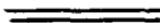


W O M A N AND FREEDOM



By

Theresa Serber Malkiel

Author of

"The Diary of a Shirt Waist Striker"



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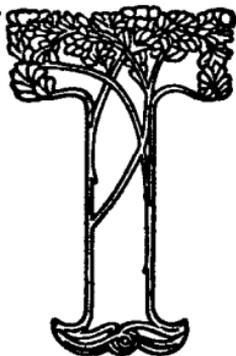
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The Co-operative Printery, 6th and Chestnut Sts., Milwaukee, Wis.

WOMAN AND FREEDOM

Woman and freedom were synonymous in the infancy of the human race. But gradually as mankind started its upward climb to civilization woman lost her freedom, her position in society changed with every change in economic conditions.

Thus in the primitive family she held a place of superiority as the head of the family. The children were known by her name; she chose her mate; the small community abided by her decisions. Woman remained in this position so long as the communal system constituted the only form of human government and human organization.

But when man with the aid of the stone hatchet conquered his weaker neighbor and acquired the latter's property for his own personal use, when collective ownership of the land, the flock and the primitive tools of production changed into private ownership woman's position changed for the worse.

As owner of his property man took the reins of power into his own hands. He owned the land, flock and armaments wherewith to protect himself from the onslaught of the enemy, the means of obtaining a livelihood were at his command and he decided to choose the woman who was to share his property instead of being chosen by her. His desire to make certain that his property would go to his children caused man later to compel woman to marriage with one husband only. While he fought, hunted and explored he assigned to woman the detail side of human activity—she tended the flock, prepared food, cared for the young and acted as beast of burden during the constant migrations.

Woman's subjection to man became still more inevitable during the next stage of human development, when man established his family in a permanent place of habitation. The gulf in the division of labor between man and woman widened; while he still roamed the world she had to attend to the domestic production of clothing and the other necessities of life. Surrounded by the narrow walls of her home, she was first relegated to a special sphere. Her position was now reduced to a mere chattel—she did

not own the home in which she was born, lived and died, but was just attached to it. She could not choose an occupation especially adapted to her personality, but had to perform all labor that was to be done within the boundaries of the home, and though she earned the bread she ate and the clothes she wore she did not own them. Even her children were no longer her own—they belonged to the father and were known by his name.

Her abject slavery lasted so long as the domestic system of production and the hand tool remained the only factors in our economic life. During that period woman was hemmed in by conditions that did not permit the birth of new ideas. Mankind did not pay any attention to her deplorable state, because her unrestricted, unremunerative service was required in the course of human progress.

The new era for woman came with the age of mechanism, during the last century. The invention and application of machinery first lessened the necessity of her constant drudgery; the transfer of her work from the home to the factory removed the bars which held her a prisoner within a special sphere, the birth of the wage system enabled her to become a remunerative worker. Her solitary existence in the home gave way to a more social life in the factory. The opening of new industries made it possible for her to widen the field of her activity, the line of demarcation in the division of work between man and woman narrowed down. Increasing opportunities meant greater progress—woman had to acquire knowledge and the doors of learning slowly opened before her. Earning a living away from home and often independently of the man of her family she acquired self-reliance and took a personal interest in the problem of existence. Working side by side with man and performing the same labor she came to resent his attitude of superiority. New thoughts entered her mind, a new sentiment found its way into her heart—the movement for woman's freedom came to life.

Man ceased to reign supreme over earth and sea, beast, bird or woman. The changed trend of our economics compelled even the dullest mind to recognize the change that came over woman. The veil of darkness was gradually lifted from all eyes.

This phenomenon became evident almost simultaneously in all countries where the change of economic conditions changed woman's position in society, where the dawn of the Industrial Revolution made possible the realization of equal rights and equal opportunities for man and woman.

With the change of public opinion came a change of law and custom. Our legislators curtailed man's right to

the appropriation of woman's labor and the earnings of her toil. They recognized her right to the ownership of private property independently of husband; they accorded her the civil rights of an adult.

True enough, the changed opinion concerning woman's rights and woman's freedom is still far from being general. The emancipation of woman is still opposed in many quarters.

