

H.G. Wells takes credit in destroying the moral standards of women.

As told in Experiment in Autobiography - 1934

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The next book of mine in which unsolved sexual perplexities appear is *A Modern Utopia* (1905). Plato ruled over the making of that book, and in it I followed him in disposing of the sexual distraction, by minimizing the differences between men and women and ignoring the fact of personal fixation altogether. This is, and always has been the intellectual's way out. My Samurai are of both sexes, a hardy bare-limbed race, free lovers among themselves – and mutually obliging. Like the people of the original Oneida community in New York State they constituted one compressive "group marriage."

*A Modern Utopia* was leading up to *Ann Veronica* (1909) in which the youthful heroine was aloud a frankness of desire and sexual enterprise, hither unknown in English popular fiction. That book created a scandal at the time, though it seems mild enough reading to the young of today.

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The particular offence was that Ann Veronica was a virgin who fell in love and showed it, instead of waiting as all popular heroines had hitherto done... Ann Veronica wanted a particular man who excited her and she pursued him and got him. With gusto.

...from the outset Ann Veronica was assailed as though she was an actual living person.

It was a strenuous and long sustained fuss. The book was banned by libraries and preached against by earnest clergymen.

...The head and front of the public attack was Mr. Strachey, the proprietor of the *Spectator*. A reviewer in his columns rallied the last resources of our noble language, made no bones about it, pulled himself together as men must do when the fundamentals of life are at stake, and said in so many words that Ann Veronica was a whore. It was I think an illegitimate extension of the term.

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After *Ann Veronica*, things were never quite the same again in the world of popular English fiction; young heroins with a temperamental zest for illicit love-making and no sense of an inevitable Nemesis, increased and multiplied not only in novels but in real life.

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Christina Alberta in *Christina Alberta's Father* (1925) is a much more living figure than Ann Veronica and her morals are far easier; but times had changed and not a voice was raised against her. That *Spectator* reviewer, and much else, had died since 1909. That particular liberation had been achieved.