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ODE TO LYDIA BECKER

Oh, maiden with a charming name,
But with a most uncomely mission.
Why to the franchise lay a claim
When marriage should be your ambition?
Women their province best fulfil
When prompt to soothe, and not defy, men,
And, shy of trusting Mr. Mill,
Rather repose their faith in Hymen!

Few of the fair sex who are blest
With husbands care a pin for voting:
No dream of suffrage stirs the breast
Of tender wives, or mothers doting;
More prescient than "strong-minded" dames,
To them far nobler nursery morals,
And joining in their children's games,
Than dabbling in election quarrels!

Helpmeet for man was woman made,
To cheer him with her love and beauty,
But when demagogue's her trade,
Vanish both modesty and duty.
On platforms she is out of place,
And meets from law no recognition—
Sweet Polly loses all her grace,
Transformed into POLLY-tician!

Once jilted damsels sought the calm,
Gained in conventual isolation;
Now, for their broken hearts a balm
Is found in Courts of Registration.
Maids eloquent on "Woman's Rights,"
And super-masculine in carriage,
Resent the ruder sex's slights
In offering them no rite marriage!

Oh! Barristers have flinty hearts
When female pleaders come before them;
They think that ladies, in such parts,
Betray an absence of decorum,
And soon demolish all the points
The lovely creatures try to lean on,
Who'd brighter shine in cooking joints,
Or striking off their polls the chignon!

In polling booth for town or shire,
No marriageable maidens linger,
Or widows, who again aspire
To have a ring put on their finger.
For men who want good wives they know,
Would rove from Manchester to Mecca,
Before they'd hand or heart bestow,
On thy disciples, Lydia Becker!

Keswick. WILLIAM GASPEY,

¹This is undoubtedly the prolific William Gaspey (1812 - 1886), son of the journalist Thomas Gaspey (1788 = 1871).

¹ Reilly, C. W. 2000. *Mid-Victorian poetry, 1860 - 1879*. London.
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