

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
A050 -- GENTEEL WOMAN SEEKS EMPLOYMENT -- FEBRUARY, 2022



WELCOME TO TOPIC # 50... TODAY HOLMES AND I WILL
BE LOOKING AT GOVERNESSES DURING OUR PERIOD.



SIX GOVERNESSES APPEARED IN THE SHERLOCK HOLMES' STORIES: MARY MORSTAN IN 'THE SIGN OF THE FOUR,' VIOLET HUNTER IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE COPPER BREECHES'...



... VIOLET SMITH IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE SOLITARY CYCLIST,' MISS BURNET IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF WISTERIA LODGE'...



...MISS DOBNEY IN 'THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LADY CARFAX' AND GRACE DUNBAR IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THOR BRIDGE.'



**THEIR FICTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES REFLECTED
COMMON PROBLEMS TRUE-LIFE VICTORIAN
GOVERNESSES FACED IN THEIR JOB.**



FOR THE WELL-EDUCATED, UNMARRIED MIDDLE-CLASS WOMAN, THE POST OF GOVERNESS WAS ONE OF FEW OCCUPATIONS OPEN TO SOMEONE OF HER STATUS.



**THESE WOMEN OFTEN SELECTED THE PROFESSION
FOLLOWING THE LOSS OR BANKRUPTCY OF THEIR
FATHER OR BROTHER OR WHEN FACED WITH A LACK
OF MARITAL PROSPECTS.**





DURING THE 1800s, WOMEN OUTNUMBERED THE MEN IN BRITAIN, AND BY ENOUGH THAT MANY SOUGHT EMPLOYMENT AS THE ONLY MEANS OF SUSTAINING THEMSELVES.





IN 1850, IT WAS ESTIMATED 20,000 SERVED AS GOVERNESSES, WITH MORE SEEKING WORK THAN THERE WERE OPPORTUNITIES.



*SUCH A SURPLUS DEPRESSED SALARIES TO ABOUT
35 POUNDS A YEAR, NOT INCLUDING CLOTHING,
LAUNDRY, MEDICAL OR OTHER EXPENSES.*



WHEN VIOLET HUNTER AND VIOLET SMITH WERE OFFERED 100-120 POUNDS PER YEAR (NOTED AS DOUBLE OR MORE THE USUAL FEE) IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THEY FOUND IT TOO MUCH TO RESIST—DESPITE THE RATHER SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT WAS OFFERED.



WOMEN COULD ADVERTISE THEIR INTEREST IN A POSITION OR USE AN AGENCY SUCH AS VIOLET HUNTER DID TO FIND A JOB.



LATER, THE GOVERNESSES' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION, CREATED IN 1843, PROVIDED A REGISTRY OF GOVERNESSES AND EVEN OFFERED SPECIAL SERVICES TO THOSE OUT OF WORK.



Dr. CORNWELL'S Approved Educational Works. *See full list of books within its pages.*

The London & Prospect

THE GOVERNESSES

A LADIES' LITERARY MONTHLY.
 Edited by JOSEPH HUGHES.
 11, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

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Popular Mythology. By Rev. St. George W. Cox, B.A., Author of 'Fables of Ancient Greece,' etc.	Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' By J. L. Keston, B.A., Lecturer on English Literature at the Westminster Training College.
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	Reviewed.
	Answers to Questions in 'The Scholar'
	School Song

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THE YOUNG COMPOSER. By Dr. Cornwell. 42nd Edition.

Dr. CORNWELL'S SCHOOL GRAMMAR. 58th Edition. Now Ready.

IN PART, THE ORGANIZATION WAS CREATED TO RECOGNIZE THE SOCIAL CLASS OF THESE WOMEN, MARKING THEM AS DIFFERENT FROM WORKING CLASS SERVANTS PLACED BY OTHER AGENCIES.



AT THE SAME TIME, WHILE HER EDUCATION MARKED HER AS ABOVE THE OTHER HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS, THE GOVERNESS'S PAID STATUS SEPARATED HER FROM THE FAMILY SHE SERVED.



HERS WAS OFTEN A VERY LONELY EXISTENCE OUTSIDE OF WORK... DEPENDING ON THE HOUSEHOLD, SHE MIGHT EAT HER MEALS WITH THE CHILDREN OR POSSIBLY DINE WITH THE FAMILY, AS MISS BURNET DID, WHEN NO COMPANY WAS PRESENT.



*BUT THE OTHER SERVANTS WOULDN'T HAVE
WELCOMED HER IN THEIR COMMON SITTING ROOM.*



THUS, MARY MORSTAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HER EMPLOYER—DESCRIBED BY WATSON AS A 'FRIENDSHIP'—WAS OUT OF THE ORDINARY AND HINTED AT HER SPECIAL CHARACTER.



