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The Impact of Industrial Revolution on the Life of Women during
the Reign of Queen Victoria

(Master thesis)

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(Anglická filologie)

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(Diplomová práce)

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to provide a detailed picture of life of women during the Victorian era which was greatly influenced by the Industrial Revolution. The position of women was changing throughout the history but the Victorian era was time full suffering and exploiting women mostly at work. Even though women eventually gained the right to vote and other rights especially within the marriage, they had to go long and difficult way to achieve this. The individual chapters of the thesis are focused on family life, education, work, social and legal status, fashion and other areas of women's life which were affected by quick development of the country. The thesis takes a look into the world of rich and poor women which was pitiful rather than admiring.

Key words

Victorian era, Victorian women, women, women's rights, women's history, 19th century women, Industrial Revolution, life of women

Anotace

Cílem této práce je podat přehled o životě žen v době vlády královny Viktorie, který byl významně ovlivněn příchodem Průmyslové revoluce. Pozice žen ve společnosti si již od pravěku prošla velikými změnami, ženy ale nikdy předtím nemusely snášet tolik utrpení v podobě neustálého pracovního nasazení a povinnosti věnovat se zásadně ženským činnostem. I když ženy konečně dosáhly práva volit a dalších výsad uplatňovaných například v manželství, musely ujít dlouhou a nelehkou cestu. Jednotlivé části práce se soustředují na rodinný život, vzdělání, práci, sociální poměry, sexualitu, módu a další oblasti z ženského světa té doby. Podíváme se do světa žen chudých i bohatých, do světa, který budí lítost a obdiv.

Klíčová slova

Viktoriánské období, Viktoriánské ženy, historie žen, práva žen, ženy v 19. století, Průmyslová revoluce, život žen

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1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to provide a detailed picture of life of women between the years 1837 and 1901 which are known as the Victorian era and which were formed mostly by the arrival of the Industrial Revolution. The emphasis will be placed on areas concerning family life, education, work, free time, and fashion.

The term Industrial Revolution evokes in people ideas like advancement, change from outdated ways of production to modern machines, progress in many countries, or wide range of new possibilities, but the impact caused by the revolution to the life of women immediately after its arrival is not clear to everyone.

The position of women has changed throughout British history – from the prehistoric time until today. The thesis will begin with a brief summary of women's role from the very beginning until Victorian age and with the description of the term Industrial Revolution. This overview is necessary to see how different and important these sixty-four years of Victorian period were and what changes were brought about, and how horrible women's position and life was in comparison with the previous periods.

It is important to mention the fact that there were significant differences between upper- and middle-class women and lower-class women. Not in the position within the society but rather in working and living conditions. The following chapters will provide a detailed picture of working opportunities and working and living conditions which were really striking. Jobs as mill workers, factory workers, servants, governesses and teachers will be mentioned as well as jobs which were strictly forbidden to women even though they desired to do them. The reasons will be provided as well. To see the huge gap between the rich and poor families, it will be necessary to show the style of their houses, the houseworks they did, and way of living generally.

Women at that time had few rights, the men ruled the rest. The thesis will clarify how limited their social and legal status was. The most famous names of women reformers, pioneers and movements will be introduced together with the reasons for

their actions which were mostly the dissatisfaction with their position. Women had to fight for the rights which were being withheld from them.

Victorians are known for social conventions and sexual restraint even though the sexuality was not taken so strictly in previous centuries. The following chapters will explore the position of women in marriage together with the changes the time brought in the form of acts which provided women more rights than ever.

The Industrial Revolution did not have only the negative impacts. It allowed people to enjoy their free time in many different ways and forget about the hardships of their lives. Many sports have their roots in the Victorian period and people had more opportunities to have fun than in previous centuries thanks to the inventions and possibility to travel by train to further places. The thesis will concentrate on the types of leisure-time activities together with one big and unforgettable event which took place in Victorian era and which is ineffaceably printed in British history, called The Great Exhibiton.

A topic which is fairly connected to women can not be omitted. Victorian fashion including beautiful parasols, thin corsets, and big and wide skirts will be divided into several periods. Each of them is different from the point of view of style and accessories used.

Lastly, the findings and the most important and interesting facts will be recapitulated in the conclusion. Everybody knows that the Industrial Revolution was an important milestone in the history. Everybody should also know that this milestone contributed to the fight for life and never-ending misery of lower-class women.

2 Life of women in previous centuries

In order to understand and fully hold the conditions of women in Victorian era, we must see how the development went throughout the centuries. Each period of time is unique and the conditions differ, although the division into men's work and women's work is visible since the Stone Age. The Victorian era is for women a small step back which will be visible only in comparison with previous periods of time.

2.1 From Stone Age to the Vikings

50,000 BC People divided the work to men's and women's. Men were supposed to go hunting and fishing, bring home the food and protect their families. Women were looking after the children, cooking meals and keeping the fire. Women at that time were incredibly important – they were worshiped for the reproducing and keeping the fire. There was a cult of mother – goddess of fertility. With the time, when the nature and weather changed, people started to domesticate animals for meat, milk and other raw materials like leather or wool. The position of men was rising which caused that matriarchy was replaced by patriarchy.¹

Celtic period was very kind to women. This period is also known as the Iron Age and lasted from 700 BC till the Roman invasion in 43 AD. Celts brought new technological innovations so people were able to make new weapons and tools from iron. The position of women was very good – they could become a chief of the tribe and they could do any other job they wanted including their own business. They were not dependent on their husbands and had to ask for their permission only in case of a large and important matter. Marriage was not business of anyone else than the couple itself so women could freely choose their husband. Only noblewomen were advised whom to marry or not. It was also possible to divorce if one in the couple desired to do so. Women were entitled to get their part of possession from the marriage and to re-marry was not forbidden. Women were also protected against violence. If someone

¹ Jarmila Halamová, "Life of Women in Britain throughout Centuries." (Bc. thesis, Palacký University Olomouc, 2011), 8-9.

hurt a woman, the punishment was very strict, even killing a woman was worse than killing a man.²

In comparison with the Celtic society, women in Roman society were “machines producing children.” The more children they had, the better. All the power belonged to men, women had not many rights. They could not vote, they could not participate in any political activities and meetings. Women got married when they were twelve years old and they were supposed to have as many children as possible. This obligation was rather for women from noble families because they were able to look after the children and provide them with proper care and money. Women very often died because of childbirth and exhaustion of previous childbirths. Women could have the same primary education as men, however only men were allowed to go to secondary schools to learn mathematics and other subjects. Women, on the other hand, were at home (women from lower classes also worked) and learned how to sew, look after children and cook. The perfect Roman woman was modest, persistent, loyal to family, and able to have many children. Women had almost no personal life and were considered to be not very clever and with no right to see or raise their children after a divorce.³

In Anglo-Saxon time women were equal to men more than before but after the Norman Conquest in 1066, the military society did not consider them to be important so men were more dominant than women again. As far as the working life is concerned, women worked with textiles – they sewed, weaved and clothed the family, they worked with domesticated animals and were not involved in any hard work except the slaves and peasants. Marriage was not so strict as in Roman period – in case of divorce, women could take their children and half of property. The higher class, the better treatment but some men thought women should be beaten regularly even though there was a law protecting women against rape or seduction. Viking woman was the head of the household and everything connected with it. When her husband was out, she took care about the farm. Parents chose husbands for their daughters but

² Ibid., 9-11.

³ Ibid., 11-12.

if they did not like them, they did not have to marry them. However, for noble women entering into marriage was mostly from political and financial reasons. Women were independent but again, according to the class they belonged to.⁴

2.2 The Middle Ages

This period was very rough not only for women but for every person. The Middle Ages is known for wars, disorders, rebellions. It is a time of Famine (1315-1322). People wanted to survive so they worked very hard, women included. Men were dominant to women who had to obey them. There is a marked difference between rich and poor women. Women from lower classes knew only never-ending work in the household. All women were supposed to have many children which is again connected with high death rate caused by exhaustion and often childbirths. The more sons, the better. Poorer women had children and got married later because they were obliged to help their parents as long as possible. Marriage was a decision of a family who chose the right potential partner for their daughters. Women had almost no right or property. The only property they could have was their dead husband's property.⁵

2.3 The Tudors and The Stuarts

There was a huge gap between the rich and the poor in the 16th century. Rich women organized their servants and were in charge of them. The other women cared about their household, they cooked, washed, cleaned the house, looked after the children, farmer's wives helped in the fields and cared about cattle. They were mothers and wives which meant that they had to help their husbands to run a business. There were jobs purely for men and women who could work as bakers, midwives, servants, shoemakers, tailoress, brewers, milliners, etc. However, women were mostly subordinated to men. The Law's Resolution of Women's Rights helped

⁴ Ibid., 12-15.

⁵ Ibid., 15-16.

women to know what their right within a marriage are. Education was different for boys and girls. Girls were taught at home whilst boys at school. Girls learnt how to read and write, how to dance, sing, and sew, some very lucky girls learnt languages.⁶

2.4 Summary

From this overview we can trace the development of women's position throughout the history. The Stone Age and Celtic times were very kind to women. They had dominant leading position and were respected by men which was never repeated in the future again, they could even fought in wars. Celtic period was the only time in the past when women were equal to men. The division of work between men's and women's duties came naturally when the men's power was needed to obtain the food and women's skills were needed to look after children and keep the fire so women, as weaker sex, were supposed to stay at home, do physically easy work and leave the more demanding activities to men. Celts and Anglo-Saxons loved their women and appreciated them but later, after 1066, women were seen as unimportant. They had to do the work belonging to women only, and have many children. For Vikings the family was very important and women were responsible for looking after the children, household, and farm in the absence of their husbands. During Tudor and Stuart times women were seen as inferior to men, they had to obey their husbands and had only few right within marriage.

⁶ Ibid., 16-20.

3 Industrial Revolution

Even though the Industrial Revolution broke out before Queen Victoria ascended the throne, it had a great influence on further development and formation of the whole world including the life of women in England. One would assume that a prospering and developing country would provide its inhabitants better conditions than ever, but the reverse is true. Since that reason it is necessary to provide some information related to this breakthrough. Industrial Revolution took place in Great Britain from approximately 1750. British society became customer-oriented for the first time in the history and the term “The Workshop of the World“ has become associated with England from this period of time. The Industrial Revolution had extreme influence on the way women were treated, on their working opportunities and style of living.

The term Industrial Revolution includes the changes in the way of working, social, political, and cultural changes. People gradually stopped working in the fields, in workshops or in their homes and moved from the countryside to bigger cities to work in mills or factories because the food and goods produced in the countryside did not earn enough money for decent life. Human hand was replaced by machines which were powered first by water later by steam, and farming was replaced by working in the factories. People for the first time in the history came in touch with different kinds of energy sources and different types of production.⁷

Process of industrial changes commenced in Britain and gradually spread into the other parts of the world. People started using new materials such as iron or steel. New energy sources appeared such as coal, steam, electricity, or petroleum. New machines were invented to replace human work force. Organization of work changed, people started working in factories and mills, the range of jobs available to women expanded. The improvement of transportation and communication offered people

⁷ Brian Milton, *A Victorian Mill* (London: Watts Books, 1994), 14.

new opportunities and international trade began flourishing. Food and other goods were more accessible and the population was rapidly growing.⁸

People faced something unknown, something new. They did not know what their future will be look like because they had never come in touch with the new machines and manufacture before. From the women point of view, they got the chance to leave their homes, go to work, and participate on making money which was a great step forward. However, it does not mean they were equal to men.

The life of all got better in every state where the industrialization took place but the beginnings were difficult. Some historians claim that between 1840s and 1850s there were no significant marks of improvement, they came later. Industrial Revolution is supposed to be one of the most important events in history.⁹

⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v. "Industrial Revolution,"
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/287086/Industrial-Revolution>.

⁹ Clark Nardinelli, "Industrial Revolution and the Standard of Living," In *Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*, edited by David R. Henderson. Liberty Fund, Inc., 2008.
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/IndustrialRevolutionandtheStandardofLiving.html>.

