

Flora Tristan
The Workers' Union
(from 1843)

III

Why I Mention Women

Workers, you my brothers, for whom I work with love, because you represent the most vital, numerous, and useful part of humanity, and because from that point of view I find my own satisfaction in serving your cause, I beg you earnestly to read this with the greatest attention. For, you must be persuaded, it concerns your material interests to understand why when I mention women I always designate them as *female workers* or *all the women*.

The intelligent person enlightened by rays of divine love and love for humanity, can easily grasp the logical chain of relationships that exist between causes and effects. For him, all of philosophy and religion can be summed up by two questions: First, how can and must one love God and serve Him for the universal well-being of all men and women? Second, how can and must one love and treat woman, for the sake of all men and women? Asked in this manner, these two questions, with respect to natural order, underlie everything produced in the moral and physical worlds (one results or flows from the other).

I don't believe this is the place to answer these two questions. Later, if the workers wish it, I shall gladly treat metaphysically and philosophically questions of the highest order. But, for the time being, one need only pose the questions, as the formal declaration of an absolute principle. Without going directly back to causes, let us limit our analysis to the effects.

Up to now, woman has counted for nothing in human society. What has been the result of this? That the priest, the lawmaker, and the philosopher have treated her as a true *pariah*. Woman (one half of humanity) has been cast out of the Church, out of the law, out of society.¹ For her, there are no functions in the Church, no representation before the law, no functions in the State. The priest told her, "Woman, you are temptation, sin, and evil; you represent flesh, that is, corruption and rottenness. Weep for your condition, throw ashes on your head, seek refuge in a cloister, and mortify your heart, which is made for love, and your female organs, which are made for motherhood. And when thus you have mutilated your heart and body, offer them all bloody and dried up to your God for remission from the original sin committed by your mother Eve." Then the lawmaker tells her, "Woman, by yourself you are nothing; you have no active role in human affairs; you cannot expect to find a seat at the social banquet. If you want to live, you must serve as an appendage to your lord and master, man. So, young girl, you will obey your father; when married you shall obey your husband; widowed and old, you will be left alone." Then, the learned philosopher tells her, "Woman, it has been scientifically observed that, according to your constitution, you are inferior to man.² Now, you have no intelligence, no comprehension for lofty questions, no logic in ideas, no ability for the so-called exact sciences, no aptitude for serious endeavors. Finally, you are a feeble-minded and weak-bodied being, cowardly, superstitious; in a word, you are nothing but a capricious child, spontaneous, frivolous, for ten or fifteen years of your life you are a nice little doll, but full of faults and vices. That is why, woman, man must be your master and have complete authority over you."³

So that is how for the six thousand years the world has existed, the wisest among the wise have judged the female race.

Such a terrible condemnation, repeated for six thousand years, is likely to impress the masses, for the sanction of time has great

authority over them. However, what must make us hope that this sentence can be repealed is that the wisest of the wise have also for six thousand years pronounced a no less horrible verdict upon another race of humanity—the proletariat. Before 1789, what was the proletarian in French society? A serf, a peasant, who was made into a taxable, drudging beast of burden. Then came the Revolution of 1789, and all of a sudden the wisest of the wise proclaimed that the lower orders are to be called the *people*, that the serfs and peasants are to be called *citizens*. Finally, they proclaimed the *rights of man* in full national assembly.⁴

The proletarian, considered until then a brute, was quite surprised to learn that it had been the neglect and scorn for his rights that had caused all the world's misfortunes. He was quite surprised to learn that he would enjoy civil, political, and social rights, and finally would become the *equal* of his former lord and master. His surprise grew when he was told that he possessed a brain of the same quality as the royal prince's. What a change! However, it did not take long to realize that this second judgment on the proletariat was truer than the first. Hardly had they proclaimed that proletarians were capable of all kinds of civil, military, and social functions, than out of their ranks came generals the likes of which Charlemagne, Henri IV, and Louis XIV could not recruit from the ranks of their proud and brilliant nobility.⁵ Then, as if by magic, from the ranks of the proletariat surged learned men, artists, poets, writers, statesmen, and financiers who gave France a luster she had never had. Then military glory came upon her like a halo; scientific discoveries enriched her; the arts embellished her; her commerce made immense strides, and in less than thirty years the wealth of the country trebled. These facts cannot be disputed: everyone agrees today that men are born indistinct, with essentially equal faculties, and that the sole thing we should be concerned about is how to develop an individual's total faculties for the sake of the general well-being.

What happened to the proletariat, it must be agreed, is a good

omen for women when their "1789" rings out. According to a very simple calculation, it is obvious that wealth will increase immeasurably on the day women are called upon to participate with their intelligence, strength, and ability in the social process. This is as easy to understand as two is the double of one. But, alas! We are not yet there. Meanwhile, let us take a look at what is happening in 1843.

