

Women's Periodicals

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The Bible Society Cleanings.
Various source media, 19th Century UK Periodicals
DECEMBER, 1896.



IN CENTRAL AMERICA.
Native Indians at Home.



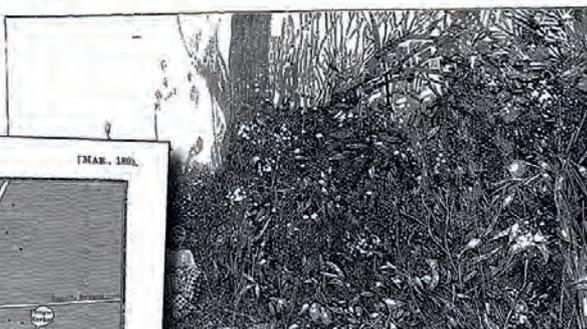
THE TOURISTS—T. W. HARKER AND H. GREEN.

A CYCLING TOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY THOMAS WOODVILLE HARKER.

ii. HE vrou is indeed the helpmate of her husband in every way, would be useless. I do believe the American poet at some time or other must have had visions in his dreams of this portion of the globe, for has he not written:—

Baptisms at San Salvador. [FEBRUARY, 1899.]



JANUARY 1, 1890.] THE MISSIONARY HERALD.
CALABAR COLLEGE, KINGSTON, JAMAICA.
THE following graphic letter from S. B. Burton, Esq. F.R.G.S., of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, will be read with great interest:—
"Newcastle-on-Tyne, December, 1894.
"DEAR MR. BAYNES,—The request
Royal Mail s.s. *Eden* on July 18th last.
"On the twelfth day out we passed

Although periodicals expressly for women appeared as early as 1693 (with *The Ladies Mercury*) and increased in number throughout the eighteenth century, it was in the nineteenth century that women's periodicals came of age. Increased literacy and the many technological advances that lowered publication costs contributed to an explosion of periodicals targeted to expanding new readerships, especially women. Publishers offered an increasing number of magazines, reviews, newspapers and journals that catered to women's tastes and interests. And as the realities and possibilities of women's lives changed throughout the century, so did the publications marketed to them.

Domesticity and Fashion

At the beginning of the century, women's periodicals were largely devoted to domestic concerns and fashion. Early nineteenth-century "ladies' magazines" incorporated most of the elements that are still found in women's magazines today: short stories, serialized fiction, poetry, profiles of prominent women, reviews and fashion. Although not as lavishly illustrated as later publications would be, early women's periodicals often included portraits of the notable women whose lives were being featured and the all-important fashion plates.

Published monthly, early nineteenth-century magazines like *The Lady's Magazine*, *The Lady's Monthly Museum* and *La Belle Assemblée* were intended for women of the upper classes and were priced accordingly, at upwards of one shilling. Readers were assumed to be women who employed domestic servants and who had discretionary income. The

articles and stories offered in these magazines addressed such concerns as how to manage household servants and the best ways to educate daughters to become good wives. The fashion features and accompanying illustrations kept readers up-to-date about styles in both London and Paris, and the magazines vied to present the most elegant and attractive layouts and plates.

By mid-century, as the costs of periodical production began to drop, domestic women's magazines increasingly sought a broader readership by lowering their prices, publishing more frequently and expanding their content. For example, the weekly *Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times* offered women a fairly traditional domestic-oriented content, but it also included 'Striking Events' and other news, all for only 6d. The format of women's periodicals also began to change, with smaller magazine-sized papers replacing some of the oversized broadsheets of the earlier period.

Perhaps the most important women's periodical of the mid-century was *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, published by Samuel Beeton. Beeton's major innovation was to offer content that addressed the daily responsibilities of middle-class women, thus greatly broadening the magazine's potential readership. A key highlight of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* was its recipes, reportedly kitchen-tested by the publisher's wife, Isabella; the recipes were later collected into the famous *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*. Another innovative feature of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* was its supplements

of colour needlework patterns and ready-to-make patterns for women's and children's clothing. The latter made it possible for middle-class women to stay fashionable on a budget, by either cutting out and sewing the patterns themselves, or by employing dressmakers to do so. The magazine was also an important promoter of various labour-saving devices, such as stoves and sewing-machines, helping to point the way to less drudgery in women's domestic lives.

