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Changes in the Wages of Domestic Servants during Fifty Years

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Domestic service, the dress and needlework trades, and shopkeepers are the groups most represented in the table of occupations.

Generally speaking, it is not possible to form any idea of the social status, as measured by employment of servants, of the women in the occupied group, as it is impossible to separate them from the men. In the dressmaking and millinery group, however, there were only 1,479 men occupiers and 14,361 women occupiers. These 15,840 occupiers employed among them 1,489 servants, or 9 servants to every 100 families or occupiers. The shirtmakers and seamstresses employed 2 servants to every 100 families or occupiers. Shopkeepers, of course, show a much higher proportion keeping servants.

No classification similar to Mr. Charles Booth's for London is available for any other county or borough. But the ratio of servants to population was considerably lower in England and Wales than in London both in 1891 and 1901. It may, therefore, be inferred that the classification of women occupiers for London shows a higher percentage waited on by servants than would be found in England and Wales.

If plural voting be abolished, it would clearly be difficult to frame a Bill in which the leisured classes of women were not greatly outnumbered by the working classes.

IV.—*Changes in the Wages of Domestic Servants during Fifty Years.*

By W. T. LAYTON.

IN the discussion which followed the reading to the Society of Mr. Bowley's first paper on the course of wages in the United Kingdom, attention was drawn to the fact that practically no statistics had ever been collected showing the changes in the wages of the largest wage-earning class in the country, viz., that of domestic servants, a class which includes over 40 per cent. of occupied females, or about 4 per cent. of the total population of the United Kingdom.¹

An adequate treatment of this subject would require much more detailed investigation than the present paper represents, but the following figures are put forward with the object of showing what sources of material are available, and how they may be used. The figures given all refer to London and its neighbourhood, but ample information exists for extending the inquiry to various districts, and ascertaining local variations and the influence exerted on domestic wages by the existence of alternative occupations. The utility of the statistics is, of course, greatly diminished by the absence of any reliable figures as to the value of board and lodging; and this is an especial difficulty if the figures are required for

¹ *Journal*, vol. lviii, 1895, p. 283.

comparing the attractions of domestic service with those of various other industries as represented by the wages paid in them.

Theoretically there are two conditions under which such comparisons can be made. In the first place, the variations of cash wages represent the changes in the total wages, if the value of any surplus paid in kind—measured, not in its money cost to the employer, but in the value to the recipient—varies in proportion to the cash paid. Such value is largely determined by the cost of obtaining elsewhere the board and lodging common to the class from which the servant is drawn. If this assumption is true, changes in the cash wages paid to domestic servants may be directly compared with those in the full wages paid in other industries. On the other hand, if the proportion of wages in other industries which is expended on board and lodging is a constant fraction of the gross wage, the surplus, after paying for board and lodging, varies directly as the total wage. One could then compare these gross wages with cash wages in domestic industry, the comparison referring, not to total wages, but to the surpluses in both cases. If this assumption is correct, we may exclude board and lodging in comparing the attractions of occupations, provided the improvement in the board and lodging given to servants keeps pace more or less with the general standard of living.

To prove either of these cases, however, would require a great deal more information than is at present available. Unfortunately, precise details of the conditions under which domestic servants, or any other workers of a similar kind, live are of the scantiest, though a little information of a miscellaneous nature is to be gleaned here and there in the under-mentioned sources of information as to the additional comforts, &c., allowed to servants. For instance, tea and sugar were rarely included in the servant's board sixty years ago; but in the sixties we find these articles being given on a definite weekly allowance, and by the eighties all restrictions have apparently disappeared. Similarly with regard to holidays, advertisements containing such stipulations as "No Sundays or evenings out allowed," which were common fifty years ago, would hardly get many responses to-day, when the "evening out" is practically universal; on the other hand, beer, which was always given fifty years ago (or in lieu thereof 1s. a week or 50s. to 3*l.* a year), is now practically never given. Such matters, however, hardly lend themselves to statistical treatment.²

There can be no doubt that the conditions of those in domestic service have improved, though whether so far as to justify either of the above assumptions it would be rash to say. In any case cash wages play so great a part in attracting girls into service that, even without precise facts as to real wages, a statement of the former is of considerable importance, referring as it does to the chief element influencing demand and supply in domestic industry.

² Phrases such as "No Irish need apply," "No crinolines allowed," and the like throw interesting sidelights on social conditions at various periods. It is possible that these and other advertisements may ultimately prove to be a valuable source of information in future historical research.

The information below has come from three sources :—

I. By the kindness of Sir Alfred and Lady Bateman two wage-books, containing a record of the wages paid in the household of Lady Bateman's family back to 1822, have been placed at the disposal of the writer. It is hoped that this article may succeed in bringing to light further records of a similar kind which would immensely strengthen the statistical basis of the present figures.

