

WOMAN

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Woman by Vance Thompson

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VANCE THOMPSON

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W O M A N

BY

VANCE THOMPSON

AUTHOR OF "EAT AND GROW THIN," "THE EGO BOOK," ETC.



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TO
MAUD THOMPSON-BOHN, PH.D. (Yale)

MY DEAR SISTER:

May I place your name at the head of this book? You have given your life to the cause of Woman; you proved her right to stand where man stands in the world—his peer in science, in scholarship, in civic administration; and then you went out into the dust and heat of the industrial world to rouse your comrades in humanity to a realization of the new destinies that await them. Had I not been three thousand miles away from you when this book was written it had been a better and wiser book; more sincere it could not have been; and you, I am sure, will see how much of my heart is in it. And so, dear sister, I take the liberty of inscribing this little book to you—with love, and with the deference due one who has done things, while I, in a more fleeting way, have only said them.

Your affectionate brother,

VANCE THOMPSON.

PREFACE

FOR years I have tried not to write this book.

Doubtless some easy-going wag will express his regret that I did not go on trying not to write it; but I do not mind the perfusorial wags. It is the exact truth that this book got itself written almost in spite of me. It came in a sort of inevitable way—riding down my pompous masculine convictions, prejudices, social habitudes. Going about the world, in man's light-minded way, I met many women and gradually I began to see there was something the matter with them. It made no difference who the woman was or what her way of life was; there was something the matter with the brawny woman pushing out the boats at Trondjem and with the little perfumed cat curled up in a Venetian boudoir. And one day I had word with a woman-advocate. It was in the Palais de Justice in Paris—there in the Hall of Lost Footsteps, as we strolled to and fro. She was

good to look at, as she walked there in the Portian cap and gown of law, for she was a large, dark, hot-tempered woman, with tragic, quarrelsome eyes. One thing she said was this:

“Life is a conspiracy against woman.”

And I took the words away with me. It was not that I believed them—they were smoky rhetoric; but they voiced, with deep discontent, the tragedy of woman; and they made for thought—for questioning, indignant thought that would not let one be.

And so this book got itself written.

It is an affirmation and it is a recantation, for I, like every male of the species, thought it rather clever (in the spotted necktie, yellow-spat period of life) to crack mean and silly jokes about women. And if I have said less of the old tragedy of woman than of her swift-coming triumph it is because she is already at the door—and the door is swinging wide. There is a kind of timidity which refuses to follow the logic of events into a proximate and prophetic future. I lack that discreet timidity. Also, while this book is, I trust, characterized by serene impartiality and prudent moderation of judgment, I will frankly admit that I have

never been (when I knew I was on the right side of a good cause) an opponent of emphatic statement—*fortia dicta*. Of course I do not believe in writing at the top of one's voice—or pitching the note too high; but when a thing is to be said it should be said in the way that carries the greatest weight of sincerity. The woman question is too big a thing to blink at—or to talk about in whispers.

Scribam quod res est, said Gaffarellus; and I, too, have tried to do it—to write the thing that is and, without fear, the thing that is to be.

VANCE THOMPSON.