Towards the end of the century, domestic magazines like *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* (another Beeton publication, edited by Myra Browne), *Hearth and Home* and *Woman at Home* further expanded their circulations by adding features and increasingly reaching out to even broader readerships. Publishers added children's sections, write-in contests and ever-more columns of advertising. *Woman at Home*—ostensibly edited by popular novelist Annie S. Swan (Annie Shepherd Burnett Smith), but actually edited by Jane Stoddart, and later by Alice Head—was noteworthy for its advice column. Although such columns had been an occasional feature of women's (and men's) periodicals since the eighteenth century, the 'Over the Teacups' column in *Woman at Home* enabled Swan to cope with the large amount of correspondence directed to the paper in a particularly personable way, and her chatty style was much admired. The kinds of questions posed by correspondents revealed that the readership for such papers had significantly expanded to include not only middle-class but also lower-class women, many of whom had distinct aspirations for upward mobility.

Younger Women and Girls

Periodicals targeted specifically to younger women and girls emerged at mid-century. For example, Charlotte Yonge's *Monthly Packet* was designed for the daughters of Church of England clergy and offered suitable articles and serialized fiction for its younger readers. The magazine also sponsored regular writing contests that helped to build a sense of community among its readers.

The demand for special publications for younger readers increased dramatically after the 1870 Elementary Education Act. Perhaps the best-known periodical for girls to emerge in the subsequent wave of children's publications was *The Girls' Own Paper*. Like its sibling *The Boys' Own Paper*, *The Girls' Own* was a 1d weekly published by the Religious Tract Society but carefully designed so as not to be overtly religious in tone or content. Directed towards lower-middle-class girls aged eleven to nineteen, *The Girls' Own Paper* offered inexpensive fiction and non-fiction that was a wholesome alternative to penny novelettes and penny dreadfuls.

Another popular late-century young women's paper was L.T. Meade's *Atalanta*, a 6d monthly aimed at a slightly older (mid-teens to mid-twenties) and slightly more well-to-do reading audience. *Atalanta's* pages featured work by such well-loved authors as Meade, E. Nesbit and Frances Hodgson Burnett, and it was a strong advocate for girls' physical fitness and professional aspirations. The magazine was also an outlet for a new subgenre of fiction, the "girl scholar" story. Featuring intellectual girls who were ambitious

but also physically active and—crucially—interested in marriage, such stories helped counter the prejudice that education would undermine society by rendering young women unfit for marriage.

Activism and Advocacy

From mid-century, women's periodicals increasingly catered to the emerging women's movement, offering forums for debate on education, employment, suffrage, and other social and political issues that increasingly engaged women. Along the way, these periodicals not only expanded the opportunities for women readers, but for women writers and editors as well.

Some of the most important and influential political periodicals were those published by the members of the Langham Place Group, a group of women (and some men) based in London and associated with many of the key reform movements in Britain through the end of the century. Centered around Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and Bessie Parkes, the Langham Place circle published a number of activist women's magazines and reviews, beginning with *The English Woman's Journal* in 1864. The group also established the Victoria Press, under the management of Emily Faithfull. Among the Langham Place periodicals were *The Alexandra Magazine*, edited by Parkes; *The Englishwoman's Review*, edited by Jessie Boucherett and later by Caroline Biggs and Helen Blackburn; and *Victoria Magazine*, edited initially by Faithfull. All of these periodicals featured news, editorials and reviews that focused on issues related to women's political, educational and employment opportunities, as well as some more general-interest fare (especially in *Victoria*, which

included poetry and fiction and sought a slightly broader readership). Another Langham Place publication was *Women and Work*, which furthered the cause of women's employment and also helped publicize work opportunities.

