

are no longer dependent colonies; they are independent nations." (p. 138).

It is appropriate that the Library of Congress has rescued from obscurity the "bold and honest" writings of early compatriots who were little honored for their views in their own country.

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*Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age.* Edited by Martha Vicinus. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972. Pp. xv, 239. Illustrations, notes, index. \$7.95.)

Victorian women fascinate students of women's history because the social image of the perfect lady seems in retrospect to have been completely at odds with human nature. What could have happened in the society to transform the robust eighteenth century ideal of the "notable housewife" into the nineteenth century's languishing, ladylike "angel in the house"? The first was so clearly functional that one tends to assume that the latter must have been too: but how? If this question is ever satisfactorily answered, scholars will have learned something important about the relationship between sexual ideals and social structure.

The essays in this volume, contributed by scholars in history, sociology, and literature, deal with a variety of specific questions within the general framework of Victorian womanhood. A collection of this kind is difficult to review sensibly since there is no central theme which permits the book to be analyzed as a whole. It is impossible to do more than summarize the variety of ideas which are advanced.

Several essays suggest new lines of inquiry for women's history and contribute new understanding of the Victorian middle class. M. Jeanne Peterson's study of the governess, that second level status symbol of the affluent, is a cogent analysis of the contradiction inherent in the notion that no lady would work for pay but that *only* a lady was fit to teach one's children. Helen Roberts of the Fogg Museum makes ingenious use of Victorian paintings to increase our understanding of the role expectations of nineteenth century wives.

Peter Stearns' essay on working women is promising both in method and content. Late nineteenth century English reformers tried hard to develop a factual basis for their social proposals, and many massive studies were the result. Stearns has gone back to some of these inquiries and to some significant government studies in search of the wives of working men. Though he does not hesitate to generalize boldly on scraps of evidence, his essay will repay careful study. Jill Conway's article on the sexual stereotypes held by theorists of evolution demonstrates once again the influence of cultural assumptions on scientific perception. S. Barbara Kanner's excellent bibliography of the scholarly work dealing with English women since 1815 shows clearly how much work remains to be done.

There are, in addition, essays on attitudes toward menstruation, on prostitution and venereal disease, and on the unconscious minds of innocent young ladies. Kate Millett writes on John Ruskin and John Stuart Mill, and another essay defends William S. Gilbert against the charge of undue cruelty to elderly spinsters. As is nearly always true in such collections, the quality is uneven, the style often distressingly pedantic. Yet in this case the number of stimulating questions raised makes the volume well worth reading.

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