

## Appendix A

### ON MARRIAGE (1832-33?)

by Harriet Taylor

Holograph MS, Mill-Taylor Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics. Untitled and unsigned, but in Taylor's hand. Dated on physical evidence. Not published. For a description of the MS, and comment on it, see xxx-xxx1 and lviii-lix above.

IF I COULD BE PROVIDENCE to the world for a time, for the express purpose of raising the condition of women, I should come to you to know the *means*—the *purpose* would be to remove all interference with affection, or with any thing which is, or which even might be supposed to be, demonstrative of affection—In the present state of womens minds, perfectly uneducated, and with whatever of timidity and dependance is natural to them increased a thousand fold by their habits of utter dependance, it would probably be mischievous to remove at once all restraints, they would buy themselves protectors at a dearer cost than even at present—but without raising their natures at all, it seems to me, that once give women the desire to raise their social condition, and they have a power which in the present state of civilization and of mens characters, might be made of tremendous effect. Whether nature made a difference in the nature of men and women or not, it seems now that all men, with the exception of a few lofty minded, are sensualists more or less—Women on the contrary are quite exempt from this trait, however it may appear otherwise in the cases of some—It seems strange that it should be so, unless it was meant to be a source of power in demi-civilized states such as the present—or it may not be so—it may be only that the habits of freedom and low indulgence in which boys grow up and the contrary notion of what is called purity in girls may have produced the appearance of different natures in the two sexes—As certain it is that there is equality in nothing, now—all the pleasures such as there are being mens, and all the disagreeables and pains being womens, as that every pleasure would be infinitely heightened both in kind and degree by the perfect equality of the sexes. Women are educated for one single object, to gain their living by marrying—(some poor souls get it without the churchgoing in the same way—they do not seem to me a bit worse than their honoured sisters)—To

be married is the object of their existence and that object being gained they do really cease to exist as to anything worth calling life or any useful purpose. One observes very few marriages where there is any real sympathy or enjoyment of companionship between the parties—The woman knows what her power is, and gains by it what she has been taught to consider “proper” to her state—The woman who would gain power by such means is unfit for power, still they *do* use this power for paltry advantages and I am astonished it has never occurred to them to gain some large purpose: but their minds are degenerated by habits of dependence—I should think that 500 years hence none of the follies of their ancestors will so excite wonder and contempt as the fact of legislative restraint as to matters of feeling—or rather in the expressions of feeling. When once the law undertakes to say which demonstration of feeling shall be given to which, it seems quite inconsistent not to legislate for *all*, and say how many shall be seen, how many heard, and what kind and degree of feeling allows of shaking hands—The Turks is the only consistent mode—

I have no doubt that when the whole community is really educated, tho’ the present laws of marriage were to continue they would be perfectly disregarded, because no one would marry—The wisest and perhaps the quickest means to do away with its evils is to be found in promoting education—as it is the means of all good—but meanwhile it is hard that those who suffer most from its evils and who are always the best people, should be left without remedy. Would not the best plan be divorce which could be attained by *any, without any reason assigned*, and at small expence, but which could only be finally pronounced after a long period? not *less* time than two years should elapse between suing for divorce and permission to contract again—but what the decision will be *must* be certain at the moment of asking for it—*unless* during that time the suit should be withdrawn—

(I feel like a lawyer in talking of it only! O how absurd and little it all is!)

In the present system of habits and opinions, girls enter into what is called a contract perfectly ignorant of the conditions of it, and that they should be so is considered absolutely essential to their fitness for it!—But after all the one argument of the matter which I think might be said so as to strike both high and low natures is—Who would wish to have the person without the inclination? Whoever would take the benefit of a law of divorce must be those whose inclination is to separate and who on earth would wish another to remain with them against their inclination? I should think no one—people sophisticate about the matter now and will not believe that one “*really would wish to go.*” Suppose instead of calling it a “law of divorce” it were to be called “Proof of affection”—They would like it better then—

At this present time, in this state of civilization, what evil would be caused by, first placing women on the most entire equality with men, as to all rights and privileges, civil and political, and then doing away with all laws whatever relating to marriage? Then if a woman had children she must take the charge of them.

women would not then have children without considering how to maintain them. Women would have no more reason to barter person for bread, or for any thing else, than men have—public offices being open to them alike, all occupations would be divided between the sexes in their natural arrangement. Fathers would provide for their daughters in the same manner as for their sons—

All the difficulties about divorce seem to be in the consideration for the children—but on this plan it would be the women's *interest* not to have children—*now* it is thought to be the womans interest to have children as so many *nes* to the man who feeds her.

*Sex* in its true and finest meaning, seems to be the way in which is manifested all that is *highest* best and beautiful in the nature of human beings—none but poets have approached to the perception of the beauty of the material world—still less of the spiritual—and there never yet existed a poet, except by the inspiration of that feeling which is the perception of beauty in all forms and by all the means which are given us, as well as by *sight*. Are we not born with the *five* senses, merely as a foundation for others which we may make by them—and who extends and refines those material senses to the highest—into infinity—best fulfils the end of creation—That is only saying—*Who enjoys most, is most virtuous*—It is for *you*—the most worthy to be the apostle of all loftiest virtue—to teach, such as may be taught, that the higher the *kind* of enjoyment, the *greater* the *degree*—perhaps there is but one class to whom this *can* be taught—the poetic nature struggling with superstition: *you* are fitted to be the saviour of such—