

Some Problems of Social Freedom and other writings from *The Adult*

by Lillian Harman, edited and with
an introduction by Jessica Moran

Lillian Harman was born in 1869, the daughter of freethinker, sex radical, and anarchist Moses Harman. Moses Harman was the publisher of a number of newspapers, including the freethought *Kansas Liberal* and most notably, the anarchist and free love paper *Lucifer, the Lightbearer*. Lillian Harman helped her father with the editing, typesetting, and publishing of his paper. As Harman came of age she also began contributing her own writing to *Lucifer* and other papers, and became in her own right a prominent anarchist feminist and proponent of anarchism, sex radicalism, and free love.

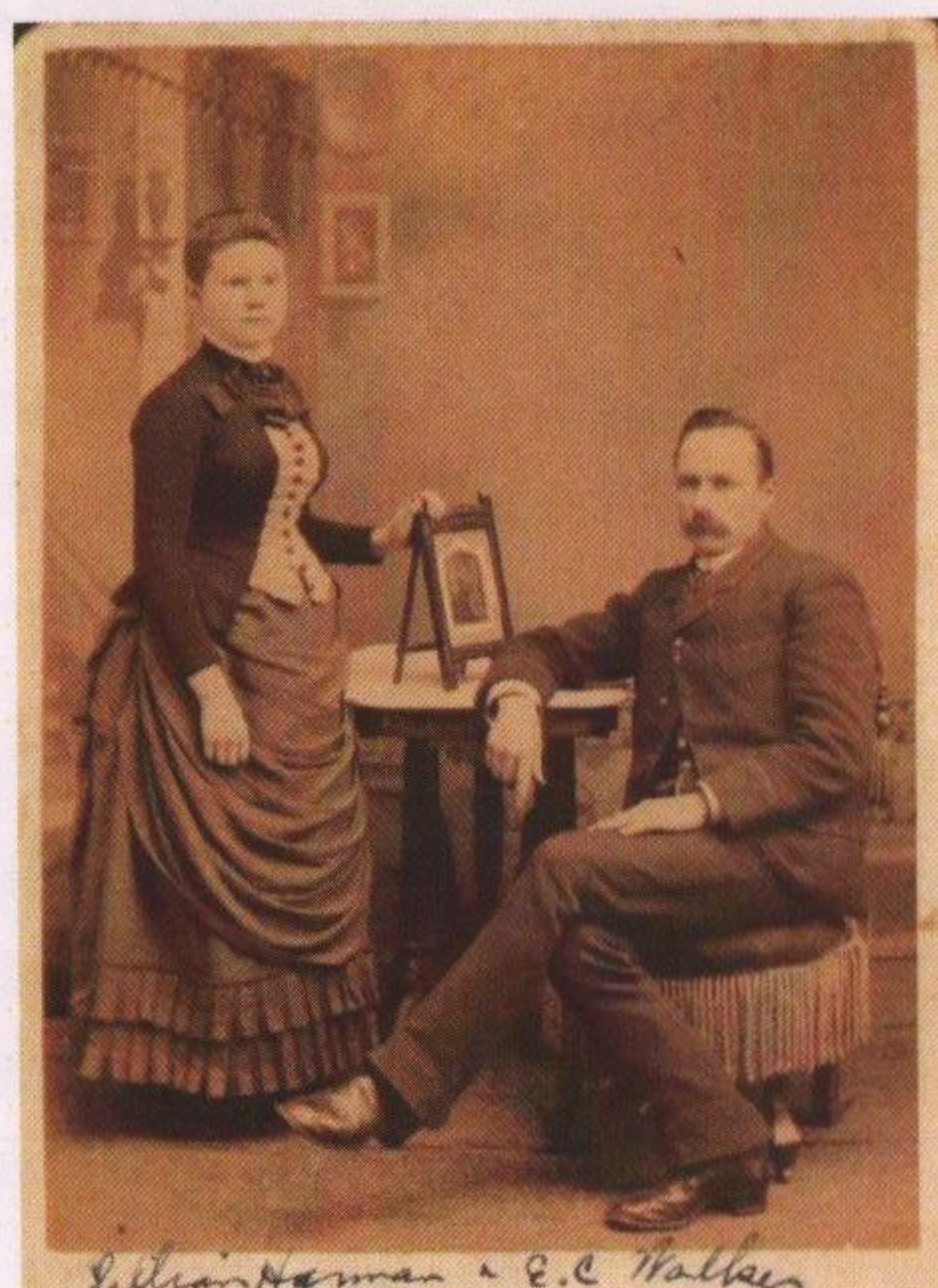
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This pamphlet contains Harman's Presidential address before the British Legitimation League as well as her contributions to the League's paper *The Adult* during 1898. While her writings in *Lucifer* may be better known, these writings deserve a wider audience. Harman is a pleasure to read: her writing is straight-forward and clear, something that is sometimes missing in the work of her more famous father and other nineteenth century male anarchist and sex radical authors.

"We need freedom to learn what is best for us. We need freedom to profit by our failures, as well as by our successes. We have had polygamy, polyandry, and monogamy and prostitution; we have experienced slavery in all its forms; but never yet have we had freedom of choice."

