intellectual inferiority, is foreordained by an omniscient Being whom they are expected to gratefully adore because of His great justice and mercy.

Now and again some of these slaves rebel, and are punished for breaking laws made by men for the benefit of men. Sometimes we hear of some woman who, driven either by lack of education, or by circumstances, has committed some outrage upon society which calls for terrible punishment. Perhaps she has been unfaithful to a wicked incarnation of lust and cruelty, who has for years indulged in *liaisons* of which all the world has been cognisant. She has had to put up with incredible slights and



indignities, but as her husband has been cunning enough to refrain from beating and starving her, the law, as made and administered by men, allows her no escape from her irksome marital bonds.

But let her become reckless, and find solace in another man's love, then she becomes a social pariah, against whom our canting hypocritical Pharisees hold up their hands in denunciatory horror, and from whom the husband speedily obtains a judicial separation, applauded by sympathising male humbugs, and consoled by the "damages," valued at £5,000 or so, which the court has ordered the co-respondent to pay as a solatium for his wounded *affections*. Said co-respondent will not be improved in morals by the skinning process he has undergone, but will turn his attentions in future to ladies who have no husbands to claim golden solatium for lacerated feelings.

Corrupt, Degraded, Rotten to the core is British Civilisation, and yet we find women, who ought to know better, actually pretending that they are perfectly contented with the existing order of things.

And that brings me back to the *raison d'être* of this story. The *Nineteenth Century Magazine* has been guilty of condoning, if not of instigating, an atrocity. It has published a rigmarole, signed by a great many *ladies*, to the effect that Woman's Suffrage is not wanted by *women*, and, indeed, would hardly be accepted if it were offered to them. The principal signatories are in comfortable circumstances; have no great cares upon their shoulders; they plume themselves upon occupying prominent positions in society;

it is to their interest to uphold the political principles of the men whose privilege it is to support them; they do not see that life need be made any brighter for them, therefore they conspire to prevent every other woman from emerging from the ditch in which she grovels.

Of course the other woman may be ambitious, or industrious, or miserable, or oppressed; but that has nothing to do with the fine ladies, whose arguments are as feeble as their hearts are callous, and whose principles are as unjustifiable as their selfishness is reprehensible.

"We have all we want," say these fair philanthropists, "and we intend to use our best endeavours to make other women regard their circumstances in the same light. They must be taught to duly acknowledge the reverence they owe to MAN and God. If we cannot persuade them that things are as they ought to be, we will take effectual means to prevent their further progress towards the emancipation some of them are treasonably preaching. Their morals we will leave to the priesthood to coddle and terrorise, but we must make them understand that MAN always was, always must, and always will be, of paramount power and wisdom in this world. Woman was but made from the rib of a man, and ought to know from this fact alone that she can never be his equal," and so on *ad nauseum*.

It would be wonderful if I, being a *woman*, did not feel indignant when being confronted with these and similar *crushing* arguments, which, if not all aired in the *Nineteenth Century*, are quite as strong as any which the deluded signatories have to advance in support of the despicably unwomanly attitude they have adopted.

Only a rib, forsooth! How do they know that woman was made out of nothing better than a man's rib? We have only a man's word for that, and I have proved the falsity of so many manly utterances that I would like some scientific proof as to the truth or falsity of the spare-rib argument before I give it implicit credence.

Thank goodness, the *Fortnightly Review* comes to the rescue with a gallant counter-protest, signed by the cream of British WOMANHOOD, and I feel viciously glad that I have been privileged to add my name to the long list of those who are determined to stand up for justice to their sex, whether they may happen to feel the need of it in their own individual cases or not. I am also delighted to find an influential magazine, conducted by men, which chivalrously does battle on behalf of my sex.

"Good old *Fortnightly*," I apostrophise mentally. "Long life and prosperity be thine," and I am confidently able to predict that there will be a persistent and flourishing *Fortnightly Review* of all things British long after the *Nineteenth Century* has become a thing of the past.