The Church having said that woman was sin; the lawmaker that by herself she was nothing, that she was to enjoy no rights; the learned philosopher that by her constitution she had no intellect, it was concluded that she is a poor being disinherited by God; so men and society treated her as such.

Once woman's inferiority was proclaimed and postulated, notice what disastrous consequences resulted for the universal well-being of all men and women.

Those who believed that woman by nature lacked the strength, intelligence, and capacity to do serious and useful work, very logically deduced that it would be a waste of time to give her a rational, solid, and strict education, the kind that would make her a useful member of society. So she has been raised to be a nice doll and a slave destined for amusing and serving her master. In truth, from time to time some intelligent, sensitive men, showing empathy with their mothers, wives, and daughters, have cried out against the barbarity and absurdity of such an order of things, energetically protesting against such an iniquitous condemnation.⁶ On several occasions, society has been moved for a moment; but when pushed by logic, has replied, "Well then! Let us suppose that women are not what the wise men have believed, that they have great moral strength and intelligence. Well, in that case, what good would it be to develop their faculties, since they would not be able to employ them usefully in this society which rejects them? What an awful torture, to feel one has force and power to act, and to see oneself condemned to inaction!"

This reasoning was irrefutably true. So everyone repeated,

"It's true, women would suffer too much if their God-given talents were developed, if from childhood on they were raised to understand their dignity and to be conscious of their value as members of society. Then never would they be able to bear the degradation imposed upon them by the Church, the law, and prejudice. It is better to treat them like children and leave them in the dark about themselves: they will suffer less."

Follow closely, and you will see what horrible consequences result from accepting a false premise.

In order not to stray too far from my subject, even though it is a good opportunity to speak from a general standpoint, I am returning to the question of the working class.

In the life of the workers, woman is everything. She is their sole providence. If she is gone, they lack everything. So they say, "It is woman who makes or unmakes the home," and this is the clear truth: that is why it has become a proverb. However, what education, instruction, direction, moral or physical development does the working-class woman receive? None. As a child, she is left to the mercy of a mother and grandmother who also have received no education. One of them might have a brutal and wicked disposition and beat and mistreat her for no reason; the other might be weak and uncaring, and let her do anything. (As with everything I am suggesting, I am speaking in general terms; of course, there are numerous exceptions.) The poor child will be raised among the most shocking contradictions—hurt by unfair blows and treatment one day, then pampered and spoiled no less perniciously the next.

Instead of being sent to school,⁷ she is kept at home in deference to her brothers and so that she can share in the housework, rock the baby, run errands, or watch the soup, etc. At the age of twelve she is made an apprentice. There she continues to be exploited by her mistress and often continues to be as mistreated as she was at home.

Nothing embitters the character, hardens the heart, or makes

the spirit so mean as the continuous suffering a child endures from unfair and brutal treatment. First, the injustice hurts, afflicts, and causes despair; then when it persists, it irritates and exasperates us and finally, dreaming only of revenge, we end up by becoming hardened, unjust, and wicked. Such will be the normal condition for a poor girl of twenty. Then she will marry, without love, simply because one must marry in order to get out from under parental tyranny. What will happen? I suppose she will have children, and she, in turn, will be unable to raise them suitably. She will be just as brutal to them as her mother and grandmother were to her.⁸

Working class women, take note, I beg you, that by mentioning your ignorance and incapacity to raise your children, I have no intention in the least of accusing *you* or *your nature*. No, I am accusing society for leaving you uneducated—you, women and mothers, who actually need so much to be instructed and formed in order to be able to instruct and develop the men and children entrusted to your care.

Generally women of the masses are brutal, mean, and sometimes hard. This being true, where does this situation come from, so different from the sweet, good, sensitive, and generous nature of woman?

Poor working women! They have so many reasons to be irritated! First, their husbands. (It must be agreed that there are few working-class couples who are happily married.) Having received more instruction, being the head by law and also by the money he brings home,⁹ the husband thinks he is (and he is, in fact) very superior to his wife, who only brings home her small daily wage and is merely a very humble servant in her home.

Consequently, the husband treats his wife with nothing less than great disdain. Humiliated by his every word or glance, the poor woman either openly or silently revolts, depending upon her personality. This creates violent, painful scenes that end up producing an atmosphere of constant irritation between the mas-

ter and the slave (one can indeed say *slave*, because the woman is, so to speak, her husband's property). This state becomes so painful that, instead of staying home to talk with his wife, the husband hurries out; and as if he had no other place to go, he goes to the tavern to drink blue wine* in the hope of getting drunk, with the other husbands who are just as unhappy as he.¹⁰

This type of distraction makes things worse. The wife, waiting for payday (Sunday) to buy weekly provisions for the family, is in despair seeing her husband spend most of the money at the tavern. Then she reaches a peak of irritation, and her brutality and wickedness redouble. You have to have personally seen these working-class households (especially the bad ones) to have an idea of the husband's misfortune and the wife's suffering. It passes from reproaches and insults to blows, then tears; from discouragement to despair.¹¹

