

**MARRIED OR  
SINGLE? VOL. I**

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Married or single? Vol. I by Catharine Maria Sedgwick

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**CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK**

**MARRIED OR  
SINGLE? VOL. I**



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# MARRIED OR SINGLE?

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"HOPE LESLIE," "REDWOOD," "HOME," ETC., ETC.

"Seven generations, haply, to this world,  
To right it visibly a finger's breadth,  
And mend its rents a little."

AURORA LEIGH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:  
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1857.

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## DEDICATION.

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MY DEAR BESSIE R—N,

Why I dedicate this book to you is best known to ourselves only. That it would never have been written without your cheering and cheerful sympathy, is reason enough to allege why it is inscribed to you, by

Your loving friend,

C. M. S.





## P R E F A C E .

THE want of an innocent occupation may be reason enough why one should write, but some better reason or a plausible apology should be rendered for inflicting the writing upon the public; for if the public, in the large sense, is not obliged to read, there is a small public of kind friends, who feel a moral obligation to perform that duty. And a hard duty it may be when the novel-readers' market is supplied by such producers as Dickens, Thackeray, Charles Reade, and Mrs. Gaskell (all honor, praise, and love be to her), and our own popular writers in this department. If we do not specify Mrs. Stowe, it is that she writes for all humanity. Her books cannot be restricted to any class of readers, nor claimed exclusively by any department of literature.

The writer of "Married or Single" has the fears and faltering of a stranger in appearing before the present public. The generation known to her, and which extended a welcome and a degree of favor to her, has, for the most part, passed away. Most of those friends are gone, whose hearts vibrated (without the vanities or selfishness of personality) to her success, and she is left to feel the chill and dreariness of the "banquet-hall deserted." Still, she has friends who speak the God-speed, and young friends who will receive the fruits of her observation of the defects and wants of our social life with ingenuousness, and perhaps with some profit; and possibly there are those who will relish better a glass of water from our own fountains,

than a draught of French concoction, whose enticing flavor but disguises its insidious poison.

It might seem natural and decorous, that one approaching the limit of human life should—if writing at all—write a book, strictly religious, but the novel (and to that guild we belong) does not seem to us the legitimate vehicle of strictly religious teaching. Secular affairs should be permeated by the spirit of the altar and the temple, but not brought within the temple's holy precincts.

One word more—the moral of our story—to our young feminine readers. We have given (we confess, after some disposition to rebel), the most practical proof of our allegiance to the ancient laws of romance, by making our hero and heroine man and wife, duly and truly. *Omnia ritè et solennè acta sunt.* We shall not, therefore, be suspected of irreverence to the great law of Nature, by which, in every province of her infinitely various kingdom, all “kindred drops are melted into one.”

But we raise our voice with all our might against the miserable cant that matrimony is essential to the feebler sex—that a woman's single life must be useless or undignified—that she is but an adjunct of man—in her best estate a helm merely to guide the nobler vessel. Aside from the great tasks of humanity, for which masculine capacities are best fitted, we believe she has an independent power to shape her own course, and to force her separate sovereign way. Happily no illustration is needed at this day, to prove that maidens can perform with grace and honor, duties from which wives and mothers are exempted by their domestic necessities. Our sisters of mercy and charity, however they may be called, are limited to no faith and to no peculiar class of ministrations. Their smiles brighten the whole world.

But we speak especially to those of our maidens whose modesty

confines their efficiency to the circle which radiates from their home. We pray such to remember that their sex's share of the sterner sacrifices, as well as the softer graces of Christian love, does not belong alone to the noble Florence Nightingales of our day, any more than the real glories of feminine heroism were once all bound to the helmet of Joan of Arc. It is not in the broad and noisy fields sought by the apostles of "Woman's Rights," that sisterly love and maidenly charity best diffuse their native sweetness. These are sensitive-flowers—too bright and sweet indeed—as our language has just partly implied—to be fully typified by that pale plant of which it is said that

"Radiance and odor are not its dower,"

but resembling it in the essential character from which it takes its name. The modesty and sensibility which in a greater or less degree belong to other flowers as attributes, are in this, its essential nature, inwrought through every fibre of its delicate texture. The same qualities mark the maidenly virtues among the pure throng of womanly graces. These they enhance; of those, they are the distinctive nature. May it never become less exquisitely distinctive.

We do not therefore counsel our gentle young friends to nourish a spirit of enterprise, nor of necessity, even to enlarge the plain and natural circle of their duties. But in every sphere of woman—wherever her low voice thrills with the characteristic vibrations which are softer and sweeter than all the other sweet notes in nature's infinite chorus, maidens have a mission to fulfil as serious and as honorable as those of a wife's devotion, or a mother's care—a mission of wider and more various range. We need not describe it.

Our story will not have been in vain, if it has done any thing towards raising the single women of our country to the compara-