

What is Godey's Lady?

How Prescriptive Literature Impacted the Women of Middle-Class America.

American Victorian society was built on a rigid class structure and strict gender roles for both men and women. This class structure is comprised of three main classes – upper, middle, and lower classes. For the middle class, maintaining a standing in society was especially important to indicate that one belonged in that sphere of society. It was up to the woman of the house to maintain these appearances, run the home efficiently, and raise her children. The 1831 volume, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* states, "It is said the character of a woman may be known by the internal appearance of her house and the dress and manners of her children."¹ The magazine's statement shows the social pressure these women were under if they did not maintain the trends of what was deemed socially acceptable. If women did not present the proper appearance or manners, it would reflect poorly on the woman, and through her, the man of the house's reputation could be damaged as well.² Due to its wide circulation, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* is one of the best primary sources for looking at social and cultural trends for middle-class American women during the nineteenth century. By the 1850s, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* was nearing its peak number of subscribers, reaching 150,000 middle-class women each year.³ Some historians have spoken on the topic of middle-class American woman's social norms and education. However, instead of focusing on a specific time, they use the magazine as an aid to

¹ L. H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, "Godey's Magazine.," *Hathi Trust* 2 (1830): 137 v., <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081675450&view=1up&seq=1>.

² Melanie Kirkpatrick, *Lady Editor* (Encounter Books, 2021).

³ "The Complete Godey's Lady's Book - 1830-1896," Accessible Archives Inc., accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.accessible-archives.com/collections/godeys-ladys-book>.

speak on the era as a whole. This essay explores popular trends presented in the magazine at the time of peak circulation (1850-1880). I chose these years because the magazine reached the largest number of subscribers, a time during which the magazine would presumably have had the most significant impact on women's lives.⁴

Godey's Lady's Magazine became a standard for women to understand their expected role in society. During this time, young girls were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic along with other lessons such as singing, sewing, and playing the pianoforte. As they got older, they learned homemaking basics, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing. While these lessons allowed them to run an effective household, to keep up women had to adapt to the new and changing social norms that were brought about during the late Victorian era. Many middle-class women read ladies' magazines to become informed about the latest changes. These magazines would have articles, instructions, patterns, and pictures to inform young girls and women about trends and societal expectations that were popular at the time. The knowledge they would gain from reading these articles would help them to understand the expectations and provide them with the tools they needed to be a successful part of middle-class society. *Godey's Lady's Magazine* established a standard for the middle-class lifestyle *Godey's Lady's Magazine* established a standard for the middle-class lifestyle in America. I argue that the magazine influenced how American women in the late Victorian Era (1850-1880) designed and presented the interior of their home, chose their attire, and raised their children.

⁴ Beverly C. Tomek, "Godey's Lady's Book," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, 2015, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/godeys-ladys-book/>.

Maintaining a proper middle-class home is the first area that *Godey's Lady's Magazine* presents as necessary. Victorians during this time were acutely aware of the importance of first impressions. The layout and decoration of the home could speak volumes about the character of those who resided within its walls, especially the nature of the woman expected to oversee this domain. Homes during the Victorian era had two key areas in which this first impression would be made: the hall and the parlor. The front hall was an area that would make an impression on a visitor. The hall was the first room guests would enter in the typical middle-class house. It was usually six to eight feet wide and could be anywhere from twelve to twenty feet long.⁵ This room was a passage into the various rooms of the home. Most halls were small and did not require or could not accommodate much furniture. The January to June 1850 volume of *Godey's Lady's Magazine* recommends front halls have:

"A set of hall furniture, comprising a hat-stand, chairs, and folding table, of finely carved and highly polished oak, is first on our list. These are of a Gothic pattern and distinguished by a peculiar neatness. The stand is furnished with a small, oval mirror, receptacle for umbrellas, etc., etc. The halls of houses in the country generally receive little attention, being considered, as most often described, simply a 'passage.'" ⁶

Since the hall of the average middle-class house was small, the furniture that was put into it had to serve a purpose. For example, chairs placed in the hall could be used to accommodate guests awaiting a meeting with the man or woman of the house. A folding table could be in the hall for the purpose of calling. A calling card could be left on the table to inform the homeowner that a friend or a suitor had dropped by while they were unavailable. A servant could also place a

⁵ Kenneth L Ames, *Death in the Dining Room, and Other Tales of Victorian Culture*. (Philadelphia Pa: Temple University Press, 1995).