And following the acute chagrins caused by the husband come the pregnancies, illnesses, unemployment, and poverty, planted by the door like Medusa's head. Add to all that the endless tension provoked by four or five loud, turbulent, and bothersome children clamoring about their mother, in a small worker's room too small to turn around in. My! One would have to be an angel from heaven not to be irritated, not to become brutal and mean in such a situation. However, in this domestic setting, what becomes of the children? They see their father only in the evening or on Sunday. Always either upset or drunk, their father speaks to them only angrily and gives them only insults and blows. Hearing their mother continuously complain, they begin to feel hatred and scorn for her. They fear and obey her, but they do not love her, for a person is made that way—he cannot love someone who mistreats him. And isn't it a great misfortune for a child not to be able to love his mother! If he is unhappy, to whose breast will he go to cry? If he thoughtlessly makes a bad mistake

* *Vin bleu*, the rough, cheap wine served in Paris taverns during the nineteenth century.

or is led astray, in whom can he confide? Having no desire to stay close to his mother, the child will seek any pretext to leave the parental home. Bad associations are easy to make, for girls as for boys. Strolling becomes vagrancy, and vagrancy often becomes thievery.

Among the poor girls in houses of prostitution and the poor men moaning in jails, how many can say, "If we had had a *mother able to raise us*, then we would not be here."

I repeat, woman is everything in the life of a worker. As mother, she can influence him during his childhood. She and only she is the one from whom he gets his first notions of that science which is so important to acquire—the science of life, which teaches us how to live well for ourselves and for others, according to the milieu in which fate has placed us.¹² As lover, she can influence him during his youth, and what a powerful influence could be exerted by a young, beautiful, and beloved girl! As wife, she can have an effect on him for three-quarters of his life. Finally, as daughter, she can act upon him in his old age. Note that the worker's position is very different from an idle person's. If the rich child has a mother unable to raise him, he is placed in a boarding school or given a governess. If the young rich fellow has no mistress, he can busy his heart and imagination with studying the arts and sciences. If the rich man has no spouse, he does not fail to find distractions in society. If the old rich man has no daughter, he finds some old friends or young nephews who willingly come and play cards with him; whereas the worker, for whom all these pleasures are denied, has only the company of the women in his family, his companions in misfortune, for all his joy and solace. The result of this situation is that it would be most important, from the point of view of intellectually, morally, and materially improving the working class, that the women receive from childhood a rational and solid education, apt to develop all their potential so that they can become skilled in their trades, good mothers capable of raising and guiding their children

and to be for them, as *La Presse* says, free and natural schoolteachers, and also so that they can serve as moralizing agents for the men whom they influence from birth to death.

Are you beginning to understand, you men, who cry scandal before being willing to examine the issue, why I demand rights for women? Why I would like women placed in society on a footing of *absolute equality* with men to enjoy the legal birthright all beings have? I call for woman's rights because I am convinced that *all* the misfortunes in the world come from this neglect and scorn shown until now for the natural and inalienable rights of woman. I call for woman's rights because it is the only way to have her educated, and woman's education depends upon man's in general, and particularly the working-class man's. I call for woman's rights because it is the only way to obtain her rehabilitation before the church, the law, and society, and this rehabilitation is necessary before working men themselves can be rehabilitated. All working-class ills can be summed up in two words: poverty and ignorance. Now in order to get out of this maze, I see only one way: begin by educating women, because the women are in charge of instructing boys and girls.

Workers, in the current state of things, you know what goes on in your households. You, the master with rights over your wife, do you live with her with a contented heart? Say, are you happy? No, it is easy to see, in spite of your rights, you are neither contented nor happy. Between master and slave there can only be the weariness of the chain's weight tying them together. Where the lack of freedom is felt, happiness cannot exist.

Men always complain about the bad moods and the devious and silently wicked characters women show in all their relationships. Oh, would I have a very bad opinion of women, if in the state of abjection where the law and customs place them, they were to submit without a murmur to the yoke weighing on them! Thanks be to God, that it is not so! Their protest, since the beginning of time, has always been relentless. But since the dec-

laration of the rights of man, a solemn act proclaiming the neglect and scorn the new men gave to women, their protest has taken on new energy and violence which proves that the slave's exasperation has peaked.¹³

Workers, you who have good sense and with whom one can reason, because, as Fourier says, you do not have minds stuffed with systems, suppose for a moment that by right woman is the equal of man? What would come of that? (1) That as soon as one would no longer have to fear the dangerous consequences necessarily caused by the moral and physical development of woman's faculties because of her current enslavement, she would be carefully educated so as to bring out the best possible in her intelligence and work; (2) that you, men of the people, you would have clever workers for mothers, earning a good wage, instructed, well-raised and very able to teach and raise you, workers, as it is appropriate for free men; (3) that your sisters, lovers, wives, and friends would be educated, well-raised women whose daily companionship would be most pleasant for you, for nothing is sweeter or gentler to a man's heart than a woman's conversation when she is well educated, good, and speaks with logic and benevolence.