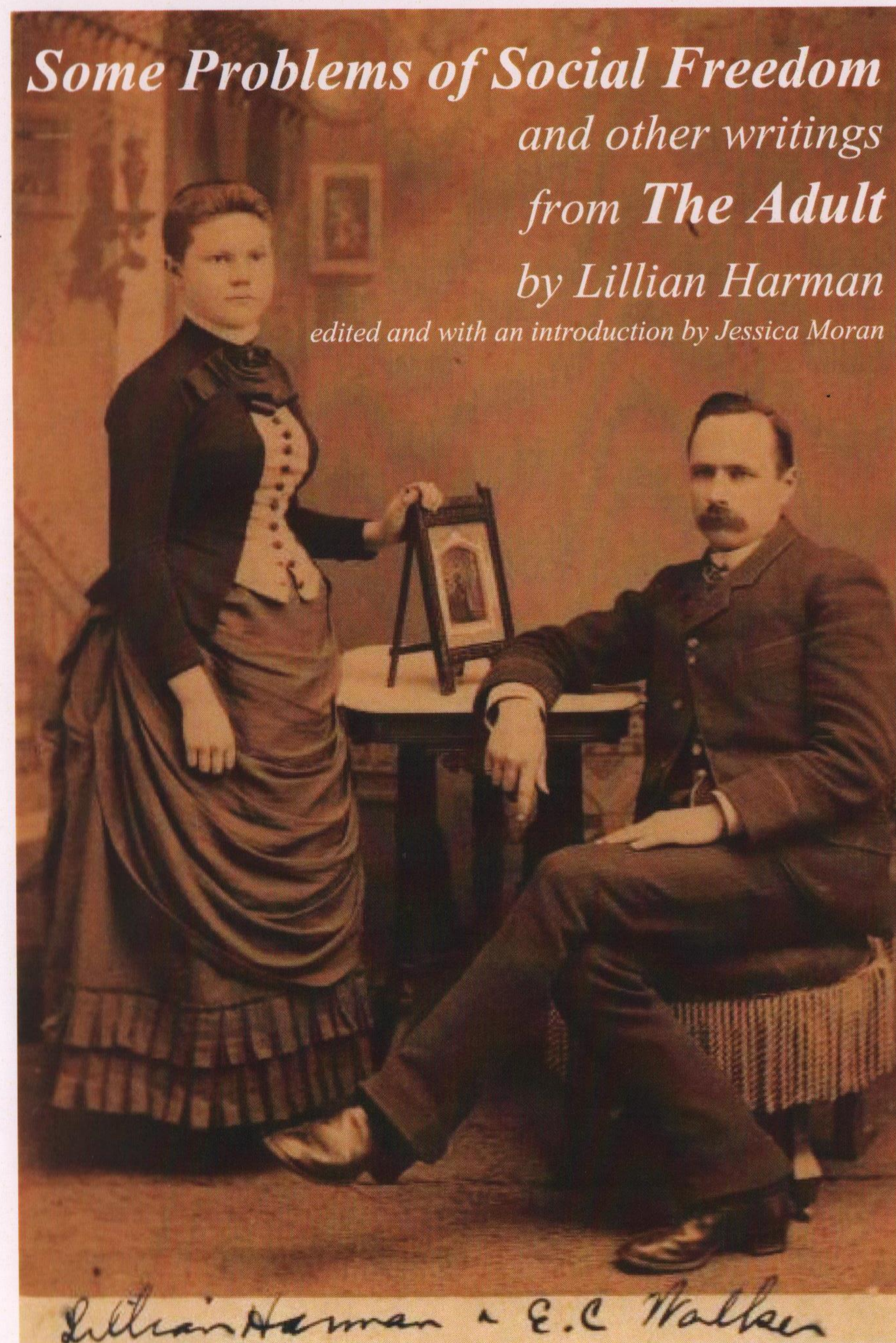
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*"Does the wedding ring ever provide bread,
except when at the pawnbrokers?"*

The
ADULT
The Journal of Sex.

"Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all inquiry."—*Shelley*.

VOL. 2. NO. 4.] MAY, 1898. [THREEPENCE.

EDITOR - - - GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

OFFICES:—

16, John Street, Bedford Row, London, W.C.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The suppression of normal instinct in mankind is inevitably followed by abnormal development, frequently in the most disastrous directions. The persistent suppression of normal sex appetites, the continual determination to regard the sexual act as essentially a subject to be rigidly tabooed in literature, journalism, and conversation, and the invariable accusations of indecency charged against those who break through conventional reticence on the subject—these things are responsible for more evils than the merely negative ones of preventing honesty of speech and the approximation of art to life. The perverted sexual life finds a strange fascination in repulsive and bestial habits which, bred in darkness, increase and multiply under the unwholesome conditions which gave them birth. These degrading habits are only possible in a society which has lost the power of discrimination between the natural, clean, healthy, sexual congress, and the cultivated substitutes for sexual passion which are never lacking in the centres of our highly respectable civilisation.

Amongst the most objectionable of these perversions of a healthy and ennobling passion, we have seen within recent years a recrudescence of what is known as Sadism—sexual pleasure derived from witnessing the infliction of pain on others. Mr. George Bernard Shaw has done a public service in calling attention to the modern renewal of flogging; a horrible mania from which the race would have evolved long ago but for the veil of darkness which has been drawn over all things sexual. Mr. Shaw shows conclusively how

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What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a political theory which opposes the State and capitalism. It says that people with economic power (capitalists) and those with political power (politicians of all stripes left, right or centre) use that power for their own benefit, and not (like they claim) for the benefit of society. Anarchism says that neither exploitation nor government is natural or necessary, and that a society based on freedom, mutual aid and equal shares of the good things in life would work better than this one.

Anarchism is also a political movement. Anarchists take part in day-to-day struggles (against poverty, oppression of any kind, war etc) and also promote the idea of comprehensive social change. Based on bitter experience, they warn that new 'revolutionary' bosses are no improvement: 'ends' and 'means' (what you want and how you get it) are closely connected.

Lillian Harman, 1869-1950

Lillian Harman was born in 1869, the daughter of freethinker, sex radical, and anarchist Moses Harman. Moses Harman was the publisher of a number of newspapers, including the freethought *Kansas Liberal* and most notably, the anarchist and free love paper *Lucifer, the Lightbearer*. Lillian Harman was raised in this reform and radical environment and along with her brother George Harman, helped her father with the editing, typesetting, and publishing of his paper. As Harman came of age she also began contributing her own writing to *Lucifer* and other papers, and became in her own right a prominent anarchist feminist and proponent of anarchism, sex radicalism, and free love.

