

WOMAN FREE

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Woman Free by Ellis Ethelmer

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ELLIS ETHELMER

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BY

ELLIS ETHELMER
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“ Le philosophe, en étudiant les lois de la Nature, acquiert chaque jour la conviction que de leur violation seule naissent tous les maux dont gémit l'humanité.”

“ The philosopher, in studying the laws of Nature, acquires more deeply every day the conviction that from their abuse alone spring all the evils from which humanity is groaning.”

DR. MENVILLE DE PONSAN
(Histoire de la Femme ; Vol. III., p. 3).

WOMAN FREE.

I.

Source of the Light that cheers this later day,
Science calm moves to spread her sovereign sway ;
Research and Reason, ranged on either hand,
Proclaim her message to each waiting land ;
In truths whose import stands but part revealed,
Till man befit himself those truths to wield ;
Since to high Knowledge duties high belong,
As to the poet's power the task of worthy song.

II.

And man, from every stage of slow degree,
Amendment for his previous rule may see ;
His keener conscience in our fuller time
Perceives the whilom careless act a crime,
Or finds some fancied fault to progress tend,—
By wiser vision traced to truer end ;
Till, growing shrewder in the growing light,
We know no lack of good but our own lack of sight.

III.

Thus, sad at first, we mark each evil deed,
Of ignorance or will, bear fatal seed
Of suffering to others in its train,—
The guileless share its penalty of pain,—
And man's worst misery oftentimes is brought
By trespass he himself nor did nor thought ;
Austere the fiat, yet therefrom we learn
A purer life to frame, lest myriads mourn in turn.

IV.

Deep though the teaching that this truth reveals
Of fellowship of man with all that feels,
Remains the riddle that, though inmost ken
Of humblest creatures and of rudest men
Has sense of freedom as an instinct strong,—
Resenting injury as act of wrong,—
Man listed not this monitor's still voice,
But gave his wanton wish the guilty force of choice.