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Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers



Synopsis

What spurred so many Victorian women to leave behind their secure middle-class homes and undertake perilous journeys of thousands of miles, tramping through tropical forests, caravanning across deserts, and scaling mountain ranges? And how were they able to travel so freely in exotic lands, when at home such independence was denied to them? This book draws upon the diaries and writings of more than 50 such women to describe their experiences and aspirations. Many of the journeys they made are re-constructed - Mary Gaunt's voyage along the West African coast, Mary Kingsley's jungle treks, Amelia Edwards's thousand-mile journey up the Nile and Isabella Bird's ascent of the Rocky Mountains are just a few. Were women such as Mary Kingsley and Isabella Bird simply the intrepid blue-stockings of popular history, or early feminists? Dea Birkett argues that they were in fact neither - dissatisfied with the restricted lives prescribed for them by Victorian society, they sought and found new horizons abroad, and a degree of freedom and respect only afforded in their own countries to men.

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Customer Reviews

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This book reports on the phenomenon of the Victorian lady traveller. I purchased it because one of my cousins from Scotland was such a traveller. I found it informative and entertaining. I am glad I purchased it.

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