She is perhaps most well known for the free marriage, or as it was described in *Lucifer* at the time, the "autonomistic sex-relation or union" that she entered into with Edwin C. Walker on September 20, 1886 at the age of sixteen. Walker, who was thirty-seven and previously divorced, was a prominent individualist anarchist and free thinker. He was then working as co-editor for *Lucifer*; a role he continued in until 1888. He was also a frequent contributor to Benjamin Tucker's *Liberty*, and would go on to edit (with Lillian Harman) his own anarchist paper, *Fair Play* (1888-1908). The two entered into the marriage as a test-case and means of challenging the legal inequality and unfair conditions of marriage. For their marriage they exchanged vows in front of family and friends, with the ceremony presided over by her father, but without a marriage license or any religious official. In their vows, which they later published in the September 17, 1886 issues of *Lucifer*, Lillian Harman retained her maiden name, her "free will and choice," refused any form of obedience, and vowed to "retain the right to act always, as my conscience and best judgment shall dictate" and Walker promised, "Lillian is and will continue to be as free to repulse any and all advances of mine as she has been heretofore. In joining with me in this love and labor union, she has not alienated a single natural right. She remains sovereign of herself, as I of myself, and we ... repudiate all powers legally conferred upon husbands and wives."

A complaint was immediately filed with the local Jefferson County, Kansas justice of peace, stating that Walker and Harman were living together as man and wife without being legally married. Interestingly the complaint was filed by Moses Harman's step-son, W.F. Hiser.¹ A warrant was issued and they were arrested and brought before a judge

¹ William Lemoire West, "The Moses Harman Story", *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, (Spring 1971) 37.1, p. 41-63.

where their combined bail was set at \$1000. They refused to post bail and remained in jail. The case went to trial on October 20, 1886 and a jury found them guilty that same day of breaking Kansas state marriage law. Walker was sentenced to 75 days in jail and Harman to 45; they were also ordered to pay a fine and court costs. The two refused to admit guilt by paying any fines or fees and therefore remained in jail. They appealed their case to the Kansas Supreme Court and in March 1887, the court affirmed their conviction. The two were finally released from prison on April 3, 1887 after Moses Harman paid their fees of \$113.80. *Lucifer* publicized the case throughout this period, reporting continuously on the case and establishing a defense fund.

Harman and Walker remained together for a number of years, though for much of that time they lived separately. Following her marriage Harman began contributing her own writing to *Lucifer*, as well as assisting Walker with *Fair Play*. In 1893 Harman gave birth to a daughter, Virna Winifred Walker and before the birth the two drew up a contract outlining Walker's promise to support any children the two might have together.² Harman's free child raising, or "bachelor motherhood" as she called it, inspired at least one other *Lucifer* reader who wrote in to the paper to describe her own experience giving birth and raising a child outside of marriage.³

Harman argued repeatedly in the pages of *Lucifer* and other anarchist and sex-radical/free love papers that women should have the freedom from both the church and state to control and determine the conditions of their lives, especially when it came to marriage and child birth. She wrote, "What we need is freedom to choose for ourselves, not to try to force on others the modes of living which seem to bring us the greatest happiness" and "conventional marriage may be conducive to the highest happiness of some people. If so, let them enjoy it. But they should not try and force it on those who do not want it."⁴ At other times Harman argued that men and women needed to change not only laws, but social practices, "social consciences," and society's views towards women's supposed inferiority. While she argued that women should develop contracts with men for the support of children, or the stipulation of the

² Hall Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America*, p. 122, 300.

³ Erin Hammer, *Redefining Sexuality and Marriage: Lillian Harman and Lucifer, the Light-Bearer, 1886-1910*, MA Thesis, Fort Hays State University, 2004: 45 and Lillian Harman, "A Child of Liberty," *Lucifer* (May 13, 1899): 141.

⁴ Lillian Harman, "Can Those Who Lived in Slavery Judge for the Free?" *Fair Play* 2 (February 22, 1890):60 and "With the I.W.P.A." *Lucifer* 2 (August 21, 1896), quoted in Hammer, *Redefining Sexuality and Marriage*, p. 38, 54.

wages women would be paid for the housework expected of wives, they would also need to keep fighting for social as well as economic freedom.

In 1898 Harman traveled to England to address the British Legitimation League. By 1897, the Legitimation League had taken as their goal "to educate public opinion in the direction of freedom in sexual relationships" and saw Harman as a heroine of this work. They elected her president in 1897 and 1898. While in England she not only spoke out in favor of sexual freedom, traveling throughout the country giving lectures, but contributed to the League's free love paper, *The Adult*. The writings in the following pages are taken from her contributions to *The Adult* as well as her essay, "Some Problems of Social Freedom" which was her presidential address to the League in 1898. Like *Lucifer* and other anarchist papers, *The Adult* distributed radical books and pamphlets as well as their paper. Among those publications distributed by *The Adult* was Havelock Ellis's study of homosexuality, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. In 1898, an agent from Scotland Yard arrested George Bedborough, the then editor of *The Adult*, at the paper's offices while Harman was present. The indictment against Bedborough included not just Ellis's book, but also Moses Harman's "A Free Man's Creed" and Lillian Harman's "Some Problems of Social Freedom." While Bedborough was under arrest and awaiting trial the English anarchist Henry Seymour took over editorial duties. Bedborough shocked his supporters in the anarchist and free love movement when, while being tried he admitted guilt and promised to discontinue any free love work in England, thus effectively ending the work of the Legitimation League and *The Adult*.⁵

By 1901 Harman was back in the United States and the office of *Lucifer* had moved to Chicago. Following the assassination of President William McKinley by Leon Czolgoz, who had previously been living in Chicago, the pages of *Lucifer*, like other anarchist papers at the time, were taken up with discussion of the act and what it meant for American anarchism. Writing in the paper Harman made the rather dissembling statement that while she would not call herself an anarchist because the name meant too many different things to different people, she did believe in the principles of the movement, and believed that neither religious or state leaders had the right to impose their will upon her life or consciousness.⁶

⁵ Hal Sears, *The Sex Radicals*, p. 256-260.