4 Women and work

After people moved from the countryside to the towns, all people including men, women, and children started working mostly in factories. The conditions were awful, working hours long, and many people would rather stay in their small workshops and on the fields growing vegetables, breeding animals and earning money just for themselves. Many women soon recognized that the broadening of jobs available for them was not such win. The bad times began. Industrial Revolution, the step towards the better future brought misery and suffering to the poor. The machines needed to be operated and textile industry was very widespread in the first decades of the Revolution and offered jobs for many women. Following paragraphs reveal the dreadful reality about women and their working opportunities and conditions.

4.1 Cotton mills

Cotton mill is a synonym for women's workplace during the Industrial Revolution and that is why it is mentioned on the first place. Between the years 1740 – 1844 new machines were invented to replace the human work force. One of the most important industries was the cotton industry. Cotton was popular for its easiness to wash, lightness and quality. We know that this had been the main industry since the Middle Ages. Women were generally good at spinning and weaving the raw cotton so a big number of them worked in the textile industry as spinners or weavers. However, until 1830 most of the spinning and weaving was still done by hand in people's own workshops or at home where the father did the weaving. Factory workers produced cloth for selling and gradually the prices went down because the production in factories was not so expensive as in the homes. One of the most significant ports for importing raw cotton was Liverpool or Manchester so many mills were built around those towns. Cloth was produced not only from cotton but also from wool, silk, or flax. Mill workers lived very often in the houses built near the mills. They were houses

standing very closely to each other, modestly furnished and containing several small rooms for the whole family, and a cellar.¹⁰

4.2 Different Jobs

Women did not work in industries dealing with textile only. Women from working class did different kinds of jobs, but especially from the beginning of the revolution their jobs were often dangerous and exhausting and work hours were long, all comparable with men's. They worked in the steel industry, in mines as brick workers, stone-breakers, or as sorters of coal, in ironworks or in sweatshops as needleworkers making work for nobility. Women worked at assembly lines, as street vendors, or furniture-assemblers. They also worked at home, they made boxes and envelopes, laundry, ironing and cleaning the household. They illustrated books or made tinting christmas cards but these home jobs were not well-paid. (appendix 1) These were examples of jobs acceptable for women. It was unimaginable to work as a doctor, scientist, or politician, especially at the beginning of the era.¹¹

„By 1861, over a quarter of the female population over the age of fifteen was working.“¹² Working hours were long and women were too tired after coming home where other work was waiting for them – cooking, cleaning the house, and other housework including looking after the family. This double work shift was called double burden. Women at that time were exploited and used to do the dirtiest work in factory and all the work in the household.

When they had small babies, they were looked after by their older brothers or sisters, or by old women who could not do any work in factories. Babies were very often fed during mother's breaks. Quite alarming is the fact they were fed by special drugs which kept them quiet so mothers could continue working. Many children died from that treatment, however, it was not strong enough a signal to stop it. Young, unmarried girls had bigger freedom. What they earned, they could spend on what they

¹⁰ Milton, *A Victorian Mill*, 6-15.

¹¹ Patricia Owen, *Women and Work* (Hove: Wayland, 1989), 7.

¹² Owen, *Women and Work*, 8.

wanted, even though they had to give a part of their money to their parents. They wore fancy clothes and often went to pubs or drinking clubs to have fun. In 1842, the so called Mines Act was passed to protect women and children from severe conditions. They did not have to work underground anymore. Women were eliminated from many types of work even though they would like to do them. For instance it was more difficult, not even unimaginable, to do higher-paid jobs and to be on the same level as men.¹³

Pregnant women very often worked until the last they of their pregnancy. They came back to work as soon as they were physically able. In 1891 the act passed which allowed them to take four weeks off to recover. Women could not survive without a salary so long so they did not take the advantage of it.¹⁴

If a woman worked, it meant that her background was not very comfortable and respectable so she needed to earn money for living or at least to help parents to support the family. To be a middle-class family, you needed to have at least one servant.¹⁵ Middle-class women's main job was to prepare for future marriage. They learnt how to become an attractive bride for a potential wealthy husband. To their disappointment there were not enough men. So if a woman did not have anyone who would be able to protect her and provide money for her needs, she was forced to work and risk a slump in her social class. Such women had few opportunities of employment which would assure them their current social position. Professions such as companions to an invalid ladies, teachers or governesses were the options. Women could work also as nurses, however, this job was not considered to be respectable enough until the time of Florence Nightingale. There was a problem with teaching also. It is known that women did not get higher education and education from subjects like science or mathematics, so they did not have proper knowledge which they could pass further. To be a governess was a very desirable job even though governesses were not

¹³ Owen, *Women and Work*, 8-9.

¹⁴ Wikipedia, s.v. "Women in Victorian Era," last modified March 27, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era.

¹⁵ Tim Lambert, "Life for Women in the 19th Century," Localhistories.org, <http://www.localhistories.org/vicwomen.html>.

sometimes treated as part of a family but like one step better servants. In 1848 and 1849 two colleges were opened for girls who wanted to become governesses, the Queen's College in London and Bedford College. They provided training for governesses and schoolteachers.¹⁶

From this list of occupations, the only ones open to women of good family was teaching, being a schoolmistress or a governess in a private family. The families very often offered comfortable housing in a beautiful countryside but the pay was sometimes very low.

Professions such as shoe-makers, wood engravers, interior designers and hairdressers were mostly entitled to be done by men, however the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women managed to gain the permission for women to be trained for these professions. The end of the nineteenth century was more amiable than the beginning. The number of jobs increased, conditions got better and women were able to work also in offices, post offices, banks and shops, as telephone operators, and were encouraged to become printers and compositors. Even though women were never paid as well as men in Victorian era, they could at least enjoy the limited freedom of choice.¹⁷

There are many famous women writers, for example the Brontë sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Ann Evans and others. They became professional writers although women were not supposed to be productive in writing. If a woman wanted to be a writer and publish her articles in magazines and newspapers in order to earn money for living, she very often chose a pen name. That is the reason why people might know the names like George Eliot, Ellis Bell, Currer Bell, or Acton Bell better than their real ones.

¹⁶ Owen, *Women and Work*, 11-13.

¹⁷ Owen, *Women and Work*, 13.

4.3 “Worries“ of Noble Women

The difference between the classes was enormous. Working-class women worked extremely hard. On the other side of the gap there were middle-class women who were often cut from work. They ran the family business when their husbands were away from home. They also looked after dairy and farm. In case the business was successful and husbands became richer, they became noblewomen without the necessity to participate on earning money at all. The duties of upper-class women were to supervise on servants and be in charge of them. Working in the factories, in the farm, or somewhere else was an unknown world for them.¹⁸

4.4 Book of Household Management

As mentioned above, lower-class women either worked and looked after their families or stayed at home and had the important job of running the home. Isabella Beeton, the most famous cookery writer in British history, wrote a book called *Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management*. The book became a bestseller and today it is known as a cookbook, however originally it meant to be a handbook to the ruling of household in Victorian Britain. The book was published by her husband Samuel Beeton. Modern versions are still published today.¹⁹ There are chapters providing information about the duties of butlers, footmen, coachmen, grooms, stable-boys, valets, lady’s-maids, housemaids, dairy-maids, nursemaids, nurses; information about the economy of the kitchen, useful tips for mistresses, housekeepers, housewives, and number of recipes.

4.5 Women as servants

Double burden’s second part was the looking after the family. Women workers came home from work and started working another shift. Work at home can be described as the work of women servants because the duties in domestic service were

¹⁸ Kate Hyndley, *Women and the Family* (Hove: Wayland, 1989), 8-12.

¹⁹ Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management, “Mrs Beeton,” *MrsBeeton.com 2000-2012*, <http://www.mrsbeeton.com/>.

comparable to those in the houses of working-class women. In Mrs Beeton's book *Book of Household Management* women could read how to care about the household and how to be a proper housewife.

Many rich ladies employed housekeepers to look after and organize their families. These servants were called "maids-of-all-work". Their duty was to clean the rooms, cook meals, and bring up children, all had to be done without modern gadgets such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, fridges, or even running water. Many girls learned that from their mothers since they were young. Servants were employed because middle-class and upper-class families simply used to have servants, otherwise they would not have the social status.²⁰ Number of people in domestic service increased dramatically not only in Britain but also in other European countries. Upper-class families often employed a whole army of servants. Duties of men servants were different.²¹

Any large country house would have several servants, it was not unusual to have more than forty servants. Families were large so nannies, governesses, nursemaids, tutors, etc. were needed. Servants usually had their own place to live and work which meant that they lived in another part of the house than the rest of the family. They were supposed to be invisible and unhearable. Even men and women-maids were segregated from each other and worked in separated rooms, e.g. in drying room, mangling room, ironing room, folding room, laundrymaids' room, etc.²²

Duties such as cleaning the kitchen stove, dusting the rooms, lightning the fire, sweeping the rooms, scrubbing the steps and polishing the boots, making the beds, sewing, mending, washing the clothes, and many others were on daily schedule of the maids.²³

²⁰ Richard Wood, *Family Life in Victorian Britain* (Hove: Wayland, 1994), 24-27.

²¹ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v. "domestic service,"
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/168568/domestic-service>.

²² Alison Honey, *Investigating the Victorians* (London: National Trust in Association with National and Provincial Building Society, 1993), 14-15.

²³ Wood, *Family Life*, 24-27.

Young girls began as scullery or kitchen maids. Their wages were low and working hours long. After some time they could become cooks or housekeepers who were better-paid and who had their own private servants. The cook had to prepare different variety of food because middle-class families liked eating and therefore the cooks were often cooking the whole day to prepare delicious soups, meat, puddings, vegetables, fruits, bread, rolls, sweets. The life of servants was called “the life below stairs” because servants literally spent their day in the kitchen, scullery, or larder.²⁴

Some women thought that this job is better than working in factories or mills, the others thought that lack of freedom, constant orders, and long working hours (often 15-18 hours a day) are not as good as working in factories. Conditions varied according to the employers, some of them treated servant girls as a part of their own family, the others only gave them the orders.

As mentioned above, there was no refrigerators so kitchen maids had to buy fresh food every day. Everything was supposed to be clean and spotless so maids dusted daily. Washing was done by a professional laundry maid who used the soap grated into tubs filled with warm water, and swirled around with a dolly stick. Ironing was also possible, flat heated irons were used.²⁵

The Industrial Revolution contributed to the ways of preserving and preparing food. People used the imported goods such as various kinds of spices. Preservation of food like salting, pickling, smoking, or drying changed into canning. The usage of chemicals was not developed until 1901. Gas was introduced to Britain in 1880s so the laborious carrying of coal and removing the ashes was replaced by it. Thereafter, gas stoves were used for cooking while open fires and ranges were used to heat the rooms and water. With the end of the century, most of the servants were replaced by the technology. Before that the chimney, kitchen range and the crockery needed to be

²⁴ Ann Kramer, *Victorians* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2003), 22-23.

²⁵ Kramer, *Victorians*, 22-23.

cleaned carefully and every morning, then black-leaded, polished and lit before any cooking.²⁶

Various gadgets were invented during the time. A real one was invented in 1878, called flushing lavatory which appeared in wealthy homes. Other small things which helped maids were for instance can openers, paraffin lamp, electric iron, vacuum cleaner, electric oven, electric kettle and others. All of these were invented at the end of 19th century.²⁷

The water had to be in most country areas pumped and carried from the well to the house. Even in the towns it was not common to have water taps in each home. There was often only one of them for several families in the street. In middle-class families there was a copper, big pot, used for washing. The clothes were washed in wash tubs.²⁸

4.6 Jobs forbidden

The university education was forbidden to women which meant that women were cut from employment in white-collar jobs like doctors, architects, bankers, or politicians. In the 19th century there was a prevalence of gender-specific employments. Supervisory roles and well-paid occupations requiring high education and intellectual contribution were exclusively taken by men.²⁹

4.7 Summary

Industrial Revolution required every single person to be employed, including women and children. The most typical industry for women was textile industry but steel industry was not an exception. Women already knew how to do all the work

²⁶ "The Kitchen," Victoriaspast.com, <http://victoriaspast.com/TheKitchen/The%20kitchen.htm>.

