

## THE LIVES OF SERVANTS IN THE 19TH CENTURY.

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### **Abstract**

This article explores the lives of servants in 19th century, shedding light on their roles, working conditions and social status. The 19th century was a time of significant social, economic, and technological improvement, particularly in Europe and North America. One of the most remarkable aspects of this era was the stark contrast in the lives of the wealthy and the working class, particularly those who served as domestic servants.

### **Key words**

Technological change, upbringing of children, nannies, working conditions, serving meals, unique position, grievances.

Roles and responsibilities of servants in the 19th century held various positions within households, each with distinct responsibilities. Common roles included:

In ancient literature, servant characters were often showed as slaves who belonged to their masters. These characters were expected to serve their bosses unconditionally and synchronic analysis. In Greek and Roman literature, slaves were often depicted as mistreated and tortured by their masters. However, there were also reasons where slaves were depicted as loyal and devoted to their masters.

One of the most notable examples of a loyal servant in ancient literature is the character of Nausicaa in Homer's The Odyssey. Nausicaa is a princess who finds Odysseus shipwrecked on the seashore and takes him in. Her servant girls are loyal and helpful to him, helping him with his everyday tasks.<sup>57</sup> In medieval literature, the description of servant characters began to change. Servants were no longer seen as mere slaves, but as individuals with their own

<sup>57</sup> DESCRIPTION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF THE CHARACTER MIRYOQUB IN CHOLPON'S NOVEL "NIGHT AND DAY" Sh.M. Mansurovich - JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT, 2023

personalities and motivations. They are often clever, intelligent and resourceful, using their wits to get out of difficult situations. One vivid example of a clever servant in medieval literature is Chaucer's character, the Miller. The Miller is a servant who can outwit and steal from his master. He is cunning and quick-witted, using his wits to steal what he wants.

And there are some types of servants that served in different positions:

- Housemaids: Responsible for cleaning and maintaining the home, housemaids always worked long hours scrubbing floors, dusting furniture, and washing linens.
- Cooks: Tasked with preparing tasty meals, cooks had to be skilled in culinary arts and often managed a team of kitchen staff, including scullery maids and kitchen porters.
- Butlers: Typically in charge of the dining room and serving meals, butlers also supervised other male staff and provided the smooth operation of the household.
- Nannies: Focused on the care and upbringing of children, nannies were important to families, especially among the upper classes, who relied on them for child-rearing.

Servants were essential to the functioning of large households, allowing wealthy families to save their lifestyles.

Working Conditions of servants:

The working conditions of 19th-century servants varied widely based on their position, the household they worked for, and their levels.

- Long Hours: Servants often worked from early morning until late at night, with minimal breaks. A typical day could span 14 to 16 hours, leaving little time for personal rest or life.

- Low Wages: Most servants earned meager wages, which were often not enough to support themselves, let alone a family. Many were provided with room and board, which was an important part of their compensation.

- Social Isolation: Living in their employers' homes, many servants experienced social isolation. They were often separated from their families and communities, and their relations were largely limited to their work environment.<sup>58</sup>

Social status and class dynamics:

Servants got a unique position within the social hierarchy of the 19th century. While they were significant to the functioning of households, they were often viewed as inferior and were subject to the whims of their employers.

<sup>58</sup> [CREATION OF NANNY HAWKINS IN BRIDESHEAD REVISITED BY EVELYN WAUGH](#) SM Mansurovich - ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MARKETING & ..., 2023

- **Class Distinction:** The division between the upper classes and their servants was pronounced. Servants were expected to obey to strict social protocols, often being required to address their employers with formal titles and respect.
- **Limited Rights:** Many servants had few rights, and their employment was often risky. They could be sacked without notice and had little recourse for grievances. Some servants worked under special contracts, but the terms were frequently unfavorable.

- **Opportunities for Advancement:** While rare, some servants could increase through the ranks or improve their social standing by acquiring skills or marrying into a higher class. However, this was more common in urban areas, where social mobility was somewhat more feasible.

#### Changing Times.

The latter part of the 19th century witnessed significant changes in the world of domestic service. The rise of the industrial revolution brought about urbanization, which changed household dynamics. Many families started to move into cities, where the demand for domestic help shifted.<sup>59</sup>

- **Emergence of New Professions:** As the number of industries grew, some former servants found work in factories or other sectors, leading to a decline in the number of domestic servants.

- **Labor Movements:** The growing awareness of workers' rights and the labor movement began to impact domestic workers. While domestic service remained a common occupation, the conversations around rights and working conditions began to change.

The lives of servants in the 19th century were marked by hard work, long hours, and social stratification. While they played a significant role in society, their experiences were often characterized by isolation and economic hardship. As the century progressed, changes in society and the economy started to shift the landscape of domestic service, setting the stage for further developments in the 20th century. Understanding the lives of these individuals provides valuable insight into the complexities of social class and employment during a transformative period in history.

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