"It is wrong to open the door of freedom to woman!" cry the upholders of the past regime.

"Woman's place is in the home. We must save her from herself, prevent her from joining the ungodly rebels who are, at best, but so many erratic women."

The cry rises louder with every step of woman's progress. It is the agonized shriek of a dying hope. Woman's special sphere is fast disappearing from the face of the earth. Her former position in society cannot be revived. The eighteenth century woman cannot fit into the twentieth century life. Woman, like man, was involved in the marvelous transition that came over the human race during the past hundred years.

Her achievements on the field of learning alone are sufficient to prove the above. As late as 1771 our girls were forbidden to attend the free schools open to the boys of the country. Only in 1789 was woman for the first time permitted to teach others. In 1889 there were no less than 175,000 women teachers and professionals in the United States. In 1910 their number reached 400,000, three out of every four educators in our country being women.

Only half a century ago were women first permitted to practice medicine. Today we have over 15,000 women physicians. In the middle of last century the majority of people thought that the world was coming to an end, for a woman dared to enter the pulpit and preach the gospel of Christ. Today 5,000 women all over the country are preaching from the pulpits of the various Protestant denominations.

Less than four score years ago woman was denied the right to practice law; according to the last census 4,000 women are admitted to the bar and given the right to plead in the highest tribunals of the land.

And while thousands of others sought various other professions, many more thousands entered the field of science, art and literature. In a word, woman woke from her long sleep, the tide turned; the forces which developed

the age of industrialism sounded the knell of woman's subjection, the age of enlightenment opened its doors to her.

The rapid advance of woman in industry and commerce is more marvelous than in education. A century ago there were only seven occupations open to woman. Out of the 400 trades plied by men at present in this country there are only seven trades left which woman did not take up as yet. One-third of our industrial workers are women. Almost 7,000,000 of them moving the wheels of our national industry. Less than a century ago the woman wage earner was the exception. Fathers considered it a disgrace to send their daughters to work outside of the home. Today one in every three unmarried women is a breadwinner. The last decade saw 1,000,000 married women seeking employment outside of the home.

In 1853 Philadelphia was the first city to hire women clerks for the stores. Three out of every four clerks in our department stores today are women. The number of women in trade and transportation is growing by leaps and bounds. Women are to be found in every branch of our commercial activity from the lowest to the highest.

Wherever woman took her place side by side with man she performed her task equally as well and often better. This in itself proves that she remained backward, the obedient servant of man, just because she depended upon him for every breath of her existence, because her constant drudgery in the home left no room for development. But as soon as she was given the opportunity to leave the narrow sphere of the home for the unlimited field of the outside world she spread out her wings and made a leap for the place that would spell—equality with man.

The low mentality of woman, which in the days of yore was man's safeguard against her rebellion, is slowly disappearing. In adapting herself to the manipulation of the newly invented machinery woman is fast learning to call her reasoning power to her aid. In her new position woman is gradually assimilating the qualities to which man attributed his superiority over her. She learned to steel herself against the disagreeable, to curb her emotions, to keep her nervous system in check, to let sentiment be guided by reason.

Her demand for greater rights is the natural offspring of her changed economic condition, and the growing activity of her brain. What our conservatives consider woman's insanity is in fact her greater consciousness, her saner judgment. In the new life which she is compelled to lead,

she could not be expected to abide by laws and conventions adapted to suit her former narrow existence.

Woman's discontent with her present position in society grows apace with the duties which society calls upon her to perform. The woman breadwinner demands greater freedom of action, better civil laws, political rights and equal opportunities with man because she realizes that the double standard still in existence is responsible for most of her suffering. She works just as hard and just as long as man does, and therefore refuses to work for half the wages that he receives. The problem of existence is harder for her to solve than it is for him. She no longer works for pin money. Nine-tenths of the women breadwinners seek self-support. Fifty-two per cent have one or more members of their families to support on their earnings, and though they give up 95 per cent of their wages they find it far from being enough to make ends meet. What wonder that they are in a state of unrest?

