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THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS QUESTION IN ROME—195 B.C.

BY ARTHUR HARVEY.

THE wheel whirls. The uppermost spokes have been uppermost before. The dust of circumstance alone varies. Throughout the cycles, *plus a change, plus c'est la même chose*. History repeating itself is, however, not monotonous, but ever interesting. Instead of craving for the unattainable new thing, and being discontented, because, as yet, they have not wings, wise folk learn to know the old, and use the powers they have. One of the lighter scenes in the kaleidoscope of ancient story as told by Livy, will amuse, and possibly instruct us.

When the terrible grip of Hannibal was tightest on the Roman throat: when he had routed consul after consul, and slain army after army, the women of the city of Rome cast their treasures into the public coffers, and, to make sure that there should be no Sapphiras, it was decreed that no one should retain in private ownership more than half an ounce of golden ornaments.

In due time, the ship of state weathered the furious African hurricane, emerged triumphantly from the cyclone; its battered hull, refitted, rode buoyantly on calmer waters, and the women of that generation became restive under the sumptuary law of the old days of trouble. The men were strenuous and still revengeful. They

argued for simplicity in private manners, for storing armories and arsenals, for strengthening the resources of the state, for emulating Spartan discipline as well as Spartan fortitude. Brass and steel for armor blade and javelin were more to them than cloth of gold and bravery of gold and silver. So, at least, they said in public, but at home each was another Alexander who could rule the world but not his wife.

The instinct of personal adornment, inherent in the sex, which Herbert Spencer and his school do most learnedly discourse about, began to assert itself, the more strongly for its late repression. The first fair breakers of the law were, no doubt, dealt with by the law. The inspectors of the Roman morality department raided Livia's house, and impounded the lovely bracelet her sailor-love had brought from Sicily, as the modern censor Arcibaldus might seize a thief's revolver. Virginia's necklace, being as heavy again as was allowable, had three or four links docked, according to the statute. Were the rings of Julia overweight—a fine of an as, and confiscation to the state. Yet, not all were caught thus golden-handed. Pomponia kept her jewel casket for strictly private lunches, and jealous Honoria straightway made her husband bring