We have quickly glanced over what is currently going on in the workers' households. Let us now examine what would occur in these same households if woman were man's equal.

Knowing that his wife has rights equal to his, the husband would not treat her anymore with the disdain and scorn shown to inferiors. On the contrary, he would treat her with the respect and deference one grants to equals. Then the woman will no longer have cause for irritation; and once that is destroyed, she will no longer appear brutal, devious, grouchy, angry, exasperated, or mean. No longer considered the husband's servant at home, but his associate, friend, and companion, she will naturally take an interest in the association and do all she can to make the little household flourish. With theoretical and practical

knowledge, she will employ all her intelligence to keep her house neat, economical, and pleasant. Educated and aware of the utility of an education, she will put all her ambition into raising her children well. She will lovingly teach them herself, watch over their schoolwork, and place them in good apprenticeships; and finally, she will always guide them with care, tenderness, and discernment. Then what a contented heart, peace of mind, and happy soul the man, the husband, the worker will have who possesses such a woman! Finding his wife has intelligence, common sense and educated opinions, he will be able to talk with her about serious subjects, tell her about his plans, and work with her to further improve their position. Flattered by his confidence in her, she will help him with good advice or collaboration in his endeavors and business. The worker, also educated and well brought up, will find it delightful to teach and develop his young children. Workers in general are kindhearted and love children very much. How diligently a man will work all week knowing that he is to spend Sunday in his wife's company, that he will enjoy his two little mischievous, affectionate girls and his two already educated boys who are able to talk with their father about serious things! How hard this father will work to earn a few extra cents to buy pretty bonnets for his little girls, a book for his sons, an engraving or something else which he knows will please them? With what joyful ecstasy these little gifts will be received, and what happiness for the mother to see the reciprocal love between father and children! It is clear that this, hypothetically, would be the most desirable domestic life for the worker. Comfortable at home, happy and satisfied in the company of his kind, old mother and young wife and children, it would never occur to him to leave the house to seek a good time at the tavern, that place of perdition which wastes the worker's time, money and health, and dulls his intellect. With half of what a drunkard spends in the tavern, a worker's whole family living together could go for meals in the country in summer. So little is necessary for people who

know how to live soberly. Out in the open air, the children would all be happy to run with their father and mother, who would be like children to amuse them; and in the evening, with contented hearts and limbs slightly weary from the week's work, the family would return home very satisfied with their day. In winter, the family would go to a show. These amusements offer a dual advantage: they instruct children while entertaining them. How many objects of study an intelligent mother can find to teach her children in a day spent in the country or an evening at the theater!

Under the circumstances I have just outlined, the home would create well-being rather than ruin for the worker. Who doesn't know how love and contentment of the heart treble or quadruple a man's strength? We have seen it in a few rare cases. It has happened that a worker, adoring his family and getting the idea of teaching his children, did the work that three unmarried men would not have been able to do in order to attain this noble goal. Then there is the question of deprivations. Single men spend generously; they don't deny themselves anything. What does it matter, they say, after all, we can gaily live and drink since we have no one to feed. But the married man who loves his family finds satisfaction in depriving himself and lives with exemplary frugality.

Workers, this vaguely sketched picture of the situation the proletariat would enjoy if woman were recognized as man's equal must lead to thought about the evil existing and the goodness which might exist. That ought to make you become very determined.

Workers, you probably have no power to abrogate the old laws or to make new ones. But you have the power to protest against the inequity and absurdity of laws that impede humanity's progress and make you in particular suffer. You can and must then energetically use thought, speaking, and writing to protest the laws oppressing you for it is your sacred duty. So now, try to

understand: the law which enslaves woman and deprives her of education oppresses you, proletarian men.

To be raised, educated, and taught the science of the world, the son of the wealthy has governesses and knowledgeable teachers, able advisers and finally, beautiful *marquises*, elegant, witty women whose functions in high society consist in taking over the son's education after he leaves school. It's a very useful role for the well-being of those gentlemen of high nobility. These ladies teach them to have proper manners, tact, finesse, wit; in a word, they make them into men who *know how to live*, the right kind of men. No matter how capable a young man is, if he is fortunate enough to be the protégé of one of these amiable ladies, his fortune is made. At thirty-five he is certain of becoming an ambassador or a minister. While you, poor workers, to rear and teach you, you have only your mother; to make you into civilized men, you only have women of your class, your companions in ignorance and misery.¹⁴

Thus it is not in the name of woman's superiority (as I will unfailingly be accused) that I tell you to demand rights for women; not really. First of all, before discussing her superiority, one must recognize her social individuality. My support has a more solid basis. In the name of your own interest and improvement, men; and finally in the name of the universal well-being of all men and women, I invite you to appeal for women's rights, and meanwhile at least to recognize them in principle.