⁶ L. H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, "Godey's Magazine.," *Hathi Trust* 40–41 (1850):152, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081675583&view=1up&seq=21>.

visitor's card on the hall table so that once the intended party returned, they would be able to receive the message. As seen in Figure 1, the hall stands had many uses, such as places for guests and occupants to store frequently needed items such as umbrellas, hats, and cloaks. This allowed the home's occupants to get the items they needed quickly and efficiently. The mirror that was most often included in the stand could allow the women of the house to have one last look at themselves before they left home, revealing the extent to which one's appearance would be judged in Victorian society. The hat stands allowed guests to discard their cloaks, hats, and other accessories before entering the rooms of the home. The functionality of the hallway was seen as a reflection of the family's status. Since the hall was such a small room, it was important for a proper homemaker to have it meticulously organized. A disorganized hall would reflect a home that was not prepared to receive guests. The parlor is the second area where women would establish first impressions in the home. The parlor in a Victorian home is one of the most important rooms. As seen in Figure 2, this room would be where the social and business meetings would take place. Scholar Katherine Grier noted in her work *Culture and Comfort*, that parlors were "the place in which calls and social visits by friends were received and the setting for entertainments such as tea parties."⁷ The parlor had a large variety of uses. It was the room where the family would present their public face to society. The parlor would be one of the largest rooms in the house and is where almost all the most expensive items would be displayed. *Godey's Lady's Magazine* provided elaborate, detailed descriptions of furnishings in the parlor since it was such a sign of status:

The sofas and ordinary chairs are covered with satin damask, crimson, and black, and deeply tufted, or knotted, as will be seen. The frames are of rosewood, delicately carved,

⁷ Katherine C. Grier and Strong Museum, *Culture & Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery, 1850-1930* (Rochester, N.Y.: Strong Museum; Amherst, Mass, 1988), 64.

and of the 'highest polish. One of the prettiest patterns represents clusters of small and large roses, every petal being distinct. Frames of the same shape and covered with velvet, plush, or hair-cloth may be procured. Mahogany is the established accompaniment of haircloth, however. The lounging, or armchair, has a richly embroidered covering of plain damask; the bouquets are life-like in color and execution, rivaling the far-famed labors of our grandmothers. Indeed, this kind of needlework is once more the fashion...⁸

The parlor was one of the more public rooms of the house therefore it was important for the parlor to be elaborately and meticulously decorated since it would be the room where visitors would get their first and potentially only impression of the family.

When using the literature as a guide, women learned what a proper parlor should contain, and it allowed them to have the knowledge needed to judge the character of other women and their furnishings. For example, if the woman of the house was having a meeting in the parlor and it was poorly decorated, it would imply a lower social status because the homemaker could not decorate according to the Victorian expectations of the time. On the other hand, if a woman paid attention to the detail prescribed in the magazine it would imply a higher status since she was able to furnish it correctly.

Godey's Lady's Magazine also cautions its readers not to spend outside of their means. The idea is that how one decorates the parlor should reflect the family's economic standing; one should not decorate over or under one's means. An example of how the magazine emphasizes this is through the story of two cousins, one who married a wealthy doctor and one who married a poor doctor. The story follows the cousins as they bought furnishings for their parlors. The rich cousin spent her money liberally without worrying about price or budget. When asked how she would care for the furniture and her house, the richer cousin stated that she would hire servants

⁸ Louis A Godey, "Godey's Lady's Magazine. v. 40-41 (1850).," ed. Sara Hale, Hathi Trust, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081675583&view=1up&seq=21>, 152.

to do the housework. In contrast, the poorer cousin spent her money wisely following a budget; she purchased plainer furnishings for her parlor and managed and cleaned the house herself. The story ends with the richer cousin losing her home and damaging her husband's reputation because he could not afford the furnishings she had bought. The poorer cousin takes in the richer cousin until her husband sends for her to come to California.⁹ This story conveyed a lesson for the readers. *Godey's Lady's Magazine* set a standard on purchasing home décor and the story illustrated the perils of not following the standard.¹⁰

Additionally, along with knowing how to furnish the home properly, women were expected to know how to care for the house, including tasks such as cooking and cleaning according to “modern” expectations. Before 1870 stews were a staple in the American diet¹¹. However, industrialization brought about changes in how people obtained the food they ate in their homes. In Ruth Schwartz Cowen's *More Work for Mother*, she states “By the turn of the century, canned goods were a standard feature of the American diet: women's magazines contained advertisements for them on nearly every page, standard recipes called for them...”¹² *Godey's Lady's Magazine* provided many recipes for well-balanced dishes, as seen in Figure 3. The January to June 1870 edition features an article describing the ideal diet for a middle-class

⁹ L. H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, “Godey's Magazine,” *Hathi Trust* 40–41 (1850):299, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081675583&view=1up&seq=21>.

