WOMAN'S ROLE

Clothes & Fashion

Objections

An anonymous Ithacan registered this complaint in the year 1823:

> Forty year ago – a young man making choice of a companion for life, would not select the young lady, whose form, by means of a corset, was assimilated [to] that of the insect wasp, and who having seated herself in a public assembly, sat gasping for breath like a fish out of water.[1]

True enough. Forty years previous, the corset had not yet made an appearance. Women's clothing was simple and comfortable. But those free-and-easy days were gone. The age of the elaborate gown with its tight corset, full skirt, and ornate finery was going strong.

> I would ask our young ladies especially, what good does all this finery do? It does not improve their beauty . . . and it cannot hide ugliness, but only make it more frightful.[2]

These were worthy objections. Corsets were uncomfortable, the many layers of petticoats were cumbersome, and the dress itself was expensive to buy or time-consuming to make. In fact, so many men objected to the "pernicious, abusive, and unnatural practice of tight lacing among the female sex"[3] that they formed the "Anti-Tight Lacing Society" in 1842. Their resolution:

> We, the young men of the town of Ithaca . . . In order to prevent this evil, and, if possible, to put a final vote on this inordinate and inconvenient practice, . . . will utterly refuse to elect from any set or party of young ladies, to make choice of them for companions for life, who will still continue in the practice.[4]

That limited their selection quite a bit. Of course, the women did not care for tight lacing and uncomfortable clothing either, but as long as their goal in life was marriage, they knew better than to buck the prevailing dress code. Besides, there was at least one advantage to those wide skirts. In 1845, Mary Moffat of Etna fell eighty-three feet into Ithaca's Fall Creek and escaped without injury. Her skirts ballooned like a parachute and graced her a safe landing.[5]

Flies in the Ointment

As the mid-century mark approached, it brought with it a new era in women's clothing. The former style of mounting layer upon layer of petticoats to make a full skirt was replaced by one massive, circular, steel hoop called the *crinoline*.

These new hoops could be designed as wide as was desired. The crinoline, then, made possible undreamed-of volumes in women's skirts. And these new widths, in turn, made for undreamed-of problems. There were jokes galore about women getting stuck in doorways, sheltering small children and dogs under their skirts, and being toppled by a gust of wind and unable to right themselves.

Fashion trends run in cycles. In the early 1800s, women's clothes were comfortable and sensible, draping loosely from under the breast. Then an "element of prudery" entered the picture, dictating a petticoat be worn under the revealing sheath-like garment. The number of petticoats increased toward the end of the second decade, and together with the high waist,

"fashionable" women made quite a preposterous picture. Eventually the waistline dropped, and skirts began to expand even more. The corset became fashionable and tight lacing exaggerated the slim waistline. This trend culminated in the 1850s with the introduction of the crinoline, a hoopskirt made of steel. Within ten years skirts had achieved monstrous proportions – two

Why would women stand for such inconvenient clothes? Again, there was the element of physical appeal. The huge skirts made them look like little puffballs about to float away. They knew the majority of men delighted in how the slim waist and full skirt combined to display the curvacious female body. And the hooped skirt had a wonderful quality of swaying from side to side, tipping up a little here, showing a peek of forbidden ankle there.

Amelia Bloomer, 1851.

The corset was in full strength – though its victims could not always say the same. An Ithaca paper reported the story of a gentleman who while walking down Cayuga Street, met "a young lady of his acquaintance" unable to hold herself upright except by leaning against a fence. Concerned, he "rushed up to her and enquired if she were ill." "Why, no," she replied, "I am very well indeed, only I am tied back a little too tight."[6] Her corset was so taut, she could not draw a decent breath!

By the 1870s the crinoline craze had thankfully passed out of popularity. But there was still plenty to gripe about. A local fashion writer stated in 1875:

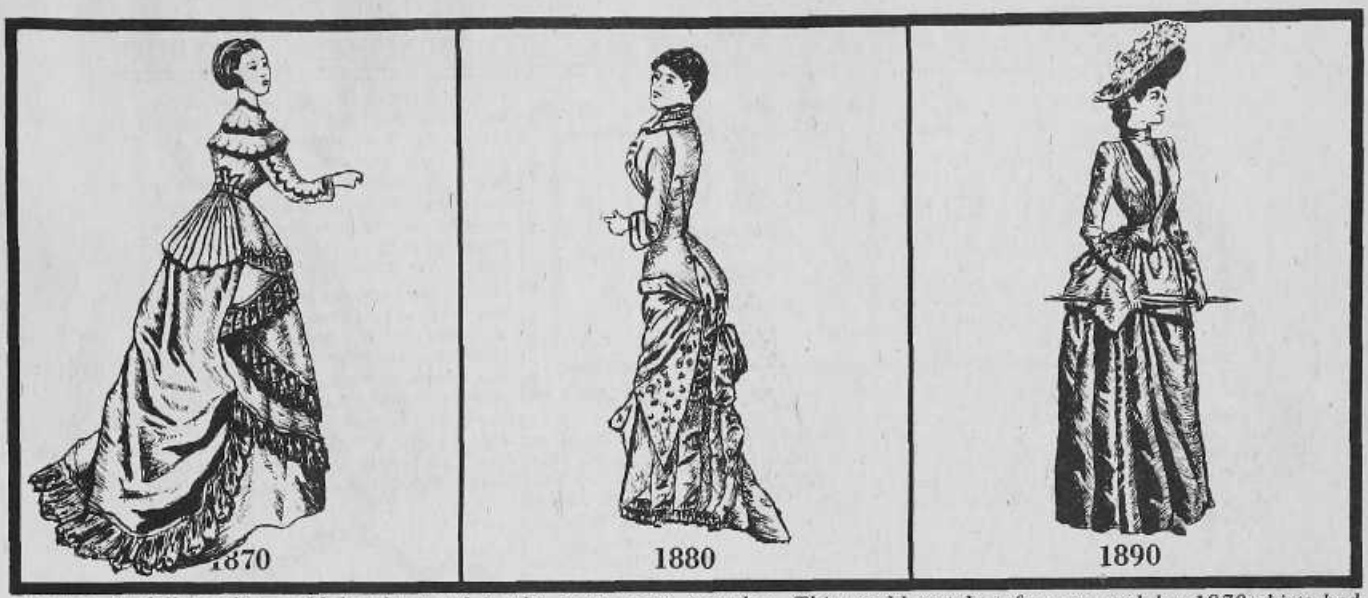
> Just at present it is the height of style for a lady not to be able to put her hand in her pocket unless she stands up, and as to picking up anything from off the floor without bursting some half a dozen straps and ties, that seems a total impossibility.[7]

Reconsideration and Reform

Dress reform was one of the earliest concerns of the women's rights movement. Feminists realized that the corsets, hoops, and straps were crippling women both physically and emotionally. The need for reform was urgent.

The first notorious attempt in that direction was Amelia Bloomer's folly, "bloomers," which appeared in the late 1850s. The outfit consisted of a short jacket, a skirt to below the knee, and the bloomers, or loose Turkish trousers, gathered at the ankles. In Ithaca, the first "bloomer-girl" strolled down the street in 1858. Townsfolk followed at her heels, gaping at the outrageous pantaloons.[8] But soon the initial shock wore off, and critics here and around the country were merciless in their ridicule of the dress. The staunchest feminist eventually packed them away, and by 1865, not a bloomer-girl dared show her face.

Lashings against the bloomers continued long after their demise. Apparently the concept of dress reform for women hit a tender nerve in the public sector. The harshest



women in full regalia could barely stand in the same room together. This could not last forever, and by 1870 skirts had deflated somewhat, only to have the excess material randomly bunched up in back, and the "bustle" was born. The bustle enjoyed two spurts of popularity over the next twenty years but by 1890 had totally vanished from the fashion scene.

complaint was that by wanting clothes which allowed the same freedom men enjoyed, those women were "just trying to be men." One cynic observed in the *Ithacan* of 1869:

> Isn't it curious that some of these progressive women, who denounce us so savagely for our short-comings and injustice, are so eager to adopt our external peculiarities? We fear they are too much like us, and too much unlike the majority of the gentle, sensitive, good, wise and charming sex to which they have been supposed to belong.[9]

Ithaca Daily Journal, 1908.

