

# **WOMAN'S WAGES**

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Woman's Wages by Catharine G. Waugh

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**CATHARINE G. WAUGH**

**WOMAN'S  
WAGES**



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CATHARINE G. WAUGH, A. M.

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## PRELUDE.

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The following thesis was examined by Rev. Aaron L. Chapin, D. D. L. L., of Beloit College, and Prof. Phoebe I. Sutliff, of Rockford Seminary, appointed by Rockford Seminary to decide upon its merits as one of the conditions requisite to a graduate from their college course, receiving the degree of Master of Arts.

Its acceptance pleased and surprised me, as I had rashly ventured to combat some of the theories advanced by President Chapin concerning the inequality in women's wages as set forth in his valuable work on Political Economy.

A belief that the facts and arguments here put forth might interest other women anxious to help their own sex, and a fond desire of seeing my own production in print has led to this publication.

I am not a widow with nine small children, nor a daughter with parents depending on my earnings, nor the wife of a drunkard claiming all my wages, nor sending my brothers and sisters through college by the sale of this book, nor ruined by the failure of a bank, nor burnt out by a fire, nor bankrupt by a siege of sickness, asking the public for sweet charity's sake to invest in this document, but myself a working woman who has experienced little of the injustice meted out to my sister women, knowing of their wrongs mainly through what I read and hear.

My ideas may bear marks of immaturity and lack of extended knowledge, but I believe they have common sense, truth and justice.

CATHARINE G. WAUGH.

ROCKFORD, ILL., October 19, 1888.

## PART I.

### EXCUSES FOR INEQUALITY IN WAGES.

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**W**OMEN have been workers from earliest ages; but little mention made of their efforts as a factor in economics until the last few years, probably because their few occupations kept them so retired.

During Harriet Martineau's visit to our country in 1840, she found only seven occupations open to women; teaching, sewing, keeping boarding house, folding and stitching in binderies, work in the factory or compositor's room and domestic service. So great has been the change that our last United States census shows three hundred occupations open, while Virginia Penny's *Cyclopedia of Employments for Women* counts up five hundred. In the ten main departments of manufacture, including boots and shoes, carpets, cotton goods, silk manufactures and wool hats are employed 535,000 people, more than a third of whom, or about 180,000, are women.

With this addition to the force of public wage-workers, it is fit that this new economic factor be studied. Miss Penny's tabulated list shows that invariably, women received from one-third to one-half less wages than did men for the same kind and same amount of work, and any one who has eyes to see can observe this unjust discrimination between men and women wage-workers, but fail to behold any just reason therefor.

In Dr. Chapin's *Political Economy*, well known as a student's manual, are outlined the reasons which, in his opinion, have always kept women's wages below that of men's. But they are really nothing but excuses. He says, "It is a prevalent opinion that for miscellaneous labor, women are by physical and mental



constitution inferior to men in the qualities essential to the highest efficiency." There need be no discussion as to the prevalence of this opinion in the past, though the continued achievements of women have been gradually bearing away this prejudice. Even if it was true that women were not capable of the "highest efficiency," there is no contention but what their qualities might fit them for places next to the highest. That would only place them with the majority of the men, for only a minor portion of them have "qualities essential to the highest efficiency," while the majority are either filling secondary places, or those less than the highest and not always filling these with the "highest efficiency." But do women receive the same wages as these inferior kind of men? If so, there would seem to be no injustice thus far, and women could only complain of their lack of qualification. But this is not the case. Labor statistics from all over our country show that where women have been working in trades considered inferior even, they have received less than the men working right by their sides. Even should certain particular women be incapable, that ought not to hinder the woman who did possess the necessary mental and physical qualities from receiving equal compensation for the same work. But, on the contrary, no degree of efficiency in the individual woman has been rewarded by equal compensation. That alone shows it is not the lack of the necessary qualities, but that accident of sex, is the prime reason for the inequality. For instance, a teacher who had shown remarkable ability in the instruction and government of her room was, on account of her superior qualifications, and the inefficiency of the man principal of her building, promoted to the principalship with an increase of salary five dollars per month more than any other woman teacher had ever received. This special mark of favor gave her twenty-five dollars, while the man principal, whose place she received, had been paid fifty dollars per month. Again, an instance confirming the same assertion was told me concerning one of the government offices.

