

# RADICALS



WRITTEN BY NANCY OSTERTAG & VANESSA RUANE





Radicals is the story of two young women coming of age during a pivotal time in America.

We meet Lizzie and Sarah four years before the Civil War. New technologies revolutionize daily life every week. A looming election consumes Washington's attention. Some argue the very existence of the Republic is at stake.



One of America's first erotic photographers, Lizzie Shaw, moves to Washington and forms an unlikely friendship with Sarah Brown, a pioneer in women's reproductive health. They each manage to keep their groundbreaking businesses through the tumult of the Civil War.

After the war, Lizzie and Sarah unite to stop anti-obscenity crusader Anthony Comstock, who threatens to shatter everything they've built.







19 years old

Elizabeth Randolph Shaw



Raised in New Orleans, the only daughter of a wealthy banker, Lizzie is educated, artistic, and used to getting what she wants. She arrives in Washington after surviving a massive hurricane that took the lives of over two hundred people, including her parents. Lizzie is impetuous and entirely indifferent to societal norms. Despite her grief over the loss of her family, at her core, she is driven by a desire for excitement and adventure.






A close-up portrait of a young Black woman with her hair pulled back, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a green top with a lace collar. The background is dark and out of focus.

24 years old

Sarah Brown





Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Sarah is a healer from a free black family with a long history of practicing botanic medicine. At twenty-four, she is already an accomplished herbalist, treating clients from all levels of society. Sarah is serious and ambitious. She is dedicated to lifting up her community, no matter the cost.





# Supporting Characters



A close-up portrait of a young woman with dark, wavy hair styled in an updo. She has light brown eyes and is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a red, ruffled garment. The background is dark and out of focus.

21 years old

## Teresa Bagioli Sickles

Lizzie's best friend Teresa, is the gifted young wife of an influential freshman Congressman. New to Washington but not to politics, she is classically educated, elegant, and a reckless narcissist.



48 years old

## Mary Ann Hall

Lizzie's friend and mentor, Mary Ann runs a successful underground lobbying business out of the city's finest parlor house.







30 years old

## Jack Stephenson

Lizzie's business partner, Jack is a "committed bachelor" and a strategic businessman who runs the city's largest photo studio along with multiple side hustles.



