

**PRAY YOU, SIR,  
WHOSE  
DAUGHTER?**

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Pray you, sir, whose daughter? by Helen H. Gardener

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*Helen H. Gardner*

# PRAY YOU, SIR, WHOSE DAUGHTER?

BY

HELEN H. GARDENER

AUTHOR OF

"Is This Your Son, My Lord?" "Pushed by Unseen Hands," "A Thoughtless Yes," "Men, Women and Gods," "Facts and Fictions of Life," Etc.



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### Life's Gifts.

I saw a woman sleeping. In her sleep she dreamt Life stood before her, and held in each hand a gift—in the one Love, in the other Freedom. And she said to the woman, "Choose!"

And the woman waited long; and she said: "Freedom!" And Life said, "Thou hast well chosen. If thou hadst said, 'Love,' I would have given thee that thou didst ask for; and I would have gone from thee, and returned to thee no more. Now, the day will come when I shall return. In that day I shall bear both gifts in one hand." I heard the woman laugh in her sleep.

*Olive Schreiner's Dreams.*



## Dedicated

*With the love and admiration of the Author,*

### To her Husband,

*Who is ever at once her first, most severe, and most sympathetic critic,  
whose encouragement and interest in her work never flags; whose  
abiding belief in human rights, without sex limitations, and in  
equality of opportunity leaves scant room in his great soul  
to harbor patience with sex domination in a land  
which boasts of freedom for all, and embodies its  
symbol of Liberty in the form of the only  
legally disqualified and unrepresented  
class to be found upon its shores.*

## Preface.

In the following story the writer shows us what poverty and dependence are in their revolting outward aspects, as well as in their crippling effects on all the tender sentiments of the human soul. Whilst the many suffer for want of the decencies of life, the few have no knowledge of such conditions.

They require the poor to keep clean, where water by landlords is considered a luxury; to keep their garments whole where they have naught but rags to stitch together, twice and thrice worn threadbare. The improvidence of the poor as a valid excuse for ignorance, poverty, and vice, is as inadequate as is the providence of the rich, for their virtue, luxury, and power. The artificial conditions of society are based on false theories of government, religion, and morals, and not upon the decrees of a God.

In this little volume we have a picture, too, of what the world would call a happy family, in which a naturally strong, honest woman is shrivelled into a mere echo of her husband, and the popular sentiment of the class to which she belongs. The daughter having been educated in a college with young men, and tasted of the tree of knowledge, and, like the Gods, knowing good and evil, can no longer square her life by opinions she has out-

grown ; hence with her parents there is friction, struggle, open revolt, though conscientious and respectful withal.

Three girls belonging to different classes in society ; each illustrates the false philosophy on which woman's character is based, and each in a different way, in the supreme moment of her life, shows the necessity of self-reliance and self-support.

As the wrongs of society can be more deeply impressed on a large class of readers in the form of fiction than by essays, sermons, or the facts of science, I hail with pleasure all such attempts by the young writers of our day. The slave has had his novelist and poet, the farmer his, the victims of ignorance and poverty theirs, but up to this time the refinements of cruelty suffered by intelligent, educated women, have never been painted in glowing colors, so that the living picture could be seen and understood. It is easy to rouse attention to the grosser forms of suffering and injustice, but the humiliations of spirit are not so easily described and appreciated.

A class of earnest reformers have, for the last fifty years, in the press, the pulpit, and on the platform, with essays, speeches, and constitutional arguments before legislative assemblies, demanded the complete emancipation of women from the political, religious, and social bondage she now endures ; but as yet few see clearly the need of larger freedom, and the many maintain a stolid indifference to the demand.

I have long waited and watched for some woman to arise to do for her sex what Mrs. Stowe did for