Thus, workers, it is up to you, who are the victims of real inequality and injustice, to establish the rule of justice and absolute equality between man and woman on this earth. Give a great example to the world, an example that will prove to your oppressors that you want to triumph through your right and not by brute force. You seven, ten, fifteen million proletarians, could avail yourselves of that brute force! In calling for justice, prove that you are just and equitable. You, the strong men, the men

with bare arms, proclaim your recognition that woman is your equal, and as such, you recognize her equal right to the benefits of the *universal union of working men and women*.

Workers, perhaps in three or four years you will have your first palace, ready to admit six hundred old persons and six hundred children. Well! Proclaim through your statutes, which will become your charter, the rights of women for equality. Let it be written in your charter that an equal number of girls and boys will be admitted to the Workers' Union palace to receive intellectual and vocational training.

Workers, in 1791, your fathers proclaimed the immortal declaration of the *rights of man*, and it is to that solemn declaration that today you owe your being free and equal men before the law. May your fathers be honored for this great work! But, proletarians, there remains for you men of 1843 a no less great work to finish. In your turn, emancipate the last slaves still remaining in French society; proclaim the *rights of woman*, in the same terms your fathers proclaimed yours:

"We, French proletarians, after fifty-three years of experience, recognize that we are duly enlightened and convinced that the neglect and scorn perpetrated upon the natural rights of woman are the only cause of unhappiness in the world, and we have resolved to expose her sacred and inalienable rights in a solemn declaration inscribed in our charter. We wish women to be informed of our declaration, so that they will not let themselves be oppressed and degraded any more by man's injustice and tyranny, and so that men will respect the freedom and equality they enjoy in their wives and mothers.

1. The goal of society necessarily being the common happiness of men and women, the Workers' Union guarantees them the enjoyment of their rights as working men and women.

2. Their rights include equal admission to the Workers' Union palaces, whether they be children, or disabled or elderly.

3. Woman being man's equal, we understand that girls will

receive as rational, solid, and extensive (though different) an education in moral and professional matters as the boys.

4. As for the disabled and the elderly, in every way, the treatment will be the same for women as for men.*

Workers, rest assured, if you have enough equity and justice to inscribe in your Charter the few lines I have just traced, this declaration of the rights of woman will soon become custom, then law, and within twenty-five years you will see absolute equality of man and woman inscribed at the head of the book of law.

Then, my brothers, and only then, will human unity be established.

Sons of '89, that is the work your fathers bequeathed to you!

NOTES

1. Aristotle, less tender than Plato, asked this question without answering it: Do women have souls? The Council of Mâcon deigned to decide in their favor by a margin of three votes (*La Phalange*, August 21, 1842).

Thus, with three fewer votes, woman would have been seen as belonging to the realm of beasts, and this being so, man, the lord and master, would have been obliged to cohabit with the beast! That thought makes one shudder and freeze in horror! Besides, given the way things are, that ought to be a subject of deep grief, for the wise among the wise to think that they descend from the female race. For, if they are really convinced that woman is as stupid as they claim, what a shame for them to have been conceived within such a creature, to have suckled her milk and remained under her tutelage for a good part of their lives! So! It is very likely that if those sages had been able to place woman outside nature as they placed her outside the Church, the law,

* Tristan probably was not familiar with a 24-page feminist declaration, *Les Droits de la femme*, written by Olympe de Gouges in 1788 and addressed to the Queen. She did know, however, Mary Wollstonecraft's work, which she greatly admired and whose neglect she lamented (cf. *Promenades dans Londres*, the chapter on English women).

and society, they would have been spared the shame of descending from her. But unfortunately there is the law of God above the wisdom of the sages.

Except for Jesus, all the prophets treated woman with inexplicable iniquity, scorn, and harshness. Moses has his God say, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (*Genesis*, III, 16).

The author of *Ecclesiastes* had pushed the pride of his sex so far as to say, "Better a vicious man than a virtuous woman."

In the name of his God, Mohammed says: "Men are superior to women because of the qualities by which God has raised the former over the latter, and because men use their riches to pamper women."

You will reprimand the women whose disobedience you fear; you will relegate them to separate beds, you will beat them; but as soon as they obey, do not try to quarrel with them" (*Koran*, IV, 38).

Manu's laws say, "During childhood, a woman must depend upon her father; in her youth she depends upon her husband; her husband deceased, on her sons; if she has no son, the closest relatives of her husband, or lacking them, those of her father. If she has no paternal relatives, then the ruler: a woman must never govern herself by herself!" Here is the most curious thing: "She must always be good-humored." [According to Hindu theosophy, Manu is a great Being (though once a man) who governs the Earth. He is the reputed author of the famed Hindu law book, which is essentially a system of cosmogony and includes among its twelve books sections on marriage and wifely duties.—*Trans.*]

215. A woman cannot go to court without her husband's permission, even if she has her own business or maintains herself.

37. Official witnesses for birth, marriage, and death certificates can only be of the male sex (*Code civil*).

One (man) must be active and strong, the other (woman) *passive* and weak (J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile*).