Even the dullest mind must come to an understanding that something must be done for woman in order to save her from falling into the abyss on the brink of which she is standing. We cannot take her back to the home, her lot will not be made easier by reactionary devices. These were still permissible half a century ago, when woman's entrance into the market aroused man's ire.

In those days man hoped to rid himself of the woman breadwinner, who sought greater opportunities, by making her advance impossible. He clung to the old conventions, fostered the former prejudices and generally treated his woman co-worker with hostility. She was not admitted into trade unions, was excluded from all professional fraternities.

But as the number of women who left the narrow sphere of the home for the outside activities reached into millions men in the professions and especially the men in industry understood that woman came into the labor market to stay, and that the more man will oppose her the lower he will have to come down himself.

The change of feeling was inevitable, the reforms had to come. Soon after the civil war organized labor found it necessary to enlist woman into its ranks. They who suffered from oppression were the first to resent the double oppression of woman. In the better organized trades woman is accepted into membership on the same basis as man. Here, at least, is the double standard eliminated.

The professions slowly followed suit. The woman physicians are today bona fide members of their profes-

sion, admitted to hospitals and operating rooms, called into consultation and accepted into all medical associations. This is equally true of the journalists, lawyers, ministers, and so forth.

It must be admitted, however, that in the labor world, as well as elsewhere, women taught men **to take them at their worth**. When Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman physician, was not admitted to practice in the hospitals she opened a clinic of her own, and in spite of all the opposition in her way, in spite of the fact that the men doctors went into league with the druggists, who refused to recognize her prescriptions, she won out and made a name not only for herself but for all the women physicians. It was a revelation for the workingmen to find the women leave their jobs when the men struck. Not taken into the men's union, these women strikers organized unions of their own, thus proving by action that they did not seek special privileges, but were fully prepared to assume all the responsibilities, fulfill all duties.

Having come into the market to stay, woman was anxious to advance, she sought further development because she found it necessary in her struggle for existence. Her rebellion at present is but the heritage of her forefathers who always rebelled against the existing order, when the latter was at variance with the progress of the world.

The millions of industrial workers, bookkeepers, stenographers, professional women, musicians and artists are clearing the road to freedom for their sex. As stated above, the special training which they had to undergo clarified their vision, heightened their aspirations and helped them to realize the true state of affairs. They resent the relics of the past which man still persists in placing on woman's road to progress and, taking up the task of righting the wrong, they fearlessly call man to account:—

"How long do you intend to prolong our agony by your reminiscences of the past? Where do you expect this to end? Behold us! so many millions and still increasing at the rate of 50 every hour. We want equal opportunities with man in every phase of human activity. We want an open road on the political field as well as the economic. It is impossible for us to mature under political disabilities. We refuse to be guided by our man-made laws. Our activity on the economic field trained us for self-government."

The woman breadwinner is not the only rebel, however; the housewife is fast lining up with her. She is no

longer contented with her special sphere, the home is no longer what it used to be in the past. Since industry was taken out of it and the young turned over to the care of the public schools the housewife finds her home a lonely place to live in. Her domestic labor wears on her because it is at variance with the progress of the age. She detests scrubbing, washing, cooking and dusting in the good old fashioned way, first—because she still has to use the implements of by-gone days, while every other worker has adapted himself to the age of machinery, and second—because her work is done gratis and has no value in the eyes of society. Hence the fact that 9/10 of our housewives seek activity and excitement outside of their homes.

While the woman breadwinner places herself as a staunch advocate of concerted action on the economic field and organizes unions and protective associations, the housewife turns to charity and civic clubs as a means of satisfying her waking social conscience.

In their diversified efforts all these women come to the same conclusion—the economic and moral welfare of society depends much upon the political administration, upon legislative measures. Actual experience convinces them that woman's complete disfranchisement on the political field, in spite of her activity in every other field, is suicidal to the progress of the nation.

Their demand for woman's enfranchisement is not the phantastic whim of a few erratic women, as the anti-suffragists would like us to believe, but embodies, on the contrary, a great principle often professed in the past. In every stage of human progress the change of economic conditions necessitates a like change in the social relation and political administration of the people. The demand for political rights by a given class was always based on the economic advance of that class.

