

**AGGRAVATING LADIES:  
BEING A LIST OF WORKS  
PUBLISHED UNDER THE  
PSEUDONYM OF "A LADY"**

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Aggravating Ladies: Being a List of Works Published Under the Pseudonym of "A Lady" by  
Olphar Hamst

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**OLPHAR HAMST**

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# AGGRAVATING LADIES

BEING  
A LIST OF WORKS PUBLISHED UNDER THE PSEUDONYM OF  
"A LADY," WITH PRELIMINARY SUGGESTIONS  
ON THE ART OF DESCRIBING BOOKS  
BIBLIOGRAPHICALLY.

BY

OLPHAR HAMST

Ralph Thomas

"The time is coming when really learned men will again be ashamed of not seeing the value of all the uses of mind : when nothing but thoughtlessness or impudence, mercurial brain or brazen forehead, will aver that no knowledge is practical, except that which ends in the use of material instruments."—Prof. De Morgan (*Arithmetical Books* 1847, p. 54).

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1880

W.F.

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## PREFACE.

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In the course of collecting materials for my "Handbook of Fictitious Names of Authors of the Nineteenth Century," I came across the titles of a number of works purporting to be written by "A Lady," the authorship of which appeared to be unknown.

It occurred to me that I might probably ascertain the names of many of the authors, and also proper descriptions of such of the books as I had not seen, and was unable to see, if I printed a list of them. As however, the essential points to be attended to, in the proper description of a book, are little understood, I thought it would be desirable to prefix to the list a few suggestions on the way to supply correct information. These gradually developed, so that I soon found the subject required more space, more time, and more consideration than I at first imagined.

In the hope that I might obtain assistance from others, and with a view to getting hints and exciting discussion, I wrote an article for "Notes and Queries," which was printed in the numbers for January and April of 1872, entitled, "How to describe a Book." I now go more fully into the matters that I consider require attention in the proper description of a book.

An explanation of the title of this essay will no doubt be looked for in the preface. It is very simple. In my searches for the Authors' names, the ladies in this list have resisted all enquiry in the most aggravating manner. Therefore I took the title of Aggravating Ladies as being concise and appropriate.

The information asked for relates only to English Literature of the 19th century, to which period I confine myself entirely. The anonymous and pseudonymous writers during this century being more than sufficient to occupy a whole life of laborious application.

I have not included in the list any phrases such as :—A Lady of Rank—A Lady of Distinction—A Lady of Hebrew faith—A Banished Lady—A Young Lady—A too generous Young Lady—nor, A Lady of distinction, who has witnessed and attentively studied what is esteemed truly graceful and elegant amongst the most refined nations of Europe (!) The pseudonym of the author of *The Mirror of the Graces*, or an English lady's costume [treating of]...taste...grace; modesty...dress...; rank...in life;...of accomplishments;...the mind...means of preserving beauty...; by a lady, &c. London, Crosby & Co., 1811.

On the other hand I have inserted some titles which have been entered in different catalogues as by "a lady," when those words do not occur on the title. Such works probably being really written by a lady, the publisher naturally desired they should go forth with that impress of good faith and with all the prestige attaching to that talismanic little word.

As I have already explained, my list comprises only works published in the present century, whose authors are unknown to me. I have a longer list of works by "a lady," whose names are known, and who have therefore ceased to be aggravating. I do not give the title when I know the name of the author because I am now seeking not supplying information.

Another list as long as that I give at the end I have not printed, not having been able to see the books themselves so as to describe them from actual inspection.

I shall be grateful for information as to any of the works, or the lives of these Aggravating Ladies.

38, Doughty Street, W.C.

July, 1880.





## PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

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What's in a name?

Ask the booksellers, and they will tell you, *much* in the title-page of a new book....

The making up of a taking title-page, seems to have been the peculiar province of the bookseller, time out of mind.  
—*Fly leaves*....London [published and edited by] John Miller, 1854.

After a perusal of my list I think every gentleman will agree with me that Ladies really are very aggravating. It would be curious to hear the exclamation of any lady who has written as "A lady," upon looking it over. She would probably exclaim that when she wrote as "A lady," she thought she was the only one, or at all events one of the first.

The authoress of: "How to dress on £15 a year as a lady, by a lady," would no doubt be surprised to find such a long list for the present century alone. I mention this flowing and somewhat vigorously written little work; but it is of too recent a date for me to make any enquiry for the author's name, especially as it is a secret that, from the present popularity of the book, is not likely to be long kept. (1) For I have remarked that though these ladies do not like placing their names on their books, yet there is little desire to disguise the authorship, and enquiries are generally soon satisfied if a work has attained any success. They like to see themselves in print, so long as there is no infringement of the patent of modesty.

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(1) Since this was written (1875) the author's name has been divulged, and there has also been a Chancery Suit in relation to the work. I have put the book in the list which follows as an illustration of some of my remarks.

The inference from this is that my list is composed chiefly of works that have not become famous or popular, which is the fact. If secrecy were their object, it has to the present time been attained, for they have defied my researches. Nevertheless I believe that to some one of the author's friends or relations she has been known, but "no man is a prophet in his own country," and friends and relations very often care too little for what literary ladies are doing to follow Captain Cuttle's advice and "make a note" of an author's name. Knowledge is often the greatest enemy to the recording of facts. People often know so well whom a book is by, that they are not even aware of its pseudonymity. The majority of novel readers never know the name of the author, nor do they care to enquire, and much prefer reading a novel "By the author of" some previous work which has interested them.

In many cases I am asking for information which the authoresses do not conceal, and which is well known though unknown to me.

Thus I ascribe my not knowing the name of the author rather to the fact of there being no one to make a note of it when found, than any desire on the fair writer's part to remain unknown. When a lady has written her first work as "a lady" she seldom adopts that denomination in her second work; but more frequently uses the term "By the author of" the previous work, or "By a lady, author of," etc.

## HOW TO DESCRIBE A BOOK.

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"If you are troubled with a pride of accuracy, and would have it completely taken out of you, print a catalogue."  
(Author unknown).

Dr. Aikin used to say, that nothing is such an obstacle to the production of excellence as the power of producing what is pretty good with ease and rapidity. *The Circulator* [1825] quoted in the *Manual of Laconics* by John Taylor, 1833, p. 361.

Practice is the best, if not the only way to learn how to describe a book. Simply reading descriptions of what to do is of little use. Indeed practice is found to teach so much, that we often find authors of bibliographical books cancelling the early portions of their works in order to correct those defects and deficiencies which experience has brought forcibly to their notice. Such was the case with the first part of Quérard's *France Littéraire*, which was called in and cancelled; and the *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis* of Boase and Courtney, published by Longmans in 1874.

Every one must be guided by their particular requirements; but must never lose sight of the absolute necessity there is of following a system rigidly, and of being accurate.

With these preliminary remarks I will now proceed to give some hints derived from my own experience.