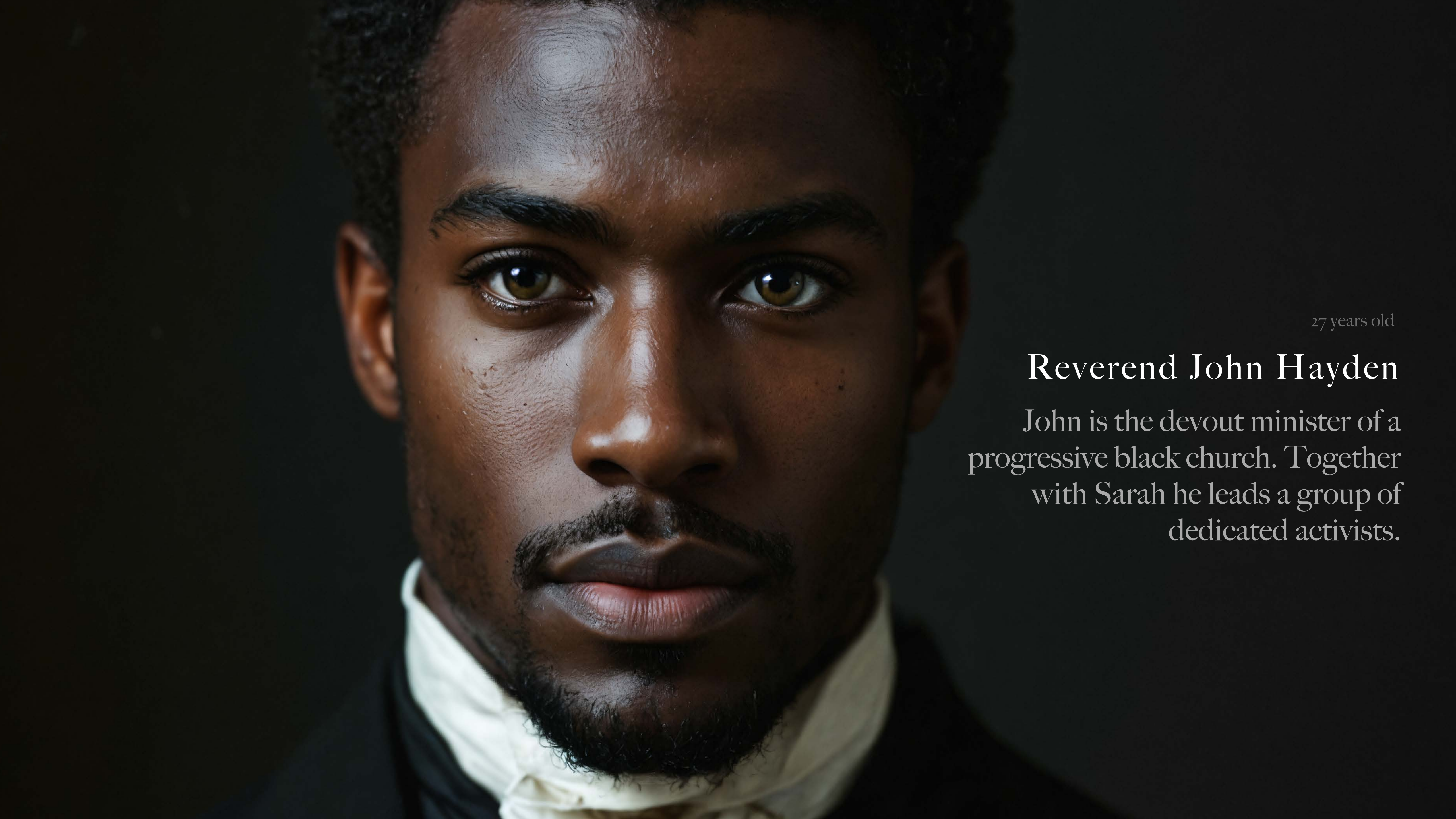


28 years old

## Peter Sullivan

"Sully" is a beloved actor and local celebrity. He is a hedonistic attention seeker, but also a true and loyal friend. Sully and Jack fall for each other the first time they meet, and remain together for the rest of their lives.





27 years old

## Reverend John Hayden

John is the devout minister of a progressive black church. Together with Sarah he leads a group of dedicated activists.





23 years old

## Reed Butler

Lizzie's only friend from her old life, Reed, is a telegraph operator who sees a future for himself as a leader in Washington business and politics.





24 years old

## Temperance Purdy

"Tempe" was raised by her widower father in the telegraph office and knows everything there is to know about the telegraph business.





Season One





Episode One

## A Fearful Storm

Elizabeth Randolph Shaw moves in with her grandfather, a doctor in Washington after she loses her family and fortune.

Lizzie asks her friend Reed to help her set up a photo studio. But when she starts spending all her time there, her grandfather suspects hysteria. Lizzie works to avoid an experimental isolation cure, seeking out help from herbalist Sarah Brown.

Sarah balances treating Lizzie with a new romance, spending time with charismatic preacher John Hayden. With the help of new friends Teresa, Jack, and Sully, Lizzie hosts a New Year's reception at her photo studio. They celebrate all night, ending up at a notorious Parlor house. Jack and Sully escort Lizzie and a group of actresses back to her photo studio. Through the window, Lizzie sees Jack and Sully kiss.

While waiting to treat Justice Taney, Sarah sees his copy of the Dred Scott decision. She learns the court plans to rule that black people have no federal rights. Lizzie takes a suggestive picture of the actresses in their nightgowns. They are interrupted by frantic knocking on the door. The theater is on fire, and Sully is missing.