But here my attention is directed to the fact that two women, who have always womanfully championed the cause of their sex, have written replies to the anti-woman suffrage article, and that, furthermore, the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* has inserted these replies in his review, which forthwith is absolved from a great share of the displeasure which the "atrocities" roused, not alone in my breast, but in thousands of other women—and MEN.

The last fact is justly emphasised in big letters, for it shows that at least some portion of the male sex recognises

the enormity and injustice of saddling one-half of the human race with all the disabilities it is possible to heap upon it, except the disabilities of exemption from taxation and kindred methods of assisting in promoting the general welfare of the nation.

When I mention the fact that the two replies in the *Nineteenth* are written by Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Ashton Dilke respectively, I have, I think, given sufficient assurance that the replies are in themselves able ones.

Into such a good humour, in fact, have I been soothed by the perusal of the counter-protests, that I find myself stringing together all sorts of fancies in which women's achievements form conspicuous features, and I am just noticing how pleasant Mrs. Weldon looks in the Speaker's chair, listening to Mrs. Besant's first Prime Ministerial speech, when my senses become entirely "obfuscated," as Sambo would say, and I sink into slumber as profound as that which overcame the fabled enchanted guardians of my favourite enchanted palace.

# CHAPTER I.

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The next event I can chronicle was opening my eyes on a scene at once so beautiful and strange that I started to my feet in amaze. This was not my study, and I beheld nothing of the magazine which was the last thing I remembered seeing before I went to sleep. I was in a glorious garden, gay with brilliant hued flowers, the fragrance of which filled the air with a subtle and delicate perfume; around me were trees laden with luscious fruits which I can only compare to apples, pears, and quinces, only they were as much finer than the fruits I had hitherto been familiar with as Ribstone pippins are to crabs, and as jargonelles are to greenbacks. Countless birds were singing overhead, and I was about to sink down again, and yield to a delicious languor which overpowered me, when I was recalled to the necessity of behaving more decorously by hearing someone near me exclaim in mystified accents, "By Jove! But isn't this extraordinary? I say, do you live here, or have you been taking hasheesh too?"

I looked up, and saw, perched on the limb of a great tree, a young man of about thirty years of age, who looked so ridiculously mystified at the elevated position in which he found himself, that I could not refrain from smiling, though I did not feel able to give an immediate satisfactory reply to his queries.

"Oh, that's right," he commented. "It makes a fellow relieved to see a smile, when he wasn't at all sure whether

he wouldn't get sent to Jericho for perching up an apple tree. But really, I don't know how the deuce I came to be up here, that is, I beg your pardon, but I can't understand how I happen to be up this apple tree. And oh! by Jove! It isn't an apple tree, after all! Isn't it extraordinary?"

But I could positively do nothing but laugh at him for the space of a moment or two. Then I gravely remarked that as I supposed he was not glued to the tree, he had better come down, whereat he followed my advice, being unfortunate enough, however, to graze his hands, and tear the knees of his trousers during the process of disembarkation.

When at last he had relieved himself of a few spare expletives, delivered in a tone which he vainly flattered himself was too low for me to hear, he stood revealed before me, a perfect specimen of the British masher. His height was not too great, being, I subsequently ascertained five feet three, an inch less than my own, but he made the most of what there was of him by holding himself as erect as possible, and as he wore soles an inch thick to his otherwise smart boots, he looked rather taller than he really was.

His proportions were not at all bad, and I have seen a good many very much worse looking fellows who flattered themselves that they were quite killing. His face had lost the freshness of early youth, and looked as though it spent a great deal of its time in the haunts of dissipation. The moustache, however, was perfect—so golden, so long, so elegant was it, that it must have been the envy of countless members of the masher tribe, and I was not surprised to

notice presently that its owner found his pet occupation in stroking it.

