

***CHARLES
G. HARPER***

***REVOLTED
WOMAN:
PAST,
PRESENT,
AND TO COME***

Charles G. Harper

Revolted Woman: Past, present, and to come

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

ILLUSTRATIONS.

I.—Woman Up to Date.

II.—The Dress Reformers.

I'LL BE A BLOOMER.

MRS. GRUNDY ON BLOOMERISM.

III.—Woman in Art, Literature, Politics, and Social Polity.

IV.—Some Old-time Termagants and Ill-made Matches of Celebrated Men.

V.—Domestic Strife.

' The Song.

THE WOMAN TO THE PLOW AND THE MAN TO THE HEN-ROOST;

VI.—Women in Men's Employments.

FINIS.

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

ELKIN MATHEWS'S PUBLICATIONS.



PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

It might have been supposed, having in mind her first and most stupendous faux pas, that Woman would be content to sit, for all time, humbly under correction, satisfied with her lot until the crack of doom, when man and woman shall be no more; when heaven and earth shall pass away, and pale humanity come to judgment.

But it is essentially feminine, and womanlike (and therefore of necessity illogical) that she should be forgetful of the primeval curse which Mother Eve brought upon the race, and that she should, instead of going in sackcloth and ashes for her ancestor's disobedience, seek instead, not only to be the equal of man, but, in her foremost advocates—the strenuous and ungenerous females who periodically crucify the male sex in sexual novels written under manly pseudonyms—aspire to rule him, while as yet she has no efficient control over her own hysterical being.

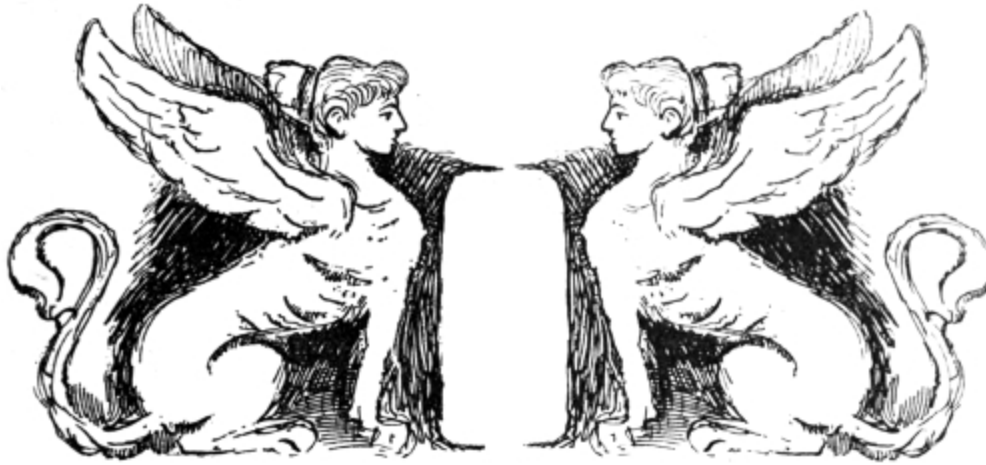
Humanity is condemned by the First Woman's disobedience to earn a precarious livelihood by the sweat of its brow. All the toil and trouble of this work-a-day world proceed from her sex; and yet the cant of 'Woman's Mission'

fills the air, and the New Woman is promised us as some sort of a pedagogue who shall teach the 'Child-Man' how to toddle in the paths of virtue and content. How absurd it all is, when the women who write these things pander to the depraved palate which gained Holywell Street a living and an unenviable notoriety years ago; when they obtain three-fourths of their readers from their fellow-women who read their productions hopeful of indecency, and conceive themselves cheated if they do not find it. Let us, however, do these women writers, or 'Literary Ladies,' as they have labelled themselves—margarine masquerading as 'best fresh'—the justice to acknowledge that they do not halt half-way on the road to viciousness, though to reach their goal they wade knee-deep in abominations. Here, indeed, they are no cheats, and it remains the unlikeliest sequel that you close their pages and yet do not find Holywell Street outdone.

Consider: If morals are to be called into question, can it be disputed that, as compared with Woman, Man is the moral creature, and has ever been, from the time of Potiphar's wife, up to the present?

Woman is the irresponsible creature who cannot reason nor follow an argument to its just conclusion—who cannot control her own emotions, nor rid herself of superstition. What question more pertinent, then, to ask than this: If mankind is to be led by the New Woman, is she, first of all, sure of the path?