⁶ During this time she also wrote an article, for the *Socialist Spirit* in which she deplored the way the Emma Goldman and the anarchists of Chicago were arrested

Lucifer survived sporadically for a few more years before Moses Harman ceased its publication and began publishing the more scholarly discussion of free love and sex radicalism in *American Journal of Eugenics*. In 1910 Moses Harman died and Lillian Harman edited a final memorial issue of the *American Journal of Eugenics* in honor of her father's life and work, before transferring the remaining subscriptions to Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth*. Harman retreated from the public sphere soon after. She married George O'Brien and later had a son with him. Lillian Harman O'Brien died in 1950 in Chicago at the age of 80.

Harman's work as an important proponent and propagator for anarchism, sexual freedom, birth control, and sex radicalism though not well known, deserves to be. On a first reading of her work, it is easy to dismiss her concerns and arguments as relics of the nineteenth century; certainly women now have the right to live with and how they like, yet her underlying argument remains relevant and powerful. Her real concern was not simply to fight for the right to sexual freedom, but to fight and live in a world where social freedom in all its manifestations was not only possible but achievable. As she writes in *Some Problems of Social Freedom*, "the greatest good attained by our work for this object is the enlargement of freedom in social relationships, of which the distinctly sexual is but one phase." For Harman, the goal was not simply to live with a man outside of marriage, or have a child outside of marriage, but for women, and men to have the freedom to decide how to shape their lives as they saw fit. As she explains, "we need freedom to learn what is best for us. We need freedom to profit by our failures, as well as by our successes."

Lillian Harman not only wrote about this work for greater freedom, but lived that life. From an early age she lived her life as she urged others to live theirs: in a constant search for the freedom to live and "learn what is best for us." As she wrote after her time in prison, "I feel far more free and self-reliant than ever before in my life. I know now...just how much I am willing and ready to and sacrifice for what I believe to be right."⁷ Harman entered and ended a free marriage on her own terms, had a child with Walker even while they lived apart, and later fell in love, married and had a child with another man on her own terms.

On the following pages, you will find Harman's Presidential address

and treated following McKinley's assassination, "How Justice is Administered," *Socialist Spirit* 1(2), October 1901.

⁷ *Lucifer, the Lightbearer*, November 22, 1886, as quoted in Joanne E. Passet, *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality*, p. 137.

before the British Legitimation League as well as her contributions to the League's paper *The Adult* during 1898. While her writings in *Lucifer* may be more well known, these writings deserve a wider audience. Harman is a pleasure to read, her writing is straight-forward and clear, something that is sometimes missing in the work of her more famous father and other nineteenth century male anarchist and sex radical authors.

Further Readings

Erin Hammer, *Redefining Sexuality and Marriage: Lillian Harman and Lucifer, the Light-Bearer, 1886-1910*. MA Thesis, Fort Hays State University, 2004.

Joanne E. Passet, *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America*. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977.

William Lemoire West, "The Moses Harman Story," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1971, p.41-63.

Some Problems of Social Freedom

By Lillian Harman

Being the Presidential Address delivered before the Legitimation League at its Annual Meeting in the Council Chamber, Holborn Restaurant, on April 50th 1898

In beginning my address I must make the startling confession that I do not know all about all the problems of Social Freedom. Perhaps there are some among my hearers who are in a similar predicament, and yet are striving to bring about better and higher conditions.

Sometimes I am asked, "What is your creed?" "What would you substitute for the conditions which you think restrict normal development?" Yankee-like, I answer with other questions: "What does the hygienist give you in place of the poisonous drugs he asks you to throw away? What does the Freethinker give in place of the hell-fire and avenging-God religion which he asks you to discard? Is it not true that "what is one man's meat is another man's poison," that the food which would be thoroughly assimilated by the organism of one man would cause another man to suffer all the tortures of dyspepsia? The hygienist will tell you to eat simple food, and reject that which experience teaches you disturbs the normal action of your stomach. In other words: regulate your diet by reason. So the Freethinker says: "You need reason only to tell you that the doctrine of hell-fire is a fiction of ignorance. Your God is only fossilized ignorance. Phenomena which your ancestors could not understand they attributed to the working of a supernatural being with human passions and weaknesses whom they called God. The increase of knowledge must necessarily dethrone the God of Ignorance; hence the continued antagonism of theology to science. God is called the Great Unknown; a confession that he is the personification of Ignorance."

I believe in freedom of thought and of action as long as free acts are not invasive. But Freedom is necessarily like space—without limit. For that reason I have been criticized for devoting my efforts toward the arousing of public sentiment to the importance of Liberty in one particular line. In justification of my action I have only to say that this is the age of the specialist. People have learned that force to be effectual must be concentrated. A pound of powder laid upon the ground and fired goes up in smoke without producing any apparent useful effect. Confined in the narrow bore of a cannon a few ounces will suffice to make a breach in the ranks of the enemy. So I have directed my force—however much or little I may possess—toward one division of the enemy's forces which I think should be disrupted in order to give

humanity the chance to develop along the lines of Freedom.