This formula is reproduced in the Code:

213. The husband owes protection to his wife, the wife obedience to her husband.
2. Most scholars, be they scientists, doctors, or philosophers, have more or less explicitly concluded that women are intellectually inferior.
3. Woman was made for man (Saint Paul).
4. Convinced that neglect and scorn of man's natural rights are the only causes of the world's misfortunes, the French have resolved to proclaim man's sacred and inalienable rights in a declaration. Therefore, each citizen, in a position to compare government's activity with the goal of each social institution, will never submit to oppression or degradation by tyranny. The people will then have a constant and clear view of the foundations underlying their freedom and happiness, of their duties ruled by the magistrates and their mission led by the legislators.

Consequently, they proclaim the following declaration of the rights of man and the citizen in the presence of the Supreme Being:

1. The goal of society is the common good. The Government guarantees man's enjoyment of his natural and unalienable rights.
2. These rights are equality, liberty, security, and property.
3. All men are equal in nature and before the law.
4. The law is the free and solemn expression of the collective will.
5. All the famous generals of the Empire came from the working class. Before 1789, only noblemen were officers.
6. Here is what Fourier said, among other things:
"In the course of my research on society, I found greater reason among women than among men; for women have on several occasions given me new ideas which have afforded me very unexpected solutions to problems.
"Several times I have been indebted to women of the class called quick-witted (the mind which promptly grasps and immediately presents ideas with precision) for precious solutions which

had tormented my mind. Men have never been of this kind of help to me.

"Why don't men have that aptitude for new ideas free from prejudice? It is because their minds are enslaved and imprisoned by the biased kind of philosophy learned in school. They leave school with their heads stuffed with principles contradicting nature and cannot independently envision a new idea. If one disagrees with Plato or Seneca, denunciation and excommunication follow for daring to contradict the divine Plato, the divine Cato, or the divine Rato" (*La Fausse Industrie*, p. 326). ["Rato" (*raton* in the original, along with *Platon* and *Caton*) means "little rat."—*Trans.*]

7. From someone licensed to operate an infant school, I learned that according to orders received from on high, the teachers in these sorts of schools are supposed to be more concerned with developing the boys' intellect than with the girls'. Usually all the village schoolmasters treat all the pupils the same. Several have admitted to me that they did receive that order. This is yet another logical consequence of the unequal position occupied by men and women in society. There is a common saying about this: "Well, *for a woman*, she knows quite enough!"

8. Lower-class women prove to be very loving mothers toward their small children until the children reach the age of two or three. Their female instinct makes them understand that during these first two years, the children need continual care. But beyond that age, they brutalize them (except in some cases).

9. It is notable that in all the trades exercised by men and women, the female worker is paid *half* the daily wage of the male worker, or if she does piecework, her wage is half as much. Unable to imagine such a flagrant injustice, we first think this: Because of his muscular strength, the man probably accomplishes twice as much as a woman. Well, reader, it turns out to be exactly the opposite. In all the trades where skill and dexterity are required, women do almost twice as much work as the men. For instance, in printing, *in typesetting* (indeed, they make many mistakes, but that is due to their lack of education), in cotton-spinning *to tie the threads*; in a word, in all the trades which call for a certain lightness of touch, the women excel. One day a printer was tell-

ing me with his quite characteristic naïveté, "They are paid half as much, which is fair because they go *faster* than men; they would earn too much if they were paid the same." Yes, they are paid not for the work they do, but for creating few expenses, for assuming all kinds of deprivations. Workers, you have not seen the disastrous consequences that would result for you from such an injustice done to the detriment of your mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters. What has happened? The factory heads, seeing women working faster and for half pay, dismiss male workers every day from their workshops and replace them with women. And the men cross their arms and die from starvation in the streets. This is how the factory heads proceeded in England. Once on this path, women are let go to be replaced by twelve-year-old children. Half-pay economy! Finally, seven- or eight-year-old children are the only ones being hired. Let one injustice go unheeded, and you can be sure that it will foster thousands more.

10. Why do workers go to taverns? The ruling upper classes have been struck with complete blindness. They refuse to comprehend that their wealth, happiness, and security depend upon the moral, intellectual, and physical improvement of the working class. They dismiss the worker to his misery and ignorance; thinking, according to an old saying, that the cruder the people, the easier to muzzle them. This was all right before the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Since then, it means committing a gross anachronism, a serious mistake. Besides, one ought to be at least logical: if it is believed that it is good and knowledgeable politics to leave the poor class in its raw state, then why recriminate endlessly against its vices? The wealthy accuse the workers of being lazy, debauched, and drunk; and to substantiate their accusations, they exclaim, "If the workers are miserable, it's their own fault. Go to the bars and taverns and you will find them filled with workers drinking and wasting their time." I think that, instead of going to the tavern, if the workers met seven in a room (the number permitted by the September laws), to talk about their common rights and find ways of making them legally valid, the rich would be even more disturbed than by seeing the taverns full.

