

Service



All upper class houses had several servants, and most middle class households would have at least one or two. In 1871 over 4% of the population was employed 'in service', the majority of them being women. Roles included butler, housekeeper, valet, footman, lady's maid, house maids, under housemaids, laundry maid, cook, kitchen maids, scullery maid, house boy, coachman, groom and stable boy.

Servants were ranked in importance with each having their own skills and duties. Children's main roles would be the house maid, under house maid, laundry maid, kitchen maid, scullery maid, house boy and stable boy.

The main duties of the house maid were cleaning, cleaning, cleaning. First thing, the breakfast room, boudoir and drawing room needed to be cleaned; they would also iron the newspaper so it was nice and crisp for the master of the house to read during breakfast.

While the family ate breakfast the house maid's attention would be on the bedrooms; opening windows, turning and making the beds, chamber pot to be emptied, floors wiped, and woodwork dusted. The rugs were taken out and shaken, mirrors polished, the grate and irons cleaned. They also had weekly duties which would include cleaning windows, washing ornaments, polishing furniture, cleaning the stairs, landing and corridors, mending linen, taking down curtains then shaking and rehangng, cleaning rugs and cushions.

Questions

Retrieval

1. How were servants ranked?
2. Name 3 of the weekly duties house maid's had to complete.

Vocabulary

3. 'While the family ate breakfast'. Use another verb instead of ate that suggests how the family ate.

Inference

4. 'The main duties of the house maid were cleaning, cleaning, cleaning.'
Why do you think the author repeated the word cleaning?