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# WOMAN AND HER MASTER

VOLUME 1

SYDNEY MORGAN



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W O M A N  
AND  
H E R M A S T E R.

BY  
LADY MORGAN.

“As the old law-phrase runs, Baron et Feme—the master  
and his woman.”—BLACKSTONE.

~~VOL. I.~~

LONDON:  
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,  
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

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1840.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108019330](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108019330)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2010

This edition first published 1840  
This digitally printed version 2010

ISBN 978-1-108-01933-0 Paperback

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# Woman and Her Master

VOLUME 1

SYDNEY MORGAN



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## Women's Writing

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## Woman and Her Master

Sydney, Lady Morgan (?1783–1859) is best remembered as an Irish novelist whose highly successful historical romances often dealt with sexual, religious and racial discrimination. One of her last works, *Woman and her Master*, published in 1840, examines the role of women in history. Morgan originally planned to write four volumes, but owing to her ill health only the first two, focusing on the Old Testament and classical civilisation, were completed. Morgan proposes the view that women were really the dominant sex that shaped human society. She criticises the legal discrimination against women that persists even in an age when superiority is no longer defined by sheer physical strength. In Volume 1 she focuses on 'savage' and 'semi-civilized' peoples, and examples of early societies as described in the Old Testament. Morgan writes vividly and passionately about the indignities to which women were and are subjected by men. For more information on this author, see [http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person\\_id=morgsy](http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=morgsy)

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LONDON:

P. SHOBERL, JUN., PRINTER, 51, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE long delay which has occurred in the publication of "Woman and her Master" is solely attributable to an infirmity of vision ; the ultimate appearance of the work in a divided form has been the result of the same painful infliction—the necessity of temporary repose having been suggested by one, to whose eminent skill and unremitting attention I stand indebted for the comparative recovery of the most precious of the organs.

The disadvantage of dividing the work into two distinct publications is manifest ; particularly as its strict adherence to chronological order obliged me to bring before the public that portion which, by its remoter associations, may be deemed the least interesting.



Still, by stopping short upon the very frontier of a new epoch in society (the land of promise to the graphic historian), I have yet followed the natural break in history itself. I have further endeavoured to give to the first two volumes as much of the design of the entire work as will form something like a distinct whole; and I shall endeavour to preserve in the last two the same character of unity and independence. Having begun with the beginning, it is my hope and my intention to conclude with the conclusion. And, should that light be spared me, without which none work cheerily, and few (save the inspired) work at all, I shall only stop at that point which Time itself has but just touched—the age we live in!

To that age and its glorious spirit of inquiry I appeal, in the full confidence that it will “hear me for my cause;” for, in spite of the consecrated axiom respecting the “wisdom of our ancestors,” the true “age of chivalry,” where woman is concerned, is *that* in which the highest development of science bears evidence of her na-

tural claims to all the social benefits and civil rights, which, in darker and more unlettered ages, have been assumed, under the supremacy of physical force, to have been the exclusive prerogative of her master.

SYDNEY MORGAN.

London, April 2, 1840.

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# WOMAN AND HER MASTER.

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## BOOK THE FIRST.

“As the old law-phrase runs, Baron et Feme—the master and his woman.”

BLACKSTONE



# WOMAN AND HER MASTER.

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## BOOK I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### WOMAN.

“ Ce sexe, que nous bornons a des emplois obscurs et domestiques, ne serait il pas destine a des fonctions plus nobles et plus relevees ? N'a-t-il pas donne des exemples de courage, de sagesse, de progres dans toutes les vertus, et dans tous les arts ? Peut-être que ses qualites se ressentent de sa faiblesse, et sont inferieures aux nôtres : s'ensuit-il qu'elles doivent être inutiles à la patrie ? Non, la nature ne dispense aucun talent pour le rendre sterile ; et le grand art du legislateur est de remettre en jeu tous les ressorts qu'elle fournit, et que nous laissons en repos.”

*Plato de Republica.—As cited by the Abbé Barthélemy.*

THE chronicles of six thousand years, the records of the known world, lie open for the benefit and the wonder of mankind, preserving, in pages indited by the lights of their respective times, monuments of the ignorance, the timidity, and the credulity, of successive generations.

From the earliest aggregations of society, man, in his shallow pride, has laboured to perpetuate the memory of his own imperfection, the story of his selfishness and his errors; and the annals which he has bequeathed from age to age, for the benefit of posterity, are but evidences of the long and painful struggles, by which the human species, on isolated points, and for periods brief and remote, have succeeded in partially escaping from physical evil, and from moral darkness.

It is thus the artless illuminations of antique misals, in preserving the rude outlines of the dark originals they were meant to honour, perpetuate, also, in vivid tints, that expression of feebleness and suffering, which is the inseparable characteristic of suspicious and unaccommodated ignorance in all ages.\*

It was not till the close of a long and unmitigated reign of barbarism, even in regions most favourable to intellectual culture, that mind began at last to assume some supremacy over brute force; but, from its first inroad of inquiry upon the density of ignorance and prejudice, it has proceeded steadily on-

\* Obvious even in the fine heads of Cimabue and Giotto.



ward in its high career, unsubdued by penalties and persecutions, undaunted by calumnies and contempt.

Neglected, when not discouraged, often repelled, and occasionally crushed, amidst the conflicts of races, and the fall of empires, science has receded only to advance ; multiplying the blessings of physical existence to the species, and “ purging the general weal ” by its extorted truths. Before its luminous progress, many maladies have disappeared, many crimes fallen into dissuetude ; and vices, once boastfully indulged, are now scarcely breathed. Society has become less cruel ; and the appetite for blood, the ferocious instinct of semi-civilized man, has diminished. The scaffold is less frequently erected, the stake has been torn up ; the faggot has been quenched ; and the rack and the wheel, banished from codes (once miscalled) of justice, are now preserved with other relics of older times, as warnings to illustrate a principle, as images to enforce its observance.

The monopoly of knowledge is no longer cloistered and exclusive ; and, if all those who run may not read, and all who live have not at their disposition the means of learning, yet a respect for education and