

# THE WOMAN REBEL

NO GODS NO MASTERS

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## THE AIM

This paper will not be the champion of any "ism."

All rebel women are invited to contribute to its columns.

The majority of papers usually adjust themselves to the ideas of their readers but the WOMAN REBEL will obstinately refuse to be adjusted.

The aim of this paper will be to stimulate working women to think for themselves and to build up a conscious fighting character.

An early feature will be a series of articles written by the editor for girls from fourteen to eighteen years of age. In this present chaos of sex atmosphere it is difficult for the girl of this uncertain age to know just what to do or really what constitutes clean living without prudishness. All this slushy talk about white slavery, the man painted and described as a hideous vulture pouncing down upon the young, pure and innocent girl, drugging her through the medium of grape juice and lemonade and then dragging her off to his foul den for other men equally as vicious to feed and fatten on her enforced slavery — surely this picture is enough to sicken and disgust every thinking woman and man, who has lived even a few years past the adolescent age. Could any more repulsive and foul conception of sex be given to adolescent girls as a preparation for life than this picture that is being perpetuated by the stupidly ignorant in the name of "sex education"?

If it were possible to get the truth from girls who work in prostitution to-day, I believe most of them would tell you that the first sex experience

was with a sweetheart or through the desire for a sweetheart or something impelling within themselves, the nature of which they knew not, neither could they control. Society does not forgive this act when it is based upon the natural impulses and feelings of a young girl. It prefers the other story of the grape juice procurer which makes it easy to shift the blame from its own shoulders, to cast the stone and to evade the unpleasant facts that it alone is responsible for. It sheds sympathetic tears over white slavery, holds the often mythical procurer up as a target, while in reality it is supported by the misery it engenders.

If, as reported, there are approximately 35,000 women working as prostitutes in New York City alone, is it not sane to conclude that some force, some living, powerful, social force is at play to compel these women to work at a trade which involves police persecution, social ostracism and the constant danger of exposure to venereal diseases. From my own knowledge of adolescent girls and from sincere expressions of women working as prostitutes inspired by mutual understanding and confidence I claim that the first sexual act of these so-called wayward girls is partly given, partly desired yet reluctantly so because of the fear of the consequences together with the dread of lost respect of the man. These fears interfere with mutuality of expression — the man becomes conscious of the responsibility of the act and often refuses to see her again, sometimes leaving the town and usually denouncing her as having been with "other fel-

lows." His sole aim is to throw off responsibility. The same uncertainty in these emotions is experienced by girls in marriage in as great a proportion as in the unmarried. After the first experience the life of a girl varies. All these girls do not necessarily go into prostitution. They have had an experience which has not "ruined" them, but rather given them a larger vision of life, stronger feelings and a broader understanding of human nature. The adolescent girl does not understand herself. She is full of contradictions, whims, emotions. For her emotional nature longs for caresses, to touch, to kiss. She is often as well satisfied to hold hands or to go arm in arm with a girl as in the companionship of a boy.

It is these and kindred facts upon which the WOMAN REBEL will dwell from time to time and from which it is hoped the young girl will derive some knowledge of her nature, and conduct her life upon such knowledge.

It will also be the aim of the WOMAN REBEL to advocate the prevention of conception and to impart such knowledge in the columns of this paper.

Other subjects, including the slavery through motherhood; through things, the home, public opinion and so forth, will be dealt with.

It is also the aim of this paper to circulate among those women who work in prostitution; to voice their wrongs; to expose the police persecution which hovers over them and to give free expression to their thoughts, hopes and opinions.

And at all times the WOMAN REBEL will strenuously advocate economic emancipation.

## THE NEW FEMINISTS

That apologetic tone of the new American feminists which plainly says "Really, Madam Public Opinion, we are all quite harmless and perfectly respectable" was the keynote of the first and second mass meetings held at Cooper Union on the 17th and 20th of February last.

The ideas advanced were very old and time-worn even to the ordinary church-going woman who reads the magazines and comes in contact with current thought. The "right to work," the "right to ignore fashions," the "right to keep her own name," the "right to organize," the "right of the mother to work"; all these so-called rights fail to arouse enthusiasm because to-day they are all recognized by society and there exist neither laws nor strong opposition to any of them.

It is evident they represent a middle class woman's movement; an echo, but a very weak echo, of the English constitutional suffragists. Consideration of the working woman's freedom was ignored. The problems which affect the

working girl who slaves in the home or the nurse girl who spends her days and nights in the care of the babies of the feminists, were not dwelt upon. The freedom which the new feminists expound can only be obtained through a greater enslavement of the already enslaved workingwoman, and "where slavery is there liberty cannot be." Instead of launching a movement for woman's freedom the impression gained was that they aimed to combat the contentions of the conventional anti-suffragists.

