

The Last Page

The Anti-Suffragists

Fashionable women in luxurious homes,
With men to feed them, clothe them, pay their bills,
Bow, doff the hat, and fetch the handkerchief;
Hostess or guest, and always so supplied
With graceful deference and courtesy;
Surrounded by their servants, horses, dogs, –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

Successful women who have won their way
Alone, with strength of their unaided arm,
Or helped by friends, or softly climbing up
By the sweet aid of 'woman's influence';
Successful any way, and caring naught
For any other woman's unsuccess, –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

Religious women of the feebler sort, –
Not the religion of a righteous world,
A free, enlightened, upward-reaching world,
But the religion that considers life
As something to back out of! – whose ideal
Is to renounce, submit, and sacrifice,
Counting on being patted on the head
And given a high chair when they get to heaven, –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

Ignorant women – college-bred sometimes,
But ignorant of life's realities
And principles of righteous government,
And how the privileges they enjoy
Were won with blood and tears by those before –
Those they condemn, whose ways they now oppose;
Saying, 'Why not let well enough alone?'
Our world is very pleasant as it is, –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

And selfish women, – pigs in petticoats, –
Rich, poor, wise, unwise, top or bottom round,

But all sublimely innocent of thought,
And guiltless of ambition, save the one
Deep, voiceless aspiration – to be fed!
These have no use for rights or duties more.
Duties today are more than they can meet,
And law insures their right to clothes and food, –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

And, more's the pity, some good women, too;
Good conscientious women, with ideas;
Who think – or think they think – that woman's cause
Is best advanced by letting it alone;
That she somehow is not a human thing,
And not to be helped on by human means,
Just added to humanity – an 'L' –
A wing, a branch, an extra, not mankind, –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

And out of these has come a monstrous thing,
A strange, down-sucking whirlpool of disgrace,
Women uniting against womanhood,
And using that great name to hide their sin!
Vain are their words as that old king's command
Who set his will against the rising tide.
But who shall measure the historic shame
Of these poor traitors – traitors are they all –
To great Democracy and Womanhood!

Charlotte Anna Perkins Gilman