Episode Two

### 2. A Path of Flame and Fire

The National Theater burns down. Sarah and John devise a plan to evacuate formerly enslaved people hiding in Washington. Jack helps Lizzie sell her titillating picture to Mary Ann. Reed proposes to Temperance.



Episode Four

### 4. A Tiny, Humble Seed

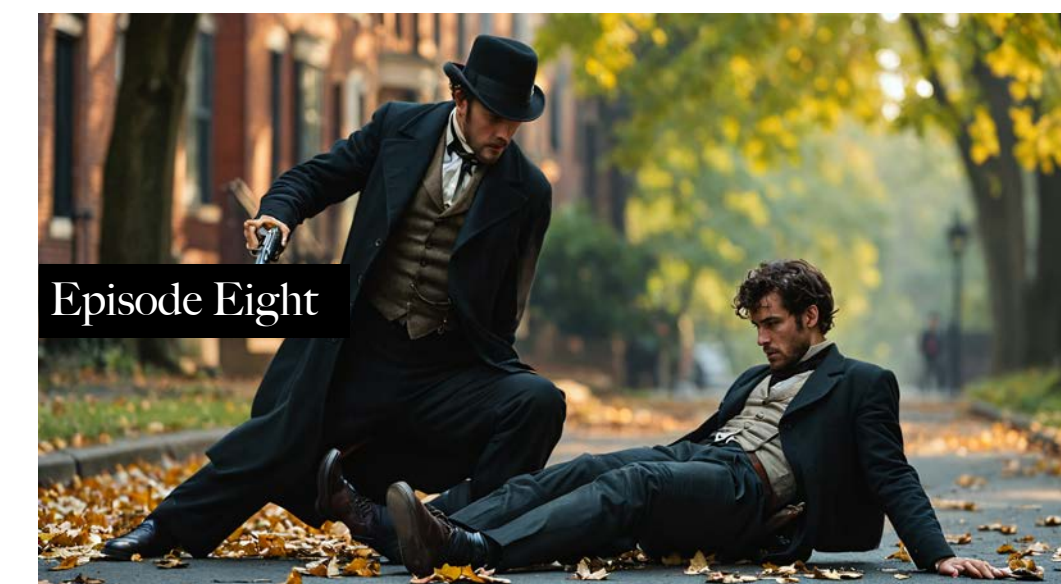
The mystery disease continues to spread. John proposes to Sarah, and she accepts. Mary Ann offers up her farm in Virginia as a location for a photo shoot. Lizzie has an unexpected encounter with one of the actresses.



Episode Six

### 6. For A while, All Strife Forgotten

Teresa has an affair with a District Attorney, who introduces Lizzie to a Congressman. Dr. Randolph and Sarah convert a space at the clinic into a hideaway for evacuees. Tempe struggles with postpartum depression after her daughter is born.



Episode Eight

### 8. An Avalanche of Woe

Teresa's husband confronts her about her affair. She denies everything. He rages at her, forcing her to write a humiliating confession. When her worried lover walks by the house, Sickles fatally shoots him. Lizzie can't contact Teresa, whose family refuses all callers. Jack and Mary Ann encourage her to sell her photos of Teresa but Lizzie refuses. Sickles is acquitted after his lawyers argue he was driven temporarily insane. Dr. Randolph clashes with a colleague during the American Medical Association annual meeting. Lizzie uses cash from her illicit business to make a large anonymous donation to Sarah's new women's clinic.



Episode Three

### 3. Amid Life's Fever and Fret

A mystery disease sweeps through the National Hotel. Reed and Tempe marry at her father's bedside before he dies. Lizzie devises a new mix of photo chemistry that is safer, and faster. She tests it for the first time while photographing the Inauguration.



