

THE WOMAN HERSELF

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The woman herself by Ruth Holt Boucicault

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RUTH HOLT BOUCICAULT

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HERSELF**

THE
Woman Herself

By Ruth Holt Boucicault



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CHAPTER I

October 29th.

TO-NIGHT we watched a magnificent fire, very close to us. We two were alone on the balcony, detached from everything in the world, it seemed to me, facing the soaring flame. And a kind of spell fell on us, of fascination and fear. The sky turned green, and the moon faded out in the great, ruinous light, and men were fighting it, and excitement and confusion were everywhere about us, but we two sat quite quietly on the balcony watching. And I was vaguely surprised to find myself shaking from head to foot. It wasn't the October frost, it wasn't the fire, but another kind of fear, indefinite—and sweet. The flames were enclosing the great mass dome.

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Suddenly it broke into a myriad prism colours and lights. It was gorgeous—beautiful past description. I thought of the Kremlin. I looked for the moon—it was gone; for the stars—they were blotted out. But close beside me were two eyes—warm eyes that humanized the horrible light, and a voice saying:

“Don’t be afraid; there is no danger.”

No danger! I fetched a long breath and said good-night, and realized that brain and spine were aching as if after a strain. Yet only a shiver had gone over me.

There are things that can’t be told to a third person—things between two—tangible and dangerous—to them, and too delicate to be put into words to others. People who have lived these things know the signs afar off—and the others will find out for themselves.

I hate women who keep journals—they are such egotists. I never kept one before in my life, but the need of a confidant now is com-

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pulling me. It will help me to think out my problem, about which I can't ask any one.

Here I am, a married woman of twenty-nine, and happily married, too, as the world sees things, for seven years. A comfortable income, a good social position, a man of pleasant temper, humour and culture, who cares for her—what more should a woman want? She *shouldn't*—that's the plain answer, especially when she married him of her own free will and choice, loving him as much as she could love then, with her family's entire approval, and the blessings of friends, spring weather, and Holy Church. All quite as it should be—happy and normal and right. I can see it now, that spring wedding day seven pleasant years ago—“ideal,” the girl friends said. The little church in the Green—the sifted sunshine through the stained glass windows, the beckoning of flowers and birds outside—and inside the swelling music, the solemn hush. My own slim figure in