MIDDLE- AND UPPER-CLASS FAMILIES HIRED GOVERNESSES TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTION TO BOTH SEXES UNTIL THE BOYS WERE SENT TO PREP OR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.



*INSTRUCTION CONTINUED FOR GIRLS IN
SUBJECTS AS VARIED AS ENGLISH, HISTORY,
GEOGRAPHY AND CONVERSATIONAL FRENCH.*





GOVERNESSES WERE ALSO EXPECTED TO PROVIDE LESSONS IN ART, PIANO, AND SINGING AS WELL AS THE SOCIAL GRACES REQUIRED OF YOUNG VICTORIAN WOMEN.



**VIOLET HUNTER HAD A SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY TO TEACH
AND LISTED HER 'ACCOMPLISHMENTS' AS INCLUDING
FRENCH, GERMAN, MUSIC, AND DRAWING.**





MISS BURNET TAUGHT TWO GIRLS, AGED 11 AND 13, AND GRACE DUNBAR HAD TWO CHILDREN UNDER HER CARE. VIOLET SMITH HAD A TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL FOR HER PUPIL.



DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER AND AGES OF THE CHILDREN, A GOVERNESS MIGHT SPEND YEARS IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD (OFTEN UNTIL THE YOUNGEST CHILD LEFT HOME) AND DEVELOP A DEEP ATTACHMENT TO HER PUPILS.



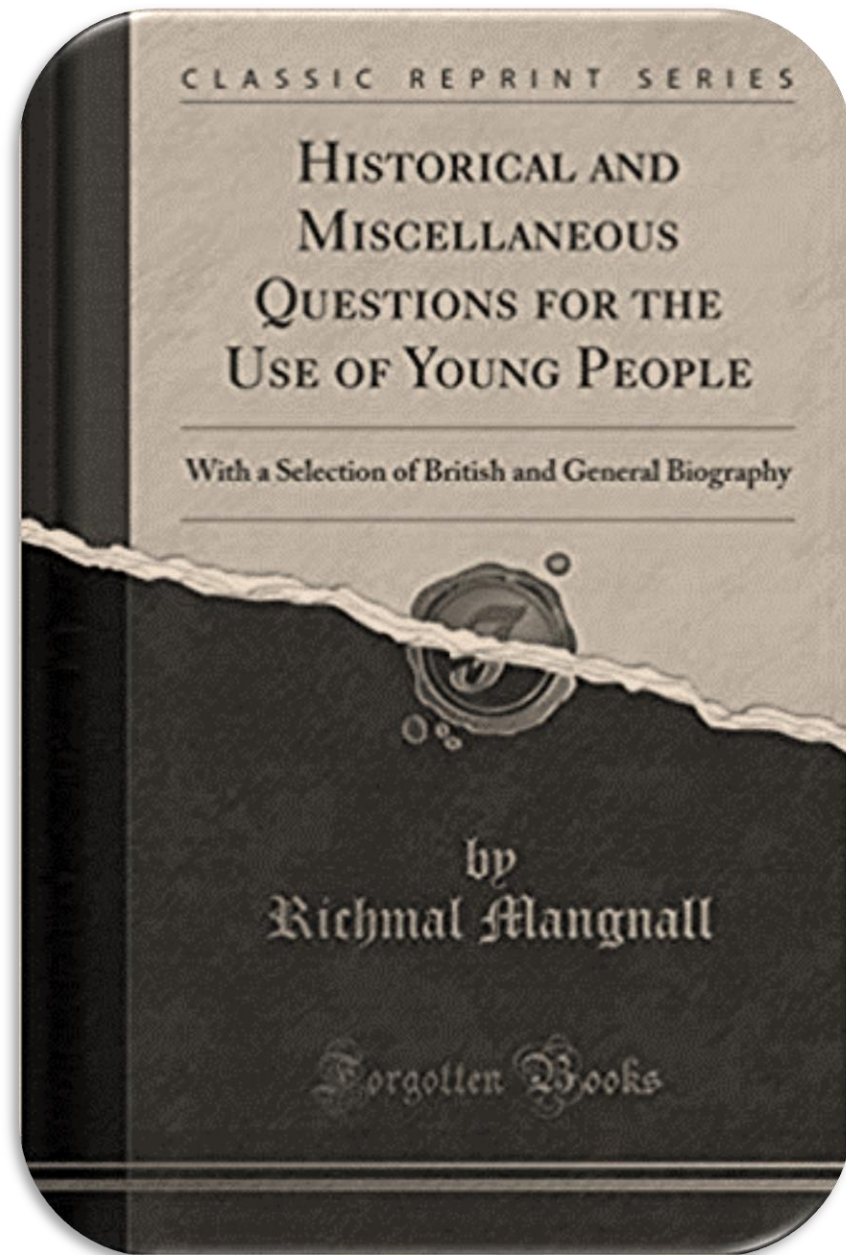
*LADY CARFAX, FOR EXAMPLE, KEPT IN CONTACT WITH
MISS DOBNEY EVEN AFTER HER GOVERNESS RETIRED.*



*NOT ALL GOVERNESSES, HOWEVER, WERE AS WELL-
PREPARED AS THOSE IN THE SHERLOCK HOLMES' STORIES.*



IF THEY LACKED THE BACKGROUND NEEDED TO COVER WHAT WAS EXPECTED, THEY MIGHT RELY ON TEACHERS' MANUALS SUCH AS RICHMAL MANGNALL'S HISTORICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PEOPLE.



