

**PRESS WORK FOR  
WOMEN: A TEXT  
BOOK FOR THE YOUNG  
WOMAN JOURNALIST**

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Press Work for Women: A Text Book for the Young Woman Journalist by Frances H. Low

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**FRANCES H. LOW**

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WOMAN JOURNALIST**



# Press Work for Women.

A Text Book for the Young Woman Journalist.

What to Write,  
How to Write It, and  
Where to Send It.

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By  
**FRANCES H. LOW.**

*Author of "Queen Victoria's Dolls," "The Little Men in Scarlet," &c.*

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# PRESS WORK FOR WOMEN.

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## PART I.

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

THE occupation of journalism is daily becoming more attractive to the average fairly well-educated woman. This is not surprising when we compare its comparatively easy conditions of success of a modest kind with the prolonged training, the accumulated knowledge, and high standard of qualification needed, for instance, by the woman teacher to-day. The great majority of teachers have gone through college training, the cost of which is rarely less than £400 to £500 (1920 to 2400 dolls.), and have gained degrees, in many cases even honours degrees, and yet their earnings are generally less than the average earnings of the journalist who has had no training at all, and in many successful instances has no mental qualifications which in any other occupation would be estimated at a high rate. Moreover, under the

present dispensation of journalistic things, it is quite possible for the novice in journalism to make a small income from the start, a situation that exists in no other form of employment open to women; for even in the higher branches of domestic service the worker is presumed to know her trade before she demands remuneration for her services.

It is in no way difficult, then, to account for the immense popularity of journalism. It is infinitely more difficult to give wise counsel upon the two or three important points that must enter into the consideration of the genuine bread-winner: and it is to this type of woman, as distinguished from the well-to-do person, unfortunately too prevalent to-day—seeing how unfair is her competition with the legitimate wage-earner—that I am addressing myself. She may be expected to take up journalism seriously as her sisters take up teaching or nursing.

Now, the first point for consideration is, how far the vocation is suited to a well-educated intelligent woman. Is the work in itself worth doing? Does it offer opportunities for mental advancement and development? I think a considerable amount of disappointment and failure will be saved if I state boldly, as a result of fifteen years' practical experience, that women's journalism, as conducted at present (and in this I include every department of



journalism open to women), is not worthy of the powers, knowledge, and training of the *highly cultivated* woman; that, in fact, it is my honest conviction, which I could support by unanswerable proof if need be, that there is absolutely no scope in the modern newspaper world for talent of a delicate order. Twenty years ago it was not so, and the cultivated woman having a light, graceful style, delicate fancy, and charm of handling which "touches nothing that it does not adorn," and having, above all, an essentially feminine attitude towards life—the complement of the rougher, robuster masculine attitude—could easily and profitably dispose of her work in the best journals read by men and women.

In a brief introduction of this kind I am not able to dwell upon this point, but I must emphasise my unshakable conviction that unless there be a complete revolution in women's journalism, the most delicate literary talent of brilliant writers, such as Madame de Girardin, exhibited in her matchless "Lettres Parisiennes"—pure journalism in every sense of the word, yet journalism raised to a fine art—will be wholly superfluous. Moreover, I seriously advise any cultivated woman determined to do only the finer kind of journalistic work to choose some other mode of bread-winning, if she would not find herself in middle age doomed to hack work and a poverty very close to destitution.

On the other hand, for a woman moderately intelligent, having the ordinary High School education and the ordinary ideals and ambitions of the average woman, it must be admitted that there is much to be said in favour of journalism as a means of earning a fair livelihood.

This brings me to the second salient point for consideration in this connection. Does journalism offer the possibility of earning a fair and regular income, which will allow of decent maintenance and saving for old age and sickness?

To lay down the law on this point, or even to give exact data, would be most imprudent; for out of the hundreds of women calling themselves journalists and belonging to journalistic clubs and societies, only a small proportion wholly maintain themselves by their earnings; and the statements that from time to time appear in the Press as to the elegant dress of this well-known journalist, or the expensive entertainments given by another, must not be taken as affording any clue to the incomes actually earned by these individuals. In nine cases out of ten, such ladies have well-to-do husbands or fathers, who contribute to their support; and an income which would barely suffice to keep a real bread-winner in food and clothes makes a very handsome pocket-money allowance for pleasures, dress, &c.

Speaking from my own actual experience, and that of a tolerably wide circle of other *bond-fide*

journalists, coupled with careful enquiries and investigations extending over the last ten years that enable me to speak with a fair degree of certainty upon this point, I am convinced that the majority of competent journalists cannot reckon upon a larger income from their own earnings than £100 to £150 (480 to 720 dolls.) a year.

A considerable number of women journalists work in their "copy" with the advertisement department, and their earnings are undoubtedly higher, in some cases reaching to £500 (2400 dolls.) a year; and there is not the smallest doubt that those who want to make money and care nothing for the intellectual quality of their work should steadily follow this branch of "commercial journalism," which is more and more absorbing the journals devoted to women's interests and pleasures. Set against the dozen or so of women doing serious work of a literary character, such as essay writing, leaders, descriptive impersonal articles, and reviewing, there are hundreds who are writing up the shops, fashions in dress, the furnishing of houses, the toilette, and so forth, all of which specialities can be used for the advancement and profit of the advertisement department. It is, however, essential that the journalistic novice should embark upon her career clear-eyed, with a knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the market—upon which matters I claim the ability to be of some use in this