CORSET COMPANY WILL LOCATE HERE

Cortland Concern Employing 30 Persons Moves Into Local Factory Today.

Arrangements were completed yesterday for the removal of the New Style Corset Company from Cortland to Ithaca. The building at the corner of Center and South Plain streets known as the knitting facory has been purchased for the corset company's use. Title to the property is held at present by several directors of the Board of Commerce. Later the property will be taken over by the corset company.

The New Style Corset Company will employ from 30 to 50 men, women and girls. The company is bringing from Cortland only a few of its experienced employes. Residents of Ithaca will be trained for most of the places in the plant. The company pays good wages and will provide desirable working conditions.

The new company manufactures corsets which retail from $1 to $5. The product is said to be of a high order and finds ready sale throughout the country. Maurice D. Levey is president and general manager of the company. The manufacturing is in charge of C. T. Gilbert, the superintendent. Mr. Gilbertson has been brought up in the corset business, his father before him having been a corset manufacturer.

Machinery for the new factory has already been moved to Ithaca from Cortland and installation will start immediately. A committee of the Board of Commerce has been working on the project for several weeks. It was only yesterday that the last details were satisfactorily worked out.

Ithaca Daily Journal, 1917.

THE ITHACA DAILY JOURNAL, NOVEMBER 24, 1900

THE UP TO DATE MARTYR

Tortures Endured by the Fashionable Woman.

What's the use of talking about the tortures of the inquisition and speaking of the dark ages? To be sure we are supposed to live in enlightened and progressive times. But are tortures extinct? I for one say no.

Dame Fashion is the most cruel and exacting of tyrants. No Nero or Caligula could be more despotic. Fashion says that a certain thing must be, and it is, regardless of the suffering and agony of her subjects. They go through life with their strength and energies crippled and their bodies weighed down by her merciless devices, while she merely laughs and puts her mind to fresh inventions. And who are her victims—strong men? No—frail women and even little children, working women, too, with their worries and troubles, and she adds furrows to the cheeks of the fairest and lines of care around the eyes of the already overburdened.

A terrible picture, you say? And I am exaggerating? We shall see.

Let us suppose we are in the year 2000 and present at an exhibition of instruments of torture, like the Nuremberg collection, for instance. Step up, ladies and gentlemen, and inspect!

What is this ungainly band stitched and stiffened with many bones and extending at both ends in two high points?

That, my dear, madam, was actually intended to be worn around the neck, and those high and particularly cruel points were designed to rise just back of the ears, preventing any chance of the head's being thrown back. Day after day the victim choked in one of these until her neck was scraped raw and the back of her head was one ache. Iron collar? No, but it might have been. The material was the only difference. The suffering was even greater.

And this heavy load of velvet, weighing several pounds and fastened to the lower forehead of the wax figure?

That, my friends, was the tilted hat.

A hat—that monstrosity? Why, in what manner could it possibly have kept off the sun?

In the dark ages of 1900 hats were not expected to do anything of the sort. They were merely invented for torture. See, this was designed to prevent the victim's looking upward. Worn in conjunction with the choking collar it was most effective.

Your eyes fill with pity. Ah, well they may! But this is not all. Remove the hat and see this protruding wad of—hair? Alas, no! The women of 1900 were compelled to resort to all sorts of remedies to keep from getting bald. No, this was a rat— Calm yourself, madam; I don't mean the real article. This was simply a wad of mere rubbish and artificial hair, designed to give a bulging appearance to the front and sides of the head. Just the opposite from the flat head Indians, you say? Yes, but in the same order of barbarity.

Is this an instrument of warfare, this ornamented leather band, with a leather weight at each end?

It might have been, I admit, but it was not intended as such. It was a belt.

A belt? That tiny thing?

Take my word. It was a belt, and those leaden coins sewed into the lining were to keep it down in front.

But these weights must have dragged, and it is not natural for a belt to stay down in front.

That made no difference in 1900.

THE FASHIONABLE WOMAN.

What is this bag stuffed hard with hair and ornamented with two long strings?

That was called the bustle and was a torture designed especially to give the backache. It was never known to fail.

Ah! Ah!

No wonder you cry out as you gaze on this picture. It is a fashion plate of the time. In it you see the victim fully appareled. Yards and yards of cloth wind themselves around her feet and conspire to trip her up, her shoes are made with high, narrow blocks, raising the heel and sending all the weight on her long suffering toes, which are incased in the tightest of coverings. It is a cold January day, snowing as you perceive, and yet she wears a very short jacket reaching only to the waist line. This was considered ultra elegant in 1900. Her face, lest she should see too plainly, is shrouded by a transparent piece of cloth covered with large dots. Over this comes another arrangement of a material called chiffon. You will notice that her hands are struggling to hold a purse, a pocket handkerchief, a bunch of flowers, a box of candy and a book. Remember also that she has no pocket and that she is obliged to hold up the train of her skirt. As for her waist—

INSTRUMENTS OF TORTURE.

How could human beings get themselves into such a shape?

S-sh! Say no more! I will show you our most valued antiquity, the only one of its kind in existence—a corset. This, ladies and gentlemen, was the latest thing in 1900. The upper part was made of cloth, boned and steeled, but from the waist over the hips and in some cases reaching almost to the knees it was of the strongest elastic webbing, which fitted like a coat of mail. How one moved, lived, breathed, in such an apparatus is a mystery. See, the victim was tied in by means of these strings and tied in so tightly that, incredible as it may seem, these ends almost met!

What could have been the crime for which this awful contrivance was a punishment?

Ah, that is buried in the dark past! No one has ever told, but there is no doubt that it must have been horrible beyond degree.

MAUD ROBINSON.

Actually, men's clothing *was* more comfortable, and in that sense, women *did* want to be "more like men." But this trend was frightening to those who preferred marked differentiations between the sexes. A local editorial affirmed in 1878:

> We have not yet reached that stage of "advanced thought" where we can look with favor upon any attempt to unsex the sex. Nor do we consider that short skirts betoken "civilization," on the contrary it is of savage origin and anything but modest, appropriate or becoming.[10]

The advent of women in sports was a point of huge importance in the reform of women's clothing. In the 1860s, croquet became the first socially acceptable sports craze for women. Skating in the '80s also helped "break the ice." But the greatest of the fads was bicycling, and in the late '80s and early '90s women and men of all walks of life took to riding these "steel horses" for sport and convenience. Ladies could not wear with comfort or safety the long, trailing robes of the period, so a special costume for bicycling was designed – a short skirt worn over knickerbockers. Though soundly denounced as inelegant and unfeminine, the dress was widely accepted. Locally, however, some women were reluctant to appear in public in the new garb. The *Ithaca Democrat* in July 1894 reported that a "large number" of the Binghamton lady bicyclists, "setting an example for Ithaca girls," were boldly wearing the cycling suits.[11]

> It is the intention of the ladies to appear in the street simultaneously with the hope that it will help those of the lady riders who are of a bashful nature.[12]

Nevertheless, inhibitions were soon overcome; as one historian declared, "No form of exercise has ever been so popular."[13] However, the modified dress had a negligible effect on everyday women's wear and clothes became, if anything, more hampering in the years that followed. But this increased amount of feminine exercise and activity in the late 1800s was an indication of changing attitudes, and held the promise of further changes in the future.

Practicing to be a fashionable lady.

To "Clothes" It Up

Today, women are becoming increasingly independent, and their clothing, loose and comfortable, reflects that change. It is now generally acceptable for a woman to dress "like a man." Women can wear skirts, dresses, bras, blue jeans, or pantsuits, all at their own discretion.

We women can finally sit back, stretch out our legs, look back on all those years of pinching, binding, bumping, strapping, and tying, and breathe a deep sigh of relief – our great-grandmothers couldn't have done so if they had wanted.