Episode Five

### 5. And Nets of Sin Where'er I Tread

Jacks sells all of Lizzie's prints to a publisher who commissions more. Thirteen-year-old Anthony Comstock feels ashamed when he can't stop masturbating to a picture of actresses in their shifts. Desperate, he takes it to a prayer meeting, where he launches into a fiery speech denouncing the sinners who sold it to him before throwing it into a fire.



Episode Seven

### 7. A More Abundant Life

Lizzie's legitimate business serves as a front for her lucrative secret business. Jack takes Sully on a romantic trip. When Lizzie breaks things off with the Congressman, he flies into a rage and writes a letter to Teresa's husband detailing her affair. John surprises Sarah with a wedding celebration.





Episode Nine

### 9. Sackcloth of the Darkest Hue

Lizzie's legitimate business suffers from her connection to Teresa's scandal. Tempe falls deeper into postpartum depression. Lizzie fumbles her exposure while photographing a dying boy, causing a second image of the boy to appear just above the first. The family is sure that Lizzie captured the boy's spirit as it ascended to heaven.



Episode Eleven

### 11. No Time to Yield

Lizzie escapes election violence in Washington by spending more time at the farm. Sarah works late into her pregnancy. After the birth, she stays home with their new daughter while John goes South to pick up several evacuees. In Connecticut, Anthony Comstock gives a fiery speech about sin at an all day prayer meeting.



Episode Thirteen

### 13. The Storms of War

The war has driven a surge in photography. Lizzie and Jack take portraits of the new recruits, and sell them works from her collection. For safety and ease of travel, Lizzie wears men's clothing on their trips. Sarah joins the Sanitary Commission. John joins the Union Navy. Mary Ann now runs a spy operation.



Episode Fifteen

### 15. Of Evil and Unrest

Jack and Anthony Comstock clash in occupied St. Augustine. John joins the Potomac flotilla, fighting confederate guerrillas and rescuing refugees. When an outbreak hits the flotilla, Sarah leaves to help. Mary Ann acquires papers for Lizzie's male persona so she can take on another mission. Reed is declared missing.



Episode Ten

### 10. A Vague Unrest

Tempe consults Sarah, confiding that she hasn't been herself since the baby was born. Sarah prescribes a new regimen and teaches her the rhythm method. Later, Sarah suddenly gets out her own journal and calendar, confirming her own pregnancy.



Episode Twelve

### 12. Shades of Night

John returns. one of the escapees is startled when he sees Sarah. They realize he is Sarah's father. Reed is tasked with recruitment for the new Military Telegraph Corps. Tempe is sent home. Sarah says goodbye to Meg and her father when they decide to keep going north.



Episode Fourteen

### 14. A Murmur of the Rain

Sarah hands out a birth control pamphlet at the contraband's camp. Tempe organizes the telegraph wives into a volunteer unit. Sully is upset when Jack enlists in the army. Mary Ann asks Lizzie to deliver a message across enemy lines. Lizzie dresses as a man, and easily gains the access she needs.



Episode Sixteen

### 16. A Prayer for Light

Tempe, and twenty other women are killed in a massive explosion at the arsenal. Sarah finds John in bad condition. She works to save his life while the crew fends off a guerrilla attack. Lizzie sets out on a dangerous mission to tell Reed about Tempe and bring him home to his daughter.



## LATER SEASONS

During Reconstruction, Reed gets involved in politics and learns of Lizzie's "other" business from a reporter. Anthony Comstock helps found the Society for the Suppression of Vice and starts raiding publishers in New York. Lizzie and Jack consider publishing her work themselves. Sarah's clinic is the target of an ongoing protest, and the story of it appears in the papers. While working at Howard University hospital, she expands the clinic, and writes a textbook on women's health. Lizzie helps Sarah get the book published. Comstock comes to Washington and targets Sarah. With Reed's help, Lizzie and Sarah manage to save the clinic, and stay out of jail, but every copy of Sarah's textbook is destroyed. Comstock raids Lizzie's studio and destroys her library of images.





