The Hour and the Woman. Harriet Martineau's "Somewhat Remarkable" Life

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Description

A British journalist and pioneering reformer, Harriet Martineau reigned at the forefront of debates over social and political issues during the Victorian era. *The Hour and the Woman* chronicles the "somewhat remarkable" life of one of history's most influential, yet overlooked, women writers.

At a time when women were valued primarily for appearance, social class, and marital status, Martineau—plain, poor, and single—fought against the odds to win recognition as a writer. Her first professional triumph came in the 1830s when she published a multivolume work on political economy. International fame and literary reputation followed, launching a career that would span the next thirty-five years and plunge Martineau into heated reform efforts on both sides of the Atlantic.

Martineau strove to use her personal and political influence for good by staunchly supporting the causes in which she believed. Her fight for the eradication of slavery strengthened the abolitionist movement in the years before the American Civil War, and her advocacy of temperance and women's rights lent crucial assistance to those causes. Many of Martineau's contemporary female writers, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Harriet Beecher Stowe, supported her in these endeavors and encouraged her through long-lasting correspondence.

The most comprehensive Martineau history to date, *The Hour and the Woman* offers a unique view of one of the nineteenth century's most complex and fascinating women.

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Harriet Martineau’s conception of fictional and economic discourses as compatible, her confidence that a woman could effectively and authoritatively write about political economy, and Illustrations’ resonance throughout the period mark Illustrations of Political Economy’s conception, publication, and reception as important events in the history of nineteenth-century literature and culture. Logan, Deborah. The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau’s ‘Somewhat Remarkable’ Life. Dekalb: Northern Illinois UP, 2002. Print.