

**WOMAN
(LA FEMME)**

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Woman (La Femme) by M. J. Michelet & J. W. Palmer

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M. J. MICHELET & J. W. PALMER

**WOMAN
(LA FEMME)**



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W O M A N

(*La Femme.*)

From the French of
M. J. MICHELET,

OF THE FACULTY OF LETTERS, CHIEF IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE NATIONAL
ARCHIVES, AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF FRANCE," "HISTORY OF THE ROMAN
REPUBLIC," "MEMOIRS OF LUTHER," "INTRODUCTION TO UNIVERSAL
HISTORY," "L'INDOUE," "L'OSSEAU," "L'AMOUR,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

Translated from the last Paris Edition, by

J. W. PALMER, M.D.

Author of "The Nuts and the Bolts," "The and How to Errands," etc.



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IN THE AUTHOR'S OWN WORDS.

"THIS book omits two subjects, by the introduction of which in *L'Amour* so much censure has been incurred. I have concluded to leave their discussion to the literature of the day—which is inexhaustible on both those themes. I have demonstrated my problems by straight lines, and left to other writers the complicated illustration by curves. In their books they elaborately pursue the by-paths of love, but never once strike out on its grand and fertile highway—that impregnation which in more elevated passions endures even unto death. Our clever novelists are in the identical fog that in former times enveloped the casuists, who were, moreover, great analysers. Escobar and Busenbaum, who met with the same success as Balzac—fifty editions each, of their works—forgot only one thing in their subtle researches; but that was the very foundation of their doctrine. So the writers of to-day lose sight of marriage, and lay down rules for libertinism.

"This book differs no less from the serious romances of our great Utopians—Saint-Simon, Fourier, and the rest. They invoke nature, but a very low order of it, in sympathy with the degradation of the times; and at once they put their trust in passional attraction, in our very inclination towards that debased nature. In this age of stupendous effort, of heroic creation, they have tried to suppress effort; but with such a being as man, an energetic creator, an artist, effort is part of himself, and he is all the better for it. The popular moral instinct perceives this, and that is why those great thinkers have not succeeded in founding a school. Art, labor, and effort rule us all, and what we call nature in ourselves is, most frequently, of our own making, for we create ourselves day by day. I felt the truth of this while pursuing my anatomical studies last year, especially on the brain. The brain is manifestly the organ of *work*, the incarnation of our daily life. Hence its intense expression, and, if I may so say, its eloquence, in superior individuals; I do not hesitate to call it the most perfect flower, the most touching beauty in nature—affecting in the child, and often sublime in the man. Let them call this Realism; I am quite indifferent. There are two sorts of realism: the one vulgar and vacant—the other, through the Real, attaining the Idea, which is its essence and its highest truth, consequently its inherent nobility. If prudery is "shocked" at my poetry of truth, the only pure poetry, it is of no consequence to me; when in *L'Amour* I broke down the stupid barrier which separates literature from the enlightenment of science, I did not ask the advice

of those shame-faces, who would be chaster than Nature, and purer than God.

"Woman needs a faith, and expects it from man, in order to bring up her child; for there can be no education without faith. The day has come when faith may be laid down in a formula. Rousseau could not do it; his age was not ripe for it. *Conscience* is the test of truth; but it must have two controlling influences—*history*, which is the conscience of the human race, and *natural history*, which is the instinctive conscience of nature. Now formerly neither of these two existed; they have been born within the last century (1760-1880).

"When Conscience, History, and Natural History accord
—Believe!"

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