## Why Now? Why Us?



NANCY OSTERTAG

"I am an army brat, and Vanessa is a firehouse kid. Because we both grew up in communities that centered around service, we share certain core values and experiences that have guided us as we've developed this story."

Early in my career, I saw a book on Victorian erotica that shocked me but also sparked my curiosity. When I tried to research the first American erotic photographers, I found almost nothing. The culprit, I soon learned, was Anthony Comstock. In the 19th century, Comstock personally destroyed tons of "obscene" material and prosecuted publishers as part of his crusade to purify America. Comstock also targeted midwives and female physicians. He destroyed medical textbooks that detailed female anatomy and anything related to birth control or abortion. Vanessa and I started writing this story in part to ask the question, "How did women's reproductive health and pornography end up in the same act of Congress, and how has that fact played out in women's lives over time?" Our main characters are composites drawn from history using primary sources. Our story is about people branded as radicals in their time because they fought for rights that Americans now take for granted.



VANESSA RUANE

"Docudrama has been a constant in my film and television career. I believe in the power of storytelling to effect real change, and I think this is an important story to share."

My dad has always loved history. Growing up, he taught me to look to history for context and wisdom when trying to understand something happening today. When Nancy and I started crafting *Radicals*, the incredible parallels between that time and ours drew me into the story. In the late 1850s, Americans were experiencing multiple social and technological upheavals, something anyone who's lived through the last 30 years is intimately familiar with. As we've been writing, the Comstock Act has gone from being a forgotten law that most people didn't know was still on the books, to being in the news almost daily. *Radicals* may be a story set in the past, but it is as much about current events as it is about history.





THE COMSTOCK ACT plainly forecloses mail-order abortion in the present & Defendants have stated no present or future intention of complying with the law. Judge Kassman



BIRTH CONTROL BILL  
**STORK CODE**  
FLYING TIME—  
3 HOUR DAY  
2 DAY WEEK.  
HOLIDAYS OBSERVED!  
NOT MORE THAN ONE PASSENGER.  
STORMY WEATHER



U. S. DISTRICT COURT  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Forty-second C  
Papers and bill of the city of Washington

