

WOMEN: A PROMISE

[ANONYMOUS]

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The men, I know, have many faults,

Yet, women have but two¹;

There's nothing right they ever say,

And all is wrong they do²:

And lest you think the other way,

I'll ere long prove it true.

¹ This attitude toward women may stem from the uneasiness men during this time had with women. They began to have more roles in different aspects of society than they had had in the past. During this time period, there were very clear cut lines for the roles of women and men in the home and in society. Women were expected to be "good wives"; this entailed certain responsibilities in the household as well as certain expectations when in the eye of the public. In the home, women were held accountable for cooking, decorating the home, sewing, cleaning, the laundry, etc. If the husband wanted children, she was expected to provide him with them. Once the children were born, she was also in charge of watching over them and teaching them manners. It was expected that she "be of good temperament so that the marital home would be happy". While some husbands are said to have consulted their wives for advice on matters of their home, work, and social life, they were by no means forced to and were ultimately the heads and decision makers of the household. (Pop).

² This time was one of great changes for the roles women had in society. One turning point for women was at the World Anti-Slavery Convention at which the women were not treated the way they wanted to be treated. This prompted them to work on women's rights in the U.S. (This is discussed more in the Editor's Note). They began to gain more education and take part in various reform movements, such as abolition, which helped them get involved with politics, as discussed in the Editor's Note. (1800's).



EDITOR'S NOTE

In the summer of 1840, the basis for a turn for women's rights happened. The World Anti-Slavery Convention was held in London for ten days with 350 delegates from various countries around the world. Included among these delegates were a handful of women, two of them being Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. (Woman). These women, who would later go on to become prominent figures in the Women's Rights Movement, believed that they would be allowed into the convention. Unfortunately, when they arrived they were turned away from sitting and forced into the gallery to stand with the large crowd that had turned up for the convention. In Lucretia Mott's diary, she wrote that "The Friends present were nearly all opposed to women's admission. We were told... that our coming had been announced in the London Yearly Meeting, and that they were put on their guard against us." The actions the men took to keep the women delegates from sitting in at the convention clearly showed their uneasiness with having female anti-slavery advocates speaking out and serving as leaders. Among these men though were a few exceptions, one being William Lloyd Garrison. He led an abolitionist movement that women already had leadership roles in and despite the dropping popularity for this movement, he and some of the other men still fought against the new opposing organization that were determined to keep the women out. Garrison, as well as a few other male delegates from the Garrisonian organization, protested the treatment of the female delegates by sitting in the gallery with them. The experiences the women had at the convention prompted them to reevaluate the treatment they received and led to them holding a women's rights convention in America to discuss the roles of females. This later became known as the Seneca Falls Convention held in 1848, which launched the Women's Rights Movement and played a vital role in mapping out the goals for the progress of women in American society. (The World Anti-Slavery...)

This poem, which was written just a few short months after the World Anti-Slavery Convention was held, could serve to hold as a representation of the changing attitudes of society during this time. With the changes in views of women, some men, such as Garrison, supported women's rights, while others, such as the author of this poem, were completely opposed to the changing dynamic between men and women. For example, during the 1800's women began to gain more education and take part in various reform movements, such as abolition, which helped them get involved with politics. (1800's). As some people showed their support, others' dislike for the support of women in different roles in society grew as well. The importance of this poem is clear because it allows readers and researchers to pinpoint not only one of the major conflicts that prompted the Seneca Falls Convention, but

it also serves to show the extreme discontent parts of society had with women's rights. Also, it showed what can be perceived as almost threatening actions and lengths that some people were willing to go to prevent women from having more rights are seen through part of the title, "A Promise" and the last line of the poem, "I'll ere long prove it true". The attitudes people, such as the author of this poem, had managed to not only to effect women during the 1800's, but also have a lasting impact on women and society. It led to more rights for women and a shift in the views of women as a part of society. While women's rights movements, such as the feminist movement, are still occurring today, it is clear that society has come a long way from the perspective many people held of women in the 1800's.

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