Eventually proponents of dress reform made inroads, and by 1920 the hoops and straps were gone. Women's clothing, hanging loosely over the hips, was sensible once again.

Marriage & Motherhood

During the nineteenth century the single woman was often preoccupied by one thought and one thought only – getting married. As a married woman, she would be proven attractive and desirable, could depend on her husband for financial support, and her station in life would be sure to win the approval of all she met. A single woman was considered a failure as a female, had to depend on her family for support, and was at best a tolerated reject.

She was no fool. The choice was simple.

"What Woman Does Best"

> There are, on the whole, few things a woman can do so well as marry.

So observed the *Ithaca Daily Journal* in 1870.

> Possibly this is because her sex have been for so many thousand years trained to that; possibly it may be because this is, after all, her true calling; but however that may be, it is certain that, as society is now constituted, and will for some time to come remain, it is the calling in which a woman on the whole has the greatest promise of success.[1]

True enough. There was little else open to the average woman which offered as great a "promise of success." Realization of that "promise" required a woman to be domestic, faithful, and industrious. She also had to be properly submissive and supportive. In 1824, the *Ithaca Journal* advised:

> *To Married Ladies:*
> If you see any imperfections in your husband (which there may well be) do not pride yourself on your penetration in discovering them, but on your forbearance in not pointing them out; strive to show no superiority.[2]

If she followed these rules meticulously, she might be able to inspire her husband to the pinnacles of greatness and acheivement.

"Is this fair hand worthy of the taking?"

> [When] she unites in mutual endeavours, or rewards his labor with an endearing smile, with what perseverance does he apply to his vocation; with what confidence will he resort to his merchandise or farm; fly over land; sail upon the seas; meet difficulty and encounter danger – if he knows he is not spending his strength in vain, but that his labour will be rewarded by the sweets of home![3]

For all this, she was duly rewarded – conferred the status of "successful wife."

> A hundred times we have seen weak men show real public virtue, because they had by their sides women who supported them, not by advice as to particulars, but by fortifying their feeling of duty, and by directing their ambition. . . . Most of the men I know have the kind of [wives] they deserve . . . who are sympathetic, intelligent, friendly. These men have got ahead in the world. They are solid citizens.[4]

The wife was likewise responsible if her husband descended into the depths of depravity.

> I know other men, failures all, who have lost interest and given up hope because their wives have broken them.[5]

It is significant that the woman's worth was reflected solely in the acceptability of her husband. This put a lot of pressure on her to "influence" him in what she hoped was the right direction. "Woman's influence" has been lauded as the female's greatest contribution; how much greater her influence, had she been able to act directly on the world as she saw fit instead of indirectly through her husband.

Race to the Altar

"Why is this Christian village infested with so many old bachelors?" one woman, signing herself "Eliza," demanded in the *Ithaca Journal* of 1825.[6] She blamed the abundance of overly romantic novels:

> Men's notions of love and females are altogether too wild – too romantic. . . . They are looking for some fair heroine, whom they invest with thousands of charms which exist only in their disordered imaginations.[7]

An "old bachelor" replied:

> The world is, indeed, inundated with novels and romances, and none so eager to devour the "disease-engendering trash" as the *females* of the present day.[8]

He advised unmarried women that in order to marry they must:

> . . . burn up their novels and corslet-boards [rigid strips used to stiffen the midriff of the corset], become *rationally industrious* and *fairly domesticated*, [then take] my word for it, this Christian village will no longer be infested with so many "marauding Old Bachelors."[9]

This self-righteousness was only skin-deep. Actually, single men were almost as anxious as single women to marry. Bachelors were eyed with suspicion by the community, seen as a potential sexual threat to its women. In 1820, the Ithaca Debating Society met to argue whether or not it would be "advisable for the legislature of this state to levy a tax on old bachelors."[10]

Several women once attempted to help the cause by printing in the *Ithaca Daily Journal* a list of all the eligible bachelors in town. Their insightful evaluations are worthy of note.

> *Kennedy, Levi* – One of the most desirable catches. Fat bank account. Hole in his heart big enough to put your foot in.
>
> *Estabrook, Wm.* – Rather coy and hard to please; but every inch a man.
>
> *Hibbard, Horace* – He has for a quarter of a century vainly sought the altar. . . . He's homely but good.
>
> *Grant, Henry* – Needs a comforter. Very docile. Would let a better half hold the reins.
>
> *Schuyler, Grant* – A better "catch" does not turn the key in a State Street store.[11]

Advertising for mates through newspapers, magazines, and "matrimonial bureaus" is not a recent phenomenon. An Ithaca bachelor in 1848 advertised in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* for a wife, asking only that she be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six, good-looking, in perfect health, and in possession of over five thousand dollars cash. Though the editors of the *Ithaca Journal* strongly advised against taking this "veritable fortune hunter" seriously, "H. P." received seventeen proposals.[12] Another story concerns Ithaca's Widow Weaver, who, while living at 419 North Cayuga Street in 1905, once found her mailbox swamped with long-distance marriage proposals. Eventually she learned that a "friend" had taken the liberty of advertising for her in a matrimonial bureau.[13]

Another option for lovelorn Ithacans was presented in 1869; hopeful singles might join a "matrimonial club" and "discuss the question of pairing off until every man that can be won and wedded has his better half to make his home cheerful."[14] At least one woman balked at this idea, and responded heatedly:

> When a woman dons the robe of resignation, folds her hands and sits down quietly with downcast eyes and a saintly expression of sweet meekness, waiting until some clear-sighted (?) individual comes along and selects her from among the many as a target for him to aim at, she is most nobly and extensively "fulfilling her mission." It may be years and it may be forever she has to wait; nevertheless it would be *awful unwomanly* and immensely "fast" if she did anything else.[15]

Another woman was likewise appalled – but for a very different reason.

> [The advocates of the club] seemed to have gotten into the prevailing notion, that the chief and only aim of a female woman is to get married to somebody – Tom, Dick, or Harry – but get married . . . Now I don't object to the club nor even the matrimony if the parties are fitted for it . . . but are they? . . . Girls are brought up to think it is a horrible future to be an old maid . . . and so, many accept the first offer they have, or imagine some school girl fancy genuine love, and take the irrevocable step . . . How many of them, do you think, will find their anticipations realized? Perhaps one in ninety-nine! And you may well ask why this fearful proportion will be doomed to disappointment. I will tell you. It is because of false education; of false views of life; of mistaken ideas in regard to what should be the holiest tie that links human hearts together, but which, alas! is too often made only the stepping-stone for aggrandizement or convenience.[16]

These matrimonial clubs thrived. Objections to this structuring of love were few and far between. In a world where the only two visible alternative in life were marriage or ostracism, most people opted for marriage.

