

THE WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES

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The women of the United States by C. De Varigny & Arabella Ward

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C. DE VARIGNY & ARABELLA WARD

**THE WOMEN OF
THE UNITED STATES**

THE
WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES

BY
C. DE VARIGNY

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
ARABELLA WARD



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

The Birth of a Civilisation—A World in Process of Formation—Woman's Part at the Beginning of American Colonisation—Different Elements among the Colonists—North and South—Puritans and Cavaliers—Antagonistic Ideas and Traditions—Establishment of Mixed Schools—Their Dangers and their Effect—Beginnings of Social Life—American Women at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century, 1

CHAPTER II.

Overmastering Influence of American Women—Their Rights and Privileges—Flirtation, Love, Marriage—Legislation for the Protection of Women—Its Abuse—American Circes—Breach of Promise Cases—Three Years of a Young Girl's Life—The American Married Woman—American Morals—Aristocracy and Plutocracy—Prevalence of Luxury, 58

CHAPTER III.

Marriage and Divorce in the United States—Extreme Laxity of the Law—Typical Cases—Legislation of the Different States—Adventuresses—Woman in the Far West—Story of Belle Starr, 129

CHAPTER IV.

	PAGE
Money in American Society—Adaptability of the American Woman—Her Qualities and Her Defects—Various Types—Elizabeth Patterson—American Critics of American Women—The American Woman of To-day—Her Position and Her Influence,	183



THE WOMEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

CHAPTER I.

The Birth of a Civilisation—A World in Process of Formation—Woman's Part at the Beginning of American Colonisation—Different Elements among the Colonists—North and South—Puritans and Cavaliers—Antagonistic Ideas and Traditions—Establishment of Mixed Schools—Their Dangers and their Effect—Beginnings of Social Life—American Women at the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century.

I.

EUROPE is becoming Americanised. In one century, between the years 1789 and 1889, she cast upon the shores of North America more than fifteen million emigrants. Until 1860 she flooded the United States with the product of her manufactories and thrust upon them her literature, her ideas, her arts and artists, her fashions and styles, her outlaws and adventurers.

Like a dry and sandy soil, the new earth absorbed everything, assimilated every-

thing—the good and the evil, the clear waters with the muddy. Then, out of these different elements, by the genius of the race, by the influence of the climate, by freedom of thought, and by an intellectual, religious, and moral culture, there arose another civilisation. This civilisation has certain affinities with ours, yet presents unexpected contrasts to it. In its turn, it reacts on Europe, which its tourists invade, and where its roving millionaires exchange their homes for establishments so sumptuous as to rival in luxury, elegance, and comfort, not only those of the high-born aristocracy which is vanishing and which they envy, but of the moneyed aristocracy which their wealth is crushing. In their turn they initiate us into their ideas, their morals, and their customs. They do this, not as timid, hesitating *parvenus* in dread of ridicule, but as people certain of success, who smile at our prejudices, emboldened by an assurance acquired through experience. In return, these civilisations suffer mutual drawbacks. They react one on the other, and change more or less rapidly and deeply, according to circumstances. Above all, they vary according to the activities involved.

Antiquity recognised only two of these :

brutal conquest and intellectual conquest ; strength of arms and charm of eloquence and of art. Each has helped the other. Murderous war has become methodical and scientific ; the book and the newspaper have replaced the tribune, which has grown too limited for its audience. Men write more and speak less. Finally, to these influences a third is added, which in olden times was either unknown or else despised, yet which is more helpful, more subtle, and more powerful than any other—the influence of woman.

For a long time woman amounted to little ; she was an accident, as it were, in the history of the people as in the life of man. She is much to-day ; and already setting aside old customs, our historians, travellers, philosophers, and moralists study not only a nation's politics, its methods of administration, and its economics, but they do more than this ; they inquire into its social life and customs ; into the realm of which woman is the centre, and where she alone holds sway and determines, now and again, those great events which impel a nation onward. Whether we approve or not, we cannot deny the broadening power of this woman-influence. Napoleon I., who was strongly opposed to it, severely rebuked