CHARLES G. HARPER.



ILLUSTRATIONS.

Table of Contents

EMANCIPATED!	Frontispiece.
	PAGE
THE BLOOMER COSTUME	33
THE RATIONAL DRESS	41
ELIZABETH, COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY	67
ANN CLIFFORD, COUNTESS OF DORSET, PEMBROKE, AND MONTGOMERY, AGED 18	71
ANN CLIFFORD, COUNTESS OF DORSET, PEMBROKE, AND MONTGOMERY, AGED 81	75
SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH	79
LADY HESTER STANHOPE	91

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE BREECHES	109
MAN MASTERED	118
A JUDICIAL DUEL	119



REVOLTED WOMAN

I.—WOMAN UP TO DATE.

[Table of Contents](#)

‘Certain Women also made us astonished.’—*Luke*, xxiv. 22.

She is upon us, the Emancipated Woman. Privileges once the exclusive rights of Man are now accorded her without question, and, clad in Rational Dress, she is preparing to leap the few remaining barriers of convention. Her last advances have been swift and undisguised, and she feels her position at length strong enough to warrant the proclamation that she does not merely claim equal rights with man, but intends to rule him. Such symbols of independence as latch-keys and loose language are already hers; she may smoke—and does; and if she does not presently begin to wear trousers upon the streets—what some decently ambiguous writer calls bifurcated continuations!—we shall assume that the only reason for the abstention will be that womankind are, generally speaking, knock-kneed, and are unwilling to discover the fact to a censorious world which has a singular prejudice in favour of symmetrical legs.

Society has been ringing lately with the writings and doings of the pioneers of the New Woman, who forget that Woman’s Mission is Submission; but although the present complexion of affairs seems to have come about so suddenly, the fact should not be blinked that in reality it is but the inevitable outcome, in this age of toleration and *laissez faire*, of the Bloomerite agitation, the Women’s Rights frenzy, the Girl of the Period furore, and the Divided Skirt craze, which have attracted public attention at different times, ranging from over forty years ago to the present day.

Several apparently praiseworthy or harmless movements that have attracted the fickle enthusiasm of women during this same period have really been byways of this movement of emancipation. Thus, we have had the almost wholly admirable enthusiasm for the Hospital Nurse's career; the (already much-abused) profession of Lady Journalist; the Woman Doctor; the Female Detective; the Lady Members of the School Board; and the (it must be allowed) most gracious and becoming office of Lady Guardian of the Poor.

Side by side, again, with these, are the altogether minor and trivial affectations of Lady Cricketers, the absurd propositions for New Amazons, or Women Warriors, who apparently are not sufficiently well read in classic lore to know what the strict following of the Amazons' practice implied; nor can they reckon aught of the origin of the Caryatides.

Again, the Political Woman is coming to the front, and though she may not yet vote, she takes the part of the busybody in Parliamentary Elections, and already sits on Electioneering Committees.

In this connexion, it should not readily be forgotten that Mrs. Brand earned her husband the somewhat humiliating reputation of having been sung into Parliament by his wife at the last election for Wisbech, and thus gave the coming profession of Women Politicians another push forward. The dull agricultural labourers of that constituency gave votes for vocal exercises on improvised platforms in village school-rooms, nor thought of aught but pleasing the lady who could sing them either into tears with the cheap sentimentality of *Auld Robin Grey*, melt them with the poignant pathos of

'Way down the Swanee River', or excite their laughter over the equally ready humour of the latest *soi-disant* 'comic' song from the London Halls. Think upon the most musical, most melancholy prospect thus opened out before our prophetic gaze! What matter whether you be Whig or Tory, Liberal or Conservative, Rotten-Tim-Healeyite, or a member of Mr. Justin MacCarthy's tea-party, so long as your wife can win the rustics' applause by her singing of such provocations to tears or laughter as *The Banks of Allan Water* or *Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay*, or whatever may be the current successor of that vulgar chant?

But the so-called 'New Purity' movement, and novel evangels of that description, most do occupy the attention of the modern woman who is in want of an occupation.

We smile when we read of the proceedings of Mrs. Josephine Butler and her following of barren women who are the protagonists of the New Purity; for woman has ever been the immoral sex, from the time of Potiphar's wife to these days when the Divorce Courts are at once the hardest worked in the Royal Courts of Justice, and the scenes of the most frantic struggles on the part of indelicate women, who, armed with opera-glasses and seated in the most favourable positions on Bench or among counsel, gloat over what should be the most repellent details in this constant public washing of dirty private linen, and survey the correspondents with delighted satisfaction. The intensity of the joy shown by those who are fortunate enough to obtain a seat in court on a more than usually loathsome occasion is only equalled at the other extreme by the poignancy of

regret exhibited by those unhappy ladies who have been unsuccessful in their scheming to secure places.

