

# Victorian Secrets

## *A Superfluous Woman*

by Emma Frances Brooke

edited with an introduction & notes by Barbara Tilley

Aristocratic Jessamine Halliday, dying from *ennui*, is brought back to life by Dr. Cornerstone, a sympathetic socialist who encourages her to be more than a "pretty piece of sexuality". Seeking a new life, she disappears to the Scottish Highlands and while there, falls in love with handsome crofter Colin Macgillvray. As a new woman she offers him the "unconditional surrender" of her body but refuses to give her hand in marriage. *A Superfluous Woman* is an audacious exploration of the *fin-de-siècle* preoccupation with the woman question, class, and the sexual double standard.

Unsurprisingly, Brooke's novel caused outrage among critics. Campaigner W. T. Stead denounced it as "an immoral tale," and *The Times* lamented its distinctly feminist message. This reaction, and Brooke's boldness, ensured that it became one of the best-selling New Woman novels of the 1890s.

This edition includes:

- \* Critical introduction
- \* Explanatory footnotes
- \* Selection of contemporary reviews
- \* Brooke's original preface
- \* The full text of Brooke's 1888 article, 'Women and their Sphere'

ISBN: 978-1-906469-56-6

**Formats:** Available in paperback and Kindle editions. **Price:** £12.00

**Victorian Secrets** is an independent press dedicated to publishing books from and about the nineteenth century.

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