¹⁰ Ellen M Plante, *Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History* (New York: Facts on File, 1997).

¹¹ Cowan, Ruth Schwartz, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, Ny: Basic Books, [Ca, 2008), 38.

¹² Cowan, Ruth Schwartz, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, Ny: Basic Books, [Ca, 2008), 73.

Victorian family and focuses on new standards of nutrition. These expectations are shown when *Godey's Lady's Magazine* states.

Variety in diet is requisite for health. A single article of nutriment, even though it contains all the requisite elements, can scarcely be long used exclusively as food, without injury to the digestive organs, or even danger to life.¹³

The author recommends that readers eat a mix of vegetables and meats and encouraged women to make what the writers considered proper well-balanced meals for their families.

The magazine also provided many specific guidelines for cleaning the Victorian home these expectations were driven partially by the newly popular “germ theory.” French scientist Lewis Pasteur discovered that microscopic organisms were responsible for food spoilage and some illnesses.¹⁴ His findings helped to influence a change in the expectations for cleanliness in the home. At a time when commercial cleaning supplies were limited, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* included tips and recipes for how one could produce or find these at home (see Figure 4). The recipes included cleaning supplies one might produce for everything from cleaning ribbons to getting rid of indoor ants. *Godey's Lady's Magazine* instructed women to accomplish perfection in managing and caring for the home, as a “clean” home was essential. Women were expected to maintain cleanliness themselves or by supervising workers hired to clean the home. A clean home provided visitors with an impression of the moral character of the woman:

A woman who is not essentially kind-hearted cannot be a comfortable housekeeper; a woman who has not judgment, firmness, forethought, and general good sense cannot manage her house prudently or comfortably, no matter what amount of money she may

¹³ L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* 1870, *Internet Archive*, vol. 81 (Open Court Publishing Co, 1870): 259, https://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1870-11_81_485/page/452/mode/1up?view=theater.

¹⁴ “History of Medicine - Verification of the Germ Theory,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/science/history-of-medicine/Verification-of-the-germ-theory>.

have at her command; a woman who has not an eye for detecting and remedying disorderliness and carelessness cannot keep her house fresh and pleasant, no matter how much money she may spend on furniture and upholstery. It is not money, but management, that is the great requisite in procuring comfort in household arrangements.¹⁵

Once again, women were able to see the expectation in print and use it as a standard by which to judge themselves and others.

The third area that *Godey's Lady's Magazine* highlights as important for Victorian women is proper attire. During the late Victorian Era, the manner and style of dress varied from decade to decade. Still, one aspect that remained constant throughout this period was the expectation that a “proper lady” should keep up with current fashion trends. It was important for women to show that they were familiar with and following the popular styles. Magazine writers argued that it was crucial for women to look and fit into the role that society expected them to play.

Expectations were not just for the style of clothing that women should wear; women were also instructed in what was considered the proper procedure for layering each article of clothing, from undergarments to outerwear. This was a lengthy process that involved specific placement and arrangement of multiple layers. A chemise would be the first item a woman would put on to begin getting dressed. Ruth Goodman’s *How to Be a Victorian a Dawn to Dusk Guide of Victorian Life* states, the chemise was almost always made of cotton, and although there were subtle changes to its style over the years, it remained essentially a simple tube-like garment with short, capped sleeves. It left a woman with bare arms, a plunging neckline, and an exposed lower leg.¹⁶ The chemise acted as a protective layer between the body and the outer layers of clothing

¹⁵ L. H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, “Godey’s Magazine,” *Hathi Trust* 66–67 (1863):299, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015020057520&view=1up&seq=14>.