And, again, the reclamation of corrupt women, if not impossible, is rarely successful, for 'woman is at heart a rake,' and, as Ouida says, who has, one might surmise, unique opportunities of knowing, she is generally 'corrupt because she likes it.' Thus, throughout the whole range of history, Pagan or Christian, courtesans have never been to seek. They have, these *filles de joie*, always succeeded in attracting to themselves wealth and genius, luxury and intellect; and through their paramount influence, Society at the present day is corrupt to extremity. The Evangelists of the New Purity, who hold that the innate viciousness of man is the cause of woman's subjection and inferiority, can have no reading nor any knowledge of the world's history while they continue to proclaim their views; or else they know themselves, even as they preach, for hypocrites. For woman has ever been the active cause of sin, from the Fall to the present time, and doubtless will so continue until the end. It is not always, as they would have you believe, from necessity that the virtuous woman turns her back upon virtue, but very frequently from choice and a delight in sin and wrong-doing. How then shall the New Purity arise from the Old Corruption?

'Who can find a virtuous woman?' asks Solomon (Prov. xxxi. 10), and goes on to say that her price is far above rubies: doubtless for the same reason that rubies are so highly valued—because they are so scarce.

The trade of courtesan has always been numerous and powerful, and has been constantly recruited from every

class. Vanity, of course, is the great inducement; love of dress and power, and greed of notoriety, are other compelling forces; and a joy in outraging all decency and propriety, of defying conventions of respectability and religion, is answerable for the rest.

This kind of woman makes all mankind her prey, and has no generous instincts whatever. Everything ministers to her vanity and lavish waste. It is a matter of notoriety that men of light and leading are drawn after her all-conquering chariot, and that in three out of every four plays she is the heroine.

She is cruel as the grave, heartless as a stone, and extravagant beyond measure. Her kind have utterly wasted the patrimony of thousands of dupes, and having reduced them to beggary the most abject and forlorn, have sought fresh victims of their insatiable greed.

They have ruined kingdoms, like the mistresses of Louis XIV. and XV. of France; they have brought shame and dishonour upon nations, like the dissolute women of Charles the Second's court, who toyed with his wantons at Whitehall while the Dutch guns thundered off Tilbury; they have risen, like Madame de Pompadour, to a height from which they looked down upon diplomatists of the Great Powers of Europe—and scorned them; and the blood shed during many sanguinary wars has been shed at their behest. Courtesans have married into the peerage of England, and, indeed, some of the oldest titles—not to say the bluest blood—of the three kingdoms derive from the king's women: Nell Gwynne, whose offspring became Duke of Saint Albans; Louise de Querouaille, created Duchess of Portsmouth;

Barbara Palmer, made Duchess of Cleveland; and others. Lais and Phryne belong not to one period, but to all eras alike; Aspasia and Fredegondas are of all countries and of every class.

But 'pretty Fanny's ways' are many and diverse. It may be that she is incapacitated or restrained from living as full and as free a life as she could wish. Very well: then she becomes a New Puritan, whose self-appointed functions are to those privy cupboards in which repellent skeletons are concealed; to the social sewers; and, in fine, to all those places where she can gratify the morbid curiosity which actuates the New Puritanical mind, rather than the hope of, or belief in, achieving anything for the benefit of the race.

If she has no wish to become a New Puritan, there be many other modern fads in which she may fulfil a part. She may, as a New Traveller, show us the glory of the New Travel, in the manner of that greatly daring lady, the intrepid Mrs. French-Sheldon, who, travelling at the heels of the masculine explorers of African wilds (carried luxuriously in a litter, accompanied with cases of champagne and a large escort of Zanzibari porters), went forth to study the untutored savage in his native wilds. But when the untutored presented themselves before this up-to-date traveller *unclothed* as well as unread, that very properly-tutored lady screamed, and distributed loin-cloths to these happy and yet unabashed primitives. She delivered an address before the British Association on her return from that unnecessary and futile expedition, in which she tickled the sensibilities of the assembled *savants* by describing how she kept her hundred and thirty Zanzibari coolies in order