

Ah! Women!

Robert E. Lowe

Since Adam took a bite of apple at the dawn of time—and bear in mind who persuaded him—women have actually ruled the world. I do not believe that even women will deny it. In story and song the exploits of he-men have been designed to please some dainty, delicate wisp of a thing on some balcony. Empires have been gained and lost for a kiss, or the hand of a beautiful woman, who soothed the tortured limbs of the spent and weary knight with the current balms as he unclasped his heavy armor. The men loved it; who wouldn't?

By the Middle Ages customs were fairly well-established as to woman's place. As a silent partner of the supposedly more aggressive male, she was to guide him to his triumphs in the field and in the parlor. As a background on the stage where he would strut his little part, she was to set the mood; and at a misspoken line or a rebellious deviation from the play, she was to slap him down. Again man loved this velvet-glove domination and helped her in every way he knew to build a citadel of customs and courtesies, right and privileges, which placed woman above his petty pursuits in the filth of commerce and intrigue. She was protected and cherished, polished and petted, and decked out in jewels and silk.

This citadel of rights was practically indestructible. There was just one termite—woman herself. At about the time when the thirteen colonies were declaring their independence from the mother country, mothers were declaring a new kind of independence themselves. No more of the pedestal, thank you. Woman was learning to swing an ax, skin a deer, run a plow, shoot a gun, or clear a field almost as well as man. It was no wonder that foreign travelers in the New World remarked at the approaching equality of the sexes in the provinces. It seemed that woman was saying, "Let my citadel alone, but let us change this and this. Let us retain the courtesies extended in the past, but give us equal ground on the playing field too."

Of course poor man became quite confused, and today he scratches his balding pate and wonders if he should give his seat to a lady. Should he doff his cap, open doors for her, and play the pretty game of manners he learned at his mother's knee? Mother never told him about this! Actually he was on safer ground when he just accepted these changes without question than when he finally rebelled and began to examine the ladies to determine his actions, because examination did

not help. Where once was a gown distinctive, there is now a pair of pants; where once the voice was modulated by stern exercise of control, now he hears, "Who d'ya think you're pushing, Samson?" She smokes, swears, makes and spends her own money in man's traditional market, and at a bargain counter acts like an all-American tackle. She has taken his job, his confidence, and his very pants away from him. The poor man has found the competition so rough that in order to be successful in one field of endeavor he has had to look like a woman by decking himself out in costly robes, by growing lustrous locks of hair, and by perfuming the very air around him. Poor guy.