Victorian attitudes toward sex are caricatured, but certainly they were stereotyped. The man went out into the world to make a living for the family, and he was faced there with a host of moral and ethical challenges. They drove him back home to his own hearth, where there waited a pure and virtuous woman, a splendid mother and nurturer, who refused the temptations to be polluted by the world and who offered him and her children a model of virtue to be emulated. Of course, such a pure woman would *never* be interested in sex—it was a dirty necessity to provide children, but she wouldn’t enjoy it. (The advice the Prime Minister gave Queen Victoria before her wedding night was "to lie there and think of England.")

Women were not educated beyond a little painting, dressmaking, French, and social achievements—Martha Stewart’s concerns were her own. Coventry Patmore, the Rod McKuen of Victorian poets, wrote a poem in 1854 called "[The Angel in the House](http://www.gutenberg.net/etext03/anghs10.txt)" that summarized woman’s role. Here’s an excerpt:

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;
And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers;
Or any eye to see her charms,
At any time, she's still his wife,
Dearly devoted to his arms;
She loves with love that cannot tire;
And when, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love springs higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone.

(And if anybody hears Milton’s Eve in these lines, you’re right—the allusion is direct.)

So women who sought more public roles in their society were vilified as "bluestockings" –the only kinds of public works they were allowed to pursue were genteel fundraising for missionary work or orphan relief. In the meantime, their husbands resorted to their clubs or to consorting with "fashionable impures"—i.e. prostitutes—for their ‘beastly desires’ (as Victoria put it in one of her letters).

http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/engl203/overviews/ladies&gents.htm