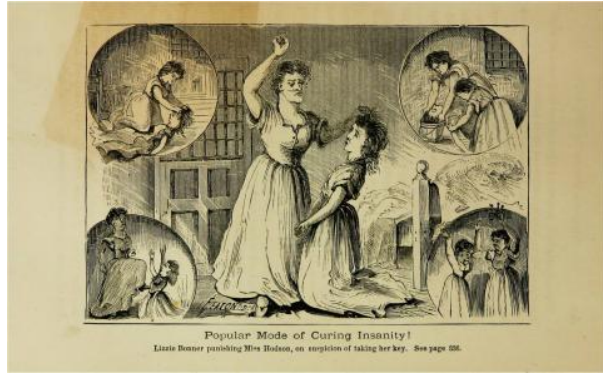




0. AN UNJUST LAW IMPACTS MARRIED WOMEN - Story
Preface

1. ELIZABETH and THEOPHILUS PACKARD -
BACKGROUND

2. CENSORSHIP INVADES PACKARD'S LIFE

3. AN UNJUST LAW IMPACTS MARRIED WOMEN

4. HUMILIATION of ELIZABETH PACKARD

5. ELIZABETH PACKARD and the LAW

6. ELIZABETH PACKARD and MENTAL HOSPITALS

7. TRIAL of ELIZABETH PACKARD

8. PACKARD CASE - AFTER the VERDICT

After Elizabeth Packard was forced to spend time at the Jacksonville Asylum, she learned about the unfair treatment of women within those walls. When she published a book about her experiences, she "named names," describing the abusers and the "punishments" they inflicted. Illustration from Elizabeth Packard's 1873 book *Modern Persecution*, Volume I, opposite page 288. Online, courtesy Archive.org.

Freedom—as a concept and as reality—had different meanings to different people in 19th-century America. During Mrs. Packard's lifetime, women throughout the U.S. were still prevented from voting in national elections. They were also at risk in their own homes, due to "laws" which could harm them.

Illinois, for example, had a law which allowed husbands to commit their wives to insane asylums simply on their own assertion that the wife was insane. Mrs. Packard, in her later writings—such as *The Prisoner's Hidden Life*—describes what it was like when that situation happened to her.

Had she agreed to leave her Bible-study class—without telling her classmates the real reason for her departure—things might have developed differently. She refused to engage in such a farce, however, which led to an unthinkable development.

Let's listen to the words she later-used to describe the predicament with her husband. We pick-up the story while she is sitting on his lap:

He construed my earnestness into anger, and thrust me from him, determining to risk this result at all hazards. From that fatal time, all good influences seemed to have forsaken him, and he left to pursue his downward way, with no power to resist evil or flee from the tempter.

Reason, conscience, judgment, prudence, consistency and affection, all, all directly sunk into the fatal sleep of stupidity or death. From that point on, I have never had a protector in my husband. He has only been my persecutor!

In a few weeks from that time, he forcibly entombed me within the massive walls of Jacksonville Asylum prison, to rise no more, if he could prevent it. He told me he did this, to give the impression that I was insane, so that my opinions need not be believed ... (The Prisoners' Hidden Life, by Elizabeth Packard, page 18.)

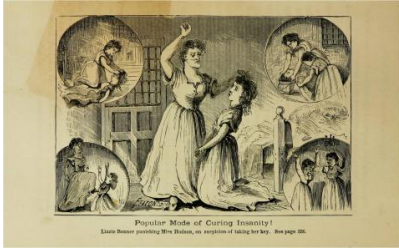
Why did Theophilus Packard take such a drastic step—and—how did he accomplish it?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AN-UNJUST-LAW-IMPACTS-MARRIED-WOMEN-Packard-Elizabeth-Civil-Rights-Advocate>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AN-UNJUST-LAW-IMPACTS-MARRIED-WOMEN-Packard-Elizabeth-Civil-Rights-Advocate>



Punishment at the Jacksonville Asylum

Illustration from Elizabeth Packard's 1873 book *Modern Persecution*, Volume I, opposite page 288. Online, courtesy Archive.org.

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