

# **THE HEROINE**

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The Heroine by Eaton Stannard Barrett & Walter Raleigh

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**EATON STANNARD BARRETT & WALTER RALEIGH**

# **THE HEROINE**



# THE HEROINE

BY

EATON STANNARD BARRETT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

WALTER RALEIGH

LONDON  
HENRY FROWDE

1909

OXFORD: HORACE HART  
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
HOWARD GREENGLASS

1815  
1816  
1817  
1818  
1819  
1820

## INTRODUCTION

IN Glamorganshire, of a rapid decline, occasioned by the bursting of a blood-vessel, Eaton Stannard Barrett, esq., a native of Ireland, and a student of the Middle Temple. He published "All the Talents", a Poem, 8vo. 1817.—"The Comet", a mock newspaper, 8vo. 1803.—A very pleasing poem intituled "Woman", 8vo. 1810.—"The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina", 3 vols. 12mo, 2d. edit. 1814. This volume is said to abound in wit and humour.\*

Very little can now be added to this obituary notice, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1820. The young Irishman whose death it records was born at Cork in 1786, received his education chiefly in London, addicted himself to the law, and was early diverted into the profession of letters, which he practised with great energy and versatility. Besides the works mentioned above, he wrote a serio-comic romance called *The Rising Sun*, and a farcical comedy, full of noise and bustle, called *My Wife, What Wife?* (The choice of this last phrase (sacred, if any words in poetry are sacred) for the title of a rollicking farce indicates a certain bluntness of sensibility in the author.) He was young, and fell head over ears in love with cleverness; he was a law-student, and took to political satire as a duck takes to the rain; he was an Irishman, and found himself the master of a happy Irish wit, clean, quick, and dainty, but no ways searching or profound. At the back of all his satire there lies a simple social creed, which he accepts from the middle-class code of his own time, and does not question.

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The two of his works which achieved something like fame, *Woman, a Poem*, and *The Heroine*, here reprinted, set forth that creed, describing the ideal heroine in verse, and warning her, in prose, against the extravagances that so easily beset her. The mode in female character has somewhat changed since George was king, and the pensive coyness set up as a model in the poem seems to a modern reader almost as affected as the vagaries described in the novel. Yet the poem has all the interest and brilliancy of an old fashion-plate. Here is woman as she wished to be in the days of the Regency, or perhaps as man wished her to be, for it is impossible to say which began it. Both gloried in the contrast of their habits. If man, in that age of the prize-ring and the press-gang, was pre-eminently a drinking, swearing, fighting animal, his indelicacy was redeemed by the shrinking graces of his mate.

For woman is not undevelop't man,  
But diverse :

as the poet of the later nineteenth century sings. But Tennyson was anticipated in this discovery by Mr. Barrett :

Yes, heaven a contrast not unmeet, designed  
Between the bearded and the blushing kind.

Those who often see the bearded kind clad in overcoats, carrying umbrellas, and timorous of social greetings, may have some difficulty in recognizing the essential truth of the following lines, which describe man in his grandeur, as his blushing consort loves to think of him :

Man, from those moments, when his infant age  
Cried for the moon, ambitious aims engage,  
One world subdued, more worlds he wishes given,  
He piles his impious tower to clamber heaven ;



Scoops cities under earth ; erects his home  
On mountains of wild surges, vales of foam ;  
Soars air, and high above the thunder runs,  
Now flaked with sleet, now reddened under suns.  
Even in his pastime man his soul reveals ;  
Raised with carousing shout, his goblet reels.  
Now from his chase imperial lions fly,  
And now he stakes a principedom on a die.  
What would he more ? The consecrated game  
Of murder must transmit his epic name,  
Some empire tempts him ; at his stern command,  
An armed cloud hails iron o'er the land.  
Earth thunders underneath the ponderous tread,  
Son slaughters sire, the dying stab the dead.  
The vallies roar, that loved a warbling mood,  
Their mutilated lilies float on blood ;  
And corpses sicken streams, and towns expire,  
And colour the nocturnal clouds with fire.  
Last, vultures pounce upon the finished strife,  
And dabble in the splash of human life.

Such is man, all magnificence and terror. And now a softly  
trilling note ushers in the partner of his cares :

But the meek female far from war removes,  
Girt with the Graces and endearing Loves.  
To rear the life we destine to destroy,  
To bind the wound we plant, is her employ.  
Her rapine is to press from healing bud,  
Or healthful herb, the vegetable blood ;  
Her answer, at the martial blast abhorred,  
Harmonic noise along the warbling chord.

To her belong light roundelay and reel,  
 To her the crackling hearth and humming wheel;  
 (Sounds of content !) to her the milky kine,  
 And Peace, O Woman, gentle Peace is thine.

Their studies are as dissimilar as their tastes. Nothing less than a comet will excite the curiosity of man ; for woman the flower-garden is science enough :

Prone o'er abstruse research, let man expound  
 Dark causes ; what abyss our planet drowned ;  
 And where the fiery star its hundred years  
 Of absence travels, ere it re-appears.  
 To Woman, whose best books are human hearts,  
 Wise heaven a genius less profound imparts.  
 His awful, her's is lovely ; his should tell  
 How thunderbolts, and her's how roses fell.

Here is the genesis of the Early Victorian ideal of female beauty. The author describes, with heart-felt sentiment, its graces and charms,

The beautiful rebuke that looks surprise,  
 The gentle vengeance of averted eyes ;

—which last line so pleased him that it occurs again in *The Farewell* (Letter XXV of *The Heroine*). The shorter poem, like the longer, has the indescribable old-world charm of a pressed rose-leaf, an elegant tarnished mirror, a faded silken fan, a vanished mode. The secret of this sentimental type of beauty perhaps lies here, that the simplicity and shyness and ardour of youth are reduced, not by a conscious science, but by the timid rules of propriety and modesty, to the service of an all-prevailing coquetry. Ovid, as expounded by Mrs. Chaponc or Miss Hannah More, gains

something in the delicacy of his methods, and loses nothing of his empire :

Ut quondam iuvenes, ita nunc, mea turba, puellae  
Inscribant spoliis : Naso magister erat.

It must be said, however, that the author of *Woman, a Poem* does not confine himself to the alluring graces. His best known and most quoted lines are written in praise of courage and fidelity :

Not she denied her God with recreant tongue,  
Not she with traitrous kisses round him clung ;  
She, while Apostles shrank, could danger brave,  
Last at his cross and earliest at his grave.

If he were to survive in a single quotation, it is probably by these lines that the author, who spent much labour on the revision and polishing of his poem, would wish to be remembered.

It may seem strange that the author of this romantic poem on *Woman* should have been so ready to parody the newschool of prose romance. Miss Cherry Wilkinson, when she took the name of Cherubina, and commenced heroine, might certainly have found some useful hints for her behaviour in this earlier treatise. But the fact is that no parodist is successful who has not at some time fallen deeply under the spell of the literature that he parodies. Parody is, for the most part, a weak and clinging kind of tribute to the force of its original. Very perfect parodies, which catch the soul, as well as the form, of the models that they imitate, almost lose their identity and become a part of that which they were meant to ridicule. Feeble parodies, where poor matter, not strong enough to