In the early days of our National Independence the propertyless workingmen were barred from voting and remained disfranchised so long as their force played but a small role in the life of the Nation. But when industry developed, centralized into fewer hands, and the number of those who could not call an inch of ground their own reached into millions the propertyless workers were given the right to voice and vote in the affairs of the Nation.

Their enfranchisement came as a result of the pressure which the millions of them brought to bear upon society from below, and was due to the fact that they had become an indispensable factor in our general advance.

The same fact holds good when applied to the coming enfranchisement of woman. Her rapid advance into every phase of human activity, her growing importance as a necessary factor in the progress of the people makes universal suffrage as great a necessity today as manhood suffrage became three-quarters of a century ago.

In vain do the anti-suffragists exert themselves to oppose it, their opposition only tends to make new converts. Theirs is a lonely cry in the wilderness. Woman's enfranchisement is no longer a theory, it is a fact and it is only a matter of time when the rest of the States will fall into line. At present its exponents are to be found in every stratum of society and even the dullest minds are coming to realize its timeliness.

We all understand that the present generation has burned the bridges connecting it with the past mode of life. But there are still millions of women in our midst who, though torn away from the old moorings, were, because of the impediments in their way, unable to find a new haven and are wandering like a ship without a rudder. Society must do something for these women.

It is an acknowledged fact that the ballot in the hands of the majority is an instrument of progress. The democracy of a Nation depends upon the extent of rights accorded to its adult constituents. Woman acquired knowledge on the economic field through personal experience in the actual struggle for existence until she became an integral part of our economic life. Likewise the profession and use of the ballot will bring her in closer touch with our social fabric and the Nation as a whole. It will help awaken her social conscience, arouse her social responsibilities.

Since woman became a wealth producer, since her participation in our economic and intellectual life is practically indispensable to the growth and welfare of the race, she must be given a place in the administration of our public affairs.

The ever greater trustification of industry; the increase or reduction of tariff are all of great interest to woman, perhaps, of greater interest to her than they are to man. The change in the mode of production so evident during the last century changed our whole mode of life. Man is no longer the sole agent between woman and the outside world, he no longer purchases the necessaries of life—woman is at present the buyer of the world's goods. If the

husband still earns the means of livelihood for the family, the wife is the one to distribute that money so as to make ends meet.

The eight million women breadwinners are, on the other hand, confronted with the same problems that confront the millions of men breadwinners. The regulation by law of the hours of labor, the minimum wage, employer's liability and workmen's compensation, the right to organization and collective bargaining are all matters as essential to the welfare of the workingwoman as the workingman. The former as the latter must be given the use of the ballot wherewith to defend herself against the onslaught of the enemy.

A century ago the Industrial Revolution compelled woman to follow her work from the home to the factory, but capitalist society refused and is still refusing to free her from her domestic duties. The woman breadwinner, whether married or single, does not stop her work when she leaves her place of employment, but simply changes her paid work in the mill, store or factory, for unremunerative work in the home.

Under the present system the workingman has only one master—his employer, the workingwoman must bow to the will of husband as well. While capitalism is satisfied with the workingman's labor power, it stretches out its claws for the workingwoman's body.

Sex debauchery on the part of the male is steadily sending woman on the war path, hastening her transition from a passive subject to a conscientious rebel. In other words, we have come to a point where woman is simply staggering under the double burden she is carrying. If nothing else, the steady destruction of her family, made inevitable by her double yoke, would cause her to rebel against her lot.

The ever greater increase of delinquents, the bitter cry of children for bread, the rate of infant mortality is bound to send her in search of freedom.

This does not mean, however, that woman suffrage is the goal, the pinnacle of woman's aspiration to freedom. It is not an end in itself, but a means to the end.

After universal suffrage is accepted in this country, men and women will still have to work for starvation wages, woman's body will be bartered for profit, absolute

dependence upon man during maternity and infancy of the offspring will still compel woman to wait until she is chosen.

