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Harvey Green, Mary Ellen Perry
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#4397513 in Books 1984-08-12 1984-08-12 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.50 x 7.50 x .751, #File Name: 039471329X224 pages | File size: 43.Mb

Harvey Green, Mary Ellen Perry : The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Superficial but useful By Chrijeff No book as thin as this (185 pages of text, with huge margins and many illustrations) could hope to encompass all the extant information about Victorian womanhood, but Harvey Green makes a good start. Although his time period is confined to the years 1870-1910, it's worth noting that "Victorian" America actually began at the same time Victorian England did, in 1837, and that most cultural assumptions of the former period carried over from the latter. At the same time, Green has purposely focused his light on the Eastern and Middle-Western middle class, quite ignoring the pioneer, the poor, the naughty, and the iconoclastic (of whom there were a goodly few). This much said, his book is full of useful data much of which can be

carried over to other segments of female reality of the day. Organized into broad chapter categories including courtship and marriage, motherhood, housework, home decoration, health, leisure, and "religion, death, and mourning," it provides a good basic picture of what 19th-Century women mostly aspired to, as well as the justifications given for society's limitations upon them. There's a good index, though a reading list might have been helpful too. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. There Are Better Books Than This One By Jim This book irritated me and it took a few days to figure out why. It's because an author who disrespects his subject is like a director who casts a film with dislikable leads: it's difficult for the audience to bear through to the end. Mr. Green's take on the lot of Victorian women is at all times disparaging and smacks of victimage. Women are cast as weak victims of their times. In truth, individuals living so many years ago did the best they could within the networks of their families and beliefs of their era. We in the present do the same, although we are blind to it. Never a word about that from Mr. Green. Rather than consider Victorian American culture as a whole, Mr. Green limits himself to "WASPs" (he uses the term more than once) and their popular help books and magazines, to pass overt or implicit judgments on how exclusionary and eccentric that stratum of the population was. Goings-on of immigrants pouring into the country are only mentioned to point out how much "WASPs" feared them. Yet recent arrivals from Europe were also convention-bound from the old country and as eccentric as anyone else. In addition, some things that Victorian self-help books were adamant about--women breast feeding rather than using bottles and formulas, for example--are indorsed today as especially healthful for children both physically and emotionally. Victorians were often right for questionable reasons, and when they insisted that breast feed was best they were probably correct. But again, never a word of this from the author. He implies, in my reading, that this insistence on breast-feeding was just another tactic to keep women house-bound. Extend such thinking to other areas and arrive at my overall objection to this book. The author has prejudices that no doubt sat well in a university's atmosphere in the 1980s but get in the way for popular readers. The many pictures in my soft cover version were not reproduced well, either, for which Mr. Green is blameless. I'd give this text a "C." 36 of 36 people found the following review helpful. Some interesting points and a light read By Rosemary Thornton This book has some interesting tidbits and some cute details about women's life 100 years ago. Lots of info about how they dressed and personal hygiene and some housework information. It is an easy read. The book is over 200 pages, but the margins are huge. I'm an old house fanatic and a history buff and this book didn't quite hit the spot for me, but it's in my personal library as a good reference work. However, if you can only buy one or two books about life 100 years ago, I'd recommend "Never done" by Susan Strasser and "Victorian America" by Thomas Schlereth. These books get to the nitty gritty and have more substance. Again, "Light of the Home" is not a bad book - I bought it, after all and I kept it! It's in my top five favorite books of women's life in history. I'd just put a couple books above it, in my personal preferences.

From the greatest collection of American Voctoriana comes a wonderful evocation of the lives of women 100 years ago. 125 black white photos.

"Green's lively text . . . is delightfully illustrated with pictures and artifacts." Time