²⁷ Kramer, *Victorians*, 22-23.

²⁸ Hyndley, *Women and the Family*, 15.

²⁹ Pat Hudson, "Women's Work," BBC History, last updated March 29, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/womens_work_01.shtml.

connected to textile before so they were supposed to continue with it. Women also worked in mills, mines or factories in terrible conditions for poor money, as servants, or at home doing boxes for matches, envelopes, etc. Domestic service was widespread. Later in the century the opportunities broadened. Women could work in banks, shops, post offices, offices, etc. Middle-class women could be private teachers or governesses which were very desirable jobs. It was supposed to be against nature to become a scientist, politician, nurse, or doctor.

Upper-class women led a life of idleness where the only duty was to change the clothes, sit in front of the mirror combing and putting make-up, in some cases to have a maid who would comb their hair and put make-up on their faces, walk in the garden, chit-chat with friends and family about entirely unimportant matters, visit the friends or family, wait for children, the only constructive and useful work would be needleworking, making of boxes, colouring, and maybe charity which would include visiting the schools and a little help to the poor.

The Industrial Revolution divided society into two groups. Those who were rich and those who were poor and actually did the work which enabled the other group to become rich. These oppressed people who lived in horrible conditions and ignorance of politicians contributed to the changes and revolts which came later. The Industrial Revolution changed the world of work which changed the rest. We work, we get money, we live. Women in Victorian era worked, got poor money, were surviving. The money from the work was not sufficient, the rest of their lives suffered as well as the homelife mentioned in following chapter.

5 Victorian Homelife

Life of the rich was absolutely different from the way of life of the poor. These were two totally incomparable worlds. High society people enjoyed the life while the poor were struggling for it. The conditions were the same as with the work, rich women did nothing while the poor everything. In the following paragraphs the living conditions are described and the portrait of women's everyday life as the part of the family will be revealed as well as the activities and duties they had.

This division of society is typical for Britain for hundreds of years. The middle class was a class of merchants, traders, small farmers and businessmen. The growth of business and industry logically caused the growth of industrialists, factory owners, and mill owners who were the people in the middle class. The advancement of railway enabled to travel for longer distances, so middle-class society often took advantage of living on the suburbs which was similar like living in the country. Only labours who had no other choice lived in the crowded and filthy towns and cities.³⁰

The Industrial Revolution gave rise to the middle and upper class. Many people became businessmen and industrialists and became richer and richer but the Industrial Revolution required growing of working-class people, too. People were needed in mills and factories, still more and more. That is why the gap between the rich and poor was so significant. This was also reflected in their private life. The poor could not afford the comfort the rich could.

5.1 Houses of the Rich

Every wealthy family had many things to show their visitors – heavy magnificent furniture, abundant curtains, wide staircase, lavishly patterned wallpapers, and wide number of ornamented accessories such as china, wax flowers, stuffed animals, mirrors, vases, etc. The ownership of many expensive things showed the social status. Big heavy chairs as well as wide staircases were a necessity because

³⁰ David McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), 138-9.

of ladies' wide skirts. On the walls there were oil paintings, engravings, water colours, stitched needleworks, pictures, or drawings. Well-off people just liked filling their rooms with ornaments and handicrafts and liked boasting with it.³¹ Victorian furniture was of good quality and served several generations.³²

As we already know, rich families had many servants who needed their own rooms for working and sleeping. The house of the rich was separated into several parts where every part had a different purpose. Every room was meant for certain people and certain purposes. One part of the house was occupied by servants with mistresses and children. The first floor was usually intended for bedrooms and sitting-rooms for women, mistresses or children. The ground floor was the busiest part of the house with the hall, parlour, dining-room, or study. The kitchen was hidden somewhere in the back so the kitchen noises were not heard and strong odours were not smelled.³³ Organization of the house could have been different but definitely in each typical Victorian home of middle-classes there was an entrance hall, dining room, living room, music room and morning room, school room, drawing room, and two or three other bedrooms, the kitchen and a bathroom. (appendix 2)

This was about the look of the house from inside. The outside of the house was a garden. Foreign voyages enabled travellers and collectors to bring different things from their journeys such as different species of plants. They were implemented into gardens and parks and created beautifully looking old-fashioned Victorian flower gardens.³⁴

5.2 Houses of the Poor

Even in our most wildest fantasy we can not imagine the horrors of those who had not enough luck to be born into a noble family. The average age of working-class

³¹ Rachel Romanski, "Upper Class Victorian Homes,"
<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/agunn/teaching/enl3251/vf/pres/romanski.htm>.

³² Victoriana Magazine, "Victorian Furniture," Victoriana Magazine Home and Garden,
<http://www.victoriana.com/Furniture/>.

³³ Wood, *Family Life*, 6.

³⁴ Honey, *Investigatin the Victorians*, 24.

people was fifteen, those from the middle class was forty-five. Working-class family often had about six members and often lived only in several small rooms.³⁵

People thought that illnesses were spread by the air which was a crucial mistake. They did not realize that the water and lice were the lousy source of cholera and other killers for those who did not have proper drains and water supplies. In 1832 there was an outbreak of cholera which killed over 31,000 people. Proper drains with clear water started appearing in the middle of the century which led to the remission of the diseases. Officers started to pay more attention to the conditions inside the towns. Even though there were still overcrowded slums and houses, they tried to make sure that newly built houses are not so crowded. (appendix 3) There were also built new libraries, parks, and public showers.³⁶

Especially in early Victorian time the cities were dirty, bleak and unpleasant. Water was polluted, streets were crowded and hardly a day went by without a person dead because of an illness.

Between the years 1875 and 1914 the conditions of the poor greatly improved. Wages rose, homes became more comfortable, people were healthier. They could afford to buy fresh and more nutritious food.³⁷ Doctors started to vaccinate people against cholera and typhoid and the invention of other pills helped doctors and people to treat headaches, cancer and other illnesses.³⁸

5.2.1 Ways of Helping

Philantropists were individuals who helped poor people. They tried to provide them the food, clothes and a place where they could sleep or stay. A Religious Army,

³⁵ Wood, *Family Life*, 7.

³⁶ McDowall, *Illustrated History*, 140.

³⁷ McDowall, *Illustrated History*, 151.

³⁸ Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 18-19.

later known as Salvation Army, was founded in 1865 by William Booth and it was a religious organization run on military lines. It provided shelter, clothes and food.³⁹

5.2.2 The Poor Law

Those who were really poor and did not have enough money to buy food and basic necessities could apply to the poor law commissioners for help. Until the year 1834 the poor were given so called outdoor reliefs – a certain amount of money necessary for surviving. However, after 1834 The New Poor Law came into existence because the cost of these helps was rising. Outdoor reliefs almost disappeared (were provided only in exceptional circumstances) and were replaced by indoor reliefs which meant the possibility to go to the workhouse. Once you were in the workhouse, you lost contact with your family, you worked long hours a day and had no privacy. In the workhouse you got clothes (kind of a uniform) and food in return for many hours of labour work a day. No matter if you were a man, women, or a child. You had to follow the strict rules. So only those who were really desperate applied for this kind of help.⁴⁰

5.3 Poor or Rich and Yet Equal

No matter if women were rich or poor, they shared two big worries. The first one was the danger of childbearing. Even though the upper-class women's food was more nutritious, the rate of infant and maternal death was still high. Infection was neglected so many newborn children died. The second problem was the legal status. The better social status did not mean the better legal status. After the marriage women lost every little right they used to have. After marriage all the women's property became her husband's, women had to be obedient and had to listen to their husbands.⁴¹ If not, they faced the consequences. Moreover, none of them could go to

³⁹ Kramer, *Victorians*, 30-31.

⁴⁰ BBC Bitesize, "People and Poverty", BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/shp/britishsociety/thepoorrev1.shtml>.

⁴¹ Hyndley, *Women and the Family*, 8-12.

universities, could be a politician or could vote. No matter if the woman was rich or poor, in these cases they were equal.

5.4 Summary

It depended on luck. It was bad for a woman to be born into Victorian times, it was even worse to be born into a poor family. The great gap between the rich and the poor was painfully obvious. Even though Britain was the country number one in the economical progress, it was not able to provide poor people conditions good enough to survive. The whole process of Industrial Revolution required work force and because the population was growing incredibly quickly, not everyone could become rich even though the Industrial Revolution gave rise to the middle class and helped businessmen, merchants, and traders to get to the money. The surplus of people caused that the price of work force was low. The affluent were living in comfort and luxury and those who did the work suffered and struggled for life in ugly and revolting slums. From all of that we can assume that women were old in their twenties without any energy which was caused by number of childbirths and exhausting work. There were individuals and groups helping the poor, from the side of the government the help was called the Poor law.

6 Marriage

Luck was not with women even in the marriage. To appreciate the way we live now we must get to know the way how previous generations lived. Today the conventions are rather benevolent and allow people not to be so strict about sexuality and marriage. It is considered to be normal to divorce and re-marry again, repeated divorces and marriages are not the exceptions as well as kissing couples, single mothers, or you can have illegitimate children or pre-marital sex. Previous centuries differed from the twenty-first century but Victorian England was somewhere behind the past. Even the centuries before had been more open to women's feelings and rights. In some periods divorces were possible and women could get some property after the divorce, they even could look after their children. Following chapter allows the readers to take a look into the marriages of Victorian women and see how submissive they had to be.

6.1 Golden Cage

Family meant a lot to Victorian people. Family was a symbol of stability and was supposed to be the most important and stable factor in the society. But once married, everything the woman possessed became her husband's, her property, her salary, her body. Women could marry a husband they wanted but they could not have as many children as they desired because birth control was not common then. Love played a minor role. Women promised before God to obey the man they marry in every way. Husband was the head of household and had the final word. In rare cases, if women were very wealthy, they could ask for premarital agreement to protect her money, however it was not usual. Unmarried women suffered from social disapproval, ridicule and pity. In the middle of the century, women outnumbered the men and over thirty percent of girls over twenty years were single. There were majority of men in colonies, so spinsters tended to emigrate there.⁴² The transformation of Britain resulted the division of the society into private sphere and social sphere. Men dominated the social

⁴² Helena Wojtczak, "Women's Status in Mid 19th Century England," <http://www.hastingspress.co.uk/history/19/overview.htm>.

sphere and women the private one which is the reason why women's place was at home.

Children could be taken from their mothers and sent to be raised elsewhere. Husbands could have mistresses and if a woman was unhappy or wanted to divorce, the law was not on her side. Adultery was the only acceptable reason for divorce but even in that case it was a reason only for men. Men were seen as protectors and supporters of their wives, so it did not matter whether they cheated on them or not. On the other hand, women cheating on their husbands were seen as ungrateful persons with no respect. Women had to prove adultery and physical violence on her person or incest to gain a divorce.⁴³

There might appear a question why all these women wanted to get married when their life was so subordinated to men. The answer is that poor women could get their social position and were not seen as unable of finding a husband. The second reason is that the marriage could free them from their families and give them the opportunity for a new life. If a wife for some reason escaped from her husband, she could be found by the police and sent back to her husband who himself decided about the remedy. Before the year 1891 a husband could imprison his wife in case that she refused to provide her body to his sexual satisfaction. After that year this was forbidden by a High Court. It was not until the 1891 which another law forbid them to rape her.⁴⁴

Let me highlight that a vast majority of women were from working classes. If they didn't find a wealthy man, they could work their whole life except the time of childbirth. If they found a wealthy groom, they could quit work.

⁴³ Rachael Hurvitz, "Women and Divorce in Victorian Era," <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/agunn/teaching/enl3251/vf/pres/hurvitz.htm>.

⁴⁴ Helena Wojtczak, "Women's Status in Mid 19th Century England," <http://www.hastingspress.co.uk/history/19/overview.htm>.