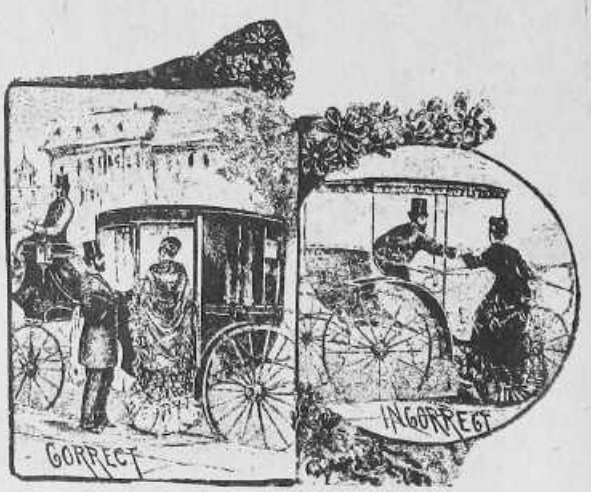
Courtship

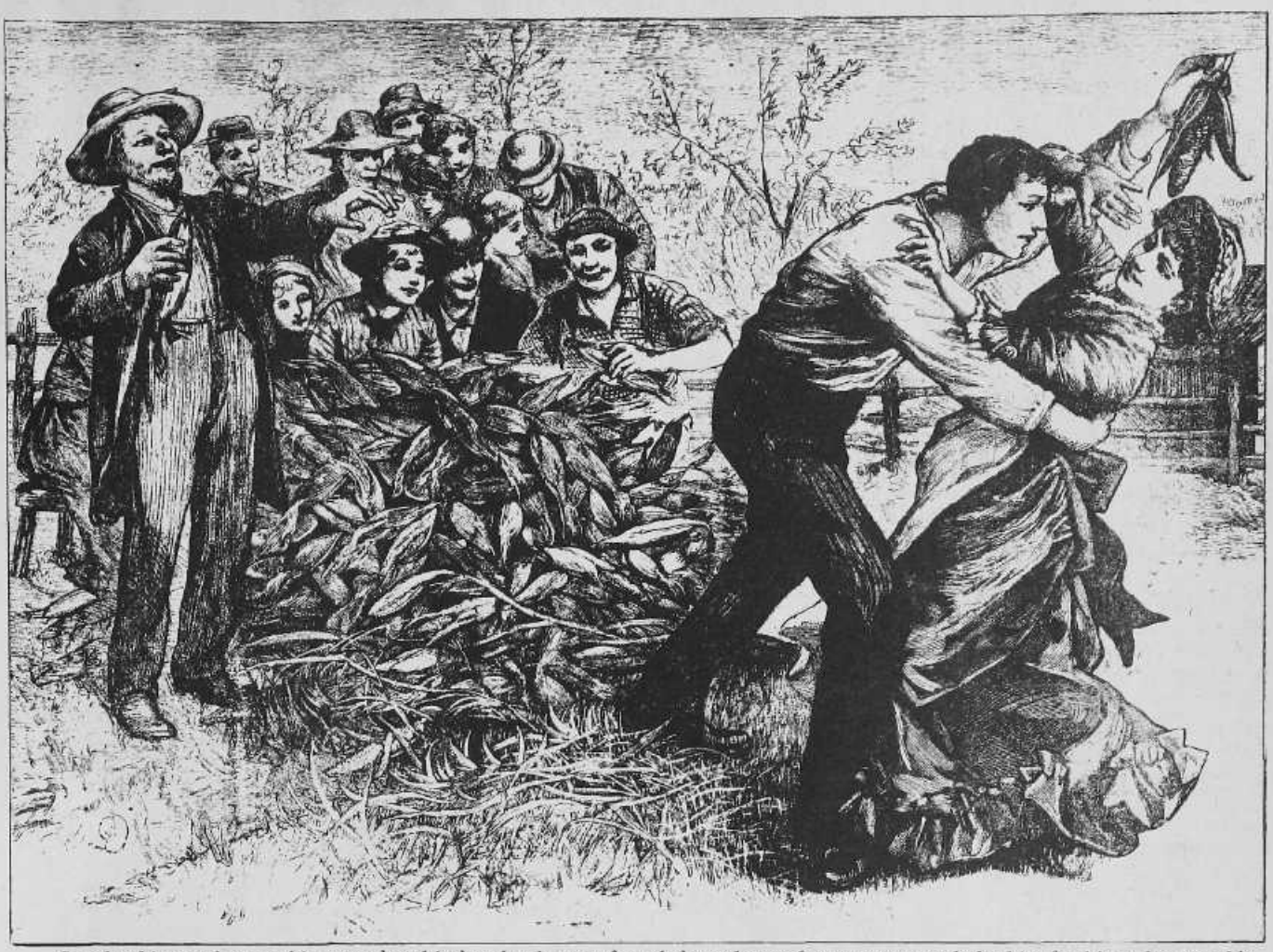
The local courting ritual was described in 1823 in Ithaca's *Castigator:*

> As soon as a girl has arrived at a marriageable age . . . she announces it by a constant exhibition of her pretty face in the streets; and it is said that if a person takes in a station at a public corner, and sees the same young lady pass a half a dozen times in the course of a morning, he can take it for granted that she is to be had.[17]

Communication is a subtle art – does he know that I know that he knows what I'm thinking? The following story printed in 1821 in Ithaca's *American Journal* puts all the awkwardness and confusion of romance in a nutshell:

> The most sentimental courtship which we have ever heard or read, took place not long since within the circle of our acquaintance. Louisa was the only child of a gentleman, who, blessed with





Cornhusking and courtship went hand-in-hand; whoever found the red ear of corn was awarded a kiss for his or her trouble.

> affluence, had spared no pains to improve by a liberal education the graces which nature had lavished upon his daughter. In short, Louisa was an heiress, and like other heiresses, had a numerous train of suitors.

And then came young William into her life . . .

> He was a man of inestimable worth and talents, which Louisa was not the last to discover; but he possessed no small share of that diffidence usually attendant on true merit. Their eyes had long confessed a mutual flame before he could muster the courage to disclose his passions. – Chance threw in his way a golden opportunity. They were alone. – After an awkward silence of some minutes, he advanced, took her hand. – "Louisa!" – his voice faltered – he could not utter another word; but his eloquent countenance spoke the rest. – Louisa understood him, and overwhelmed with confusion, stammered out, "Go – *ask my father!*"[18]

It was all too embarrassing. Young women were instilled with a sense of caution in relating to men, as their intentions might be misinterpreted.

> Every approach on the part of a young girl to any personal familiarity with a young man, such as she might most innocently take with another girl, exposes her to misconstruction.[19]

It was considered unwise, at best, to leave a young dating couple alone. Any discovered physical intimacy between the two, and the woman's reputation went down the drain. Infinitely worse were the consequences of an unwanted pregnancy. The only way to prevent such misbehaviors, and stop malicious rumors before they started, was accomplished through the surveillance of a chaperone.

Young Ruth Nelson's attitude towards chaperonage was typical of her time. She wrote to her "dearest Momsie" while a student at Cornell in 1893 and complained of the inconvenience, but did not question the validity of the convention.

> Yesterday afternoon I was to have gone through the shops with Mr. Clark but Mrs. Hooker [the matron] said I must take some third person with me, my sister, or Miss Stoneman or some of the other girls, as it would be criticized if we went alone. Well as Gertrude [her sister] did not know the gentleman I could not very well drag her or anybody else along, so when he came I had to go down and tell him I couldn't go. I was awfully mad and I guess he was too.[20]

Ruth's sister Gertrude had similiar problems. In 1893 "Momsie" received another letter which discussed the pros and cons of a certain young man who invited her to the senior ball.

> The gentleman who invited me is Mr. Hildebrand. I have never met him except at dances and he

> was one of the audience when we gave our play the second time. . . . Now this youth has been rather wild (something to do with a woman downtown), since he came to college for his first two years and there are rumors that he was rather so at home, but the latter is not known here except to a few. They say he has been steady this year and Mrs. Wilson who knows his family as she comes from the same place where he lives says he is of a good family and was well brought-up. She advised me to go with him (of course if you would permit it). He acts like a gentleman and is a good dancer . . .[21]

The official policy of chaperonage, which stipulated in part that first-year female students must be accompanied by an upperclassperson or an adult, was discontinued in 1921.

Choice of a Husband

Though it has been said that all the world loves a lover, there are exceptions to every rule. On pain of parental disapproval, many young women took matters into their own hands.

When Jennie Cart's father found out in 1798 that she had eloped with John Cantine, Jr., he responded instinctively. He grabbed two pistols, mounted his trusty steed, and set off in hot pursuit to kill them dead. Fortunately for all concerned, he reconsidered the wisdom of his homocidal plans and, though still very much upset, he returned home. Young Jennie and John settled in Brooktondale, where they bore nine little Cantines and to all appearances, lived happily ever after.[22]

The Francisco family of Lansing was packing to leave for Colorado in the early 1800s. Their eighteen-year-old daughter Jennie, however, had no intention of leaving her betrothed. On the morning of the departure, some sympathetic neighbors kept Mrs. Francisco busy in the rear of the house, giving Jennie a chance to escape. She ran out the front door, jumped into a waiting carriage, and she and her love went up the road to the Reverend J. W. Pratt's. They found him in the field stacking wheat, and were married behind one of those stacks.[23]

Who could blame all the Jennies of the world for eloping? At worst, she had only to face the wrath of her parents. Better that, than the prospect of a lifetime with an undesired husband. The *Ithaca Journal* lamented in 1825 that the latter was all too often the lot of the female sex.

