

"WOMAN'S RIGHTS."

BY HANNIBAL HATBLOCK.

I am a married man—thoroughly and unmistakeably married. I have been married about three years. I used to call my wife my "Christmas Box," because we were married on that day; but lately I have got the habit (mentally) of naming her Pandora's Box.—Reason why—"woman's rights!" You see, my wife's name before she married me was Abigail Cheesecrumbe:—she was a sempstress, and I married her from pure love of her quiet, modest, maidenly ways, and I think she loved me too; but, dear me! things have changed since then so much that I sometimes wish I had never seen her. Reason for change—"woman's rights!" My wife is small in stature, wavy brown hair, hazel eyes, and used to have a sweet expression—but she has't now. Reason she has't—"woman's rights!" I am six-feet-two in my stockings, black hair, military moustache, large side whiskers, erect form, and used to have rather a fierce and determined aspect—look humble now—skulk along like a dog whose tail has been amputated, and the cut healed by turpentine. Reason I look humble—"woman's rights!" Used to go down town to my occupation (wholesale fruit dealer) with elastic step, order my clerks around and do a big business—don't do so now—go down like a bark mill horse to his harness. Reason for it—same as before—"woman's rights!" Used to come home and meet a pair of loving arms in the hall: also one kiss, at least, and sometimes two;—used to be lead in captive triumph to the drawing-room, where a flaming dressing-gown and a pair of slippers waited me before a cozy fire. 'Tisn't so now—often wonder if I dreamed it. Reason—"woman's rights!"

D—woman's rights! They are a humbug—a swindle—a myth;—and yet there must be some substance in them, for look what they've done for me. I who used to weigh 18 stone have become reduced to a mere skeleton of 14 ditto! Isn't that sad? Isn't it enough to make me tear my clothes and whiskers—wear sackcloth and ashes—go into a convent—give up smoking, or do something else equally ridiculous? But, alas! clothes cost too much; I am not yet reduced to the degradation of being careless to the looks admiring school girls cast upon my hairy appendages;—sackcloth and ashes are said not to be healthy in winter time, and, besides, they are not much worn this season, at least I have not noticed them on the tailors' fashion plates;—convents I cannot abide, having been brought up a strict Presbyterian;—and as for giving up smoking—ye gods! just to think of it, and my new meerschaum beginning to color! Besides, you see, on second reflection, if I were to do something desperate it would please my wife too much,

and I don't care about amusing her at my own personal expense;—also an item to be considered—the fiendish glee of Miss Scraggyskin, the cause of all my woes. I was just beginning to settle into a subdued melancholy, but the thought of Scraggyskin rouses my ire. Will no one deliver me from Scraggyskin? Can't I get an act, banishing her forever as a nuisance? or why the mischief can't some one fall in love with her and marry her, or murder her, I don't care which. They say that "without charity we are as tinkling brass or sounding cymbal;" unfortunately this does not seem to apply in Scraggyskin's case. She is a whole brass band with an extra set of kettle-drums; but she is so charitable—dear me! she quite overwhelms me. Do you think it is inhuman to picture the pleasurable emotions you would feel in going to any (then living) person's funeral? Well, if so, I must be a brute, for I would travel ten miles to Scraggyskin's burial, and never quit the corpse till it was under six feet of earth, with delight; and, if permitted, I would have the procession accompanied with a number of disenthralled husbands, whose wives now bow before the shrine of Scraggyskin—each of said husbands to carry a broken chain as an emblem of their new found liberty, and each to play upon the flute (that is to say say such as could pucker their mouths in the agonizing position required to extract melody from that hollow-hearted instrument,) some appropriate air about "shout with the battle cry of freedom," or "Brittania rules the waves, and Britons never," &c. By the way, that line about "never, never shall be slaves" is all folderol,—isn't it now? because Britons are slaves. I am a slave—a white slave—a slave to "woman's rights," personified in the form and proportions of Penelope Scraggyskin.

But all this time I am not telling my heart-rending tale, or how I became a slave. Well, let us proceed:—I had been married about two years—two years of perfect happiness—when my Paradise was invaded by the fiend. She came to lecture in our city, and being evidently a person of great talent—at least I judged so from the reports published in the morning papers (written, I have since learned, as is the usual custom, by the lecturer herself,)—I one evening proposed to my wife to go and hear this new doctrine. She declined—said she had rights enough: she had the right to "love, honour and obey," &c., and only yielded at last to my ridicule, when I teasingly asked her if her head was not level? if she could not hear and see a woman make a fool of herself for a living, without becoming a convert? She yielded, as I said before, and her unfortunate complaisance was the first step towards my slavery!