6.2 Ideal Victorian woman

Of course there were individual women with strong opinions who tried to fight against current laws, however, the vast majority of women found it easier to follow the mainstream. It meant to be a weak, helpless, fragile creature able to change the house into the comfortable warm home for husband and children. A good Victorian lady could speak a little French or Italian, could sing and play an instrument and should be innocent, virtuous, modest, biddable, dutiful with no intellectual opinions. Her career was marriage. Her role was to become a mother of at least six children. Her duty was to be a good wife.⁴⁵

6.3 1857 Matrimonial Cause Bill

This act enabled husband and wife to divorce. However, husband had to prove her wife's adultery or vice versa and moreover woman had to prove her husband's ill-treatment with her or bigamy or incest or cruelty to her person.⁴⁶

6.4 The Married Women's Property Acts (1870, 1882, 1893)

This was a series of acts that allowed women to be financially independent from their husbands. The first act passed in 1870 allowed women to have the right over their own earnings. About twelve years later women were allowed to administer their possession as any unmarried woman. The control over any kind of property obtained during the marriage was given to women in 1893. All women were equal now. These were not just some acts which were approved throughout the history.

⁴⁵ Pauline Wetson Thomas, "A Woman's Place in 19th Victorian History," Fashion-era.com, http://www.fashion-era.com/a_womans_place.htm.

⁴⁶ BBC, "Matrimonial Causes Act – 1857," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/bloodlines/familysecrets.shtml?entry=matrimonial_causes_act&theme=familysecrets.

These were acts which finally let women feel independent, they were milestones in women's history.⁴⁷

6.5 1886 The Guardianship of Infants Act

After being divorced or after husband's death, women were allowed to raise their children instead of other, strange guardians. Before that the husband could give his children into the custody of strangers instead of their own mother.⁴⁸

6.6 Summary

Women had to wait a long time until they could make decisions on their own. In middle-class household the woman was seen as a child-bearer. Life for working-class women was incredibly difficult. They were supposed to go to work, look after family and bring up their children. Women were excluded from public life, they could not vote, could not have higher education, could not have well-paid jobs. Their profession was marriage. It is sad that in the time of Industrial Revolution, of economic boom, and overall progress, women stood in the back and could not show their abilities and power.

An ideal Victorian woman was submissive, fragile, and dependent on her husband. Women in marriage had no rights, everything belonged to the husband, the body, property, children. Women belonged to the private sphere, the intellectual world was men only. Especially from the beginning of the era their life in marriage was wholly subordinated to men. Gradually women gained the right to divorce, later the right to own property, and finally even the right for guardianship of the children. From the legal point of view, these acts were milestone in women's history.

⁴⁷ Claire Jones, "The Married Women's Property Acts (UK, 1870, 1882, 1893)," HerStoria.com, <http://herstoria.com/?p=473>.

⁴⁸ "Guardianship of Infants Act," Spartacus Educational, <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Wcustody.htm>.

7 Fight for Rights

The Industrial Revolution established that life not very suitable for working people. If people wanted better conditions, they had to fight for them. The ways of fighting were protest movements, trade unions, and other organizations. One very strong movement was Chartism set up in 1838. A People's Charter was presented to Parliament and required the right to vote and secret ballots. The movement was not very successful and lasted only ten years. Later on their demands were taken effect anyway.⁴⁹ For the purposes of our investigation it is important to mention a movement consisted of suffragettes fighting for voting rights and several individual women who contributed to better conditions.

7.1 Brave Women

Women did not have many choices and once they decided to go against the mainstream they had to bear the consequences in form of public critique, slanders, scorn, and sometimes even prison. Their behaviour was labeled as mad, naive, and absolutely inappropriate. But not all women sat at home and submitted to the strict rules. There were those who tried to pull down the strong wall of prejudices and prohibition against them and who tried to gain at least the basic rights which should belong to everybody such as voting or education.

History is part of our existence; it is something which created the present so it is important to remember the important people and the actions they took which contributed to the world we live in now. This thesis deals with women so it is necessary to introduce women such as Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler and others. All women mentioned below contributed to something which was not achieved immediately but gradually. The first place on the list is deserved by the woman after whom the whole period is named, her majesty Queen Victoria.

⁴⁹ Kramer, *Victorians*, 32-33.

7.1.1 Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria, the daughter of the Duke of Kent, the niece of the King George's IV younger brother William, began her reign in 1837 in her eighteens and reigned for sixty-three years as the longest reigning British monarch in history. Even though the real power lay with Parliament and much of her work was rather ceremonial, she played an important role. During the 19th century, Britain became the world leader in the field of varied industrial production.⁵⁰ Britain had the largest navy, the most modern industries and became the world market.⁵¹

She married her German cousin Albert of Saxe-Coburg in 1840 whom she gave nine children.⁵² Victoria was completely devoted to her husband who started to have bigger and bigger responsibilities in running the country. They were a model to the nation, she introduced a period of stability, industrialism, and imperialism. Even though queen Victoria was strictly against childbirth which gave her the feeling to be similar to a cow, they spent a great deal of time with their nine children and wanted to give them as normal life as possible which impressed the wide public.⁵³ When her beloved husband died she was deeply hurt and for a very long time did not appear in the public. Whispering tongues started criticising her and questioning the value of the monarch. Fortunately, her advisers persuaded her to restore her interest in the country and queen Victoria became extremely popular. When she died, the love for the monarch and the pride of the country was great. She published her own diary called *Our Life in the Highlands* which was about her life with prince Albert, about their Balmoral castle in Scotland (her favourite place of relaxation), and about their relatives. People loved this publication, in fact, they could read something which no one else could throughout the history. No previous monarch had ever published any private papers. People respected her, her moral and social values.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v. "Queen Victoria,"
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/627603/Victoria>.

⁵¹ Kramer, *Victorians*, 3.

⁵² Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 2.

⁵³ Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 3.

⁵⁴ McDowall, *Illustrated History*, 144-145.

The longest reigning queen whose name was given to the period she ruled and to many places all around the world. She ruled the country which was facing the Industrial Revolution, the country which undertook many changes, the empire which took about twenty percent of the planet. Even though she was popular among people, there were several attempts to assassinate her. She was interested in the conditions of the poor and ill, and the system of education. However, she was not a supporter of voting rights for women.

7.1.2 Florence Nightingale

She was known as the Lady of the Lamp. Her main contribution was to improve the conditions and to reduce the mortality rate. She founded the first training school for nurses at St Thomas' Hospital in London. After the year 1900 there were over 64,000 trained nurses all over the Britain helping and spreading what they learned.⁵⁵

Florence Nightingale established nursing as a respectable womanly profession. She was always interested in nursing, however her parents, as members of the upper class, did not want their daughter to do the profession which was supposed to be not reputable enough. Eventually, she left to Germany for three-month nursing training. She became the superintendent of a hospital for noblewomen. When the Crimean War started in 1854, the war minister asked her to make a team of nurses who would help in military hospitals in Turkey to take care of wounded British soldiers. Florence and the nurses did a great work and saved many soldiers' lives. She died in 1910 and she is probably the most famous Victorian woman after the Queen and her highly influential theories are still practised today.⁵⁶

She was the heroine of her time, the lady who helped people in need and those who were dying. Florence Nightingale, introducing the interest in the proper care and looking after her patients day and night, was the Lady of the Lamp. Without her contribution many women throughout Britain would not have a job and the people

⁵⁵ Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 19.

⁵⁶ BBC, "Florence Nightingale," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/nightingale_florence.shtml.

would not make another step which contributed to better health and longer life. Moreover, she established the ethics and morals and made nursing a respected profession. Without her trying England would still be backward in terms of health and nursing. The public and government were blind and did not want to admit that a woman can save men's lives and effectively develop the health care. She achieved this and it can be bravely and proudly said that nursing has its proper roots in Victorian times.

7.1.3 Elizabeth Fry 1780-1845

Throughout her life she was involved in charity work and helped the poor in the streets. She helped women in the prison Newgate and other prisons which were dirty, dark, and dangerous. She fought for better treatment of imprisoned women because she believed that even prisoners deserve human treatment. Her effort was supported also by Queen Victoria. After presenting her comments to the House of Commons, certain improvements were made.⁵⁷

7.1.4 Annie Besant 1847-1933

Anne Besant was a social reformer who legally separated from her husband in 1873. In her case we can see Victorian law in practice – she refused to join one religious group, her husband ran her out of the house and kept their son in his custody leaving her only their daughter.⁵⁸

She stopped being a Christian and became a member of the National Secular Society which promoted free thoughts. In 1870s she and her friend edited the weekly National Reformer where they released advanced opinions and ideas on topics like women trade unions, national education, women's right to vote, birth control, or

⁵⁷ BBC, "Elizabeth Fry," BBC Primary History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/famouspeople/elizabeth_fry/.

⁵⁸ Jone Johnson Lewis, "Annie Besant Heretic," About.com Women's History, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/freethought/a/annie_besant.htm.

better working conditions. In 1888 there was a strike in a match factory and Annie helped with organising. The strike was successful and led to the improving of working conditions in the factory. She was also a supporter of Indian nationalism.⁵⁹

She published two books advocating birth control and giving reasons for it. Authorities did not like the books at all and her husband finally found her and took their daughter from her into his custody. But she did not stop being active in her actions. She helped poor children, became a speaker for women's rights, and still tried to provide more information about birth control to the wide public. She earned a science degree from London University and moved to India together with her son and daughter. Later on she became a speaker of the suffrage movement.⁶⁰

Never feeling intimidated, always pointing out the current problems. She could easily submit to her husband and keep her mouth shut. However, she wanted other women to know that they had a choice and that it is worth fighting for the rights which were taken from them. She helped many people, mostly children and the poor, she kept the public informed via articles in magazines and her books. Maybe she did not achieve any really revolutionary change but her opinions and information settled down in women's minds and germinated for other actions. She was fully aware of the fact that informing the public is the best start how to cause a revolution, how to achieve that women could start changing their minds and doing something more for achieving their rights.

7.1.5 Josephine Butler 1828 – 1906

Another social reformer fighting against prostitution and exploitation, for better education and public health. She had four children but one of them died in the age of six. She joined a charity and fought for the rights of women and against child prostitution. She led her own campaign to repeal the Contagious Disease Act which was passed in 1860s to control the number of people suffering from venereal diseases

⁵⁹ BBC, "Annie Besant," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/besant_annie.shtml.

⁶⁰ Jone Johnson Lewis, "Annie Besant Heretic," About.com Women's History, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/freethought/a/annie_besant.htm.

in the armed forces. Prostitutes in some ports and army towns were arrested and controlled whether they were infected by some venereal disease. After the control they were given a certificate saying they are free of any illness. She saw these acts useless because men were not tested which meant they could spread the diseases freely. She campaigned against this and her effort led to the results – acts were suspended and later repealed. Butler also became a president of the North of England Council for the Higher Education of Women in 1867.⁶¹

She helped the poor children and women in the workhouses and opened her own workshop for making envelopes so women could earn enough money for a decent living. She supported the higher education for women and with the help of her husband she became a head of the committee and contributed to the founding of University in Liverpool. All of this required a fair amount of courage because in public she was seen as a prostitute, not as a real lady. She opened a House of Rest for women in need and throughout all her life she continued with her campaigns.⁶²

She helped many people and she was not afraid to follow her ideas and strong believes. She pointed out that the Disease Act is a nonsense. How could it be meaningful if men were not tested? After all, everybody who was participating sex with the infected women logically caught the disease, too. It was a clear discrimination of women who were labelled like cows in a herd. Fortunately she managed the act to be cancelled but it is hard to say whether the society learnt something.

7.1.6 Elizabeth Garrett Anderson 1836-1917

Elizabeth became a first qualified woman doctor in Great Britain. There was no woman, doctor in profession, in Britain. Schools providing such education were meant only for men. She tried to attend a number of classes but after some complaints she was forced to stop. Nevertheless, she passed the exams which were not forbidden to

⁶¹ BBC, "Josephine Butler," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/butler_josephine.shtml.