> One of the most ungrateful and I might add, criminal acts, which a parent can commit, is that of enforcing their children to take those for partners in life who had never shared in their affections.[24]

If so, it was a crime unpunished. The story of Harriet Clark is one example – she was thwarted in her efforts to marry her intended, Nathan Burr. Her parents warned her that she would receive "not a farthing"[25] unless she married the man of their choosing, James Cain. Harriet bid her lover good-by under the tree that bore their initials in Indian Falls. She wrote on her wedding day, April 1, 1918:

> I don't know whether to be glad or sorry; all the family seems very glad, only I think I have been hurried into giving my consent . . . James is good enough, but I do not believe the match was made in heaven. . . . [But] it is all settled, and I suppose we have to take each other "for better or worse."[26]

Harriet started for her new home "with a wagon load of sundries and a heart full of agonies." As she left she cried, "Sweet Ludlowville, with all thy faults, I love thee still"! In a log cabin near Auburn, Harriet mothered three sons in ten years. Her husband later "became heavily involved in debt," left her, and she returned home to her parents.[27]

Did Harriet consent to marry James simply to please her parents, or did she do it to remain eligible for the promised farthings? How strong was the financial incentive? In the early 1880s in Lansing:

> William Ozmun had several daughters and one son. He was a Whig and when [one of] his daughters married he would give [her] a farm if she married a Whig. If she married a Democrat she got no farm unless she changed [his] politics. Only one [daughter] failed to get a farm. To the son he gave all he possessed when he died and the son in his later years lost it all.[28]

Even without dangling merchandise or money in front of her nose, parents have sometimes changed a daughter's chosen marital path by manipulating circumstances.

> Susan Terry and Jefferson Crocker were engaged to be married but, at the time of the California Gold Rush [1840s] Jeff went west to make his fortune and establish a home for her. She waited six years, then giving up hopes of hearing from him, married Alonzo Clark whose first wife was her elder sister Emeline. It seems that her mother and sister, thinking it best for Susan, concealed letters Jeff had written. . . . She long afterward told intimate friends that she respected her husband but would love Jeff to the end of her life. . . . "For fifty years," she once confided, "I have watched the sun go down behind those hills and my heart has gone with it."[29]

Many a single woman knew she had better get married – but to whom? Untold households lost their peaceful demeanor over this issue. Sometimes the parents won, and sometimes the woman eloped, but the desirability of marriage itself was rarely disputed.

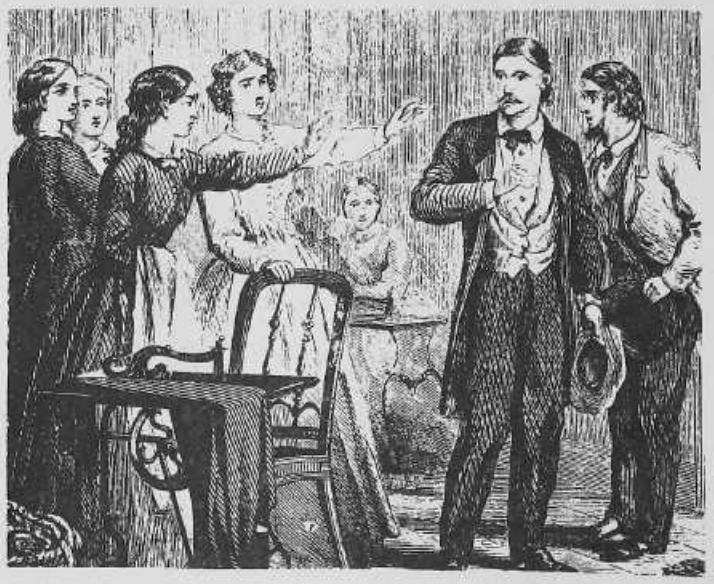
Spinsterhood

Although it would seem that the pressure to marry was overwhelming, many individuals throughout the nineteenth century chose a life of "single blessedness." But single women were often hidden from the public eye because many lived inconspicuously with their next of kin.

In the late 1800s, a transformation in the methods of production from hand labor to mechanical labor – called "The Industrial Revolution" – created many new job opportunities for women; formerly dependent "spinsters" could then find work and support themselves. For the first time, they assumed a visible place in the work force. In 1870, only one and a half million women held jobs in this country. By 1905, the number had swollen to five million.[30] This trend caused the *Ithaca Daily News* to cry out in dismay that "women are getting the whip hand of the world"![31]

> Women are taking the place of men in many callings . . . The sex is invading the professions and making desperate attempts to enter politics, and no force seems able to stop them, not even nature herself.[32]

The new world offered possibilities other than housewifery to women and many did not feel as pressing a need to marry. Subsequently, there was great alarm over the future of marriage as an institution. To this day, widespread criticism is still aimed at those choosing the unmarried state.



Motherhood

Motherhood has long been revered; the tender caring of a woman for her children is a subject of much fond remembrance in Tompkins County, as elsewhere. One local man extolled her virtues in the *Ithaca Journal* of 1825:

> Oh! there is an endearing tenderness in the love of a mother . . . that transcends all other affections of the heart. It is neither to be chilled by selfishness, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by ingratitude.[33]

Truly, a mother's love is precious. Throughout history, many women have chosen to become mothers, and to offer that love to their children. However, if for some reason a woman was uncertain about her maternal suitability, she might be so persuaded by strong outside pressure. Stated President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908:

> The woman who shirks her duty as wife and mother is heartily to be condemned. We despise her as we despise and condemn the soldier who flinches in battle.[34]

Not anxious to be "heartily" despised or condemned, many women, not ordinarily so inclined, married early and embarked on the business of raising children.

There is always the case of motherly devotion carried to extremes, as seen in the story of one Groton woman in 1868; over 105 years old, she continued to "keep house" for her son, who was then past 60 himself. This included "doing the cooking, washing, making beds, and other housework."[35] Needless to say, there was no retirement plan available for a career in motherhood – not even after one hundred long years.

More common was the situation in which a woman attempted to cling to her children long after they were grown and needed any maternal attention. When that happened, she felt hurt and rejected, they felt guilty, and there was no easy solution. A local woman once wrote that though motherhood demands "your time, health, pleasure, yes, it means your life for your child, . . . the saddest of all, is that

after you have taught your birds to fly, you stay in the old nest and sigh for the nestlings."[36]

For better or worse, motherhood was the task a great majority of women accepted as their life's work.

Sex & Morality

Townsfolk in 1816 urgently solicited the visiting Reverend William Wisner to stay on in Ithaca. Noting the "moral desolation of the place," he agreed.[1] From a total of four hundred inhabitants, the newcomer observed:

> . . . but one praying man and two or three pious females in the village. Sabbath-breaking, gambling, horse racing, profane swearing, drunkenness and licentiousness were fearfully common.[2]

Rev. Wisner tried to uplift the community, and indeed, a number of conversions occurred.[3] But immorality still ran rampant. The *Ithaca Journal* in 1824 described the "fugitive from virtue":

> The sensualist, who disdains all restraint in his pleasures, is odious to the public eye. His vices become gross, his society contemptible, and he ends in being a burden both to himself and to society.[4]

Correction: To *some* of society; there were always those circles in which his company was as popular as ever. Peter, a newcomer to Ithaca, wrote to his friend Jack in 1823:

> For my part, Jack, I like this little place very well . . . Don't understand [that] we are altogether destitute of good female society; I spend an hour, once in a while, pretty comfortably in that way.[5]

Two factions formed – the reformers trying to inspire those who offended their standards, and the offenders themselves, oblivious to such attempts. A "godless, wilder element"[6] expressed their dissatisfaction with the Reverend's attempts, and within a year of his arrival burned the building where he preached against them.