¹⁶ Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-To-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, A Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 59–76.

absorbing oil and sweat. The chemise was one of the garments that could be washed regularly. Their outer garments would often be made of satins and silks, it was riskier to wash garments made of these materials. Wearing a chemise protected the more fragile garments.¹⁷ Next were the drawers: "Two knee-length legs are drawn together with a waistband. This left a gap between the legs that was entirely exposed."¹⁸ The last step for the base layer was the stockings, which covered from the feet up to the knee and would be made of cotton, wool, or silk. Many women wore a garter belt to keep the stockings from falling. Over the base layers, a corset was worn. Women's fashion at this time required a small waist. Corsets were used to help shape the woman's body to meet this standard. Corsets this time were made up of eight panels with boning sewn on the front and back at each of the seams of the panel, allowing the corset to conform to the user's body shape. There was lacing at the back that could be synched to decrease a woman's waist size. Then the proper woman added corset covers and camisoles to provide warmth and shape the body further to add to the illusion of a tiny waist. In Scholar Ruth Goodman's work *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-To-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life* she notes:

A neat, corseted figure was ultimately, what society expected of a woman. Wearing one meant that she was daily proving to herself, and her neighbors, that she had standards and more importantly, self-respect. An uncorseted woman was thought to lack self-control and would have

¹⁷ "Victorian Era: The Importance of Underwear to Create a Real Look!" *Le Grand Costumier*, last modified September 2, 2020, accessed April 24, 2023, <https://grandcostumier.com/en/news/victorian-era-the-importance-of-underwear-to-create-a-real-look#:~:text=The%20chemise's%20primary%20purpose%20was,chemises%2C%20which%20were%20washed%20regularly.>

¹⁸ R Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-To-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, A Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 59–76.

faced public disapproval and crude assumption about her lifestyle. Only those who were prepared to be social outcasts went without.¹⁹

The last piece of base wear would be the petticoats. Petticoats shaped the bottom of the dress and also provided warmth. If a woman wanted her dress to be larger, more petticoats would be required.²⁰ Petticoats were made of materials such as cotton flannel to make them warm and easier to clean. Many women also wore crinolines to accentuate one or more parts of the skirt according to the latest fashion trend. Meme Mathews in her work *A Victorian Lady's Guide to Fashion and Beauty* notes "A crinoline was essentially a petticoat made of horsehair or some other stiffening material which held the gown out away from the body. "All of these undergarments could help the Victorian middle-class woman to transform the look of one of her garments with little to no change to the garment itself. Women could present the correct visual impression and be able to achieve the latest fashion by adding or removing some of these layers..."²¹

The final layer would be the dress. Women were instructed in *Godey's Lady's Magazine* about what dress a proper middle-class Victorian woman should wear and how many times and why she should change throughout the day. First, the authors recommend that women start their day in a morning dress, made of thin, lightweight material with a high neckline and long sleeves with a hem that just touched the floor. These dresses could be worn for morning visits with close

¹⁹ R Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-To-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, A Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 66

²⁰ Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-To-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, A Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 59–76.

²¹ Goodman, 59–76.

friends or a meeting with any house staff, but these would not be worn out to a more formal event or visit with friends in the community.²² The second type of dress, the walking dress, was expected to be worn on walks around town or when shopping. The walking dresses were most commonly made of wool and cotton with shorter skirts to enhance mobility. These dresses had few embellishments and could be found in various colors. The third type of dress was an afternoon dress, which was more elaborate and embellished than the morning and walking dresses. The afternoon dress was typically made of finer materials and would fully touch the floor. They were usually worn when a lady was either paying a visit to someone's house or if she was expecting company. The fourth type of dress was the dinner dress, which is more elaborate than the afternoon dress. The skirts on this dress would touch the floor all the way around and occasionally included a train. These dresses also featured long sleeves, creating a more formal impression. The magazine suggested women wear a dinner dress when she is hosting or attending a dinner party. The final type of dress was the ball or evening gown, the most elaborate dress that a Victorian woman could own. Magazine writers noted that these should be more decorative, with different trim types. Unlike the dinner dress, the sleeves on the ball gown would be very short, whereas the skirts would go all the way to the floor, sometimes leading into a train.²³ Women were instructed that their standing in society depended partly on whether they wore the appropriate dress for each occasion. Florence Hartley notes in *The Ladies Book of Etiquette and Manuel of Politeness*

In arranging a dress for every occasion, be careful that there is no missing string, hook, or button, that the folds hang well, and that every part is even and properly adjusted. Let the skirts hang

²² Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-To-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, A Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 59–76.