In the current state of affairs, the tavern is the worker's TEMPLE; it is the only place he can go. He does not believe in the Church; he does not understand anything about the theater. That is why the taverns are always full. In Paris, three-quarters of the workers do not even have a home; they sleep in furnished barracks; and the married ones reside in attics where there is no room or air. Consequently, they are forced to go out, if they want to get a little exercise and fresh air. You do not want to teach the people, you forbid them to meet, in the fear that they will teach themselves or will talk of politics or social doctrines. You do not want them to read, write, or fill their minds with thoughts, for fear that they will revolt! . . . So what do you expect them to do? If you prohibit everything that is mental, it is clear that, as a last resort, there remains only the tavern. Poor workers sometimes go crazy, overwhelmed with misery and sorrows of all kinds at home or with their bosses, or finally because the repugnant and forced work to which they are condemned irritates the nervous system so much. In this state, their only refuge is the tavern, in order to escape from their suffering. So they go to drink blue wine, an execrable medicine whose virtue is the power of *intoxication*.

Before such facts, there are people in the world called virtuous and religious who, comfortably settled in their homes, drink lots of good Bordeaux wine, vintage Chablis, and excellent champagne, at every meal, and those people make a beautiful moral fuss over drunkenness, debauchery, and intemperance in the working class! . . .

In the course of studying the workers (I have been doing this for ten years), never have I encountered a drunkard or real débauché among happily married workers enjoying a certain ease. Whereas, among those who are unhappily married and deeply impoverished, I have found some incorrigible drunkards.

The tavern, therefore, is not the cause of evil, but simply the effect. The cause of evil lies solely in ignorance, misery, and the brutalization of the working class. Instruct the people, and in twenty years the retailers of blue wine will close shop for lack of customers.

In England where the working class is much more ignorant and

miserable than in France, the working men and *women* carry the vice of drink as far as dementia; see Eugène Buret on this topic. [Eugène Buret (1811-42), an economist, submitted his two-volume work, *De la Misère des classes laborieuses en France et en Angleterre* (1841) to the "Académie des sciences morales" and won its 1840 contest. It figures prominently on Tristan's recommended reading list, p. 132.—*Trans.*]

11. In support of what I am maintaining here touching on women's brutality and the excellence of their nature, I shall cite an incident which occurred in Bordeaux in 1827 during my stay there.

Among the vegetable vendors holding shop in the open market, there was one woman feared by all the good ones, for she was so insolent, mean, and brutal. Her husband was a garbage collector (which meant that he was a street cleaner and sewage gatherer). One evening he came home and supper was not ready. An argument ensued between the husband and wife. The husband wanted to get to the point with insults, and he struck his wife. At that moment she was cutting up morsels for the soup with a big kitchen knife, and she turned on her husband, piercing his heart. He collapsed, dead. She was taken to prison.

Seeing her husband dead, this very brutal and wicked woman was gripped by such grief and remorse that, despite her crime, she inspired not only compassion but respect in everyone. It was simple to establish that her husband had provoked her, that the murder had been committed in a moment of anger, and not by premeditation. Her grief was such that one feared for her life; and since she was breast-feeding an infant of four months, the judge told her, in order to calm her, that she need not worry, she would be acquitted. But how surprised everyone was when, upon hearing those words, the woman exclaimed, "Me, acquitted! Ah! Your honor, what do you dare say? . . . If an awful woman like me were acquitted, there would be no justice on earth."

One tried everything to reason with her to make her understand that she was not a criminal, since she had not the thought of committing the murder. "Well! What does the thought matter?" she repeated, "if there is a brutality in me which can make

me cripple one of my children or kill my husband? Am I not a dangerous person, incapable of living in society?" Finally, when she was quite convinced that she would be acquitted, this uneducated woman made a resolution worthy of the strongest men in the Roman Republic. She declared that she would take justice into her own hands and *let herself starve to death*. And with what strength and dignity she executed that terrible death sentence she imposed upon herself! Her mother, her family, and her seven children came and tearfully begged her to agree to live for them. She gave her small infant to her mother and said, "Teach my children to be glad to lose such a mother, for, in a moment of brutality, I could kill them as I killed their father." The judges, the priests, the market women, and many others from the town went to her and tried to solicit in her favor. She could not be moved. Then, another means was tried: cakes, fruit, dairy products, wine, and meats were brought to her room. Even some chicken was roasted and brought piping hot so the aroma would entice her to eat. "Everything you're doing is useless," she repeated with great coolness and dignity. "A woman who is brutal enough to kill the father of her seven children must die, and I will die." She suffered awful torment without complaining, and on the seventh day, she expired.