The first object of this Society, and one with which I am in hearty sympathy, is the promotion of freedom in sexual relationships. To my mind, however, the greatest good attained by our work for this object is the enlargement of freedom in *social* relationships, of which the distinctly *sexual* is but one phase. That is to say, the narrow conventional creeds concerning sex manifestations, which are current at the present day, render all social intercourse between men and women strained and artificial. Thoughts of sex are given undue prominence through the very fact that sexual desire must be avoided or suppressed. Two men or two women may be good friends, and be their natural selves; but let a man and woman meet, and their friendship is interfered with by the necessity which they feel resting upon them, if they are conscientious, of avoiding sexual desire. The woman must not be as friendly as she feels, for her interest in the man may be construed into an invitation to flirtation, or she may be accused of "misleading" him. Every expression of friendship which she gives is practically held to be an implied contract to further steps. A coldness and reserve in the attitude of men and women toward each other is the natural result of this condition—a reserve which is broken through only by the impelling force of strong and unreasoning passion. This passion compels people to do that which they believe to be wrong, and so long as they believe it to be wrong it is wrong for them. The result is that when the imperious passion is satisfied, remorse takes its place, and shame and misery ensue. "The ideal must precede the real." This is why the common rebellions against marriage are failures. If a man believes that he is sinning against God when he works on Sunday he sins against *himself* if he works on that day. Hence the need of enlightened ideals in morals and religion, as well as elsewhere.

In a recent lecture this society was told by Mr. W. M. Thompson that freedom in love is impracticable, because no man can love and respect a woman who is the "common property of the herd," the inference being that a woman who is not the property of *one* man must inevitably be the property of *all* men; that she can never by any possibility be the property of *herself*. And this is the natural and logical outcome of the acceptance of Christian morality. A woman is immature, an infant, the property of her father, until he give her in marriage to another man who becomes her husband. She is then the property of her husband until his death, when she is his "relict." In other countries and ages this relict was so useless that it was burned just as the man's worn out garment might be, for why cumber the earth with a man's valueless possessions when the owner is gone?

In civilization we permit the widow to live, though if she is *very* virtuous and desires the commendation of Madam Grundy, she refrains from marriage and wears mourning for the remainder of her days. She may, however, give herself in marriage to another man, but however great the mistake she may have made in doing so, she cannot rectify it. For her the choice is made. She belongs to her husband. Her person can never belong to herself.

And the law holds that not even the woman who sells or gives herself for the night instead of for a lifetime has the right to dispose of herself as she chooses. It has decided that when a prostitute is the complainant there can be no such thing as rape. "Once consent, always consent," has been its edict.

So I admit that Mr. Thompson has the authority of the customs and laws of the past and present days, in support of his statement that a woman who does not believe in marriage must be the "common property of the herd." What then? Must we admit that what has been must always continue? It is not at all difficult to prove that in England a man may not marry his deceased wife's sister. But does this fact prove that such a relation is wrong, and that we should not protest against that law as absurd and unjust?

There are a few though constantly increasing number of women who are quietly but firmly taking the matter into their own hands, and deciding it for themselves. They ignore the dictates of law and custom, and refuse to belong to one or many men. If one such loves her deceased sister's husband, she does not take the trouble to ask the House of Lords for its permission to express that love. She considers that the consent or disapprobation of that body of men has nothing whatever to do with the case.

Said a man to one of these free women: "It would be very unpleasant for almost any other woman in your position, surrounded by people who do not agree with your views. Yet all seem to respect *you*."

"Why should they not respect me?" she asked. "I respect *myself*. I do and say nothing of which I am ashamed. I respect their opinion and lives regardless of the difference in our ideals. Why should you accuse them of being more unjust to any woman in my position than I am to them?"

Fortunately most men are better than their laws. I have become acquainted with a great many conservative men, and I can assure Mr. Thompson that I have found very few of them who believed that a free woman was necessarily the "common property of the herd," and even those who seemed to agree with him were not wholly impervious to reason.

"But what would you have?" I am asked. "Where would you draw the line?" "What would become of the family?" "What about the children?" These are questions constantly hurled at all who antagonize enforced legal marriage, or advocate free motherhood.

"What would I have?" In the first place, I would have people think. Age should make no custom exempt from criticism. Do not accept a thing as worthy of credence or support merely because your fathers or grandfathers gave it credence and support. Such a method is unprogressive. Nothing is too good, too holy, too pure for careful inspection. If marriage is a good thing its fruits are good. Let no foolish reverence for the opinion of others hinder you from examining the fruits of this custom which has such a vital effect on the happiness of millions of persons living, as well as of that of countless millions more yet unborn. If a lifelong union of one man and one woman is the condition of the greatest happiness, of the highest development of the individual and of the race, it will survive and become perfected in freedom. We need freedom to learn what is best for us. We need freedom to profit by our failures, as well as by our successes. We have had polygamy, polyandry, and monogamy and prostitution; we have experienced slavery in all its forms; but never yet have we had freedom of choice.

"Where would I draw the line?" Where common sense and sound reason dictate. We are not all gifted with equal reasoning powers, nor is any one person gifted with the same reasoning power at one time as at some other time. The line set to-day may be set further ahead to-morrow, and so the tendency is toward absolute freedom. We may never attain absolute freedom, but we can push forward in that direction by removing every obstacle which our reason tells us is detrimental to the best interests of humanity, and a barrier in the pathway of freedom. Of the past it has been well said:—

"What is liberty now were license then;

Their freedom our yoke would be."

And because we are hampered and crippled by the laws and restrictions inherited from our ancestors, we should realize the folly and injustice of hampering our descendants in a like manner. We have no right to draw the line for others. We *have* a right to draw the line for ourselves. In Grant Allen's great novel, "The Woman Who Did," Hermina fell into this fatal error. She felt that she had the right to differ from her father in any way, and to live her own life, even though by doing she broke his heart. Yet she could not realize that her own child might differ from her just as radically as she had differed from her father, and quite as rightfully; and when the sudden realization of that

fact came to her, her own heart was broken.⁸

I am often asked what I would have in place of the present marriage system if I had the power to change the laws. It would be quite as reasonable to ask me what size I would make the shoes if I had a monopoly of shoe-making for the entire human race. I do not understand that it is desirable to make the great majority wear shoes too large or too small, too light or too heavy for their comfort, merely that there may be apparent uniformity in size of feet. Such an arrangement would undoubtedly entail a great deal of inconvenience and suffering, and would cause people to awkwardly stumble and fall. I consider uniformity in mode of sexual relations as undesirable and impracticable as enforced uniformity in anything else. For myself, I want the right to profit by my mistakes. If I inadvertently place my hand in the fire, I shall take the liberty to withdraw it; and why should I be unwilling for others to enjoy the same liberty? If I should be able to bring the entire world to live exactly as I live at present, what would that avail me in ten years, when, as I hope, I shall have a broader knowledge of life, and my life therefore probably changed? I do not want to spend my life in converting the world to my method of existence. I want the world to have reason of its own, and use it.