²³ Mimi Matthews, *A Victorian Lady's Guide to Fashion and Beauty* (South Yorkshire, England Pen Et Sword History, 2018), 89.

smoothly, the outside ones being always about an inch longer than the under ones; let the dress set smoothly, carefully hooked or buttoned; let the collar fit neatly, and be fastened firmly and smoothly at the throat; let shoes and stockings be whole, clean, and fit nicely; let the hair be smooth and glossy, the skin pure, and the colors and fabric of your dress harmonize and be suitable for the occasion, and you will always appear both lady-like and well-dressed.²⁴

Further, styles were constantly changing, so women should consult the current issues of the magazine to be certain they were following the newest styles and fashion trends. Besides discussing the types and styles of clothes for each occasion, the editors included colored fashion plates that provided a more thorough look at the garment's appearance. The plates and the fashion advice also suggested which fashions may be popular next season. By showing different styles of outfits and dresses in its fashion plates, the magazine highlighted the types of clothing women may have missed. Figure 5 shows one of these fashion plates. The illustration features five different types and styles of formal gowns and accessories that could be worn with each one under the title "Fashionable Costumes." *Godey's Lady's Magazine* encouraged its reader not to miss out on what could be the latest fashion.

In addition to the fashion guidance, the magazine published a section known as its "Work Department," to help women learn how to make some of these fashion items themselves. This magazine section included sewing patterns, tips, and tricks for achieving these fashions economically. The January to June issue of *Godey's Lady's Magazine* states

The colored fashion -plate, containing six designs, principally of walking suits, has been gotten up by our well-informed fashion editress with her usual taste. And in her selection of articles for the work department, we think that she has displayed a knowledge of fancy work - that cannot

²⁴ Florence Hartley, *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness: Complete Handbook for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society ...* (Lee and Shepard, 1882).9-10

fail of impressing on our friends the fact that in the LADY ' S BOOK alone will be found the best instruction for a life of usefulness.²⁵

The magazine shared how to sew, crochet, and embroider to embellish the gowns women already owned to fit new trends. The “Work Department” included “chit-chat” on fashions and colorful fashion plates. The magazine set a standard that emphasized the belief that a proper Victorian woman should always keep up with the latest fashion trend. The “Work Department” was provided to underline the expectation of keeping up with current fashion trends even when one has to do so in an economical manner.²⁶

Godey's Lady's Magazine's advice to mothers on how to feed, care for, and educate their children; provides the final example of what was considered to be the appropriate behavior for proper middle-class women. A woman, when it comes to her children, must be able to care for their every need. A proper woman must be a good role model for them and provide a sense of what is morally appropriate behavior in society. She must also provide her children with an equal education no matter what sex they are so that both can grow up to be contributing members of society.²⁷ A writer in the 1860 issue of *Godey's Lady's Magazine* states:

The perfection of motherhood lies in the harmonious blending of a happy instinct with those qualities which make the good member of society with good sense and information, with subdued or regulated passion, and that abnegation which lays every selfish consideration at the

²⁵ L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* 1870, *Internet Archive*, vol. 81 (Open Court Publishing Co, 1870): 1047, https://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1870-11_81_485/page/452/mode/1up?view=theater.

²⁶ Ruth Goodman, *How to Be a Victorian: A Dawn-To-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, A Division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2015).

²⁷ Ellen M Plante, *Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History* (New York: Facts on File, 1997).

feet of duty. To make a good mother, it is not enough to seek the child's happiness, but to seek it with forethought and effect.²⁸

Ironically, the magazine's editors and writers found it necessary to tell women what to do, assuming perhaps that generational knowledge or as *Godey's Lady's Magazine* puts it "happy instinct" might not be enough for their children to become proper Victorian middle-class citizens. Mothers were charged with the monumental task of raising the next generation and their knowledge must continuously be updated to meet that of the ever-changing societal standards. Women were tasked with preparing their children for society's standards because they were seen as the most influential person in the home. As primary caretakers, there were expected to be able to care for and educate the children on social, cultural, and political ideas.²⁹ *Godey's Lady's Magazine's* writers give plentiful advice on how to be a mother and raise children properly. For example, an article in the July to December of 1860 edition entitled *Raising Children by Hand* explores health and discusses how mothers who cannot nurse their children should feed them. The column strongly urges women to try to nurse before bottle-feeding their children:

True, there is consumptive and a scrofulous and dyspeptic woman who have inherited their diseases, or who have sinned against their bodies beyond redemption, and who are irremediably diseased. However, these cases, though, alas, too numerous, are comparatively few: they are but a fraction when compared with the vast numbers who are diseased as a consequence of their misdoings and to whom health and strength are yet possible by forsaking bad habit is the right and proper course for all mothers whose milk

²⁸ L. H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, "Godey's Magazine.," *Hathi Trust* 60 (1860):530, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d00322043u&view=1up&seq=9>.