12. Here is how *La Phalange* spoke about a very remarkable article in *La Presse*, on September 11, 1842:

"*La Presse* made the wise decision to table the futile quarrels over the small session, on the type of voting on the investigation and the regency law, or on Monsieur Thiers's conversion, and has begun to study the questions that are going to be submitted to the general councils. . . . Today, many children are still deprived of education, and 4,196 townships have no school. To take any excuses away from the parents and in order to win over the lack of caring and bad will of some municipal councils, the *Presse* editor proposes that the monthly fee paid by the pupils be eliminated, and he calls for the establishment and maintenance of all schools to cease being the concern of the townships and be henceforth part of the State budget. We have always stated that society owes an education to all its members, and it is quite deplorable

that the government of an enlightened country itself cannot see that, without fail, children be given the necessary care for their development. We quote the end of the *Presse* article; this journal's reflections on education for women are correct and do it honor. On every occasion we have always protested that odious and stupid abandonment of a *whole sex*, of which our so-called civilized and in many respects truly barbarous society has been guilty.

"Besides this important reform, there is another, perhaps more urgent, that the general councils also ought to recommend to the administration and the chambers; we wish to speak of the organization of primary schools for girls. Is it not strange that a country like France, which sees itself in the vanguard of civilization, which seeks to prove it by spreading the light of instruction for all classes of citizens, which opens schools everywhere for children and their teachers, also completely neglects to educate the women, the earliest teachers of children? This neglect is not only an injustice, it is an imprudence, an error. In fact, what is the result of the ignorance of most mothers? That when their sons are five years old and start school, they come with a bunch of bad habits, absurd beliefs, and false ideas sucked with their mother's milk. And the schoolmaster has more trouble getting rid of these than he has teaching them to read. So in the long run, *it costs more money and time to get rid of an injustice and have bad pupils than to instruct women, while making them more adept workers, more efficient housekeepers, and the natural, free teachers of school lessons.*"

13. Read the *Gazette des Tribunaux*. That is where, before the facts, one must study the state of exasperation manifested today by women. [In the issue of February 1, 1839, Tristan's personal story of domestic oppression appeared, as revealed during her husband's trial for attempted murder.—*Trans.*]

14. I have just shown that woman's ignorance has the most dangerous consequences. I maintain that the emancipation of the workers is impossible as long as women remain in this state of abjection. They inhibit all progress. Sometimes I have witnessed violent scenes between husband and wife. I have often been the victim of it, receiving the most crude insults. Those poor creatures, not seeing beyond the tips of their noses, as it is said, got

angry with their husbands, and with me, because the worker wasted a few hours of his time being concerned with political or social ideas. "Why do you need to get involved in things that don't concern you?" they exclaim. "Think about earning enough to eat and let the world be."

This is cruel to say, but I know some unhappy workers, men with hearts, intelligence, and good will, who would like nothing better than to devote their Sundays and small savings to serving the cause, and who, in order to have peace at home, hide from their wives and mothers the fact that they come to see me and write to me. These same women detest me, say awful things about me, and if they did not fear prison, maybe their zeal would push them to coming and insulting and beating me; and all that, because I commit the big crime, they say, of putting ideas in their men's heads which move them to read, write and speak among themselves, all useless things that are a waste of time. It's deplorable! However, I have met a few women who are capable of understanding the social issues and who show themselves to be dedicated. [One of the abusive wives in question, Madame Gosset, is mentioned by Puech: Tristan "had to undergo a violent scene from Mme. Gosset, upset for a month because her husband was wasting his time over an idea; also perhaps because the idea belonged to a young, seductive woman . . ." (p. 148).—*Trans.*]

IV

Plan for the Universal Unionization of Working Men and Women

I am going to provide a quick glimpse of the steps to be followed if one wishes promptly to consolidate the Workers' Union on a solid footing.

Let it be understood that I am not claiming to trace a definitive, unalterable plan. A plan totally spelled out in advance can never be realized. Only in the process can one appreciate the most appropriate means to achieve the enterprise's success. To shape, cut back and affirm in theory only imply to me extreme unawareness of the difficulties of implementation.

However, as it is natural for the person who conceived of an idea to grasp its entire scope and understand all its ramifications, I believe I must pose some guidelines to alleviate many difficulties and to help set up the Workers' Union.

In order to locate more readily the paragraphs that might have to be consulted, I have decided to number them. This format will appear perhaps a bit strange for I do not mean to list statutes here: just as for the rest of the work, I hereby entreat the reader not to forget that I had to, and in fact did, focus on the *content*. I felt that in order to treat such issues well, I had to limit myself to being clear and concise, and shy away from certain stylistic effects; formal elegance would have detracted from my subject.