

**WOMAN'S RIGHTS UNDER
THE LAW: IN THREE
LECTURES, DELIVERED IN
BOSTON, JANUARY, 1861**

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Woman's rights under the law: in three lectures, delivered in Boston, January, 1861 by Caroline H. Dall

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CAROLINE H. DALL

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WOMAN'S RIGHTS
UNDER THE LAW:

In Three Lectures,

DELIVERED IN BOSTON, JANUARY, 1851,

BY

CAROLINE H. DALL,

AUTHOR OF "WOMAN'S RIGHT TO LABOR," "HISTORICAL PICTURES
UNFOUNDED," &c., &c.

"Every leaf, we have seen, connects its work with the entire and accumulated result of the work of its predecessors. Dying, it leaves its own small but well-labored chord; aiding — if imperceptibly, yet essentially — to the strength, from root to crest, of the trunk on which it has lived, and aiding that trunk for better service to the next year's foliage." — JOHN RUSKIN.

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22, SCHOOL STREET.

To the Friends
OF
FORSAKEN WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

I Dedicate this Book,

BECAUSE THE LIVES OF SUCH WOMEN ARE THE
LEGITIMATE RESULT OF THE SPIRIT
OF THE LAW.

" Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are registered where every day I turn
The leaf to read them."

MACBETH.

" Some reasons of this double coronation
I have possessed you with, and think them strong."
" Why do you bend such solenn brows on me?
Have I commandment on the pulse of life?"

KING JOHN.

" According to the fair play of the world,
Let me have audience. I am sent to speak."

KING JOHN.

. . . " Let this be copied out,
And keep it safe for our remembrance.
Return the precedent to these lords again."

KING JOHN.

P R E F A C E.

THERE seems, at first sight, a certain presumption in offering to an American public, at this moment, any book which does not treat of the great interests which convulse and perplex the United States. But experience has shown, that neither the individual nor the national mind can remain continually upon the rack; and both author and publisher have thought that a book upon a serious subject, popular in form and low in price, would find, perhaps, a more hearty welcome, under present circumstances, than in those prosperous days, when romances and poems, travels and biographies, are scattered over every table by the score.

“*Woman's Right to Labor*” owed its warm welcome, not to the power or skill of its author, but to the impatient interest of philanthropists in every thing relating to that subject. It remains to be seen, whether as large a portion of the public and the press are prepared to treat with candid consideration the subject of the present essays.

Both these volumes have been given to the world in their present detached form, that they may receive the benefit of general criticism; that errors, inaccuracies, or misapprehensions, may be perceived and rectified before they take a permanent position as part of a larger work. All criticism, therefore, which is *honestly intended*, will be received with patience and gratitude; but a great deal falls to the lot of every author, which cannot come under this head.

If we are told that a "wider acquaintance with the history" of a certain era will modify our views, it is natural to expect that an honest critic will show *where* the acquaintance fails, and how the views should be modified. When we are told that certain scientific illustrations, "though true in the main, are not accurate in detail," we may reasonably hope to see at least *one* error pointed out. When neither of these things is done, we sweep such remarks aside, as alike unprofitable to us and our readers.

A wide and generous sympathy in my aims has given me, thus far, all that I could desire of encouragement and appreciation; and this appreciation has come, in several instances, from a "household of faith" far removed from my own, and has been mingled in such cases with an outspoken regret, that one who "wrote so well, and felt so warmly,"

should not acknowledge on her pages the debt woman owes to Christianity, and unfurl an evangelical banner above a Christ-like work. Because such friends have spoken tenderly, I answer them respectfully; because I never saw any church-door so narrow that I could not pass through it, nor so wide that it would open to all God's glory, I answer them without fear.

And, first, I believe in God, as the tender Father of all; as one who cares for the least of his children, and does not turn from the greatest; as one whose eye marks the smallest inequalities of happiness or condition, and holds them in a memory which does not fail. I believe in Christ, as his authorized and anointed Teacher, come especially to reveal the fulness of God's love through his own life of practical good-will. I do not expect him to be superseded or set aside; and I do expect, that in proportion as men grow wiser, humbler, and sweeter, their eyes will open only the more widely to the great miracle of his spotless life, to the heavenly nature of his so simple teachings. And, next, I believe in my own work, — the elevation of woman through education, which is development; through labor, which is salvation; through legal rights, which are only freedom to develop and save, — as part of the mission of Jesus on the earth, authorized by him, inspired of God, and sure of