⁶² BBC, "Josephine Butler," HerStoria.com, July 5, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/womens_work_01.shtml.

women by the Society of Apothecaries and gained a certificate which enabled her to become a doctor. The Society realized this mistake and after that it changed the rules so no other woman could gain the certificate this way. She went to the University of Paris and obtained the medical degree but it was not approved by the British Medical Register. In 1872 she found the New Hospital for Women in London. Although it was not easy at all, other women tried to become doctors, too. Later, in 1876 an act was passed which allowed women to enter the medical professions. In her retirement she became the first female mayor and she was also a member of a suffragette movement.⁶³

Why she is worth mentioning and having our respect is that she fought against something which was meant not to be defeated, the laws which prohibited women to become doctors. Somebody had to start, somebody had to be the first rebel fighting against the prohibition of education and even though her tries were suppressed many times, she did not stop and finally achieved what she determined to achieve.

7.1.7 Elizabeth Gaskell (1810 – 1865)

Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a very famous book which won the praise of Charles Dickens and which was called *Mary Barton*. In the book she described how the life could be horrible if the one was born into the poor family. She described the totally industrial city of Manchester and horrible working and living conditions typical for Britain of her time.⁶⁴

She gave a picture of difficulties and cruel life conditions of working-class people in Manchester. Even though she herself was not born into this class, she sympathized with the people for what she was also criticized by the middle class. She did not hide anything; she revealed all the truth, all the injustice and she depicted the misery people lived in.

⁶³ BBC, "Elizabeth Garrett Anderson," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/garrett_anderson_elizabeth.shtml.

⁶⁴ BBC, "Elizabeth Gaskell," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/gaskell_elizabeth.shtml.

She used the literature to show the conditions of the poor. Her books and books of many other Victorian writers are very important and valuable for all the people as a source of information about that period of time.

"Victorian novel is primarily a female thing. It deals with what women had to deal with."⁶⁵

7.1.8 Mary Seacole (1805-1881)

Mary Seacole was born in Jamaica and even though she was not British, she deserves to be remembered as the woman who went her own way and as only few women at that time she travelled, she run her own business, and she went to Crimean war to help the wounded soldiers. She opened a hotel and provided comfortable services and accommodation for wounded soldiers. She was called "Mother Seacole" and her reputation is as important as that of Florence Nightingale.⁶⁶

7.1.9 Summary

Women mentioned above were unique. They were unique in a way that they did something which was not natural, normal, or acceptable at their time. They were not afraid and more or less contributed to the better future. Everything they were propagating was finally achieved or improved. In what scale they contributed to the change is questionable but the most important is that Britain had women who knew that it was wrong to accept all the suffering and misery and who did not stay back and had the confidence to do what they could to change the reality. Of course that there were much more women worth mentioning, paragraphs above deals with the most important ones.

⁶⁵ G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 65.

⁶⁶ BBC, "Mary Seacole," BBC History, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/seacole_mary.shtml.

7.2 Suffragette Movement

Other women trying to gain more freedom were those who we call suffragettes. They pointed out that women are human beings who are able to think critically and who are able to participate in public matters and run the country on the same level as men. Suffragettes fought for the rights to vote. There were movements running in peace, later some suffragettes used violence. In the first place it is important to explain what the reason of excluding women from these areas of interest was. Men considered them to be not clever enough and not able to understand all the matters requiring intellectual thinking. According to men they were weak, irresolute and hesitant, not trustworthy and crafty which equals not able to be involved in such important and prolific matters as politics etc.

There were two separated spheres. Women ruled over the house which was domestic sphere, men ruled over the public sphere like science, business, politics, war and the British Empire.⁶⁷

7.2.1 National Unions

There were many groups and movements arising from 1847 all over the country. There were many attempts to promote the right to vote for women in Parliament. In 1852 there was John Stuart Mill trying to secure vote for women in the Second Reform Act. His try was not successful and the situation led to the founding of the National Society for Women's Suffrage. One year later Richard Pankhurst made a new attempt for gaining women's rights. His daughter Christabel and wife Emmeline continued and became the prominent figures of the movement. However, they were not successful either. Emmeline Pankhurst was the founder of WSPU – Women's Social and Political Union which was created in 1903. Emmeline used aggressive and violent strategies such as smashing windows, burning the buildings, vandalism, or social disobedience. They went further on – Emmeline's daughter Christabel and her friend Annie Kenney interrupted the Liberal Party meeting and got themselves arrested.

⁶⁷ Patrick Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009),63.

However, the other suffragettes did not stop. Burning the churches, chaining themselves to the Buckingham Palace, not paying the taxes, attacking politicians, or setting mailboxes in fire were their means how to get what they wanted.⁶⁸

There was the protest of Millicent Fawcett, an active suffragette who believed in a peaceful and logical protest. She founded NUWSS in 1897 – National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies. She thought violence and disobedience damage the trustworthiness of women, and logical arguments were her strongest weapons in persuading men. (appendix 4) She used political methods like lobbying parliament or collecting signatures for petitions. The group published various pamphlets and magazines, held public meetings and speeches, or spread leaflets, newspapers, and journals providing the reasons why women should get the right to vote. Members of such movements were called the suffragists.⁶⁹

The first idea was to gain voting rights for women who campaigned for it which were middle-class homeowners. Later they needed the support of all women, including the working class.⁷⁰

Women finally get the right to vote in 1918 but it was limited only to those women who were over the age of 30. Equal voting rights were given women ten years later.⁷¹

7.2.2 Summary

The situation established by the Industrial Revolution resulted in the assembling of unsatisfied women and creating groups and movements calling for the

⁶⁸ Dominic Casciani, “The History of the Suffragettes,” BBC News Online, last modified October 2, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk/3153388.stm>.

⁶⁹ British Library, “The Campaign for suffrage – a historical background,” British Library Online, <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/21cc/struggle/suffrage/background/suffragettesbackground.html>

⁷⁰ “BBC, The Women’s Suffrage Movement,” BBC Higher Bitesize, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/higher/history/britsuff/suffrage/revision/1/>.

⁷¹ British Library, “The Campaign for Suffrage – a Historical Background,” British Library Online, <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/21cc/struggle/suffrage/background/suffragettesbackground.html>

change. It is understandable that oppressed women wanted to do everything to change the situation.

Historians can not agree whether the suffragette movements contributed to the change. Violence was probably not the best way how to persuade politicians so the movement of Emmeline Pankhurst seems to postpone the decision about the voting rights; on the other hand it was the only way how to make the others to notice them. Still there are believers who defend the movement and claim that all the attention made politicians to solve the situation, so it is suggested that without suffragettes women would get the voting right later.⁷²

⁷² BBC, "The Women's Suffrage Movement," BBC Higher Bitesize, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/higher/history/britsuff/suffrage/revision/4/>.

8 Education

As mentioned earlier in the paper, working-class women and children were taught only the basics of reading, writing, and domestic skills. Girls in middle and upper-class families were taught at home to become good wives and housewives.

From the 19th century private schools set up by charities and religious institutions were opened so middle-class girls could get the same education as boys. Nevertheless, this was anything but sufficient. There were only twelve public secondary schools for girls in all England and Wales and the interest in education was still increasing. In 1870 the framework for elementary education was established but working-class girls still could not get the secondary education.⁷³

It is important to mention the beginning of higher education for women. Colleges and universities began to accept female students at the end of the 19th century. The very first college for women was the Girton College in Cambridge which was opened in 1869. Actually, women's Colleges were established at Cambridge and Oxford in 1869 and 1879 but women could only study there, no degree could be earned until 1920 – 1921. Other universities offered women different courses but without a final degree. Historically the first university which allowed women to study there on the same terms as men and to complete their education with a degree was the University of London, the Queen's College.⁷⁴

The arguments why women should not get higher education were based on the natural dispositions of women. They were believed to be too weak to stand all the stress and all the requirements. Women themselves, on the other hand, claimed that if women from working class were educated, they would use their newly gained knowledge at work or at home. Even though the education was allowed for everyone later on, it was not equal for everyone. Girls were taught the duties in the household and in family while boys were educated for their later jobs. The working-class girls

⁷³ Institute of Education University of London, "Women and Education," Institute of Education Archives Subject Guide No. 7, http://www.ioe.ac.uk/services/documents/SG7_Women_and_education_web_%28Oct_2009%29.pdf.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

were supposed to become *good women* which meant to master practical abilities and skills as housewives, wives, and mothers. The middle-class girls were supposed to become *perfect wives and mothers* with the skill of organizing the household and providing supportive domestic atmosphere. When the science was taught both girls and boys, in girls' case it was applied into the context of household.⁷⁵

8.1 Summary

The higher education was not allowed to women. The first college opened for women was the Queen College in 1848 which provided training for governesses and schoolteachers. It was actually the first educational college for women. Long time before the first colleges enabled to earn a degree they could get only the basic education without any certificate. To gain a degree was possible from 1920s.

⁷⁵ Diane Richardson and Victoria Robinson, ed., *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 326-327.

9 Free Time

So far it seems like women suffered from horrible conditions at work, torture at home, no recognition in public and no fun at all. But Victorian people knew how to enjoy themselves.

They loved music and dance. All governesses should know how to play a musical instrument and they taught it the children they were looking after. Music was one of the most popular entertainment. There was a number of music bands, clubs, choirs, and musical societies. In long winter days, they amused themselves with playing the piano, singing, talking, reading, or doing embroidery in a room called the drawing room. Dancing was also extremely popular. Queen Victoria used to give evening concerts at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. Johann Strauss, a famous composer, introduced Viennese Waltz to the British.⁷⁶ The variety of activities was very wide. However, also while having fun certain rules had to be followed.

9.1 Victorian Fun

Before the 1850s it was almost unimaginable for working-class people to enjoy their free time because they had only Saturday afternoons off. Going on holiday was a privilege only for the rich. But with the improvement of working conditions and rising the wages, people started enjoying activities outside their normal working days. They could go to the museums, libraries, parks, zoo, swimming pools, sporting events, they could visit the Great Exhibition; working-class society went mostly to the alehouses or pubs which were more accessible to them. The trains were no more used exclusively for travelling to work but also for travelling to the countryside or seaside resorts which became extremely popular. People and women as well could finally feel more free, more independent, more happy. Even though the travelling by train was not very comfortable from the beginning because the crowded waggons were without the roof

⁷⁶ Pauline Wetson Thomas, "Victorian Recreation Fashion History," Fashion-era.com, http://www.fashion-era.com/victorian_recreations.htm.

or lavatory, they did not mind.⁷⁷ Factories and churches also sometimes organized one day trips outside the town for workers and their families.

One of the very big celebrations was the one of the Queen and her jubilee. It was Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrated in July in 1887. The Queen was fifty years on the throne.⁷⁸

9.2 The Great Exhibition

In 1851 there was a big event taking place in London titled the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, called the Great Exhibition. An enormous building of glass and iron was built in Hyde Park displaying everything which was produced and invented during the Industrial Revolution. (appendix 5) This exhibition was visited by more than six million people from all over the country. Everything was the idea of Prince Albert and Henry Cole, the inventor. The building was called the Crystal Palace and exhibited the culture and industry.⁷⁹

Nothing like this had ever been seen in London before. Big glass building looking like a glittering giant was an astonishing event for everyone. There were over 100,000 items in 10 miles from over 15,000 contributors. The biggest competitor was France which exhibited porcelain, silk from Lyons, luxurious tapestries, or furniture. The Russian exposition was also great, as well as the Swiss'. People could also admire there a famous diamond called the Koh-i-Noor. The value of this diamond was supposed to be unnumerable, however, something lying in the box without any gleam was not very attractive. Later, by skillful cutting, the diamond reached its deserved honour and now it is a part of Crown Jewels. The Crystal Palace became a temporary home for beautiful paintings and tapestries, for gadgets like a tangible ink for the blind,

⁷⁷ McDowall, *Illustrated History*, 151-153.

⁷⁸ Sheila Watson, *A Victorian Holiday* (Hove: Wayland, 1993), 13.