"What would become of the family?" This is one of the most absurd objections urged against the opponents of legal marriage. The only happy marriages now are those which are happy in spite of the compulsory tie, and not because of it. Marriage does not prevent a man from abandoning his wife and children. The people who are happily married are those who are sexually mated, or intellectually mated, or both. The last instance is extremely rare.

We have a few natural desires and passions which have existed before all, independent of all, and will exist after all laws, if such time shall ever come. We would not lose the desire to eat if no articles of diet were prohibited, or if the manner of eating them were prescribed by law. And when we have outgrown barbarism in the sexual relations the love of man and woman for each other and for their children will live in a sweetness and purity now scarcely even dreamed of.

In the "Story of An African Farm," Olive Schreiner has Lyndall say:—

"And then, when they have no other argument against us, they say, 'Go

on, but when you have made woman what you wish, and her children inherit her culture, you will defeat yourself. Man will gradually become extinct... the passions which replenish the race will die.' Fools! A Hottentot sits by the roadside, and feeds on a rotten bone he has found there, and takes out his bottle of Cape-smoke, and swills at it, and grunts with satisfaction: and the cultured child of the nineteenth century sits in his arm chair and sips choice wines with the lip of a connoisseur, and tastes delicate dishes with a delicate palate, and with a satisfaction of which the Hottentot knows nothing. Heavy jaw and sloping forehead—all have gone with increasing intellect; but the animal appetites are there still—refined, discriminative, but immeasurably intensified.... When all the later additions to humanity have vanished, will not the foundation on which there are built remain?"

It is claimed by its defenders that marriage is the friend of woman and of the children, and insures paternal responsibility. Someone has said that marriage is a lottery in which we have all to gain and nothing to lose. I deny it. It is a lottery in which we have *nothing* to gain and *all* to lose. It is an insurance scheme which does not and cannot pay its liabilities. It is what is called in America, a "confidence game," in which, under the pretence of giving much for practically nothing, the unsuspecting innocents are fleeced of all they have.

Ingersoll feels quite sure that he is opposed to freedom in love, yet he asks: "Do the believers in indissoluble marriage treat their wives better than others?" And this is his answer—

"A little while ago, a woman said to a man who had raised his hand to strike her, Do not touch me; you have no right to beat me; I am not your wife!"

Colonel Ingersoll is a lawyer, and while his prejudices are in favour of marriage, he must admit the injustice of the system. It is true that men are, as a rule, better than the laws, but what a terrible power the law places in the hands of men who are willing to take advantage of it! As an instance, take this case which was decided in court in Scranton, Pennsylvania, last December.

Mary E. Hover was so cruelly treated by her husband that the neighbours had him arrested. On trial, he admitted the truth of her statement that he had abused her so that she had felt the effects for more than a week, and that she had been subjected to similar treatment for years. But he claimed that he had attempted to caress her, and in struggling to escape his caresses she had been hurt. In his charge to the jury the judge laid down the law that a man is entitled to a show of his wife's affections; that if the statement of the husband was correct the jury should acquit him, and this it proceeded to do.

⁸ Grant Allen's 1895 novel, *The Woman Who Did* was a popular novel among sex radicals and anarchists in both the United Kingdom and America. The novel tells the story of a young woman who defies social conventions as a matter of principle, including living and having a child with a man outside of marriage.

If the man who attempted to win the affections of Mrs. Hover had not been married to her, he might have considered himself fortunate if his life had been spared by the indignant neighbours. But as he had purchased the *right* to a show of her affections, no one, not even she herself, could rightfully object. And this is the way in which marriage protects woman.

In Topeka, Kansas, a few years ago, a woman was sent to the insane asylum. In reporting the case, a local daily said:— "The evidence showed that her husband abused her body worse than a Satyr could be capable of, resulting in the loss of her mind."

But such cases as these do not very often find their way into the public prints. Their existence is ignored. It is dangerous to even mention them. The woman who has drawn a blank in the marriage lottery must conceal her disappointment, and pretend that she has a prize. And when an editor is found brave enough to denounce marital outrage, he is an enemy of society, a disrupter of the home, and he is placed behind prison bars. Physical outrage of a woman by a man is a crime—*provided* that man is not the woman's husband.

And in the face of all this we are asked, "What of the children? What will become of them when their mothers are not *protected* by marriage?"

What of the children truly! Society has guaranteed to woman support of her children, in exchange for the surrender of her liberty in the bonds of marriage. And how does it fulfil its contract? Does it take the children of the men who are unable or unwilling to provide for them, and tenderly nurture them? Illustration of the efficacy of its guarantees are to be seen on every hand by those who have eyes and use them.

In New York, for example, in 1896, 366 infants were sent to the institution on Randall's Island. Of these 366 *twelve* survived the beneficent care of the state. We are told that we must not bear children outside of marriage, because the state will have to provide for them. And this is the result! Three hundred and fifty-four dead, and twelve living! This is a specimen of the institutions which our critics tell us free women are to crowd with their offspring.