II. Domestic agencies are represented by the figures supplied by the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants. With this exception, registry offices are disappointing as sources of statistical information; in most cases books are not kept in an available form, and there are very few with a long history. Regular registries are of comparatively recent date, their function being performed in early days by the local dairyman or other local tradesman, sometimes even by the undertaker.

III. The third and most detailed source of information is the advertisements in daily and weekly papers. For many years the press has been a sort of employment bureau for servants, and from its columns it is possible to gather large numbers of wages quotations. But before giving actual figures there are one or two remarks to be made as to figures obtained from this last source in order to guard against misinterpretation.

(a.) We need to be certain that the figures refer to the same class of servant throughout the period under review. At first sight this might seem a difficulty, but in practice, in addition to general knowledge as to the circulation of any particular journal, the perusal of a column of advertisements enables one to glean so much as to the social status of the advertisers that any change in the class of persons advertising would at once be apparent to the investigator. For example, the number of servants kept is stated in a large proportion of advertisements.

(b.) The wages offered are commencing wages; as in most households servants receive an annual rise, the wages paid *in the first place* are not the same as the *average* paid to those now in service. But changes in the former represent changes in the latter sufficiently closely unless there has been a great change in the average length of service; such a change does not seem to have taken place.

(c.) The custom as to advertising varies from decade to decade. In the fifties and sixties servants rarely advertised, and certainly never stated wages, but in recent years it is more common for them to do so. Naturally such insertions are only to be found in great numbers when the supply is in excess of the demand, and as such a state of things is comparatively rare, it has not been possible to get a series of figures for servants advertising for places. It is, however, interesting to find that the average wages asked for by the highest grade, *i.e.*, cooks, is *2l.* higher in 1907 than that offered by employers. It is possible that this is merely an extra margin for bargaining purposes, but it is more likely that the best servants advertise and are not advertised for. If this be so, the highest wages have been omitted from the table, and the average given

below for the later years is too small; the total increase during the fifty years would, therefore, be somewhat greater than that indicated.

Table 1 gives the wages of servants in the upper and upper middle classes. They are from two sources—Sir A. E. Bateman's wages record, the figures of which are averaged in five-year periods, in order to eliminate fluctuations due to purely individual conditions, and *The Times* advertisements in each of the census years 1851 to 1891 and in 1907,³ representing from 100 to 200 wage quotations in each year. The figures, by their remarkable agreement, afford ground for regarding them as typical.

Table of Annual Wages of Domestic Servants in the Upper and Upper Middle Classes.

Year.	1	2	3	4	5
	From Sir A. E. Bateman's Record.				
	Cook.	Housemaid.	Nursemaid.	Man-Servant.	Parlourmaid.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1820-22....	12 10 0	—	—	—	—
'23-27....	12 10 0	7 14 0	—	—	—
'28-32....	12 5 0	9 8 0	—	—	—
'33-37....	13 10 0	10 0 0	—	17 0 0	—
'38-42....	14 0 0	11 2 0	—	20 0 0	—
'43-47....	15 10 0	12 2 0	—	20 0 0	—
'48-52....	16 6 0	11 13 0	12 0 0	11 10 0*	—
'53-57....	14 12 0	12 0 0	12 0 0	14 6 8*	—
'58-62....	15 14 0	12 4 0	12 0 0	16 8 0	—
'63-67....	18 4 0	12 0 0	12 6 0	18 0 0	—
'68-72....	18 14 0	14 0 0	14 0 0	18 10 0	—
'73-77....	20 6 0	15 12 0	16 0 0	19 12 0	—
'78-82....	20 16 0	16 10 0	18 16 0	18 10 0	—
'83-87....	19 12 0	18 14 0	20 16 0	—	19 8 0
'88-92..	22 10 0	18 19 0	21 8 0	—	19 8 0
'93-97....	24 0 0	18 16 0	22 0 0	—	19 10 0
1904.....	—	—	—	—	—
'07.....	—	—	—	—	—

Year.	6	7	8	9	10
	From <i>Times</i> Advertisements.				
	Cooks.	Housemaids.	Nursemaids.	Parlourmaids.	Generals, &c.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1848-52....	15 0 0	11 0 0	11 0 0	—	11 0 0
'53-62....	16 0 0	12 13 4	12 10 0	14 0 0	11 5 0
'63-72....	19 6 8	14 2 6	17 2 6	17 7 6	14 0 0
'73-82....	23 10 0	16 17 0	21 0 0	19 5 0	18 8 0
'83-92....	26 13 4	19 16 0	20 0 0	23 14 0	17 13 4
1907.....	25 0 0	20 13 4	23 5 0	26 8 0	19 10 0

* During these years a lad was employed as footman.