⁷⁹ Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 7.

printing machines or machines for making cigarettes, a beautiful enormous fountain, and many other remarkable innovations.⁸⁰

Six million people at one place. It was a show of shows. So huge, so bright, so expensive, so progressive. People admired all of it, boasted that their country had something unique, something so huge and so special. It was an extraordinarily important event for all the people. On the other side, all of this, all the machines, all the gadgets, all the luxury, all that progress which they admired caused the workers the misery, lack of bread and butter, no work, and hardship. On one side the celebration of revolution, on the other suffering, poverty and inability to provide decent conditions for the working class. It was a vanity of middle- and upper-class people who showed how great the country they lived in was.

9.3 Seaside Fun

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, people used travelling by train also for travelling to the sea. At first only affluent people travelled there for the health reasons, later also common people enjoyed the sun and fun near the sea.

9.3.1 On the Beach

Even while having fun on the beach, proper dress was required by the etiquette. Men were wearing hats and women parasols to protect their body against the sun; when women wanted to bath they had to wear a special bathing dress covering most of their body. The kinds of entertainment on the beach were for instance Punch and Judy shows, famous shows with puppets of Mr. Punch and his wife, Judy. This was a typical British seaside culture which was completed with funfairs, bandstands, or gardens. Rich people took their servants with them to look after their children.⁸¹

⁸⁰ British Library, "The Great Exhibition," British Library Learning Victorians, <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/victorians/exhibition/greatexhibition.html>.

⁸¹ Watson, *Victorian Holiday*, 8.

9.3.2 Bathing Machines

Women promenaded along the sea with their hats on, watching the water, and talking. When they wanted to bath in the sea they used bathing machines. They were tiny houses with wheels which were pulled or slid down into the water with the help of horses or just human power, and were used to provide women the privacy while changing the swimming clothes. They were mostly wooden boxes about six feet in length and eight feet high without a window or mirror. They were roofed and the sunshine could go into the box through the window in the roof. After changing the clothes, ladies climbed down a little ladder and entered the water where they enjoyed themselves. After some time when they found their merrymaking sufficient enough, they did the opposite process. (appendix 6) The bathing machines were very useful because nobody could see the women without their dress or while changing it.⁸²

9.4 Travelling; Mary Kingsley

Travelling to far away exotic countries and examining different cultures was dominated exclusively by men. However, Mary Kingsley as the first European women did exactly what most Victorian women would not dare to. She travelled to the West Africa and examined African culture and society. In her two books, *Travels in West Africa* and *West African Culture*, she disproved the commonly believed assumption that Africans are savages with no culture. Her travelling passion was most likely inherited from her father who also made many voyages and who was interested in Maori society. Nevertheless, all this came later. At the beginning of her life she was a decent Victorian. She looked after her ill mother and later also after her father. After her parents' death she became independent and with her annual income she could afford to travel. At that time Africa was becoming more and more colonized – economically and politically but at the same time Africa was said to be extremely dangerous continent to travel for all white people. Many of them died there or suffered from various illnesses. She travelled there with the help of members of many

⁸² Melissa Haug, "Bathing Machine," *Victoriana Magazine*, <http://www.victoriana.com/Etiquette/bathingmachine.htm>.

different tribes. The first trip to Africa was in 1893 and the motive was to study fetishism and fetish. Fetishism was an European term for African religions. In academic circles she was highly regarded, giving lectures all over the Britain. Of course she had to face many difficulties because most of these scientific clubs were only for men. There were many obstacles she had to overcome because of being a woman. During the second Boer War she signed up to be a nurse. She passed away in 1900 and up to now she is supposed to be an extremely courageous woman pioneer.⁸³

9.5 Sports and Games

Sporting events were also very popular among Victorians. Games like cricket or football were played many years before the Queen entered the throne. However, not until the 19th century they were turned into the official games with fixed rules. International cricket was developed and many football leagues started to form. Lawn-tennis has its roots in Victorian era too. It was a game for rich people who had a lot of free time and big gardens around their houses so tennis was developed as their pastime and for women it was a big fun. One of the typical tennis outfits was a striped blouse, long serge skirt, black belt, a tie, black canvas shoes and a straw hat. Other activities for rich people were for example shooting or fox-hunting. Cards, dice or horses were also on daily routine but women rather played the role of spectators and fans than fox-hunters. After 1800 racing became a sport for everyone not just for upper-class society.⁸⁴ Boat race between Cambridge and Oxford also started in Victorian era, as well as Henley Regatta at Ascot. Even though women were quite clumsy while doing some sport because of their clothes, they did not mind, they liked it.⁸⁵

⁸³ Jacob Hanebutt, "Mary Kingsley," Women in European History, last modified June 2, 2010, http://womenineuropeanhistory.org/index.php?title=Mary_Kingsley.

⁸⁴ Walter Robson, *Britain 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 85-86.

⁸⁵ Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 26.

9.6 Other Fun

Women also loved visiting fairs. They could drive there in a carriage, do shopping, see the shows, enjoy a ride on steamers around the rivers, and see the latest fashion.⁸⁶ They loved reading books, newspapers, magazines, guides, or comics. Extremely popular were stories by Brontë sisters or Charles Dickens. Before the books were published, the stories in the form of monthly episodes were printed in the magazines. They kept people in tense, impatiently waiting for the other part of the story. There were also libraries accessible firstly only to wealthy people. In 1850, the Public Libraries Act enabled towns to build their own libraries which would be free for all. Also children could take books and read them – stories, educational books, or fairy tales. Before 1850s the freedom of the printing of newspapers was strictly regulated. The content was regulated as well as the target public. Newspapers could read only the upper-class society. After 1850s the tax imposed on the newspapers was banned and soon everyone was reading a paper.⁸⁷

The invention of bicycles was also the breakthrough. Before 1817 riding a bike was thought to be quite dangerous because before inventing tyres there were used steel constructions or wood constructions as wheels. Later there were built so called penny-farthing bicycles which were much more practical and safe.⁸⁸ Sewing, woodwork, making pictures from shells, feathers, or straw, and playing the piano were other forms of fun.⁸⁹

9.7 Family Gatherings

As we know one of the most important Victorian values was that of a family, they paid a lot of attention to family gatherings. One of the most common gatherings was the mealtime. Father and mother sat on the heads of the table with their children around them. After thanking God they started eating. If there were any guests there

⁸⁶ Watson, *Victorian Holiday*.

⁸⁷ Kramer, *Victorians*, 28-29.

⁸⁸ Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 27.

⁸⁹ Wood, *Family Life*, 16-18.

could be up to six courses. Among the other occasions how to meet with the family were for instance weddings, Christmas, or Easter. Christmas was a happy holiday. People decorated trees, sent cards, ate plum pudding and a cake and waited for presents from Santa Claus. During Christmas even the poor people ate the meal.⁹⁰

9.8 Outgoings

People used to go to the churches to hear the services and sing the hymns and songs. There were public parks where people could go to have a picnic or go for a walk to escape from the rush of the town and enjoy the pleasant sunshine. There were also sports to watch like football, cock fighting, or boxing. Bank holidays enabled people to go on holiday for more than one day. At Boxing Day, pantomime season began. Families went to the theatres to watch shows and songs. There could be also a circus or a fair.⁹¹

The rich had broader range of options where to go, they used to visit countryside to walk and enjoy the scenery, and also other foreign countries. Queen Victoria's favourite place, for instance, was in Scotland on her Balmoral Castle. Travelling further was not common for women however there was one woman – Mary Kingsley, mentioned in the previous paragraph, who travelled across west Africa and became the first European to enter parts of the other continent.⁹²

9.9 Summary

Victorians had various opportunities how to spend their precious free time. At the beginning of the era working people hardly ever went somewhere to the sea or to the countryside but when the years past they got more chances to see unseen. Thanks to the amusements they could forget about the worries of the routine. For the first time we can see the positive impact of the Industrial Revolution on working people.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 16-17.

⁹¹ Ibid., 20-22.

⁹² Watson, Victorian Holiday.

Thanks to the possibility of travelling by train, Victorians used to visit seaside areas which were very popular at that time. The Great Exhibition gave them the feeling of pride; rules of many sports were established together with the new ones which came into existence; museums, parks, galleries, libraries, dance clubs, fairs, ceremonies, or festivals became more available; and old pastimes like singing, family gatherings, playing the piano, embroidering, reading etc. offered working women to forget about the worries of everyday routine.

10 Fashion

“The Song of the Shirt“

*With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread.
Stitch – stitch – stitch,
In poverty hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of a dolorous pitch
She sang the Song of the Shirt.*

*Work – work – work
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread – and rags,
That shatter’d roof – and this naked floor –
A table – a broken chair –
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank,
For sometimes falling there.⁹³*

A part of a poem which was written by Thomas Hood and published in 1843. The poem can be understood as a lamentation over the work of women in inhuman conditions and for meagre salary. Women often worked as sewers, as the woman in the poem, and prepared garments from materials provided by their employer. The poem was dedicated to the real person.⁹⁴

⁹³ Thomas Hood, “The Song of the Shirt,” Poets, <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/23111>.

⁹⁴ Michael J. Cummings, “The Song of the Shirt,” Cummings Study Guide, <http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides5/SongofShirt.html>.

10.1 Fashion, the world itself

Morning dress, mourning dress, town dress, cycling dress, bathing dress, visiting dress, receiving visitors dress, travelling dress, shooting dress, golf and seaside dress, concert dress, opera dress, dinner dress, or ball dress. A wide variety of dresses were used for a scale of occasions.⁹⁵

As people can observe, the style of clothes our parents used to wear is from a great part different than the style of nowadays youths', even though there is a slight tendency to go back and wear similar style as our ancestors did. Let's have a look at the fashion during the Victorian era. All the chapters are related to women and there is nothing closer to womanhood than fashion. It is important to point out that the fashion differed according to the class and the period. We can say that poor women wore simple aprons while rich women were characterized by beautifully wide skirts, corsets, and parasols.

Now we consider it normal, or at least acceptable that young girls and women wear clothes that reveal their legs, arms, belly, or neck. Nevertheless, the Victorians were very modest about their bodies. Respectability was one of their most important virtues so everybody, men included, were supposed to dress respectably. According to fashion, Victorian era can be divided into several decades which were characterized by different style of clothing. Altogether we could call the Victorian ladies' fashion as a hoop fashion. A hoop was a tool used for widening the skirt into a fashionable and stylish shape.

Victorian fashion can be summarized in a simple way into the following description. Ladies almost never showed men their legs, even ankles were forbidden to men's sight. When swimming, women wore swimming costumes covering even these parts. The skirts women used to wear were very long and very wide. There was a certain tool called crinoline that helped them to widen their skirts which was used until 1870. Over a crinoline, there were several layers of petticoats and finally a dress.

⁹⁵ Pauline Wetson Thomas, "A Woman's Place in 19th Century History," Fashion-Era.com, http://www.fashion-era.com/a_womans_place.htm.

Impressing but impractical.⁹⁶ Skirts were wide, waists were, on the other hand, very thin. Corsets with laces were used to constrict the waist as much as possible. Crinolines were replaced by bustles, tools that enlarged the back part of the skirt.⁹⁷

10.2 Pre-Hoop Era (1840-1855)

Before inventing hoops, the desired effect was achieved by using many layers of petticoats made of horsehair or padding. Skirt hoops facilitated the work and enabled the skirt to be wide and frilled enough without using these uncomfortable stuffings. The dresses created the shape of a triangle – very broad and ruffled skirt, wasp-like waist and broadened shoulders. This era is characterised by wide neckline with the bodice shoulder line under the shoulders with wide trimming. The neckline could be covered by bertha or other folds and short or long narrow sleeves were later widened as well as the skirts. Even the necklines were more open than later. Fabrics were made from different materials, they were patterned and coloured.⁹⁸ The overall look was strengthened by parasols and shawls.⁹⁹ (appendix 7) Before 1856 there was a necessity to use at least six layers of petticoats to achieve desired width (after 1856 there was a cage crinoline).¹⁰⁰

10.3 Hoop Era (1856-1869)

Invented cage crinolines allowed to wear even wider skirts than before. The name crinoline comes from French where “crin” means horsehair. Hoops were round and slightly more fuller in the back than in the front. Necklines were worn off the shoulders but tightly to the neck too. A jacket started to be a popular accessory. Civil War caused the shortage of fabrics which caused that skirts were not so wide any

⁹⁶ Kramer, *Victorians*, 44.