And how does protection protect in England? Does the wedding ring ever provide bread, except when left at the pawnbrokers? A few days ago I visited Wormwood Scrubs Prison. My guide told me that very many women were imprisoned for neglecting their children. "And I presume there are many men in for the same cause?" I said. "O, no," she replied; "not very many; but then you know it is the woman's place to take care of the children." Think of it! An ignorant young woman marries. She becomes the mother of babies that she does not want; no

matter how she may dread the pain and danger and care involved in their birth, she must perform her marital duty; then when she "neglects" them, she is sent to prison, and her children go to the workhouse. Her husband is not sent to prison, because it is "the business of the woman to take care of the children." Many babies are born in that prison, I am told; but no matter how intensely the mother may desire to keep her babe, it is taken from her when nine months old, and if there are no friends to receive it, it is sent to the workhouse. And in this way Society provides for the children.

Rarely indeed are free men born of slave mothers. Just so long as we have legally enforced prostitution and rape, so long as the majority of homes are the abiding places of inharmony, degradation, and cruelty, as now, there can be little progress. Marriage is woman's worst enemy, and is therefore the enemy of the race. Marriage gave a Christian preacher the power to rob Annie Besant of her children. He could not have touched them if she had not been married to him. She was his property; therefore her children belonged to him.⁹

Under freedom undesired children will not be born. For why should a woman pay the great price which must be paid, if she does not want the child for which she pays it? When a woman wishes to become a mother she may if she chooses make terms concerning the custody of the child to be begotten, before permitting herself to be impregnated.

Whether the homes to be established will be individual or cooperative or communistic will depend on the tastes, the desires, of the persons concerned. Under liberty there will inevitably be many varied modes of living.

The right of protest is as vitally essential in morals as it was, and is, in religion. And free life must be the logical outcome of free thought.

⁹ Annie Besant was a Theosophist, women's rights activist, and writer and orator. She was married to Frank Besant an evangelical Anglican. Besant legally separated from her husband in 1873. She and close friend Charles Bradlaugh published a birth control book by Charles Knowlton in 1877. The two were arrested and found guilty for publishing Knowlton's book. They were released pending appeal, but the scandal caused Besant to lose custody of her children after Frank Besant was able to convince a court that she was unfit to look after them.

Lillian Harman's Writings in *The Adult*

"Eve and Her Eden"

The Adult, Vol. 2 No.2, March 1898

I was greatly interested in Mr. Thompson's address before the Legitimation League. He seems, however, to have a very hazy conception of what Free Love really means. Is it impossible for him to realize that a woman may be the property of herself; that because she refuses to be the property of one man she must, therefore, inevitable become the "common property of the herd"? What a horrible indictment of mankind is contained in that assertion! If that is true, then indeed is the condition of humanity hopeless.

Is this all that the boasted chivalrous respect of man for women is worth—that he respects her only so long as she is the unmarried property of her father, or the married property of her husband? Is she respected only as a cat might be—the plaything of its master, without money value, which unprotected by a master, is merely a stray on the streets, fit object of the kicks of every passing man, and the pursuit of every yelping cur?

Yet disheartening as it may be—as it is—Mr. Thompson evidences a knowledge of the nature of the large class of men—for humanity's sake, it is well that class does not represent all men. As I write, the case of a friend of mine comes to my mind. She discovered a defect in her husband's nature which she had never dreamed was there. She told him she would not dare risk transmitting that blemish to possible offspring, and so would never incur the risk of maternity again while she lived with him. If he desired, she would continue living with him, and make home as pleasant as possible. He raved. He told her that the heart of a true wife should be the grave of her husband's faults. She quietly replied, "If you thought, when you married me, Henry, that you married a graveyard, you were mistaken." Finally he told her he could endure it no longer; if she would not resume the old relation she must leave his house and never return. She was ill and weak, and he did not think she would dare go out into the world with her three babies; but she did; quietly and gently, too, with no word of anger or denunciation of him to her friends. Shortly after her separation, while struggling with poverty and illness in her battle for bread for her little ones, a man who prided himself of his adherence to conventional standards tried to induce her to yield sexual "favours" to him. "Do you know," was her indignant reply, "that I left the father of my children because I would not submit to that? And do you think that now I will yield to you whom I do not even love?" Other such experiences she had with men

who shared Mr. Thompson's opinions, but she has won her hard-fought battle. She has maintained her freedom, and her children are such as any mother might well be proud to call her own. And yet this woman, and such as she, are called, "the property of the common herd!" "O, fools and blind"! When will ye learn that women, as well as men, can reach their highest development only in a state of freedom?

Will a free woman voluntarily incur the risk of pain and death to bring children into the world to populate "barracks"—little human "microbes" to swarm neglected, unloved, and unknown? There needs to be a special dispensation of Providence by which some men may learn that bearing a child is not all physical pleasure. Some people can cognise facts only when made personally to experience them. To illustrate, I am inclined to believe there would not have been quite so many little Rousseaus in the foundling asylum if there had been such special dispensation for the benefit of Jean Jacques. The unwelcome, deserted children, which in themselves are a terrible indictment of present society, are the fruit of the ignorance and weakness of their mothers, or the criminal carelessness and conscienceless insistence of their fathers. Let woman be free, let her be educated to know her rights and responsibilities, let her realize that no man, whether husband or lover, has a right to insist on her incurring risks which she does not wish to assume, and then, and not until then, will there be hope for humanity.

It would appear that Mr. Thompson thinks he has discovered an unanswerable question when he asks: "Who is to determine whether there shall be any children?" I should like to hear *his* answer to that question. It is possible for a man to compel a woman to bear a child. It is impossible for a woman to compel a man to beget a child. If there is ever need for harmony of feeling, of unison of desire, between a woman and a man, it is at the inception of a new life. If either is unwilling, nay, if either does not heartily desire the result; the act should not be performed. Is it not wonderful that humanity is as good as it is, when we contemplate the disgust, aversion, yes, even the rape, of which it is the progeny? Fear is often expressed that if women are left free to choose, the race will die out. If that were true, if humanity can exist only as the price of enslaved motherhood, then I would say, "Let it die, the sooner the better." But the fears are foolish. The "Golden Romance" lived, lives, will live, in the human heart before all, despite all, beyond all, silly childish laws. The "little girl clasps her doll to her motherly heart" unmindful of any marriage vow, and as long as that instinct lives the race will be perpetuated.