³ Figures from *The Times* could not be quoted for 1901, as domestic advertisements ceased, or, rather, became exceedingly rare, after 1895, and apparently were only renewed under the new advertisement management in 1906. The domestic advertisements are now very numerous.

Statistics dealing with a lower class are obtainable from the *Christian World*, a weekly journal, which for fifty years has had a large circulation among the lower middle and artisan classes, for whom it is a large advertising medium. Figures from this source cannot be given for the earlier decades, for practically no advertisements are to be found prior to the seventies. Only three advertisers stating wages were found in the whole 52 numbers in 1861, though a considerable number offered board and lodging without any money wage at all in return for teaching girls their domestic duties. The conclusion suggested is that servants were rarely kept by this class prior to the sixties and seventies.⁴

Table of Annual Wages of Domestic Servants in Middle Class Households.

Year.	Cooks.	Generals and Helps.	Housemaids.	Nurses and Nursemaids.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1861	—	5 0 0 (1 advertisement)	10 0 0 (average of 2)	—
'71	15 0 0	12 4 6	11 5 0	13 0 0
'81	18 0 0	14 9 0	12 7 6	15 0 0
'91	18 4 6	13 12 6	13 3 0	15 8 0
1901	19 6 0	15 0 0	14 9 6	17 14 0
'07	19 15 0	18 0 0	15 0 0	15 16 0

Even this source hardly touches the lowest class of all, for whom no figures could be found from advertisements, and of whom, no doubt, very few were employed in the earlier years. For the last fourteen years, however, a comparison can be made from the wages of servants placed by the M.A.B.Y.S. The first series was published by Mr. Charles Booth in *Life and Labour in London*, and the Association has kindly provided figures on a precisely similar basis for the first quarter of 1907.

Table of Annual Wages of Domestic Servants placed by the M.A.B.Y.S.

Age.	First Quarter of 1894.		First Quarter of 1907.	
	Number.	Average Annual Wage.	Number.	Average Annual Wage.
		£ s.		£ s.
13 years	57	5 16	—	—
14 „	199	5 18	178	6 14
15 „	260	6 16	224	8 0
16 „	286	7 16	304	9 5
17 „	289	9 0	193	10 4
18 „	238	10 4	173	12 2
19 „	149	11 0	133	11 4
20 „	95	11 10	174	16 11
20—25 years	96	12 4	} 83	14 10
26—30 „	9	12 18		
Over 30 „	14	17 14		
All ages	1,692	9 1	1,469	10 11

⁴ The enormous increase in the number of domestic servants between 1851 and 1871 is attributed in the census report of the latter year to a downward extension of the servant keeping class.

The low wages paid in 1907 to girls aged 19 and over 20 are due to special causes, as those figures include a number of girls with mental deficiencies who were found homes during the three months. An estimated figure, excluding such cases, is 15*l.* for girls aged 19, and 18*l.* for those over 20, making the final average 11*l.* 2*s.*

The increases shown in these groups are represented by the following table of index numbers. In the case of Columns I, II, and III, the indices are unweighted means of the indices of the various grades, no system of weights being available. A figure for 1900 is interpolated as a base year where necessary on the assumption of a continuous change between adjacent years.

The figures of the M.A.B.Y.S. show a greater rise than the others, but how far this is due to the fact that the Society reaches a better class of employer, and how far it represents the course of wages among the lowest class, it would be hard to say.

The other figures show a sufficiently remarkable agreement to establish their substantial accuracy, and to prove a rise in domestic wages in the same class of over 90 per cent. during fifty years, and to suggest a still greater increase during eighty years, though the basis of the earliest figures is at present too slight for any but the most general statement.

Indices showing Changes in Domestic Wages.

Year.	Figures from Sir A. E. Bateman's Records.	From Advertisements in the <i>Times</i> . (Census Years.)	From Advertisements in the <i>Christian World</i> . (Census Years.)	Figures Supplied by the M.A.B.Y.S.
1823-27.....	42	—	—	—
'28-32.....	46	—	—	—
'33-37.....	50	—	—	—
'38-42.....	54	—	—	—
'43-47.....	59	—	—	—
'48-52.....	59	54	—	—
'53-57.....	58	—	—	—
'58-62.....	60	59	—	—
'63-67.....	63	—	—	—
'68-72.....	69	73	77	—
'73-77.....	77	—	—	—
'78-82.....	84	89	90	—
'83-87.....	88	—	—	—
'88-92.....	92	95	91	—
'93-97.....	96	—	—	92 [1894]
1900.....	(100)	(100)	100	(100)
'07.....	—	103	103	107 [1907]

These figures are illustrated graphically in the accompanying chart.

