

**WOMEN RULE: A
COMEDY IN
FIVE ACTS**

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Women Rule: A Comedy in five acts by Charles Ingersoll

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CHARLES INGERSOLL

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WOMEN RULE:

A COMEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

By Charles Ingersoll.

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IN talk with a friend, the writer of these pages—under the impression that successful pieces for the stage have been in many instances the work of persons of a low order of literary ability—ventured the assertion that he could himself produce a Comedy, and, being instantly challenged to the proof, wrote his drama, and showed it to his friend, by whom it was condemned without ceremony. The fact is well known that acting plays are not written at a heat, as some of the best poetry has been, and much good prose, but are elaborated. The piece thus summarily damned was laid aside, and, at intervals, afterwards taken up and altered, until the writer began to persuade himself it had the stage twist; but, after time and pains bestowed on his MS., he at last took fright, and irrecoverably, at the thought of submitting it to the ordeal of the footlights; bethinking himself, however, of Bob Acres' self-encouraging conclusion, that *so much good matter ought not to be all thrown away*, he determined to print it.

The inverted commas commonly prefixed to lines meant to be omitted in playing, have not been removed. The scene, though of, in part, American manners, is laid abroad; an incongruity for which there is this excuse: that any of us who will try his hand at making a five-act play turn upon home incidents and characters will probably discover—if he had never found it before—that his country, however great and respectable, is sadly provincial.

CHARACTERS.

MEN.

LORD WINTERLY.
HENRY (*his nephew*).
LANDAFF.
VALENTINE.
OLD PAYKSAN.
YOUNG PAYKSAN.
MARGIN (*a servant*).
A SOLICITOR AND HIS CLERK.

WOMEN:

MRS. WINSLOVE.
MRS. PAYKSAN.
EMILY.
QUEEN (*a servant*).

SCENE.

AT LORD WINTERLY'S IN THE COUNTRY.

TIME.

ONE DAY.

WOMEN RULE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Library at LORD WINTERLY'S—The room somewhat littered—Breakfast on a tray.

Enter MARGIN, with a letter.

Marg. My master not down yet! Here is his breakfast—Oh, the warm and friendly face of a good breakfast! Your right philosophy [*helping himself*] is practical philosophy. Did not the great Socrates say to his maid of all work, *My dear, strike the pot when it is hot?* [*Eating.*] What a rascal a man's heart is! If it were my master's inclinations I brushed, what a scavenger I would be! "Gentle blood! Blood is the same, up stairs and down; runs in the same ditch, empties from the same reservoir, feeds the same appetites—don't I know that? Do I serve a bookish gentleman for nothing? I am no son of science, but the kitchen, a footman 'to the manner born;' beau to the scullion, forlorn hope to the housemaid, fit only to live under ground, half brother to the antipodes—hem! to give my arm to the fat house-keeper, with a secret inclination to the cook, if my

"master's blood is not as muddy as mine is—so said—
 "who 's that Egyptian gentleman with a hard name?
 "—No matter—he agrees with me, so he must be
 "right. The man that is right is the man that agrees
 "with you; there is your key to conclusions." Why
 is my master sick with love of his aunt—his aunt that
 is to be? Mr. Henry, the last thing before he left here,
 did not your uncle say to you [*mimicks him*], *Nephew,*
watch this treasure!—Thee only can I trust—Books
are innocent—"And did not the hard-hearted old dan-
 "dy, that never shed a round tear in his life—did not
 "he try to whimper, and wind up with a cry?—What
 "for I don't know, unless woe is a luxury—But, hold,
 "Margin! Is the fault in your master, or your phi-
 "losophy? Who sent for love? Not your master;
 "he did not ring and order it. It came uncalled; it
 "came like a ghost. It came like the measles. It
 "came, souse. It came like a heavy cold, and your
 master was all choked up before he knew it." Mr.
 Henry is in love, where he ought not to be—but he
 can't help that.—What pretty boy ever so blushed,
 when rumped and kissed by some coveting, uneasy
 spinster, as my master does when Miss Emily's mild
 eye passes over him? Doth he not love in spite of his
 teeth?—the teeth of his modesty, if it has any teeth?
 Breakfast is spoiling. What is the Latin for break-
 fast? *Gent, gent,* something like *gentleman.* [*Takes*
a book to look for it.] Here is this saucebox, come
 cutting across the library, again—How often have I
 forbid that?

SCENE II.

Enter QUEEN, crossing the stage.

Queen. Fa-la-la-la-la—

Marg. Musical box, too! Ah! young woman, where are you going?

Queen. Did not you hear my mistress' bell, young man?

Marg. Stick to circumference—Eschew diameter.

Queen. W-h-a-t?

Marg. From the servants' hall to the back stairs—from the back stairs to the maids' gallery—from the maids' gallery round, round—that is your way to answer your bell, Mrs. Muslin.

Queen. Up to his knees in his master's books—like puss in boots. I will see Mr. Henry knows of your Didos, Mr. Shoulderknot.

Marg. Dido! Who was Dido?

Queen. Who was she? Who are you? She was the old turnspit, now deceased; a more useful member of the family than you will ever be.

Marg. Respectable slut!

Queen. Slut! You—you wearer of second-hand learning and cast-off coats—you spoiled meat, kept too long in the house, and proper only to be thrown to the ducks; you humble servant to the butler, suspected of disloyalty and trusted with a fork or two, and the small spoons, but never with the soup ladle!—You odd volume of an improper book!

Marg. Oh! oh!!

Queen. You, a scholar indeed! You scholar educated to shave and dress single gentlemen—to cool their wine and warm their shirts—you etymology!

Marg. Rising in the climax, an etymology! Besotted female!

Queen. Female to you, you odious thing! You stupid, stuck-up, ridiculous, rude, intolerable, insuffer-