HISTORICAL
AND
MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS,

FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PEOPLE;

WITH

A SELECTION OF
BRITISH, AND GENERAL BIOGRAPHY.

&c. &c.

By RICHMAL MAGNALL.

Unrivall'd Greece, where every power beign,
Conspir'd to blow the flower of human kind,
And lavish'd all that genius can inspire,
Rome, in her glory see, the pride of earth,
All head to counsel, and all heart to act;
Last, English merit, where we find combin'd,
Whate'er high fancy, sound, judicious thought,
The ample, generous heart, unrooping soul,
And firm, tenacious valour can bestow.

THOMSON'S Liberty

Catch them, O catch the transient hour,
Improve each moment as it flies,
Life's a short summer, soon a flower,
He dies; alas! how soon he dies. JOHNSON.

Fifteenth Edition,

CORRECTED AND IMPROVED.

LONDON

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-BOW;
AND HURST, ROBINSON, AND CO., CHEAPSIDE.

1820.

THE DESPERATE GOVERNESS MIGHT HAVE HER STUDENTS MEMORIZE ONE OR TWO PAGES EACH DAY OF THE BOOK'S QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS THAT COVERED EVERYTHING FROM HISTORY TO MYTHOLOGY TO HERALDRY AND ASTRONOMY.



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HISTORICAL
AND
MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS,

FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PEOPLE;

WITH A SELECTION OF

BRITISH AND GENERAL BIOGRAPHY,

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RASTER STREET, STRAND.

FOR EXAMPLE, FROM THE FIRST PAGE UNDER
'SCRIPTURAL HISTORY,' A STUDENT'S RESPONSE
TO THE QUESTION 'HOW CAME THIS WORLD INTO
BEING?' WAS GIVEN AS 'IN THE BEGINNING THE
GREAT GOD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH AND ALL
THINGS THAT ARE IN THEM.'



IF FORTUNATE, THE GOVERNESS MIGHT BE SUPPORTED BY A SPECIAL GOVERNESS OR TUTOR BROUGHT IN TO COVER CERTAIN SUBJECTS.



**VIOLET SMITH, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS HIRED TO TEACH
MUSIC TO WOODLEY'S DAUGHTER... SHE MENTIONED
NO RESPONSIBILITIES FOR OTHER LESSONS.**



IT WAS ALSO NOT UNHEARD OF FOR THE GOVERNESS TO FIND HERSELF AT THE MERCY OF THE MALE FAMILY MEMBERS... NOT ALL WERE AS LUCKY AS JANE EYRE TO MARRY THEIR EMPLOYER... GRACE DUNBAR AND VIOLET SMITH BOTH WERE FORCED TO REJECT THEIR EMPLOYER'S ADVANCES TO THEIR OWN DETRIMENT.





MORE THAN ONE YOUNG EMPLOYEE WOULD HAVE AGREED TO MY ACCUSATION OF MR. GIBSON'S ACTIONS TOWARD MISS DUNBAR: 'YOU HAVE TRIED TO RUIN A DEFENCELESS GIRL WHO WAS UNDER YOUR ROOF.'





GIVEN SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES THESE GENTEEL AND EDUCATED WOMEN FACED, IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THAT THEIR PREDICAMENTS WOULD HAVE STRUCK A CHORD WITHIN ME.





*AND I, ALWAYS A GENTLEMAN IN SUCH
CIRCUMSTANCES, WOULD HAVE FELT HONOR-
BOUND TO ASSIST THEM.*



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 050 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 051, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT CODES AND CIPHERS DURING OUR PERIOD.



ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THIS TOPIC:

- DANIEL POOL, WHAT JANE AUSTEN ATE AND CHARLES DICKENS KNEW, NEW YORK: SIMON AND SCHUSTER, INC., 1993
- SALLY MITCHELL, EDITOR, VICTORIAN BRITAIN: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA, NEW YORK: GARLAND PUBLISHING, INC., 1988
- MARTHA VICINUS, EDITOR, SUFFER AND BE STILL: WOMEN IN THE VICTORIAN AGE, NEW YORK: INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1972
- RICHMAL MANGNALL, HISTORICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS, NEW YORK: D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, 1853



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JOE FAY
LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE
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STEVE MASON