²⁹ Ellen M Plante, *Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History* (New York: Facts on File, 1997).

is insufficient in quantity or impure in quality. This much they owe to themselves; this they owe to their children.³⁰

According to the authors, nursing a child is more in line with what a good mother should do and mothers who were unable to do so need to work hard to make up for their inability to provide for their child. If a mother is unable to do her duty and nurse a child, she could find advice on how to adequately bottle-feed. The first piece of advice is on what type of milk should be given to the child, noting "Next to the mother's milk, the best food, all things considered, is a mixture of cow's milk and water, sweetened with sugar."³¹ The article instructs the mothers on how and when to give it. The article highlights what the editors of *Godey's Lady's Magazine* deemed to be an ideal mother. It emphasizes that a proper mother should do whatever she needs to care for her child according to their standards. The writers also provide health care ideas, including how mothers should treat their children for various illnesses, from colic to scarlet fever. For example, the January to June of 1860 edition featured a recipe for how to treat a cough or hoarseness:

To Cure Cough or hoarseness. —Take five cents' worth of gum -Arabic, put it into a pint of water, set it on fire too, dissolve, and let it simmer for about ten minutes; add to it as much pure loaf sugar -as you like. If the cold is acute, drink as you please; but take two teaspoonfuls or more every ten or fifteen minutes, as the disease may require.³²

Through recipes such as this, the magazine is providing mothers with the tools they need to ensure the next generation remains healthy. The magazine also provides guidance as to how a

³⁰L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, *Godey's Lady's Book 1860 Vol. 61*, Internet Archive, 1860, 174–76, <https://archive.org/details/godeys-1860-v-61/page/520/mode/1up?view=theater>.

³¹ L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, *Godey's Lady's Book 1860 Vol. 61*, Internet Archive, 1860, 174–76, <https://archive.org/details/godeys-1860-v-61/page/520/mode/1up?view=theater>.

³² L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, *Godey's Lady's Book 1860 Vol. 61*, Internet Archive, 1860, 174–76, <https://archive.org/details/godeys-1860-v-61/page/520/mode/1up?view=theater>.

mother should provide an appropriate education for her children. For example, The January to June 1876 edition offers advice on how to educate children of different genders:

The bodily education of boys and girls ought in every respect to be uniform. A great difference usually prevails in the education of the sexes during Infancy... Girls are, from their cradles, compelled to a more sedentary life, and with this intention, dolls and other playthings are early procured; yet boys are permitted to take more frequent exercise. Thus, girls are confined in their apartments, while boys amuse themselves in the open air. Such absurd constraints impede the free and progressive evolution of the different faculties and powers.³³

Godey's Lady's Magazine editors prescribed that boys and girls should receive the same education. The authors suggest that in the past, girls tended to be kept inside and sheltered while boys were able to explore and grow. Their opinion was that this unequal treatment of girls led to impaired development. They instead presented the expectation that young girls should, much like boys, be allowed to go out and play instead of being kept inside. Mothers were given the responsibility of insuring that each of their children would develop to their potential. There were many articles printed that explained exactly what was expected of a good mother. Victorian women learned to judge themselves and each other based on the latest trends in child-rearing. Another example of this prescriptive literature providing the expectations of motherhood comes from the July to December 1870 volume of *Godey's Lady's Magazine* states:

Never suffer your children to advance in years before you attend to their education. The younger they are, the more tender and soft their minds, and the more susceptible to impressions: consequently, if you neglect them, they will imbibe notions from every example which presents itself to them, and, as there are more bad examples than good.³⁴

³³ L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, "Godey's Magazine.," *Hathi Trust* 92 (1876):283, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015014112935&view=1up&seq=5>.

³⁴ L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine 1870*, *Internet Archive*, vol. 81 (Open Court Publishing Co, 1870): 453, https://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1870-11_81_485/page/452/mode/1up?view=theater.

