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## Review of *The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau* edited by Deborah Anna Logan

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BOOK REVIEW <sup>1</sup>

*The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau*. Edited by Deborah Anna Logan. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007. 5 vols. 2,036 pp. \$795.00.

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**T**HIS METICULOUS, EXQUISITE AND STUNNINGLY SPECTACULAR scholarly accomplishment must be earmarked as a required high-priority acquisition for every college, university, and research library. In addition to the obvious appeal to scholars in Victorian studies *per se*, this phenomenal cross-disciplinary *tour de force* will also become a mandatory resource for serious students of gender studies, history, literature, policy studies, political science, and sociology, for example — as well as for students of the history, philosophy, and development of the sciences. For institutional purchasers, the hefty price tag is more than well justified; it will pay extraordinary dividends for decades to come.

This latest addition to Pickering and Chatto's outstanding series of Martineau publications is unquestionably the jewel in the crown, for here Professor Logan goes light-years beyond the usual edited reissues of Martineau's standard works. Dr. Logan presents us with a genuinely fresh goldmine of Martineau materials, much of which is published here for the first time after being methodically discovered in myriad archives and private collections. Scholars familiar with earlier but far more restricted aggregations of Martineau's correspondence (e.g., *Selected Letters*, edited by Valerie Sanders; *Letters to Fanny Wedgwood*, edited by Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle; and *Harriet Martineau and America*, edited by R.A. Burchell), can easily anticipate what lies in store: an extraordinary, well-nigh comprehensive, and greatly-to-be-treasured window into Martineau's most candid, intimate, critical, and confidential moments and relationships. The chronologically arranged letters, from 1819 to 1876, span essentially the whole of Martineau's adulthood but emphasize her more mature and most productive decades. If there is a fault in this massive collection, it is the pragmatic circumstance that we are given only Martineau's side of her epistolary conversations. To learn what her correspondents wrote *to* Martineau, we must necessarily turn to other sources in libraries and archives both here and abroad.

In addition to Professor Logan's general orientation to the set as a whole, she provides in each volume a summary introduction and an itemized appendix of Martineau's published works penned during the years covered by the volume in hand. Volume 5 is especially noteworthy for Logan's 83-page biographical dictionary, a magnificent and indispensable *Who's Who* succinctly identifying the hundreds of central correspondents and referents in Martineau's letters. Rounding out the set is a detailed, 45-page index which includes personal names, place names, publication titles, and selected subjects.

The wonder of this work is that it exists at all, as most readers know that Martineau eventually asked her correspondents to destroy her letters. History owes a debt of gratitude to those who preserved Martineau's epistolary record and we also incur a deep obligation to our colleague, Deborah Anna Logan — and to Pickering and Chatto — for presenting us with this discerning and erudite labor of love and scholarship.

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