

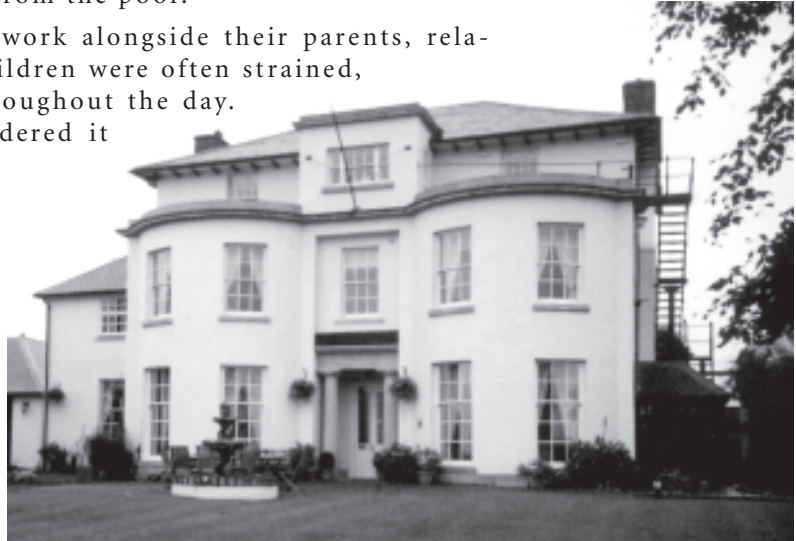
## HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVED

The children of the poor were not the only children who lived during the Industrial Revolution. Factory owners, bankers, merchants, and landowners also had offspring. Their children, however, usually lived very differently from the poor.

While the children of the poor might work alongside their parents, relations between rich people and their children were often strained, as they only saw each other briefly throughout the day.

Many affluent Victorian parents considered it inappropriate to coddle their children, believing too much affection would leave them unprepared for the rigors of adult life. In a wealthy Victorian household parents usually employed a nanny to care for the children. She lived with the children in their own nursery, which was separate from the rest of the house. It was here that the children ate and slept. Children were often more fond of their servants, who cared for them, than of their parents, whom they rarely saw. Often a nanny would stay with one family her whole working life and care for more than one generation of children.

Photo by Linda Miller



**Edderton Hall**

Now a bed and breakfast, this was typical of homes for well-to-do Victorian families.

Victorian children of affluent families dressed as miniature versions of their parents. Up to the age of three or four boys wore dresses. They then wore breeches and suits. Tweed suits and sailor suits were very popular for young gentlemen. Girls wore corsets and full skirts with lots of frills. They had to move carefully to avoid knocking anything over. Children had no special play clothes and so were expected to play properly and not get dirty.

Wealthy children typically had nursery filled with toys. Older children often owned a toy theater. Games played outside changed according to the season. Reading was a favorite pastime. Books well-loved by children included *Oliver Twist* and *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

For well-to-do young gentlemen, an education either meant being taught at home by a private tutor or attending a public boarding school such as Eton or Rugby. At school boys were taught Classics (Latin and Greek) as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic. After attending public school it was important that a young man go to the right university so that he could make contacts for his future. The best universities were Oxford and Cambridge.

A girl's education was not considered to be as important as she was normally destined to become wife and mother. Girls were taught at home by a governess and lessons

Photo by Linda Miller



**Replica of a more affluent home**

This replica is in a house behind the "Victorian School of the 3rs," Llangollen, North Wales.

included sketching, singing, and embroidery. Victorian girls also practiced deportment which was the art of sitting and moving properly. For many wealthy young ladies life was an endless round of social gatherings—attending balls, the opera, or the theater, so as to be seen by prospective suitors.

Despite suffering hardships such as cold houses, lack of parental contact, and susceptibility to serious childhood diseases, it seems that the lives of wealthy Victorian children were typically happy. They were in the care of their nanny and had a constant supply of toys and activities.

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Source: Marie Clare Peiuy, *Victorian Newstead* "A Victorian Childhood at Newstead Abbey" City of Nottingham.



Photo: Linda Miller