

**WOMEN IN EPIGRAM;
FLASHES OF WIT, WISDOM,
AND SATIRE FROM THE
WORLD'S LITERATURE**

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Women in epigram; flashes of wit, wisdom, and satire from the world's literature by Frederick W. Morton

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FREDERICK W. MORTON

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*Flashes of Wit, Wisdom, and Satire
from the World's Literature*

COMPILED BY

FREDERICK W. MORTON



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1894

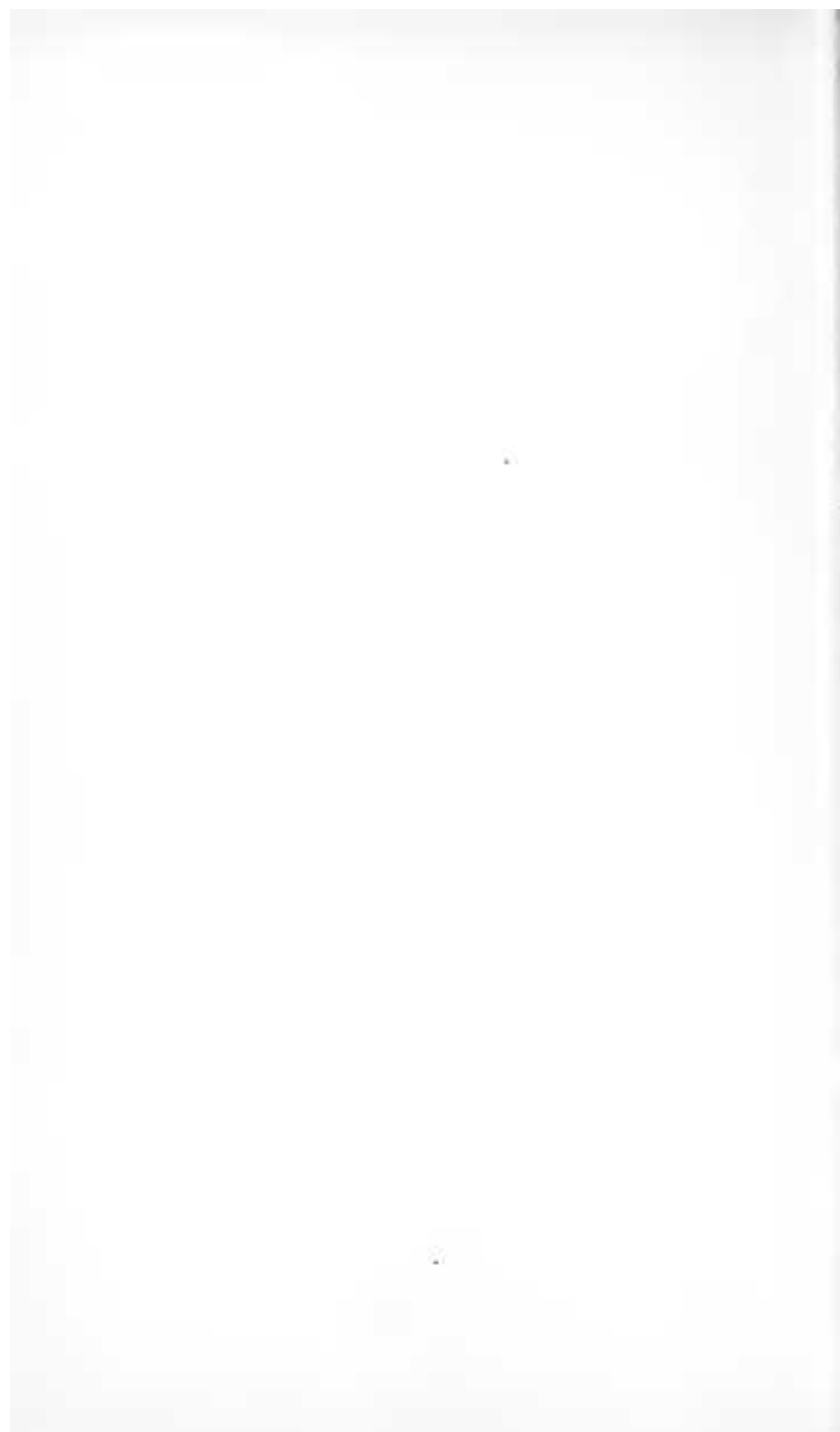
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TO WOMAN.



*I'll tell thee a part
Of the thoughts that start
To being when thou art nigh ;
And thy beauty, more bright
Than the stars' soft light,
Shall seem as a woft from the sky.*

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.



INTRODUCTORY.

FOR centuries the mute stone face of the Sphinx — the accepted symbol of the unknown, the mysterious — has looked out over the wilderness; and generations have puzzled their brains over her riddle. But conjecture has been unavailing; the secret of the strange creation of Egyptian fancy is undetermined.

Woman is the enigma of the ages, — the world's sphinx. Men always have been, are, and ever will be guessers of her secret; but after centuries of thought, all one finds is a mass of contradictory statements, which one may liken to the sands that have been worn from the dumb sentinel of the desert. Woman is to-day unknown, a creature for surmise and speculation, — what Amiel has been pleased to call the "*monster incomprehensible.*"

With all their wooing and worshipping, men have looked at their divinity but to differ in opinion. Lessing thought God meant to make woman his masterpiece, and Milton deemed her a fair defect of nature; Shakespeare calls her another name for frailty, and Holmes thinks her the Messiah of a new faith. To one she has seemed divine, and to another satanic. Where shall we draw the line between dangerous extremes? Who shall draw it? The fabled mariner who sought the open channel between Scylla and Charybdis had an easy task compared with that of the sex-casulist of to-day.

Literature is full of opinions, wise or otherwise, on woman's nature and character; but thinkers have been prone, as the following pages show, to sin on the side of panegyric or of wilful libel. Wherein lie woman's power and her weakness? Do her graces and charms make her a ministering angel or an instrument of evil? Has she the purity, the gentleness, the self-sacrificing spirit, that make her divine, or is she the incarnation of waywardness and wickedness, spite, fickleness, folly? One has but to search the