⁹⁷ Honey, *Investigating the Victorians*, 31.

⁹⁸ Heather McNaughton, “Pre-Hoop Era 1840-1855,” *Truly Victorian*, <http://trulyvictorian.com/history/1840.html>.

⁹⁹ “Victorian Fashion,” *Historic UK*, <http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Victorian-Fashion/%29/>.

¹⁰⁰ Pauline Weston Thomas, “Crinolines Fashion History,” <http://www.fashion-era.com/crinolines.htm>.

more. The bustle comes later to replace the hoop. Petticoats were usually white which later became the colour for formal or evening occasions. Coloured and patterned fabrics were used instead. Materials used were for instance camlet, cashmere, flannel, taffeta, silk, or alpaka.¹⁰¹

Triangular skirt shape supported by steel crinoline was introduced in 1856. In 1850s sewing machine was invented so they were probably used to stitch dresses on them. A bonnet was replaced by the hat which was tied by wide ribbons under the neck.¹⁰² Around the year 1860 the skirt reached its maximum width. After this year the emphasis went to the back of the skirt and eventually the front flattened.¹⁰³

10.4 Early Bustle (1869 – 1876)

Hoop skirts were replaced by more popular framework called the bustle. Overskirts became a necessity and trimmings were bigger. Even more fabric was added to the back with large bow behind. Day dresses were with full sleeves often in the bell shape and ruffled, neckline could be high with or without a collar or still off the shoulders. Night dresses were off the shoulders with small sleeves decorated with ruffles. Till that time bodice with natural waist line was popular, later basques were attached – they extended past the waist and continued over the hips into the shape of the skirt. They were like very short overskirts. Many petticoats protected the dress against the dirt. Bodices became longer and longer and a polonaise was introduced.¹⁰⁴

This dress was described as a “seaside costume” and the back was the most important feature. Trimmings were attached to the dress which was done on the

¹⁰¹ Heather McNaughton, “Hoop Era 1856-1869,” Truly Victorian, <http://trulyvictorian.com/history/1855.html>.

¹⁰² “Victorian Fashion,” Historic UK, <http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Victorian-Fashion/>.

¹⁰³ Pauline Weston Thomas, “Crinolines Fashion History,” Fashion-Era.com, <http://www.fashion-era.com/crinolines.htm>.

¹⁰⁴ Heather McNaughton, “Early Bustle 1869-1876,” Truly Victorian, <http://trulyvictorian.com/history/1869.html>.

sewing machines. Night dresses differentiated in sleeves which were mostly sleeveless, and in the neckline which was under the shoulders.¹⁰⁵

10.5 Natural form (1877-1882)

Wide skirts disappeared and the bustle was only in the back. Tall and slim figure was very fashionable. Bodices began to be longer and overskirts were sewn directly to the dress. The petticoats were closer to the legs and almost embraced them. Evening dressing was rather more on the shoulder than off. Clothes became more conservative.¹⁰⁶

10.6 Late Bustle (1883-1889)

Skirts remained slim in front and on the sides but the back was stuffed very high thanks to the bustle framework. Evening dresses were on the shoulders often without sleeves. Day dresses were with a very high neckline or a collar. Vests and jackets were also in use.¹⁰⁷ (appendix 8)

10.7 1890s

The bustles disappeared forever and slim skirts remained. They were flat in front and very full in the back but without any fluffy lift. The emphasis started to be put on the bodice that was decorated with frills and trims. Sleeves started being stuffed and very big later in 90s.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ "Victorian Fashion," Historic UK, <http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Victorian-Fashion/>.

¹⁰⁶ Heather McNaughton, "Natural Form 1877-1882," Truly Victorian, <http://trulyvictorian.com/history/1877.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Heather McNaughton, "Late Bustle 1883-1889," Truly Victorian, <http://trulyvictorian.com/history/1883.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Heather McNaughton, "1890s," Truly Victorian, <http://trulyvictorian.com/history/1890.html>.

10.8 National Dress Society

The clothing signalizes how limited the life of women was. They could not sit, they could not lie, otherwise they would ruin their dress. The dress was uncomfortable and cumbersome. Many women died in flames when one part of the skirt caught the fire. They had no time to escape from the number of petticoats.¹⁰⁹ The National Dress Society was founded in 1880 with the aim to making dress healthier and more comfortable.¹¹⁰

10.9 In Mourning

When prince Albert died, Queen Victoria was very saddened. She wore her mourning weeds and gave an example to other people who followed her style.

Everything was black – dress, stationery, envelopes and visiting cards. On the table there were bottles tied with black ribbon which was also attached to the children's clothes. The importance of mourning was very visible in Victorian era and mourning clothes and mourning accessories and other little mourning rules were strictly followed. Normal clothes was put away and was replaced by mourning clothes and caps from quality material (crape was the most popular) and black and dark color which was the mourning color used in the first months of deepest mourning. Among other materials was for instance merino wool, paramatta, bombazine, or cashmere. If there were more demises in family within short intervals, the mourning period could last several years. Standard time for mourning was two and half years. These long months could be divided into three periods. The first period, deepest mourning, was the time when women wore crape dresses. In the second period of mourning – after one year and one day – women could wear fancier materials like black velvet or silk with more stylish ornaments and ribbons decorated with lace and rich trimmings. The last period of six months was more casual which meant that women wore ordinary clothes in the shades of grey, white, purple, heliotrope, or violet. As the mourning

¹⁰⁹ Helena Wojtczak, "Women's Status in Mid 19th Century England," <http://www.hastingspress.co.uk/history/19/overview.htm>.

¹¹⁰ "Victorian Fashion," Historic UK, <http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Victorian-Fashion/%29/>.

progressed, the changes were more and more visible, clothes fancier, hats and bonnets more trimmed and veils much shorter.¹¹¹

10.10 Victorian Swimwear

The Industrial Revolution allowed people to see the places even far away. Visiting seaside resorts required new clothes and swimming costumes.

Early Victorian swimwear was made of dark flannel which covered the whole body. It was quite clumsy and not very attractive. Three quarter trousers were acceptable as bathing dress only. In the late Victorian period the bathing fashion was little bit more attractive but most of the body was still covered with the cloth. Sleeveless style with bare ankles became usual very slowly.¹¹²

10.11 Parasols

Nowadays we can see them only during making wedding pictures. Beautifully dressed brides with white gloves and elegant white or colourful, slightly decorated laced parasol from a delicate fabric with the most beautiful handles of carved ivory, pearl, or porcelain. What a beauty!

In the past there was a significant difference between wearing a parasol and an umbrella. Women who wore an umbrella in misty or rainy day were women who could not afford to ride a carriage. On the other side women who were walking with parasols protecting them from the sunshine were ladies. Every true lady had a different parasol which matched different outfit. It was an indicator of position, a sign of beauty. Bonnets and later small hats were fashionable and contributed to the pale skin too. Parasols were very expensive accessories. If a man went to a lady with the best of intentions, he brought her a parasol. If a lady accepted the parasol, she accepted his offer. Parasols were indispensable complements of a lady's fashion. Females'

¹¹¹ Pauline Weston Thomas, "Mourning Fashion," Fashion-Era.com, http://www.fashion-era.com/mourning_fashion.htm.

¹¹² Pauline Weston Thomas, "The Early Seaside," http://www.fashion-era.com/early_swimwear.htm.

attraction could be increased by delicate movements coming close to flirtation. A change in the social climate caused gradual disappearance of parasols. The most beautiful and romantic piece of accessory ended in the attics.¹¹³

10.12 Summary

It is very difficult to describe Victorian fashion in detail because it is obvious that in certain period of time something slightly else was trendy. Paragraphs above provide general view of Victorian women's clothing which brings another fragment into the mosaic of Victorian life. Poor women could not enjoy all the fun and pleasure because they had no money to buy beautiful clothes for various occasions. They could not try on beautiful, clean, luxurious dresses, they could not change the clothes several times a day, they could not walk in the streets and seduce men by having sexy thin waist and parasol above the head. Their dresses were aprons, working dress, and sleeping gown. But for all that it is nice to remember this different style which is not worn any more.

¹¹³ Kristina Harris, "Flirtatious Fashions," VictoriasPast.com, <http://victoriaspast.com/Parasols/parasols.htm>.

11 20th Century and the First World War

The 20th century and the First World War meant for women great development forwards. Even though war is nothing to be celebrated, in case of women and their position and opportunities it was a big progress. Women had to do the work instead of men who were drafted into the army. The range of jobs broadened and women could work in industry and engineering, in transport, hospitals, or banks. They were also nurses, doctors, and lawyers and their wages were higher than in previous years. Even though they still got less money for the same work than men, they could at least enjoy the variety because they found out they were able to do exactly the same jobs as men. Nevertheless, there were still professions exclusively for men so women could not become dentists, hairdressers or architects. Important for women was also the Representation of the People Act which gave women over 30 in 1918 the right to vote in local elections. Another important act was Parliamentary Qualification of Women Act which enabled women to be elected as Members of Parliament.¹¹⁴

This was a brief look into the years following the Victorian era. Women's conditions gradually got better and never been so harsh as in the 19th century.

¹¹⁴ Halamová, "Life of Women in Britain throughout Centuries," 28-30.

12 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to examine how crucial was the effect of the Industrial Revolution to the life of women in Victorian era. The attention was paid to areas such as historic overview, work, homelife, marriage, education, free time, fashion, and movements revolting for better conditions were mentioned as well. These were the areas where the impact was the most visible.

The thesis begins with a description of the life of women from the Stone Age until the reign of Stuarts. This description is important because it shows that the attitudes to women in previous historic periods, considering the circumstances, had never been so harsh as in the Victorian time. Romans and Anglo-Saxons saw women as subordinated with their place at home but the Industrial Revolution was even worse because it introduced women never-ending work in inhuman conditions. The Industrial Revolution was the time of changes which was supposed to push the life of all forward, instead the life of women was moved back.

The chapter number 3 explains the term Industrial Revolution which is necessary for future understanding of all the relations between the Industrial Revolution and the life of women in different spheres. The revolution changed the whole view on making money. People moved from the countryside to the towns and newly built factories required a lot of work force. Women and children represented the cheapest labour. The impact of the Industrial Revolution on the working life of women is described in the following chapter as extremely severe. However, it must be distinguished between women who were rich and who were poor. For many years working-class women worked long hours in horrible conditions for very little money. Although they worked for quickly growing industrial country, according to their income one would say they were rather slaves than workers. Moreover, they had to look after their large families and the work in the mills or factories was followed by the work in the household. This was called double-burden. The rich women's working life was easier, they either worked as governesses or private teachers, helped their husbands running business, or did nothing. The subchapters provide the description of the work in mills and factories and other work opportunities. The subchapter 4.6 enlightens

what kinds of work women did in the homes as servants. It shows that without all the modern gadgets the work day was very long and hard but fortunately the Industrial Revolution allowed to invent new inventions which later helped all the people.

It was a big misfortune to be born in the 19th century as a woman. It was even worse to be born into the poor family. Chapter 5 describes the conditions the poor and the rich lived in. Poor women had to care about the household by themselves, they could not afford the army of servants as the rich could. They lived in one or two dirty rooms without a proper supply of clean water and with the everlasting threat of death behind the back. On the other side of the gap, rich families enjoyed furnishing their opulent houses and boasting with nice livelihood. Even though the life of poor and rich women was totally different, they were females which meant they share the same social and legal status. The subchapter 5.3 explains that men took control over the life of business, commerce, science, education, and politics and did not allow women to have any rights in these spheres, no matter if they were rich or poor.

In marriage woman's body and property belonged to her husband. Women had no word and their only duty was to stay at home and spend the time on primarily women's matters. Higher education, work in medicine, science, or politics was the world of men, forbidden to the weaker sex as well as the right to express the opinion in the elections. Chapter 6 describes an ideal Victorian woman and the life in marriage. Women had no right over their children, they were not allowed to possess anything, their body had to be provided any time their husbands desired, and having babies was almost an obligation. The Industrial Revolution gave men the power and they seized it. The subchapters 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 shows the slow development from the side of government. Several acts were passed helping to ease women's position within the marriage. This was great success because women for the first time in the history achieved legitimate support in these matters.