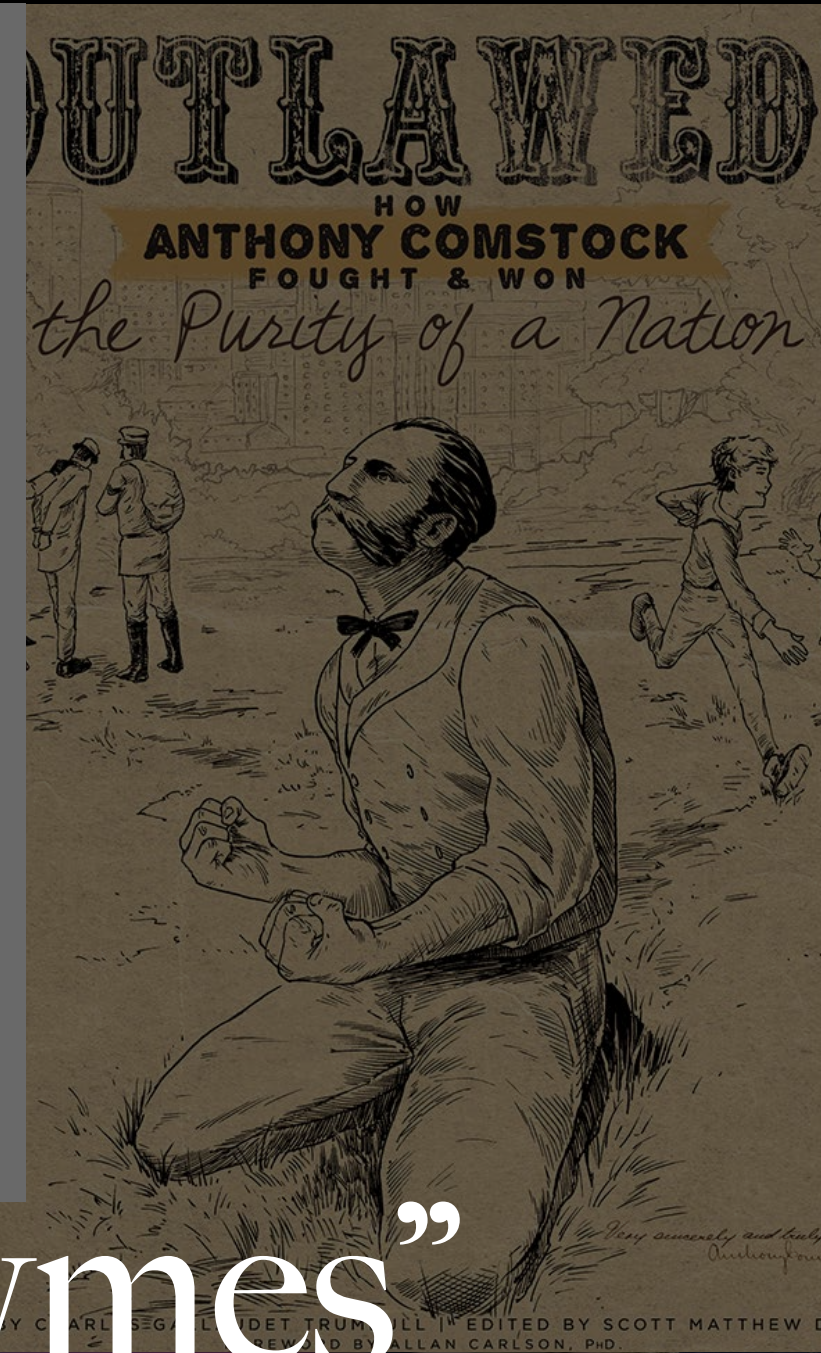
WHO is the ENEMY;  
Anthony Comstock.  
or You?

By EDWIN C. WALKER

Difficult as it will be, it has become, in my opinion, imperative to achieve a shifted attitude from superior men and women towards the thought and fact of sexuality, as an element in character, personality, the emotions, and a theme in literature. I am not going to argue the question by itself; it does not stand by itself. The vitality of it is altogether in its relations—like the clef of a symphony.—WALT WHITMAN.

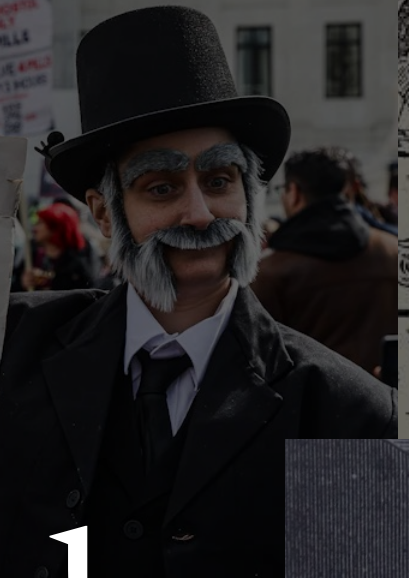
New York, October, 1903  
PUBLISHED BY EDWIN C. WALKER,  
244 West 148rd Street