Under the present system of society politico-economic equality with man will not mean economic independence of him. The entrance of woman into the political arena will not bring the millennium at once. History teaches us that in the beginning the acquisition of greater rights by a given class was not used to the best possible advantage by that class. Those who corrupt politics today will undoubtedly strain every effort at their command to turn the bulk of women voters into their tools, as they often turned the bulk of men voters. But the chief advantage to woman from her enfranchisement will be her coming in direct contact with the broader aspects of life.

In the States where women have obtained political rights they use the ballot conscientiously, as a rule, aiding the passing of laws beneficial to womankind. With the aid of woman's vote and woman's influence laws effecting better conditions for women and children have been passed in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. California, Colorado, Oregon and Utah have a minimum wage law, and Washington is at present investigating conditions with a view of passing a similar law. It is acknowledged even by the opposition that Arizona would not have its present female labor law, had not women been granted the right to vote. Utah and Washington have lately adopted mother's pension laws, while almost all suffrage States have stringent white slave laws and laws making it a crime for a father to desert his young children. We thus see that the interest of women in passing new legislation leans, as a rule, toward moral and social reform. Liberty, wherever it appears, is always in harmony with all branches of development.

All through the ages, while woman was deprived of an active part in the progress of the human race, every new generation of women, as every new generation of men, inherited some of the father's energy, aspiration, will power and ability. In the progress of civilization the sons expended their inheritance, while the daughters stored their inheritance for a time when they will be given an opportunity to use it.

This long accumulated power is already bursting its fetters, woman's unrest grows as life places greater and greater responsibilities upon her shoulders. Woman will undoubtedly remain imbued with the spirit of unrest after her enfranchisement. As a matter of fact, she will con-

tinue to rebel so long as man will place obstacles on her road to freedom.

Deeper and more serious than woman's desire for political rights rises the unconscious desire for complete independence. Unconscious, because the majority of women do not realize the fact that suffrage, though absolutely necessary, is not the goal. That the ballot will be just another factor in the struggle for liberty, a weapon that will stand woman in good stead in the greater battle.

The widening of the industrial field resulted in the moral, mental and economic uplift of the individual; the opening of the political field will teach woman the promotion of social justice. Having come into political rights and political power she will, undoubtedly, refuse to abide by the double code of morality, the one-sided chastity which man established for her during the ages of subjection. Through legislation and public opinion she will raise the standard of man's morals and compel him to obey the same rule which he has established for her.

We could not possibly give a description just how woman will proceed to right the wrong perpetrated upon her sex during the ages of subjection. But we can safely assume that her ultimate freedom from the yoke of ages will come with industrial sovereignty, as her partial freedom came with the Industrial Revolution.

Judging from the general trend of woman's development at present, it is safe to say that the day is fast approaching when all our household work will become factory production, and every girl will be trained for some vocation, and every woman will become a breadwinner, with a legitimate recompense for the time spent in child bearing and child rearing.

The woman of the future will therefore differ as much from the woman of the present, as the woman of the present differs from the woman of the past. Our daughters will not be satisfied to hang around father's home, idly waiting for some suitor to put in an appearance and offer them support, they will seek an outlet for their young energy in education and later in some one of the numerous activities which will be open to woman as to man. The preparatory systematic training will teach them self-control, self-reliance and give them a greater desire for independence.

The partial freedom to which our present generation of woman has fallen heir has given her a greater incentive to right living and purposeful action than her mother and

grandmother possessed. Hence our assertion that more extensive opportunities will bring in their wake a greater store of wisdom.

Woman will come to understand that in order to change her lot she must change the present system of society. That only when man will cease to be master over man will he cease to be master over woman. Not until the world recognizes the right of all children to be well-born and lead a natural childhood will woman become the master of her destiny.

Standing near the summit of freedom's height she will unfurl her standard to the air and, tearing down the system of strife, will establish a system of brotherhood there.

Under the co-operative system of society as man's companion she will produce the world's wealth for use and not for profit for the benefit of all without distinction of race, creed or sex. As part of the Nation's wealth her children will no longer be a burden to her. Her temporary disability of child bearing and child rearing will no longer be a calamity to her. In bearing and rearing a child she will perform a service to society and the latter will protect her from all harm.

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