This article warns mothers about the danger of neglecting a child's education: the child will not know right from wrong and may be unable to reach their full potential as functional members of society. Women were expected to nurture and shape their children into the image of society's expectations. If this did not happen a woman would be considered a poor mother and she would have a lower status in society. *Godey's Lady's Magazine* provides extensive advice on the manner in which women should be raising their children. The January to June 1876 volume discusses the hazards of leaving a child's education to someone else. The article reiterates that the mother is the best source of education for her children. As one author argues: "This guidance is much like a woman's responsibility to the home, if someone else is doing the work, it is the woman's responsibility to supervise and make sure everything is done correctly. A mother is expected to know and understand what is appropriate and provide the necessary instruction or materials." The magazine also warns women about the need to provide an appropriate education before their children began school. One writer argues: "There is far more mischief done in many families before the children reach the school room than the best of governesses or tutors have the power to eradicate. Just as prudence should dictate the food a child should eat, so should it regulate the food afforded to the brain."³⁵ This restates the authors' belief that a woman is ultimately the person in command of her children's education. Children who enter school behind or lacking in the social skills which are expected would have been considered as lacking in early instruction, and it would reflect poorly on the mother's character.

³⁵ L.H. Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, and Louis Antoine Godey, *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine 1870*, Internet Archive, vol. 81 (Open Court Publishing Co, 1870): 453, https://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1870-11_81_485/page/452/mode/1up?view=theater.

The late Victorian period was a time of change both in the home and in the world in general. Women's roles changed as more technological innovations were created. Some of these inventions were created to help make life easier. While they helped society as a whole, for women the time that was saved by the new innovations was often taken up by trying to keep up with new expectations that came along with them. For example, as scientists learned more about the microorganisms that cause sickness, women were expected to clean to a higher standard than ever before. When clothing could be bought instead of only being made in the home, women were taught the importance of fashion and why they should keep up with the latest trends. Publications such as Godey's Lady's Magazine were very influential to women because of the information they imparted. As more women read the magazine, its influence grew and gradually became the standard by which women judged themselves³⁶. During this period of change, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* was an influence in the lives of many Victorian women. The writers and editors sought to provide the essential advice that would help guide women toward becoming what they considered the ideal middle-class Victorian woman. To accomplish this goal, they provided advice and instructions to help women keep up with the constantly changing society. The magazine was a platform through which the authors could prescribe details and descriptions that would lead women to understand how to maintain their place in Victorian society. Throughout the issues, *Godey's Lady's Magazine* presents not only the fashions but new ideas of the time as they relate to the ideal middle-class woman. Their ideal woman could affordably and appropriately furnish the home. She also knew how to meet new standards of diet and cleanliness as prescribed by the magazine. The ideal woman dressed appropriately for every

³⁶ Cowan, Ruth Schwartz, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, Ny: Basic Books, [Ca, 1983).

occasion and learned how to make what was needed if she could not afford to buy it. She was also a good mother to her children, caring for their every need, serving as a role model, and teaching what was morally acceptable for society. Mothers were tasked by the magazine editors with ensuring children would be upstanding and contributing members of society. Publications such as Godey's Lady's Magazine were very influential to women because of the information they imparted. As more women read the magazine, its influence grew and gradually became the standard by which women judged themselves³⁷.

³⁷ Cowan, Ruth Schwartz, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, Ny: Basic Books, [Ca, 1983).

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Figure 1: Hat stands, and hall trees as would be seen in the hall of the Victorian home. Credit: Kenneth L Ames, *Death in the Dining Room, and Other Tales of Victorian Culture*, (Philadelphia Pa: Temple University Press, 1995), 19.



Figure 2 A Victorian parlor. Credit: Katherine C. Grier and Strong Museum, *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930*, (Rochester, N.Y.: Strong Museum; Amherst, Mass, 1988), 27.

MISCELLANEOUS COOKING.

To Boil Rice for Curry.—One pound of rice, water. Thoroughly wash the rice in three separate waters, then place it in a very large saucepan nearly full of water, let it boil gently until it is quite tender, which may be tried by pressing a grain between the thumb and finger. Pour the water off from the rice, and shake it over the fire in a smaller saucepan until it is quite dry. Turn it into a hot basin, and cover with a plate, place before the fire, let it stand five minutes, then turn it out into a hot dish ready for the table.

Botted Vermicelli Pudding.—Stir very gently four ounces of vermicelli into a pint of new milk over the stove, until it be scalding hot, but not more; then pour it into a basin, and add to it while hot one ounce of butter and two ounces of sugar. When the above is nearly cold, mix in it very gently two well-beaten eggs, and immediately put it into a basin that will exactly hold it. Cover carefully with a floured cloth, and, turning the basin the narrow end upwards, move it round for ten minutes, and boil an hour. Serve with pudding sauce.

