



Family, Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen

M. Jeanne Peterson

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Physically frail, badly educated girls, brought up to lead useless lives as idle gentlewomen, married to dominant husbands, and relegated to "separate spheres" of life?these phrases have often been used to describe Victorian upper-middle-class women. M. Jeanne Peterson rejects such formulations and the received wisdom they embody in favor of a careful examination of Victorian ladies and their lives.

Focusing on a network of urban professional families over three generations, this book examines the scope and quality of gentlewomen's education, their physical lives, their relationship to money, their experience of family illness and death, and their relationships to men (brothers and friends as well as fathers and husbands). Peterson also examines the prominent place of work in the lives of these "leisured" Victorian ladies, both single and married. Far from idle, the mothers, wives, and daughters of Victorian clergymen, doctors, lawyers, university dons, and others were accomplished and productive members of society who made substantial public and private contributions to virtually every sphere of Victorian life.

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