Other advocacy periodicals for women included the Irish suffrage journal *The Women's Advocate*; the *Journal of the Women's Education Union*, founded by education reformer Emily Sheriff; and *The Women's Union Journal*, edited by labour activist Emma Paterson and printed by another women-run press, the Women's Printing Society. Like most of the Langham Place periodicals, these publications focused largely on news relating to the associations and societies that sponsored them, and they envisioned a very targeted audience of politically active women.

Another important political publication for women was the *Women's Penny Paper*, which later became the *Women's Herald* and then *The Woman's Signal*. Under its founding editor Helena B. Temple (Henrietta Müller), who had come of age during the mid-century women's movement, the *Women's Penny Paper* took a broader view than some of its predecessors, presenting not just news about women's political associations, but more general news affecting women as well. This broader approach to defining women's news was reinvigorated towards the end of the century under the editorship of journalist Florence Fenwick-Miller, who repositioned *The Woman's Signal* as a 'progressive paper for women'.

Between Temple's and Fenwick-Miller's editorial management, the *Women's Herald* under Lady Henry Somerset became closely associated with both the Liberal Party and the British Women's Temperance Association. Such cause-driven publications were another important branch of women's periodicals in the nineteenth century. Women had constituted a significant readership for anti-slavery periodicals at the beginning of the century. At the end of the century, women were important as both readers and writers of periodicals devoted to a wider range of causes, ranging from the defence of animal's and children's rights to temperance and anti-vice.

A number of organizations were established to focus women's efforts on behalf of these various causes, and many of these organizations issued publications. Although the *Women's Herald* was a voice for the British Women's Temperance Association, the Association's official organ was *The British Women's Temperance Journal*, edited by Margaret Lucas. A penny newspaper distributed to the Association's many branches, the paper sought to galvanize its readership with accounts of how drinking adversely affected women and children.

Championing another women-supported political crusade were the three periodicals founded and edited by Josephine Butler, *The Shield*, *The Dawn*, and *The Storm-Bell*. Butler launched the first paper to support her efforts to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the later papers concentrated on the governmental regulation of prostitution. *The Dawn* focused on anti-vice efforts in the colonies and on the Continent, while *The Storm-Bell* provided a mouthpiece for her

Ladies' National Association for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice.

Despite the relatively limited readerships of some of these cause-driven periodicals, their proliferation in the later decades of the nineteenth century helped consolidate the base for women's social, educational and professional self-development, a consolidation that was essential for the continued expansion of the women's movement in the twentieth century. The many female editors and proprietors of these and other activist publications shared a belief that a women-run press was essential for calling attention to women's issues and promoting women's activism.

Consumer Culture

Whether intended to support women in their traditional roles as daughter, wife and mother or to galvanize them to professional achievements and political action, women's periodicals in the nineteenth century increasingly conceived of their readership as engaged, independent agents—agents whose purses and pockets could be coveted by a myriad of manufacturers and other commercial ventures.

While advertisements were relatively limited in the earlier decades, and virtually nonexistent in some of the advocacy papers that were underwritten by individuals or organizations, they proliferated in the general interest and fashion magazines and even in some of the political papers. From corsets and patent medicines to Egyptian cruises and typewriting courses, women's periodicals featured a vast range of products

for sale. And as with contemporary women's magazines, the lines between editorial and advertising comment could occasionally become blurred. The type and placement of advertisements in these periodicals provide valuable clues about the incomes, attitudes and likely aspirations of the periodicals' readers, especially when details about subscription bases are missing.

Conclusion

The many magazines, newspapers and reviews directed towards women readers in the nineteenth century mirrored women's experiences and expectations during this dynamic era. Offering entertainment and improvement, relaxation and challenge, these publications helped women in all spheres of life to conceive of themselves as members of a distinctive and diverse community, to imaginatively explore the opportunities that were opening for them and, in many instances, to become active participants in their changing worlds.

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