Price, 20 Cents



THE WOMAN REBEL  
NO GODS NO MASTERS

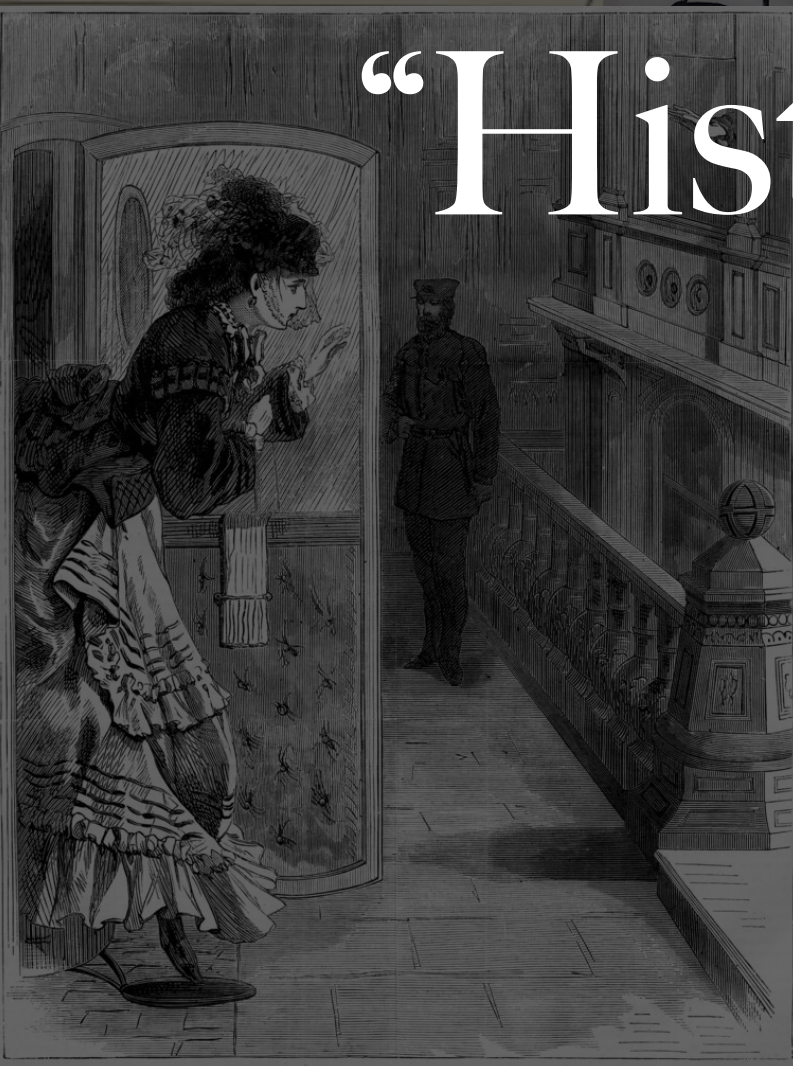
LET THE MEN DECIDE



York Tribune, Inc.  
Next Congressional Huddle  
—Brown in the New York Herald Tribune