Just now, however, he was chiefly employed in lamenting the accident which had occurred to his nether garment, this being, by the way, one portion of a tweed suit of the most alarmingly demonstrative pattern and colour.

“By Jove!” he muttered, disconsolately, “it’s awful! you know. When I was so careful, too! What on earth ever possessed me to mount that tree? Isn’t it extraordinary?”

This time I was about to attempt a reply, when I was struck dumb with awe and astonishment, and my companion, who had found his own eyes sufficiently powerful to take in my appearance, hastily fixed a single eyeglass into position, and gazed in open-mouthed wonder at an apparition which approached us.

And he might well gaze, for of a surety the creature which we saw was something worth looking at, and a specimen of a race the like of which we had never seen before. “It is a woman,” I thought. “A goddess!” the masher declared, and for a time I could not feel sure that he was mistaken.

She was close upon seven feet in height, I am sure, and was of magnificent build. A magnified Venus, a glorified Hebe, a smiling Juno, were here all united in one perfect human being whose gait was the very poetry of motion.

She wore a very peculiar dress, I thought, until I saw that science and common sense had united in forming a costume in which the requirements alike of health, comfort, and beauty had reached their acmé.

A modification of the divided skirt came a little below the knee, the stockings and laced boots serving to heighten, instead of to hide, their owner's beautiful symmetry of limb. A short skirt supplemented the graceful tunic, which was worn slightly open at the neck, and partially revealed the dainty whiteness of a shapely bust. The whole costume was of black velvet, and was set off by exquisite filmy laces, and by a crimson sash which confined the tunic at the waist, and hung gracefully on the left side of the wearer.

She was wearing a silver-embroidered velvet cap, which she courteously doffed on beholding us, and I noticed that her hair, but an inch or two long, curled about her head and temples in the most delightfully picturesque fashion imaginable.

She was surprised to see us, that was quite apparent, but she evidently mistook our identity for awhile. "What strange children!" she exclaimed, in a rich, sonorous voice, which was bewitchingly musical. "Why are you here, and for what particular purpose are you masquerading in this extraordinary fashion?"

"Yes, it is extraordinary, isn't it?" burst forth the masher, "but you are slightly mistaken about us. I can't answer for this lady, and I really don't know what the deuce she is doing here, but I am the Honourable Augustus Fitz-Musicus. I daresay you have heard of me. My ancestor, you know, was King George the Fourth. He fell in love with a very beautiful lady, who, until the first gentleman in Europe favoured her with his attentions, was an opera singer. She subsequently became the mother of a family, who were all provided for by their delighted father, the king. The eldest son was created



Duke of Fitz-Musicus, and he and his family were endowed with a perpetual pension for 'distinguished services rendered to the State, you know.'"

"Then you are not a little boy?" queried the giantess. "But of course you must be. Come here, my little dear, and tell me who taught you to say those funny things, and who pasted that queer little moustache on your face."

As she spoke she actually stooped, kissed the Honourable Augustus Fitz-Musicus on the forehead, and patted him playfully on the cheek with one shapely finger. This was, however, an indignity not to be borne patiently, and the recipient of these well-meant attentions indignantly sprang on one side, his face scarlet, and his voice tremulous with humiliated wrath.

"How dare you?" he gasped. "How dare you insult me so? You must know that I am not a child. Your own hugeness need not prevent you from seeing that *I am a man.*"

"A man! never! O, this is too splendid a joke to enjoy by myself." Saying this, and laughing until the tears came into her eyes, the goddess raised her voice a little, and called to some companions who were evidently close at hand, "Myra! Hilda! Agnes! oh, do come quickly. I have found two such curious creatures."

In response to this summons three more girls of gigantic stature came from the further end of the garden, and completed our discomfiture by joining in the laugh against us.

"What funny little things! Wherever did you find them, Dora?" queried one of the new comers, whereat Dora composed her risible faculties as well as she was able, and