Turning the Tide

In the early 1800s, a group of avid moral crusaders from Ithaca organized the "Moral Society" and their newspaper, the *Castigator*, diligently reminded villagers of what they should not be doing.

> Those young ladies who are in the habit of riding down hill, blowing horns, and making riotous noises in the evening, are informed that it is not only injurious to their character, but strictly forbidden . . . We therefore shall expect to hear no more of it.[7]

> The old maids who are in the habit of using beardless boys as gallants, when they go sleigh-riding, are informed that said boys would be much better off, in bed, at home.[8]

The time was ripe for the moralists both here and countrywide. Within a decade, their dictates became the unofficial law of the land. By the middle of the nineteenth century, anything remotely suggestive of sex was universally banned as "immoral" – or, when that word was too indiscreet, "immodest." Births went unmentioned in the newspapers, it being too tender a subject. The word "leg" was delicately removed from the vocabulary – even in reference to tables and chairs![9]

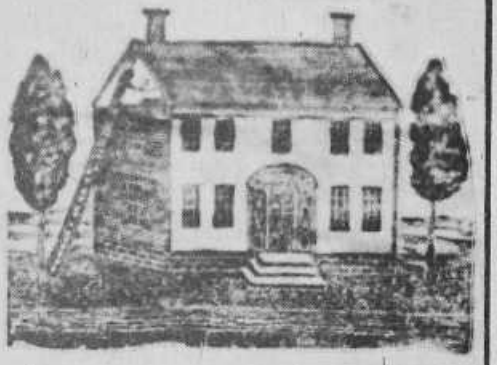
Innocence Beware

Young girls were meticulously trained, lest their reputations and opportunities to marry be destroyed by one fatal mistake. If a woman lost her virginity, she was through. Ithaca's *American Journal* warned:

> If once a woman breaks through the barrier of decency, her case is desperate; . . . she is aware that all return is prohibited . . . she forfeits her place in society forever.[10]

Mrs. H. B. Howe cautioned in 1873 of the inevitable result of succumbing to men "in that way":

> Be sure that a young man who is pleased through his lower nature, because you encourage his indolent and self-indulgent habits, and take part in his least elevated impulses, will think of you by and by only as a part of something unworthy, which his better half will seek to outgrow.[11]



A PROCLAMATION

BY THE ITHACA MORAL SOCIETY.

Whereas among the many important duties which devolv
on us as President of this ancient Institution, we are especially enjoined to guard this Community against imposition from Hawkers, Pedlars, Jugglers, Swindlers, Rogues, Vagrants, and Vagabonds, from the exhibition of demoralizing Shows, and the circulation of spurious, uncurrent, counterfeit, and worthless Bank Papers: And whereas, the Legislature of the State of Pennsylvania has, by a late act, authorised the **SILVER LAKE BANK** to resume their depredations: And whereas, this Bank is located in a place where there is little monied capital, and where the commercial transactions of the inhabitants is principally confined to an inconsiderable traffic in venison, maple sugar, and wolf-skins—and it could therefore not have been intended to facilitate the fair operations of trade—but has, as his Highness is credibly informed, again become an engine in the hands of a few brokers and speculators, in the city of New-York and elsewhere, to the great detriment of community, and the unmerited reproach of the honest and worthy inhabitants of the borough in which it is located, and who are deserving of our prompt and gracious protection: And whereas, the evils which have arisen from the swindling machinations of this *Commercial Scourge* have heretofore been most severely experienced in this section of the country—as bankrupt distilleries—farms overgrown with bushes—fences and barns out of repair—and windows stuffed with the patched bottoms of old trowsers, bear ample testimony ——Now, Therefore, to prevent the recurrence of these disasters, from this vile source—We do of our sovereign authority in such matters, ordain, publish and declare, That the Bills of the *SILVER LAKE BANK* shall at all times hereafter be considered on the same footing with spurious and counterfeit Bank Paper, and be entitled to no more consideration or regard within our jurisdiction—And we do hereby prohibit the circulation of the said Bills, and strictly forbid all persons from passing, taking, or receiving the same, under the severest penalties—or in any wise using said Bills, except for segar-papers, shin-plasters, or other *necessary* purposes. All Publicans, Grocers, Merchants, Mechanics, Lawyers, Doctors, Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Constables, Coroners, and all other descriptions of Persons, are required to take notice of this Proclamation, and to be aiding and assisting in carrying the same into full operation.

In witness whereof, we have caused our great Seal to be hereunto affixed this twenty-second day of the first month of the fourteenth year of our illustrious Institution.

TECUMSEH.

CAPT. CUDGEL, Printer.

The Ithaca Moral Society was a collection of local citizenry who banded together to take up the slack of the ineffectual sheriff's department. The sentences they imposed – a dunk in the creek or a night spent in the village pound. (c. 1820)

Yes girls, beware. Yet, the same paper did admit that while flirting with men "is a very dangerous practice, . . . if they don't flirt they may not have near so much fun."[12] In other words, a woman walked a very fine line – if she erred, the consequences were tragic.

In 1916, two Cornell coeds were discovered to have been out all night without permission. They withdrew rather than face the inevitable expulsion, while the men involved were not bothered at all.[13]

Around that same time, two student residents of a Cornell men's dormitory were arrested in their room with two townswomen, and all were convicted of "immoral conduct." The men were fined fifteen dollars each, and the women, neither with any previous record of arrest, were sent to female penitentiaries for one to three years.[14]

"That's not fair!" Justice cries out. But if one is led to believe that a woman's chastity is the single criterion that determines her worth, then all the rest falls into place.

Illegal Lovemaking

Such was the voice of the prevailing morality. But the following stories seem to indicate that even during the years of heaviest censure, non-marital sex, incest, and adultery have flourished.

Farmers were notorious for carrying on with their "hired help." One local farmer's wife did not mind the situation, and was once overheard saying to a friend, "Ah, it was just a relief." (Other wives were not as co-operative.) The word "incest" was virtually unmentionable, but at least one local woman confided that it went on "all the time." "Most people think it's fathers and daughters," said she, "but it's mothers and sons more than you'd think."[15]

One woman in the early 1900s was "quite sure" her husband left her bed when she was asleep and "went to her daughter's room."[16] Horrified and helpless, she turned to an Ithaca lawyer in desperation.

> O! help me if you can, I pray you! O, how I wish I could find out for certain if he is committing this terrible crime on my little daughter, help for *"Jesus sake"* if you can, for the thought of it is killing me through and through, and torturing me beyond endurance night and day.[17]

There were many more unmarried non-virgins walking around in yesteryear than is generally recognized today. "Virginity has been highly overstated," as one local woman put it.[18] Even the *Ithaca Daily Journal* remarked in 1900 that "country roads are full of 'thank-you-ma'ams.' "[19] The reason authority could be so glibly defied was that there was no reliable way of determining if one had "sinned."

With the exception of pregnancy. In that case, a woman would be held accountable for her actions, and most likely judged for the worst. As a result, many an unwanted pregnancy was frantically aborted, and the toll was many a tragic death. "It is a *known secret*," a local woman wrote in the early 1900s, that women turn to abortion, "but they mostly have to pay afterwards with their own bod[ies]."[20]

Summary

Our preoccupation with morality is constantly fluctuating. It is not clear whether if in those strait-laced years there was any *less* illicit lovemaking going on, but surely the participants had to contend with greater outside disapproval.

Today, there is once again a tolerant atmosphere. The stakes aren't as high or the consequences as disastrous when a woman chooses to spend an hour "in that way."

Margaret Sanger, worldwide champion of birth control, visited Ithaca's Unitarian Church in 1924.

BIRTH CONTROL

It was convenient when a married couple in the nineteenth century wanted lots of children – with contraception virtually unheard of, they would probably have a flock of them.

Some women, however, were not partial to the patter of little feet – there might have been health considerations, maybe they did not relish the thought of being eternally pregnant, and some women did not especially like children. But unless a woman chose to be sexually abstinent, her fate was sealed.