The figures given above all relate to domestic servants in private households. There is probably more extensive information to be obtained with regard to employées in large institutions which have a long continuous history. By kind permission of the Asylums Committee of the London County Council I have been allowed to refer to the wages books and statements of Hanwell Asylum,

which give a continuous record back to 1839. Statistics from such a source refer to more persons than a private record, but the pitfalls in making comparisons over a long period are no less numerous. Not only does the organisation of the domestic staff vary from time to time, but also the managing authority has been changed during the period under review.

The figures given only refer to grades for which figures have been given in the preceding tables, but it should be remembered that the nurses and attendants who are not included performed many domestic duties in the earlier years which are now performed by those classed as domestic servants.

Table showing Average Wages paid to Domestic Servants at Hanwell County Asylum.

	Cook.	Housemaids.	Kitchenmaids.	Laundry- maids.
	£ s.	£ s.	£ s.	£ s.
1839-42.....	15 0	11 1	12 0	14 8
'43-47.....	18 16	12 19	11 2	15 10
'48-52.....	15 10 (average of 2)	13 14	12 3	17 0
'53-57.....	17 18 „	13 4	12 11	15 11
'58-62.....	18 10 „	13 2	12 0	15 11
'64-67.....	22 10 „	13 10	13 0	15 7
'68-72.....	21 13 (average of 3)	13 17	13 10	16 5
'73-77.....	24 0 „	13 0	16 7	16 9
'78-82.....	25 7 „	12 0	14 0	16 17
'83-87.....	29 10 „	13 0	16 7	17 2
'88-92.....	28 7 „	16 13	15 7	18 18
'93-97.....	—	—	—	—
'98-1902.....	27 10 „	19 0	19 10	20 3
1903-07.....	31 13 „	20 10	22 0	22 16

Converting these figures into percentages, and taking the *unweighted* mean, we get the following result:—

1838-42	61	1863-67.....	74½	1888-92.....	92
'43-47	67½	'68-72.....	75	'93-97	—
'48-52	68½	'73-77.....	80	'98-1902.....	100
'53-57	69	'78-82.....	78	1903-07.....	112
'58-62	68½	'83-87.....	86		

On the whole the figures show a slightly less rise than the previous series in the earlier years, but a somewhat greater rate of increase in more recent years. It is impossible to dissociate the very rapid rise since the eighties from the fact that the management has been transferred to the London County Council.

Though, as has been said, any comparison with other industries must be made with great caution, owing to the difficulty of estimating real wages, the following table at least suggests that the rise of wages in domestic service has been greater than in other occupations—a result which, in view of the social and other disadvantages of domestic service, is hardly unexpected. The last two columns are taken from Mr. G. H. Wood's article on "Women's Wages," in Hutchins and Harrison's *History of Factory Legislation*.

Table of Comparative Changes in Wages in Domestic Service and Other Industries.

	Domestic Service.			Industrial Occupations.	
	Private.	Institution.		Women Only.	All Workers.
1823-27	42	—	1824	60	65
'28-32	46	—	'33	58	60
'33-37	50	—	'40	59	58½
'38-42	54	61	'45	61	57
'43-47	59	67½	'50	62	60
'48-52	59	68½	'55	65	68
'53-57	58	69	'60	72	68
'58-62	60	68½	'63	73	71½
'63-67	63	74½	'66	78	77
'68-72	69	75	'70	84	77
'73-77	77	80	'74	95	94
'78-82	84	78	'77	98	—
'83-87	88	86	'80	97	84
'88-92	92	92	'83	98	88
'93-97	96	—	'86	91	85
'98-1902	100	100	'91	96	95
1903-07 '....	103	112	'95	98	93
			1900	100	100

The first three columns of this table are illustrated on the second diagram.

So far as any conclusions are possible from so slight material, the result points to a somewhat greater rise in domestic wages than in those of women engaged in industrial occupations, especially in the last three decades under review, and to the comparative absence of any influence of the boom of the seventies, though further investigation may show that the effect is merely concealed by the method of averaging—a process which is necessary on account of the scanty nature of the material.

APPENDIX.—*Numbers Engaged in Domestic Service.*

By combining comparative tables given in various census reports, it is possible to give the following table of the numbers of females engaged in domestic service in England and Wales from 1831 onwards. The other series from 1851 are from the tables prepared by the Board of Trade for the St. Louis Exhibition. The fall between 1891 and 1901 is partly due to the adoption of a new classification.

Domestic Servants (Women only).

	England and Wales.	United Kingdom.		England and Wales.	United Kingdom.
1831	560,979	—	1871.....	1,225,014	1,562,237
'41	765,165	—	'81.....	1,256,893	1,595,678
'51	783,543	1,093,870	'91.....	1,430,486	1,748,954
'61	976,931	1,397,183	1901.....	1,373,224	1,641,154