

Victorian Women's Movement

MICHELLE COLLINS ~ JILL COTTAM

TIMELINE:

- 1837—Victoria named Queen of England
- 1839—Child Custody Act
- 1842—Mines Act
- 1844 & 1847—Factory Acts
- 1857—The Matrimonial Causes Act
- 1864, 1866, & 1869—Contagious Disease Acts
- 1869—Girton College founded at Cambridge
- 1869—Voting rights given to women ratepayers
- 1870—Education Act
- 1870—The Married Woman's Property Act
- 1873—Custody Act
- 1882—The Married Women's Property Act
- 1884—The Matrimonial Causes Act
- 1886—Infant Custody Act
- 1888—Jack the Ripper kills 5 prostitutes
- January 22nd, 1901—Queen Victoria dies
- 1918—Voting Act
- 1928—Equal Franchise Act

WOMEN'S RIGHTS



HER RIGHTS.

Old Gent (mildly). "PRAY, ARE YOU AN ADVOCATE OF WOMAN'S RIGHTS, MA'AM?"

Lady (sharply). "MOST CERTAINLY I AM, SIR. WHY DO YOU ASK?"

Old Gent. "BECAUSE I WAS ABOUT TO OFFER YOU MY SEAT; BUT OF COURSE YOU CLAIM THE RIGHT TO STAND!"

Punch Magazine, December 1882

- Married women were considered the property of their husbands.
- Husbands were legally allowed to beat their wives.
- Women had no custody over their children.
- Women could not petition for a divorce.
- Any property amassed by a woman became her husbands.
- Married women could not sign legal documents.
- Married women could not deny their husband of any "carnal favors" or refuse to bear him children.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S VIEW ON FEMINISM

"I am most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of "Women's Rights", with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feelings and propriety. **Feminists ought to get a good whipping.** Were woman to "unsex" themselves by claiming equality with men, they would become the most hateful, heathen and disgusting of beings and would surely perish without male protection. I love peace and quiet, I hate politics and turmoil. We women are not made for governing, and if we are good women, we must dislike these masculine occupations." - 1870



LADIES OF THE MOVEMENT

Elizabeth Barrett
Browning
1806—1861
Aurora Leigh



"...the man
Is born in ignorance of
his element."



Charlotte Brontë
1816—1855
Jane Eyre

"Take her away to the
red-room, and lock her
in there."

Mona Caird
1854—1932
*Does Marriage Hinder a
Woman's Self-
Development?*



"Marriage is a vexatious
failure."



Caroline Norton
1808—1877
A Letter to the Queen

"A married woman in
England has no legal
existence."

SOURCES

Damrosch, David and Dettmar, Kevin J. H. *The Longman Anthology of British Literature Fourth Edition. Volume 2B.* United States: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006.

<http://www.victorianlondon.org>

<http://www.hastingpress.co.uk/history>

<http://www.victorianweb.org/history>

http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=673

<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/152>

Jordan, Ellen. *The women.* Psychology Press, 1999. Print.



A NOVEL FACT.

Old-fashioned Party (with old-fashioned prejudices). "AH! VERY CLEVER, I DARE SAY. BUT I SEE ITS WRITTEN BY A LADY, AND I WANT A BOOK THAT MY DAUGHTERS MAY READ. GIVE ME SOMETHING ELSE!" Punch Magazine, December 1867