The perfection of rubber processing in 1843 – "vulcanization" – led the way for a veritable flood of rubber products, and the condom became the first widely available type of birth control in the history of this country. One might think such an invention would achieve instant popularity, but such was not the case. The general feeling in the mid-1800s was that contraception was immoral.[21] In fact, anti-birth control feeling ran so high that when legislation was introduced in Congress in 1873 disallowing the mailing of contraceptive information, it passed without protest.

In 1912, twenty-nine-year-old Margaret Sanger took it upon herself to wage a national campaign for widely available birth control; she was incited to action when a young woman died in her arms of a self-induced abortion. She came to Ithaca on tour in 1924 and spoke at the Unitarian Church. There, she asserted that birth control was practiced "by the educated masses and not by the poor who needed it most."[22]

She also stated her objection to the laws forbidding doctors to discuss contraception with any patients, including those who were married.

> The laws in this state make it a crime to give these women the information which they need. . . . That is what we are fighting for.[23]

On January 6, 1936, largely due to her efforts, Judge Moscowitz of the U.S. District Court ruled that contraceptive material was indeed mailable, and the legislation of 1873 became obsolete. The next major breakthrough occurred in 1937, when the American Medical Association passed a resolution stating that doctors should be thereafter informed about birth control, and be able to advise their patients accordingly. Before long, public birth control services were introduced in the state health clinics, and those who could not afford a private physician could take advantage of these resources. By 1939, nearly six hundred such clinics dotted the country.[24] Margaret Sanger had founded the National Birth Control League in 1917; it combined with the clinics in 1942 to form the Planned Parenthood Association of America.

LESBIANISM

During the nineteenth century, lesbianism – like male homosexuality – was an unmentionable subject and was virtually never acknowledged by the community at large. In fact, the author discovered only one allusion to lesbianism in the recorded history of Tompkins County during those years. Ellen Coit Brown, Cornell graduate of the class of 1882, described this most embarrassing incident:

> We had one scandal only while I was there but it was terrific. At a concert in town one evening a handsome girl student was observed to have with her as escort a young gentleman not immediately identifiable, rather small and slight in appearance. Before the evening was over some snoof-minded person realized that the escort was a woman dressed up in a man's suit. Next day it was all over town. The University expelled the handsome girl, whom everybody saw at once was the perpetrator of the crime and not the

> mouse-like companion who was her intimate – I suppose the University felt that was too utterly utter and they *must* take note of it. When I came up to the campus the next morning and joined a friend ahead of me on the path she told me, very soberly, what had happened. She felt the tragedy as we all did (I was young and subject to mob mind as anyone). For several days the women of Cornell went about in a mood of chastened gloom savoring and acknowledging their disgrace. . . . Later on she beat on the closed doors of the university so persistently that they let her in again. She graduated successfully and lived a long and exemplary life thereafter, employing her brilliant talents in fruitful ways suitable to the virtuous, and to Cornell, women.[25]

One long-time local resident declared, "I never knew it existed, never knew anything about it *at all*. It was never mentioned . . . and if it ever existed, it was *always* kept in secret.[26]

Health & Medicine

Menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth have been shrouded in mystery since time immemorial. These "strange" functions have evoked every emotion from fear to worship, and every cultural response from acceptance to ostrasism.

Menstruation

According to Roman scholar Pliny, the touch of a menstruating woman could have many peculiar effects, like turning wine into vinegar and dimming a mirror. In many aboriginal societies a menstruating woman had to withdraw from the rest of the community. Women in their monthly cycle were considered "possessed," or at least unclean and sick.[1]

Early Tompkins County women did not have to go off into the woods during their periods, but for the most part people pretended the condition did not even exist. These women had to be as active and presentable when bleeding as when not as if there was no such thing as menstruation.

Since nothing as luxurious as Kotex existed for them, rags were folded and used like a feminine napkin is used today – a tedious process indeed. One local woman remembers her period was so heavy, she had to use a bathtub to wash out all the rags! "It was a mess," she remembers with distaste. When she went on trips and was menstruating, she had to take an entire suitcase along solely for all the rags she would need.[2]

Perhaps it would have given our sullied local foremothers comfort to know that in the mid-1920s, the feminine napkin would be invented and made widely available. Then, by the late 1940s, the wonderful tampon would be out and virtually eliminate all menstrual mess.

Childbirth and Midwifery

Like menstruation, pregnancy in the 1800s was a condition that was seldom discussed openly. It was all too physical and related to sex to make suitable conversation.[4] Luckily, there was one place a pregnant women could turn – the friendly neighborhood midwife. As ministrator of "woman's second oldest profession" (prostitution is the first), the midwife would gladly bestow advice, medicine, and tender-loving-care to women for miles around as a neighborly service. A great many of the residents living in Caroline today were delivered by the midwife Mabel Van Dyke.[5]

As late as 1910, about 50 percent of all babies in the country were still being helped into the world by a midwife's knowing hands.[6] That number was fast diminishing, however, as more and more preference was given to hospitals, mechanization, and formally trained doctors. During the next fifty years, many states outlawed midwifery. It happened here in 1922.[7] Today, there are only a handful of states that have not outlawed midwifery, mostly in the South and Southwest. Formally trained "nurse-midwives" are a new phenomenon, and are licensed to practice in certain states (including New York) under the auspices of an obstetrician.[8]

Childbearing is often a painful experience. In primitive societies where the women were, by necessity, more physically-oriented and strong, labor often lasted no longer than two hours. But in western society, the agony of childbirth might stretch on for days.[9] In addition, the use of pain relievers was frowned upon for centuries, since this suffering was considered ordained by God. There was no mistaking the meaning in this decree of divine wrath:

> I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.[10]

Childbirth without pain relievers was common practice until the late 1700s.[11] By the time Tompkins County was developing in the early 1800s, midwives were using such time-honored remedies as camphor and alcohol, and often relied on their tranquilizing effects.

Initially, there was very little that could be done in the case of a difficult birth. Surgery was not on the midwife's skill-sheet, and unless a doctor was rushed in, both the mother and child usually suffered. Later, with the sophistication of surgical techniques and the outpouring of professional doctors in the early 1900s, medical attention was more widely available to the pregnant woman.

WOMAN.—FEMALES, OWING TO The peculiar and important relations which they sustain, their peculiar organization, and the offices they perform, are subject to many sufferings. Freedom from these contribute in no small degree to their happiness and welfare, for none can be happy who are ill. Not only so, but no one of these various female complaints can long be suffered to run on without involving the general health of the individual, and ere long producing permanent sickness and premature decline. Nor is it pleasant to consult a physician for the relief of these various delicate affections, and only upon the most urgent necessity will a true woman so far sacrifice her greatest charm as to do this. The sex will then thank us for placing in their hands simple specifics which will be found efficacious in relieving and curing almost every one of those troublesome complaints peculiar to the sex

HELMBOLD'S EXTRACT OF BUCHU.—Hundreds suffer on in silence, and hundreds of others apply vainly to druggists and doctors, who either merely tantalize them with the hope of a cure or apply remedies which make them worse. I would not wish to assert anything that would do injustice to the afflicted, but I am obliged to say that although it may be produced from excessive exhaustation of the powers of life, by laborious employment, unwholesome air and food, profuse menstruation, the use of tea and coffee, and frequent childbirth, it is far oftener caused by direct irritation, applied to the raucous membrane of the vagina itself.

When reviewing the causes of these distressing complaints, it is most painful to contemplate the attendant evils consequent upon them. It is but simple justice to the subject to enumerate a few of the many additional causes which so largely affect the life, health and happiness of women in all classes of society, and which, consequently, affect more or less directly, the welfare of the entire human family. The mania that exists for precocious education and marriage, causes the years that nature designed for corporeal development to be wasted and perverted in the restraints of dress, the early confinement of school, and especially in the unhealthy excitement of the ballroom. Thus, with the body half clothed, and the mind unduly excited by pleasure, perverting in midnight revel the hours designed by nature for sleep and rest, the work of destruction is half accomplished.

In consequence of this early strain upon her system, unnecessary effort is required by the delicate votary to retain her situation in school at a later day, thus aggravating the evil. When one excitement is over, another in prospective keeps the mind morbidly sensitive to impression, while the now constant restraint of fashionable dress, absolutely forbidding the exercise indispensa-

Let us Reason Together.