**Mifeprex**  
(Mifepristone)  
Tablets, 200 mg  
The Early Option Pill

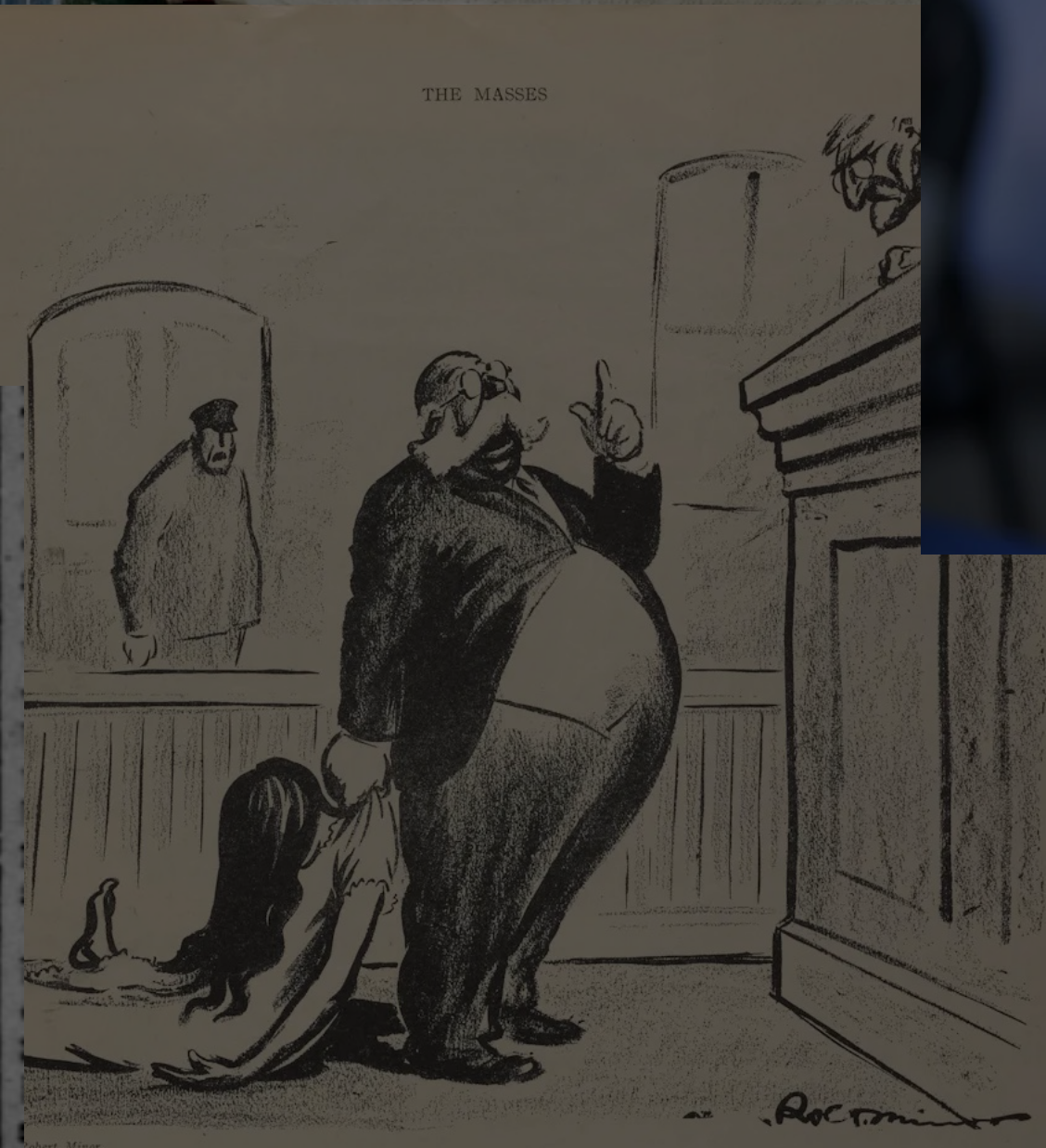
“History doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes”



CHICHESTER'S ENGLISH PENNYROYAL PILLS  
RED CROSS DIAMOND BRAND.  
Original, best, only genuine and reliable pill for sale. Never Fail. Ask for Chichester's English Diamond Brand, in red metallic boxes, sealed with blue ribbon. At Druggists. Accept no other. All pills in paste-board boxes, pink wrappers, are a dangerous counterfeit. Send 4c. (stamp) for particulars and "Relief for Ladies," in letter, by return mail. 10,000 testimonials from LADIES who have used them. Name Paper. Chichester Chemical Co., Madison St., Phila., Pa.



**WOMAN DEFIES MAIL CENSORS**  
Articles in the "Rebel" Make P. O. Officials Blush.  
SPECIAL DISPATCH TO THE GLOBE-DEMOCRAT.  
NEW YORK, April 4.—Mrs. Margaret H. Sanger, publisher of the "Woman Rebel," which has made post officials blush, says that no holdup by Uncle Sam's mail censors can intimidate her. She declares the notice served on her today that her magazine can't go through the mails is already in the waste basket, and that she is going to circulate the "Rebel" by express.  
Anthony Comstock is reported as already on Mrs. Sanger's trail, but she says she will foil him, too. Deputy United States District Attorney Lamar read a



"Your Honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child!"



AND THE VILLAIN STILL PURSUES HER.

