

**WE WOMEN AND
OUR AUTHORS**

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We women and our authors by Laura Marholm Hansson

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LAURA MARHOLM HANSSON

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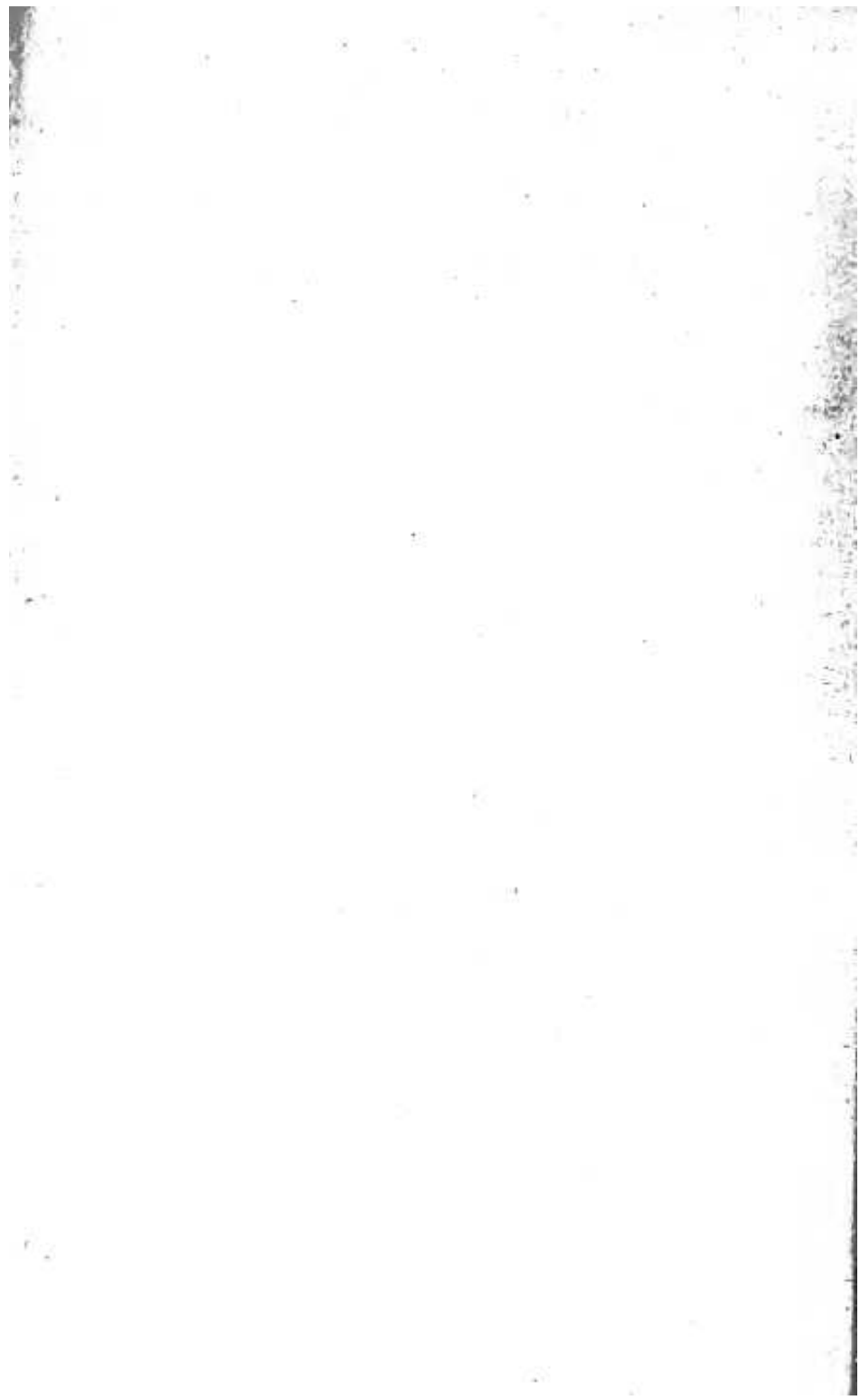
We Women and our Authors

WE WOMEN AND OUR
AUTHORS  BY LAURA
MARHOLM HANSSON  AN
ENGLISH RENDERING FROM
THE SECOND EDITION OF
THE GERMAN WORK, BY
HERMIONE RAMSDEN 

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY
HEAD  LONDON AND
NEW YORK   1899

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We Women and our Authors

WE German women are accustomed to look upon ourselves as an appendage to or a part of man. Up till now it has been the chief object and the pride of our existence to subordinate ourselves to him, and to look after his comforts. It is so no longer, or at any rate it is not as common as it used to be. Women have begun to ask: Who am I? and not: Whose am I? which proves that they are conscious of their individuality and wish to live their own lives. At present they are only helpless beginners filled with desires, needs and claims, which they themselves do not understand and which they would rather not admit. Their first longing is for outward independence, and in that they are not even original, as the economic conditions of the middle classes have long since forced women to exert themselves to the utmost in order that they may be self-supporting in part, if not entirely. And they are proud and happy when they have succeeded thus far, they fight for it in public and in private life, in the family, in Associations for Women's Rights, in newspapers, and in books where the movement has advanced the furthest. They fight for the first and rudest

basis of their independence, for the right to maintain themselves, which, while it is the lowest step on the way to freedom, is the one that gives them the first title to the possession and disposal of their own selves. It is by no means an aimless struggle, but it is a sad one, in which the woman only too often forfeits her most precious possession—her womanliness.

But there is something in the background, besides what a woman ventures for the sake of attaining her wishes and advancing her claims. Many women have not yet learned to express it, many consider it their duty to dispute it even to themselves, while some give way to the indistinct longing with fear and hesitation, and only a very few know what it is and welcome it with gladness and with the consciousness that through it their lives are being strengthened, and their souls and bodies beautified. Women have passed through a fresh development and have entered upon a new stage of their inner consciousness.

It was an event which it took the whole of this century to bring about, and which has only now begun to draw attention to itself and its consequences.

One of the causes which brought it into being was due to the authors of this present century.

There has never been a literature so rich and so full of variety as that which has surrounded us women of the present day. Woman has never played such an important part in the literature

of any century as in ours. It is not merely that writers have made use of her as a speaking-trumpet to say much that they could not have trusted themselves to say more plainly, but they have needed the woman herself in many and more various ways than was ever the case in former times. They wanted to have her with them in all that they thought and created, they needed her with her soul, her mind, her approbation, in order that she might make them strong, and give them confidence. Since the end of the last century there have been few literary or intellectual works, either during the classical or the romantic period, or about the year '48, with which a woman has not been closely connected. The relationship between man and woman had changed from its simple foundation and had assumed a tenderer, more delicate form. This betrays the fact that the men, or rather let us say the *élite* among the men, of this century have become more sensitive, more refined, more nervous. But the same is true of women, only that they have also become more self-conscious, and this is largely owing to the influence of the superior men of their time. It was an influence that extended far beyond the limits of personal acquaintance. How many young girls have experienced their first soul-rapture in fearful bliss over a book, and have felt their heart and the world and existence itself to be too narrow for their emotions! How many women there are who have been awakened through