HOLLOWAY'S PILLS.

WHY ARE WE SICK?

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These Pills Purify the Blood.

These famous Pills are expressly combined to operate on the stomach, the liver, the kidneys, the lungs, the skin, and the bowels, correcting any derangement in their functions, purifying the blood, the very fountain of life, and thus curing diseases in all its forms.

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Nearly half the human race have taken these Pills and has been proved in all parts of the world, that nothing has been found equal to them in cases of disorders of the liver dyspepsia, and stomach complaints generally. They soon give a heal hy tone to these organs, however much deranged, and when all other means have failed.

General Debility. Ill Health.

Many of the most despotic Governments have opened their Custom Houses to the introduction of these Pills, that they may become the medicine of the masses. Learned Colleges admit that this medicine is the best remedy ever known for persons of delicate health, or where the system has been impaired, as its invigorating properties never fail to afford relief.

Female Complaints.

No Female, young or old, should be without this medicine. It corrects and regulates the monthly courses at all periods, acting in many cases like a charm. It is also the best and safest medicine that can be given to children of all ages, and for any complaint; consequently no family should be without it.

Holloway's Pills are the best remedy known in the world for the following Diseases:

Asthma	Dropsy	Inward Weakness
Bowel Complaints	Debility	Liver Complaints
Coughs	Fever & Ague	Lowness of Spirits
Colds	Female Complaints	Piles,
Chest Diseases	Headaches	Stone and Gravel.
Costiveness	Indigestion	Secondary Symptoms
Dyspepsia	Influenza	Venereal Affections
Diarrhœa	Inflammation	Worms of all kinds.

*Sold at the Manufactories of Professor Holloway, 80 Maiden Lane, New York, and 244 Strand, London, and by all respectable Druggists and Dealers in Medicines throughout the United States, and the civilized world, in boxes, 25 cents, 62½ cents and $1 each.

☞ There is a considerable saving by taking the larger sizes.

N. B. Directions for the guidance of patients in every disorder are affixed to each Box.

WOMAN

By an immense practice at the World's Dispensary and Invalids' Hotel, having treated many thousand cases of those diseases peculiar to woman, I have been enabled to perfect a most potent and positive remedy for these diseases.

To designate this natural specific, I have named it

Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription

The term, however, is but a feeble expression of my high appreciation of its value, based upon personal observation. I have, while witnessing its positive results in the speedy relief of cases incident to the organism of woman, singled it out as the climax or crowning gem of my medical career. On its merits, as a positive, safe, and effectual remedy for this class of diseases, and one that will, at all times and under all circumstances, act kindly, I am willing to stake my reputation as a physician; and so confident am I that it will not disappoint the most sanguine expectations of a single invalid lady who uses it for any of the ailments for which I recommend it, that I offer and sell it under A POSITIVE GUARANTEE. (For conditions, see pamphlet wrapping bottle.)

The following are among those diseases in which my Favorite Prescription has worked cures, as if by magic, and with a certainty never before attained by any medicine: Leucorrhœa, Excessive Flowing, Painful Monthly Periods, Suppressions when from unnatural causes, Irregularities, Weak Back, Prolapsus, or Falling of the Uterus, Anteversion and Retroversion, Bearing-down Sensations, Internal Heat, Nervous Depression, Debility, Despondency, Threatened Miscarriage, Chronic Congestion, Inflammation and Ulceration of the Uterus, Impotency, Barrenness, or Sterility, and Female Weakness. I do not extol this medicine as a "cure-all," but it admirably fulfills a singleness of purpose, being a most perfect specific in all chronic diseases of the sexual system of woman. It will not disappoint, nor will it do harm, in any state or condition.

Those who desire further information on these subjects can obtain it in THE PEOPLE'S COMMON SENSE MEDICAL ADVISER, a book of over 900 pages, sent post-paid, on receipt of $1.50. It treats minutely of those diseases peculiar to Females, and gives much valuable advice in regard to the management of those affections.

Favorite Prescription sold by Druggists.

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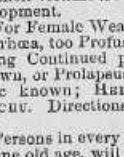
FEMALES

Dr. Marchisi's Uterine CATHOLICON

will positively cure Female Weakness, such as Falling of the Womb, Whites, Chronic Inflammation or Ulceration of the Womb, Incidental Hemorrhage or Flooding, Painful, Suppressed and Irregular Menstruation, &c. An old and reliable remedy. Send postal card for a pamphlet with treatment, cures, and certificates from physicians and patients, to HOWARTH & BALLARD, Utica, N. Y. Sold by all druggists—$1.50 per bottle.

DR. PEFFER'S

FEMALE PILLS.



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PENNYROYAL PILLS

Original and Only Genuine.

SAFE, always reliable. LADIES ask Druggist for *Chichester's English Diamond Brand* in Red and Gold metallic boxes, sealed with blue ribbon. Take no other. *Refuse dangerous substitutions and imitations.* At Druggists, or send 4c. in stamps for particulars, testimonials and "Relief for Ladies," *in letter*, by return Mail. 10,000 Testimonials. *Name Paper.* Chichester Chemical Co., Madison Square, Philada., Pa.

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ble to the attainment and retention of organic health and strength; the exposure to night air; the sudden change of temperature; the complete prostration produced by excessive dancing, must, of necessity, produce their legitimate effect. At last, an early marriage caps the climax of misery, and the unfortunate one, hitherto so utterly regardless of the plain dictates and remonstrances of her delicate nature becomes an unwilling subject of medical treatment. This is but a truthful picture of the experience of thousands of our young women.

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Ithaca Democrat, 1868.

However, the average birth went smoothly. The midwife would receive the infant, help draw it out, and sever the umbilical cord. All the while, she would sooth the mother with medicines, massages, and perhaps a few soft songs. After birth she would stay with her and the newborn babe, tending the household chores until the mother was well enough to do so herself.

Health Care

Throughout the 1800s, this was a basically rural area and health care was more or less uniform. Midwives brought new babies into the world and country doctors rode miles on their horses to visit sick patients. But rich, poor, or rural, the most important factor in determining the type of health care an individual could expect was their social ranking.

Upper-class women were touted as terribly delicate creatures, requiring a great deal of care.[12]

> Feminine weakness and even fragility, as evidenced in palor and emaciation, was considered very appealing to men – possibly because it emphasized male virility and strength.[13]

Indeed, the tiniest disruption in a woman's life would be enough to send her reeling off to bed. Women often lapsed into inexplicable illnesses. An Ithaca newspaper of 1879 concluded the progress of one lady's ill health:

> Lina Burlew . . . whose singular illness has for a long time baffled medical science, awoke a few days ago from the semi-consciousness in which she had laid for the past three months and is extremely well.[14]

It is hard to guess at the physical basis of these illnesses; many were probably psychosomatic in origin. But these women were victims of the prevailing Feminine Ideal.

There was no similiar concern expressed for the health of working-class women. They could not afford doctors when they *were* sick, and they had much more cause to be so than ladies-of-leisure. These women often put in ten or more

hours a day in crowded, poorly ventilated factories and sweat shops, in constant danger of fatal or disfiguring accidents. Predictably, their health and longevity were in much greater jeopardy.[15]

By the turn of the century, the image of the delicate-and-pampered woman was passing out of vogue, and the "rosy glow of health" becoming fashionable.[16] Since then, good health has been a goal for rich and poor, women and men alike.

Today

The twentieth century has seen some changes in women's health care. For one, most people know about the workings of the female body, so it is not entirely the unexplained phenomenon it was once. Menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth are explained in exacting detail in any number of books. The tampon is here, and so is the Pill.

One unresolved situation is the lack of women doctors. In the United States, they comprise only 7 percent of the total figure, and less than half of that percentage are gynecologists. It is understandable that one might feel disconcerted at a routine breast or pelvic exam by a male doctor; it would be reasonable to prefer an examination by a woman. But today women's health is basically in the hands of men.