To those who have been on the firing line for woman's freedom for the past

several years, the new movement is sadly lacking in vitality, force, and conviction.

Any movement with fear lurking in the background, fear of the press, of public opinion, of our neighbors, or of the enemy, can not have that spirit which fearlessness of opposition brings. It is not for rights women should ask, all rights are here—rather is it for you to inculcate into her the desire to get these rights.

Feminists—Come out from under the cover of morbid respectability and let's get a look at you!

How many could be a Voltairine de Cleyre, a Louise Michel, an Emma Goldman or an Elizabeth Flynn?

Let us all in life pay a little more attention to the possibilities of the heroic and the unexpected. It is only the rebel woman, when she gets out of the habits imposed on her by bourgeois convention, who can do some deed of terrible virtue.

Yet there is one emphatic caution to be given to the woman who would defy the conventions. If the working woman does this, let her do it without a rag of excuse, without reason or justification to anyone. Let her be herself and live for her ideal and her convictions not for the approval or the applause of fashionable feminism. If she does it, however, for some secondary reason, from vanity or worldly ambition, she may become a beggar in more senses than one.

## WHY WAIT?

MARION HOWARD

Workers of The World! Pause a moment in your self-imposed slavery and listen—can't you hear it? The rumbling and muttering of an approaching storm the vastness and magnitude of which you cannot gauge nor even comprehend?

What is it? Why all this unrest and feverishness all around me?

What means this listening, expectant attitude? It is the mutterings and cursing of the thousands, yea millions of oppressed.

Hungry and destitute, driven farther and farther away from the bare necessities of life they are listening, waiting,—a striving, toiling mass of humanity—for what?

They know not. Uncertain, afraid, still with nerves tense, and hearts and minds smoldering. Waiting! For the match to set fire to the World of human gunpowder!

All over the world goes the cry for One Big Union but to what purpose?

The half starved Slave looks into the future and sees nothing more than he has already had—Waiting!

What for? Why not the One Big Strike? To what purpose is One Big Union unless it can bring definite results? Now not tomorrow.

Tomorrow the Capitalist shuts down his iron hand tighter, squeezing more vitality out, a little more of our life's blood to weaken and defeat us. Every hour of delay means Danger! The world is full of the good things of life, thousands of acres of fertile lands are lying idle! Take them as you may! The Capitalist does it—why not the worker, the producer, the men who give all the luxuries of life to the few.

Eight Hours a day—a dollar an hour—the One Big Strike—anything—any way—to get it!

Delay may mean disruption and defeat. Strike now while the iron is hot!

Yours for the Universal Eight Hour strike!

## RULERS, JUDGES, SOLDIERS AND HANGMEN

DOROTHY KELLY

It is a bad business to mark a woman, a man, a nation or a race out for the vengeance of Man. But it is a thing to which the specialized man or the professional man can grow accustomed.

The curse of our industrial epoch is the tendency and trend toward specialism and professionalism. We have trained soldiers because they fight better; trained rulers because they rule better; trained judges because they judge better; trained executioners because they kill better.

The terrible thing about these officials and specialists, even the best, all rulers, judges, soldiers and executioners, is not that they are wicked or cruel—some of them are good and kind-hearted—not that they are stupid—several of them are quite intelligent, even some soldiers. It is simply that they have got used to it.

Strictly, the ruler does not see the individual, the unit. The judge does not see the prisoner in the dock. The soldier does not see his brother. The hangman does not see the condemned. All they see is the usual man or woman in the usual place.

They do not see the horrible nature of their work. They only see the workshop.

The advent of the woman rebel involves the fact that into the judgments, the measurements and the institutions of Man there shall upon each and every occasion be introduced a new outlook—the soul and spirit of Humanity.

## TO BE A WOMAN REBEL

ELIZABETH KLEEN

The woman rebel's minor actions in life, her social and marital arrangements are free, flexible and original; the things that are unchangeable, are her principles, her ideals. With the bondswoman the reverse is the case; her ideals and principles change constantly, her thoughts and her dress rarely. The woman rebel has strong and rooted conceptions, but as for her dinner she has it sometimes in bed, or on the roof or in a boat. She argues from the same fundamental principles,

but she does it anywhere; in bed or in a bath or in a balloon. The present-day prevalence of good habits involves a too great emphasis on those virtues which only Custom can ensure and too little emphasis on those virtues which Custom can never ensure—sudden and splendid virtues of inspiration; of noble achievement; of lofty ambition. A working woman can get used to getting up at five o'clock, but how many can get used to being imprisoned for their convictions or shot at for their ideals?