Chapter 7 is an evidence of women's infinite desire to gain the recognition and to be equal to men. The individual subchapters introduce women who possessed the energy to fight and bravely faced to the cruel reality of restrictions and prejudices established together with the arrival of the revolution. Florence Nightingale, a social

reformer and founder of modern nursing; Annie Besant, a member of NSS and promoter of topics like birth control or national education; Josephine Butler, a feminist interested in the welfare of the prostitutes; Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first Englishwoman to qualify as a physician doctor; Elizabeth Gaskell, an English novelist known for her novels and short stories from Victorian era; Mary Seacole who looked after the wounded soldiers in Crimean war. The subchapter 7.2 deals with the Suffragette movement which was a very strong association fighting for voting rights. Women finally get the permission to vote in 1928 on equal terms as men. Every single attempt to make a change contributed to the gradual releasing of the strict rules. Changes were slow but they came eventually.

The positive impact of the Industrial Revolution can be observed in the enjoying the free time. Although working women had not much of free time, there was a wide range of possibilities what to do after work. The Industrial Revolution allowed people to spend their free time at the sea, people started going to dance balls, parties, pubs, parks, or doing sports. They got the feeling their homeland was the world leader in industry and at the time of Great Exhibition they felt extremely proud. Also many sports have their roots in Victorian times.

What people usually imagine while talking about Victorian women are the opulent dresses with wider than wide skirts, thin waists, or ladies with parasols and bonnets walking along the streets. Not all of them know the reality, the corsets of the beautiful dresses can be compared to the women's life. They represent the cage women had to wear and live in. Last chapter of the thesis is touching maybe the only pleasure women could enjoy every day. Although the dresses were quite uncomfortable, every woman loves being smartly dressed. The Industrial Revolution provided wide range of materials, colours, patterns, and accessories richer women could enjoy. In spite of all the suffering and injustice they could take several layers of petticoats, corset, jacket, parasol and bonnet and feel as a real lady.

Especially at the beginning of the Victorian era women had to face the real misery. Gradually conditions were getting better and women achieved the recognition from the side of the law and their social and legal status was strengthened.

13 Resumé

Hlavním cílem této diplomové práce bylo popsat vliv průmyslové revoluce na život žen a jejich postavení v anglické společnosti za doby vlády královny Viktorie. Zdůrazněny byly hlavně oblasti jejich života jako práce, život v domácnosti a manželství, vzdělání, volný čas a móda. V práci jsou také uvedena občanská hnutí a několik samostatných žen, které bojovaly za práva a přispěly k lepším podmínkám života žen.

Práce začíná popisem období, která průmyslové revoluci předcházela. Toto je důležité pro srovnání, ze kterého je patrné, že ženy nikdy neměly méně práv a nikdy nezažily tolik vykořisťování právě jako ve Viktoriánském období. Pokryta jsou období od doby kamenné až po 18. století. Římané a Anglo-Sasové sice viděli ženy jen jako rodičky dětí, jejichž místo bylo v kuchyni s vařečkou v ruce, nicméně za průmyslové revoluce k tomu všemu přibyla nekončící robota v nelidských podmínkách tehdejších továren. Průmyslová revoluce znamenala obrovskou změnu a pokrok kupředu. Nicméně ve vztahu k ženám, jejich sociálnímu postavení a podmínkám, ve kterých pracovaly a žily, znamenala ohromný krok zpět.

Ve třetí kapitole je vysvětlen samotný pojem průmyslová revoluce se vším, co představoval. Průmyslová revoluce znamenala zásadní změnu v zemědělství, výrobě, komunikaci a dalších hospodářských faktorech. Ve výrobním procesu došlo k přechodu od ruční výroby k tovární strojní velkovýrobě za pomoci nových strojů a energií. Lidé se za prací stěhovali z vesnic do měst, protože práce na venkově neposkytovala dostačující výnos pro uživení rodiny. Ženy a děti v té době představovaly nejlevnější pracovní sílu, čehož bylo hojně využíváno. V následující čtvrté kapitole je popsán vliv revoluce právě na pracovní život žen. Po dlouhou dobu byly ženy nuceny pracovat v nelidských podmínkách celé dny, za což jim jedinou odměnou byl nuzný plat. Ačkoli pracovaly pro rychle se rozvíjející zemi, podle délky pracovní doby, podmínkám a vydělaných peněz by se dal jejich život přirovnat k otrokům a nepracujícím. Je ovšem nutno zdůraznit rozdíl mezi ženami bohatými a chudými. Ženy nižších vrstev na tom byly nejhůře. K těžké dřině v továrně se musely starat o domácnost a rodinu. Život žen ve střední a vyšší třídě byl mnohem jednodušší. Ty buď pracovaly jako guvernanky

v bohatých rodinách, jako soukromé učitelky, nebo pomáhaly manželům vést rodinný obchod. V některých případech se ženy nepodílely na vydělávání peněz žádným způsobem a užívaly si nicnedělání. Podkapitoly názorně ukazují práci v továrnách a popisují další pracovní příležitosti. Podkapitola 4.6 popisuje činnosti, které vykonávaly služebné. Bez všech moderních vynálezů byl jejich den opravdu dlouhý a náročný. Průmyslová revoluce naštěstí představila mnoho užitečných vymožeností.

Vskutku neštěstím bylo narodit se jako žena v 19. století. O to větším neštěstím bylo narodit se do chudé rodiny. Kapitola 5 popisuje, v jakých podmínkách žili lidé z chudých a bohatých vrstev tehdejší doby. Ženy z chudých rodin si nemohly dovolit zaměstnávat armádu služebných, a proto se o domácnost staraly samy. Často žily spolu s celou rodinou v jedné nebo dvou špinavých místnostech bez zdroje čisté vody a s neustálou hrozbou smrti tyfem, morem, nebo infekcí za zády. Na druhé straně barikády si ženy z bohatých rodin užívaly života ve skvostných domech bez nutnosti podílet se na domácích pracích. Nicméně, i když tyto světy byly naprosto odlišné, jejich obyvatelky byly ženy a to znamenalo, že měly stejný sociální status. Podkapitola 5.3 vysvětluje, že nehlédě na sociální třídu, ženy se nemohly vzdělávat, nemohly vykonávat určitá zaměstnání, nemohly volit a neměly ani zdaleka taková práva jako muži.

V manželství to bylo podobné. Veškerý majetek patřil manželovi a ten také o všem rozhodoval. Kapitola 6 představuje ideální ženu 19. století a její život v manželství. Hlavní slovo měl manžel. Rozhodoval o dětech, o majetku i o tom, kdy mu žena poskytne své tělo pro jeho vlastní uspokojení. Mít děti bylo pro každou Viktoriánku povinností. Obrovským přínosem pro rozvoj postavení žen byly zákony, které v té době vešly v platnost. Nejdříve to byl zákon umožňující rozvod, dále právo vlastnit majetek v manželství, a zákon, který ženám umožňoval převzít opatrovnictví svých dětí po rozvodu.

Sedmá kapitola je důkazem nesmírného odhodlání získat uznání a snahy být na stejné úrovni jako muži. Jednotlivé podkapitoly představují ženy, které se nebály vyjádřit svůj názor a bojovat za lepší zacházení a více práv. Florence Nightingale, anglická průkopnice v ošetřovatelství, Annie Besant, bojovnice za ženská práva a práva chudých, Josephine Butler, feministka zastávající se tehdejších prostitutek a bojující

proti prostituci, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, první žena, které se podařilo získat lékařské vzdělání, Elizabeth Gaskell, anglická spisovatelka, jejíž dílo Mary Barton popisuje těžkosti, kterým museli čelit lidé z chudých vrstev v Manchesteru v 19. století, Mary Seacole, neoblobná žena a opatrovnice vojáků v Krymské válce. Podkapitola 7.2 se zabývá hnutím anglických sufražetek bojujících za volební právo, které ženy nakonec získaly až v roce 1918, na stejné úrovni jako muži až v roce 1928. Změny přišly pomalu, cesta k nim byla dlouhá a trnitá, ale všechny tyto ženy spolu s dalšími k nim bezpochyby přispěly.

Ačkoli pracující lid neměl moc příležitostí užívat si svého volného času, zejména zpočátku 19. století, Průmyslová revoluce přinesla množství možností jak se zabavit a jak si užívat volné chvíle. Lidé mohli cestovat vlakem k moři, bavili se na tanečních bálech a večírcích, chodili do hospody, do parku, nebo se věnovali sportům. Záleželo na společenské vrstvě a možnostech. Světová výstava, která se uskutečnila v roce 1851, dala lidem jakýsi pocit pýchy a radosti, že jejich rodná země je ve světě číslo jedna. Viktoriánské období dalo vzniknout také mnohým sportům, hrajícím se dodnes. Volnočasovým aktivitám se věnuje kapitola číslo devět.

Když se řekne slovo „viktoriánská žena“, mnohým se na prvním místě vybaví krásná dáma s navlněnými vlasy, šaty upnutými korzetovou stuhou s nesmírně širokou sukni a decentním slunečníčkem v ruce. Ne všichni ale ví, že právě tyto krásné šaty by se daly přeneseně přirovnat k jejich životu v tehdejší době. Upnuté šaty, ve kterých se dá sotva dýchat byly možná právě jedinou radostí, kterou si ženy mohly užívat. Ty bohatší samozřejmě. Průmyslová revoluce sebou přinesla možnosti obchodovat s jinými zeměmi a přivážet do Anglie různé látky s různými vzory. Ženy tak mohly zapomenout na všechna nepráva a věnovat se několikahodinovému oblékání do mnoha a mnoha spodniček, korzetů a kloboučků, ve kterých se mohly cítit jako opravdové dámy.

Zvláště na začátku Viktoriánského období ženy čelily velké dřině a utrpení. Postupně se podmínky začaly zlepšovat, až ženy dostaly uznání, které jim náleželo. Zlepšily se pracovní podmínky, stejně jako možnosti, které byly k dispozici. Z minulosti obvykle známe jen ty důležité události. Tou nepochybně Průmyslová revoluce byla. Co

ale mnoho lidí nezná, jsou podrobnosti, které tyto důležité události doprovázely. A ty mohou někdy stát za všemi těmi milníky, které změnily historii. Tato diplomová práce odhaluje pouze část toho, na co Průmyslová revoluce měla ohromný vliv, a i ty horší věci bychom měli znát.

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15 Appendices



Appendix 1: Workers in a hat factory



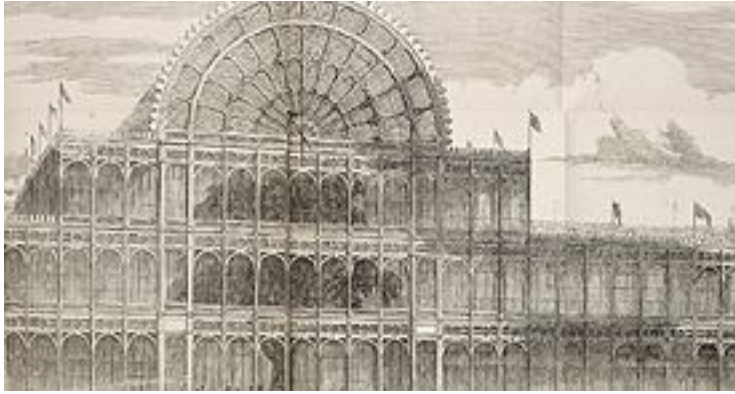
Appendix 2: Drawing room



Appendix 3: A Victorian slum



Appendix 4: The NUWSS campaigned peacefully. Here Mrs Fawcett is addressing a rally



Appendix 5: Exterior view of the Crystal palace, 1851



Appendix 6: Bathing machine



Appendix 7: Day Clothes about 1848/9



Appendix 8: Lady's Dress about 1885