To Roast Partridges.—Rightly, to look well, there should be a leash (three birds) in the dish. Pluck, singe, draw, and truss them; roast them for about twenty minutes, baste them with butter, and when the gravy begins to run from them, you may safely assume that the partridges are done. Place them in a dish together with bread-crumbs, fried nicely brown, and arranged in small heaps. Gravy should be served in a tureen apart.

To Fry Partridges.—Take a brace of cold partridges that have been either roasted or braised, cut them into quarters, dip them into beaten and seasoned yolk of eggs, make some butter perfectly hot in a frying-pan, put into it the birds, and do them over a moderately hot fire until they are beautifully browned.

Figure 3 Food recipes. Credit: *January to June of 1870 Godey's Lady's Magazine*

TO PRESERVE BOOKS.—A few drops of any perfumed oil will secure libraries from the consuming effects of mould and damp. Russian leather, which is perfumed with the tar of the birch-tree, never moulders; and merchants suffer large bales of this leather to remain in the London Docks, knowing that it cannot sustain any injury from damp. This manner of preserving books with perfumed oil was known to the ancients. The Romans used oil of cedar to preserve valuable manuscripts. Hence the expression used by Horace, "*digna cedro*," meaning any work worthy of being anointed with cedar-oil, or, in other words, of being preserved and remembered.

NATURE PRINTING.—The following is a method of obtaining the figure of a plant: A piece of paper is to be rubbed over with powdered dragon's blood, and then the small branch or leaf of which the design is required is to be laid upon it. By means of slight friction, it soon takes up a small quantity of the powder; and being then laid upon moistened paper, an impression may be taken.

TO CLEAN BLACK LACE.—Pass the lace through a warm liquor of bullocks' gall and water; afterwards rinse in cold water; then take a small piece of glue, pour boiling water on it, and again pass the lace through it; clap it with your hands, and then frame it to dry.

TO CLEAN BLACK SILKS.—To bullocks' gall, add boiling water sufficient to make it warm, and with a clean sponge rub the silk well on both sides; squeeze it well out, and proceed in like manner. Rinse it in spring water, and change the water until perfectly clean. Dry it in the air, and pin it out on a table; but first dip the sponge in glue-water, and rub it on the wrong side; then dry before a fire.

HOUSE ANTS.—The best way to get rid of ants is to set a quantity of cracked walnuts or shell-barks on plates, and put them in the closets and places where the ants congregate. They are very fond of these, and will collect on them in myriads. When they have collected on them make a general *auto-da-fe*, by turning nuts and ants together into the fire, and then replenishing the plates with fresh nuts. After they have become so thinned off as to cease collecting on plates, powder some camphor, and put in the holes and crevices, whereupon the remainder of them will speedily ramose. It may help the process of getting them to assemble on the shell-barks, to remove all edibles out of their way for the time.

Figure 4 Cleaning Recipes Credit: *Godey's Lady's Magazine* 1855

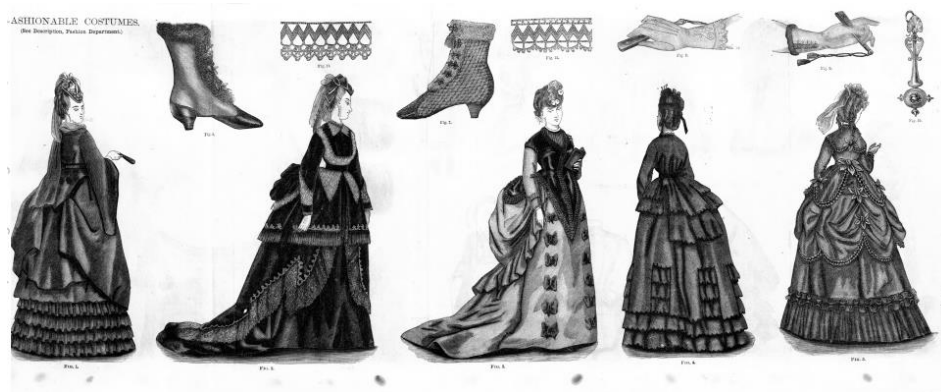


Figure 5 Examples of ladies' formal wear and accessories. Credit: *Jan-Jun 1870 volume of Godey's Lady's Magazine*

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