I am not a mere theorist. I have lived that of which I write. The

happiest days of my childhood were spent in idealizing the dolly in my arms; the sweetest dreams of my young girlhood were those of the time when my own babe should be a living reality instead of a dream-child of my fancy, and the most glorious experiences of my womanhood were when I pressed my living babe to my breast. I say this because I can realize, from my own experience—which was made beautiful to me because I wanted my child and felt that I could do it justice in its infancy—what must be the torture of the poor ignorant slave-mothers who have never had, never can have, such experience as mine. And because of this I do what little I can do to make free motherhood possible.

“Pen Points”

The Adult Vol. 2 No.3 April 1898

A man should no more pay for *love* than should a woman. But if a man wants a woman to devote all her time to “keeping house” for him, they could decide how much her time is worth, and how much he can afford to pay her. (Prudence would counsel the amicable settlement of this question before the advent of children upon the scene, while both are equally free to accept or reject terms.) If he also desires children in their home, and wants her to give her time for several years to that important and pleasant work, it is still possible to bring business principles to bear upon the relation.

A friend of mine, one of the most rational women I know, told me that her little boy, aged eleven, had one day asked her, “Mamma, what makes the babies grow? Can women make them come when they want to—or how?” She had previously explained to him the mother principle, but not the father principle, and when this question came she could not answer, but evaded it as best she could. She is a superior woman, yet she could not shake off the old sense of shame, and tell her son simply and candidly just how conception took place. By her evident dodging of the question, she risked lowering herself in the estimation of that child, for it is probable that he had heard something of it from other boys, and her evasion would naturally lead him to think that she felt ashamed of the act which called him into existence, and she missed an opportunity of impressing on his mind the sacredness of love. She could have told him, as I know she feels, that only in love can such a relation be enjoyed at its highest, and have given helpful thoughts that would have aided him in maintaining respect for his mother, for himself, and for the girls and women of his acquaintance.

“Pen Points”

The Adult, Vol.2 No.4 May 1898

Queen Victoria, the most over-rated woman in the world, is likewise the most uncompromising in her intolerance of divorced women. When we remember that there is not a reigning house in Europe that has not its divorced men and women, from one to several, we perceive that hypocrites are just as numerous, proportionally, among the rulers as among the ruled. In the Protestant countries, these members of the royal families are divorced; in the Catholic countries they are separated, many princesses of the reigning houses of Spain, Bavaria, and Austria occupying establishments of their own, and these separations are officially recognized by the courts and governments. In Russia a similar state of affairs prevails. And yet, in spite of this, other divorced women cannot be received at court. There is no other fact in life which develops so many pretenders, hypocrites, and petty prosecutors as that of the relations of the sexes. Society perpetually offers rewards for hypocrisy and brutality.

Some women are better off financially, but more imagine that they are, and still more work harder, and enjoy less, than they would if alone, but have not energy or self-assertion enough to demand their rights. They will drudge from early morning till late at night, and then fancy that they are being “supported.” I know a number of women who work and support their children and their lazy worthless husbands, yet have not independence enough to separate themselves from their “lords and masters.” Only from free, self-respecting mothers can the highest type of children be born. Many men are very coarse, and morally weak, and regardless of the rights of others, but the same may be said of many women. Both women and men need enlightenment. I think that any arrangement—whether it be with women as housekeeper, and man as grub-staker (is that allowable, O wild westerner?), or with the positions reversed, or any other that is mutually agreeable, is good if it allows for the dissolution of the partnership at the insistence of one or both parties. Absolute liberty is as perfect an arrangement as could be made by either fools or wise people.

If it is only through the insistence of men and the submission of women that the race is continued, we are in a very bad way, indeed; but happily for the higher development of the race, the tastes of an increasingly large number of men are becoming refined to the point that the association which can be obtained by purchase or force has no attractions for them; while the statement that only through submission will women bear children is absurd. The many proud mothers of children, whose advent into this world was planned and hoped for, will

smile as they read this sentence. Nature does not force the "new woman" to assume a position inferior to her lover, in any relation of life. She will sustain only the relations which she herself desires, will be happy in the love of her lover, and tenacious of her own self-respect; and her children will imbibe the spirit of their free mother, and will be happy, healthy, and independent—in marked contrast to the offspring of the "submitting" slave mother.

"The Prosecution"

The Adult, Vol.2. No.6 July 1898

Is the first result of the much-desired "Anglo-American Alliance" to be the importation of Comstockism from America to England? The arrest of George Bedborough on May 31st would seem to answer this question in the affirmative. The number of detectives required to make the arrest, the police raid and seizure of books and papers on the premises, and the excessive bail demanded, all indicate a desire on the part of the officials to out-Comstock America.

But the attempted suppression of free publications must fail. It is encouraging to see the interest which is being aroused in all classes and among those of all shades of opinion. This is a cause in which all *can* unite, and in which all *should* unite, in the interest of self-preservation. "Freedom of speech, freedom to teach"—these must we have before we can have any other freedom. And the British pluck, the spirit which inspired Paine and Truelove and Bradlaugh and Foote, and all other brave defenders of the right of free expression will be aroused to the defence of George Bedborough in the courageous fight in which he is now engaged.

Now is the time for us to show our colours. We could not have a better man in the difficult position which Mr. Bedborough occupies. He is hopeful, courageous, judicious, and energetic, and prepared to do his work, come what may. If we do our work as well as he has done, and is doing his, our victory is assured.