



# The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed

*Judith Flanders*

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## **The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed** Judith Flanders

A middle class home, circa 1850, of the sort that many people live in today, is the focus of Judith Flanders' book. The Victorian age is both recent and unimaginably distant. In the most prosperous and technologically advanced nation in the world, people carried slops up and down stairs; buried meat in fresh earth to prevent mould forming; wrung sheets out in boiling water with their bare hands. This drudgery was routinely performed by the parents of people still living, but the knowledge of it has passed as if it had never been. Running water, stoves, flush lavatories - even lavatory paper - arrived slowly throughout the century; and most were luxuries available only to the prosperous. Judith Flanders' new book is itself laid out like a house, following the story of daily life from room to room: from childbirth in the master bedroom, through the scullery and kitchen - cleaning, dining, entertaining - on upwards, ending in the sickroom and death. Under Judith Flanders' guidance the Victorian house opens up in front of the reader to become a full exploration of Victorian life. Through a collage of diaries, letters, advice books, magazines and paintings, she shows how social history is built up out of tiny domestic details. Through these we can understand the desires, motivations and thoughts of the age. Many people today live in Victorian terraces, and so the houses themselves are familiar. But the lives are not.

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