A clerk falling sick sent his wife to supply his place. This she did for many months, working and drawing her husband's salary as his agent, until she became thoroughly conversant with all the business details. After a year's illness the husband died. The wife wished to continue at the same post, but was only allowed to do it at a considerable decrease in the wages; for it was Mrs. A. who really held the position now and not the sick husband, who had formally held the appointment before, while

she did the work. These two instances are taken from many to show it was not the lack of the essential qualities that kept their wages less but the fact of sex. Because the average man is physically stronger than the average woman is no reason why the individual slender man should receive larger pay than some individual muscular woman, or in some occupation where muscular energy is not the main requisite.

But this prevalent opinion as to women's inferiority is not a correct one. Though there are fewer cases of particular women attaining prominence in the public walks of life, is this not because there have been so few occupations open to women, the world has had no opportunity to learn of the ability in them? In home circles, for ages women's only sphere, their efforts have not been open to the public gaze. Many a noble woman with characteristics that in a man would have made a leader famous for grand public achievements, has uncomplainingly, even gladly, devoted those talents to helping perhaps a husband or a brother scale the heights of fame. Pericles' power and renown would have been far less had not Aspasia devoted herself so wholly to his interests. The brilliant Mrs. Fawcett's assistance and care of her husband, otherwise helpless through blindness, has been the secret of his success. Only lately has been understood the value of the work done by Caroline Herschel in helping her brother Sir William. Many a long night did brother and sister toil together, sweeping the heavens with their telescopes, making their astronomical calculations, consulting as to possibilities and probabilities and the methods of proving them. She cared not for fame, glad that her labors could make her renowned brother yet more illustrious, and only the flight of years has shown the value of her work. The wife of the late John A. Logan was a woman of singular ability, and devoted herself wholly to pushing her husband forward as a politician and a statesman. She so wholly made his interests her own, that men antagonistic to him or his plans were subdued by her greater tact. She made friends for herself that they might be her husband's friends. Sometimes the press of business left him little time for the preparation of lectures, and Mrs. Logan would herself write them. Nor did he forget to acknowledge that she collected the materials and prepared his speeches. Still he was the renowned one. Many other women, the majority of them, have thrown the whole of their enthusiasm into caring for their homes and families. To make that kingdom complete and happy requires as many "qualities requisite to the highest efficiency"

as it would to plan a campaign, establish a bank, or manage a factory. Yet, as this more humble work is not public, the world has not credited women with their full ability.

In the last few years, however, it has been demonstrated that sex is no hindrance to the existence of those qualities, and the accomplishment of such grand results as no inferior minds could have produced. Look at the work done by Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War, or at what Mary Livermore did in our own Sanitary Commission; at the honors bestowed on Clara Barton by even European potentates for her sacrifices and ability in the Red Cross benevolences. Remember that the Tennessee campaign executed by General Grant with such brilliant success was planned by a woman, Anna Ella Carroll, and that though Lincoln, Stanton, Wade, and others acknowledged this and the archives of our nation now contain the full proofs, her claim for remuneration has been before Congress for years. Now she who gave time, talent, and money to destroy the rebellion is in her old age suffering from pecuniary want, because she is a woman, and can not push her claim. Mary Lyon, who dared establish that pioneer college for girls, Mt. Holyoke; Mrs. Frank Leslie, who received from her dying husband a legacy of little more than debt, carried forward the business to such success that now every debt is paid and she is a rich woman; Ellice Hopkins who has begun this social purity movement, which is now sweeping over all the world; Mrs. Leonora M. Barry, the greatest Masterworkman of them all in the Knights of Labor, whose advice has always been for peace and against strikes; Maria Mitchell, whose original observations have included valuable examinations of the nebulae, discovery of comets, work for the coast survey, and compilations for the Nautical Almanac, all of which entitled her in the eyes of the King of Denmark, to his gold medal: Captain Mary Miller, who after long delay in obtaining her captain's license, on account of her sex, and not because of lack of the needful qualifications, was at last legally allowed to continue controlling the vessel she had formerly managed, when her husband was nominal captain; Helen Hunt Jackson, who was so thoroughly posted on all matters pertaining to the Indian question that the President recognizing this ability appointed her on a committee for investigating certain complicated claims,—all these women exhibited the "qualities essential to the highest efficiency" in their various and widely different departments. Turn also to that queenly leader of the quarter of a million white ribbon