

Baker Street Elementary

Presents
"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



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The Life and Times in Victorian London

038 -- Sherlock's Night at the Opera -- Convent Garden --

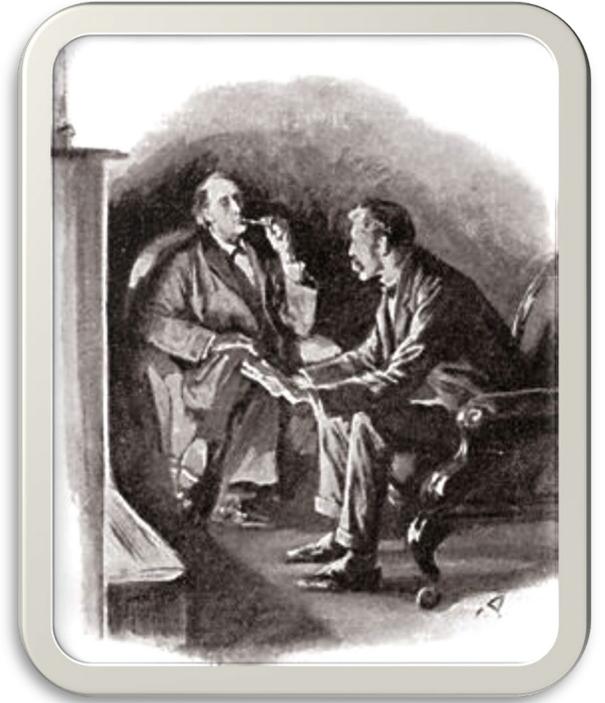
January, 2022



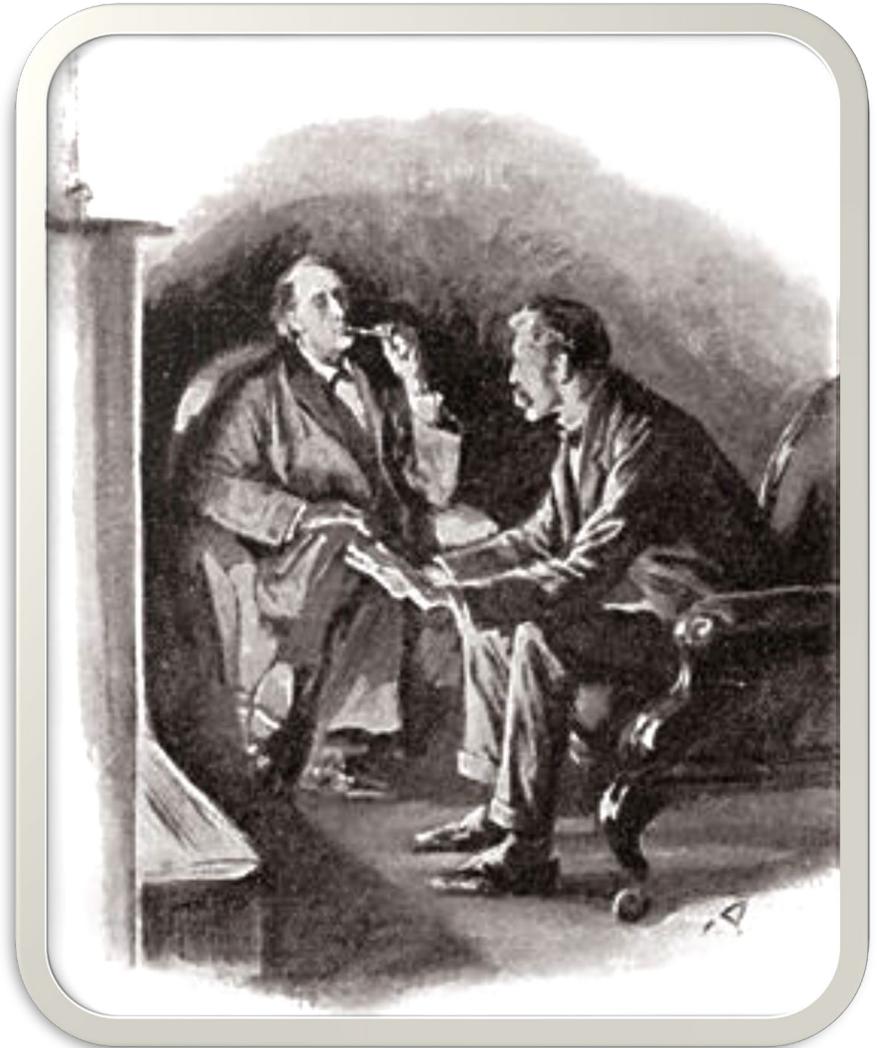
Welcome to topic # 038... today
Miss Adler and I will be looking
at a night at the Opera at
Convent Garden...



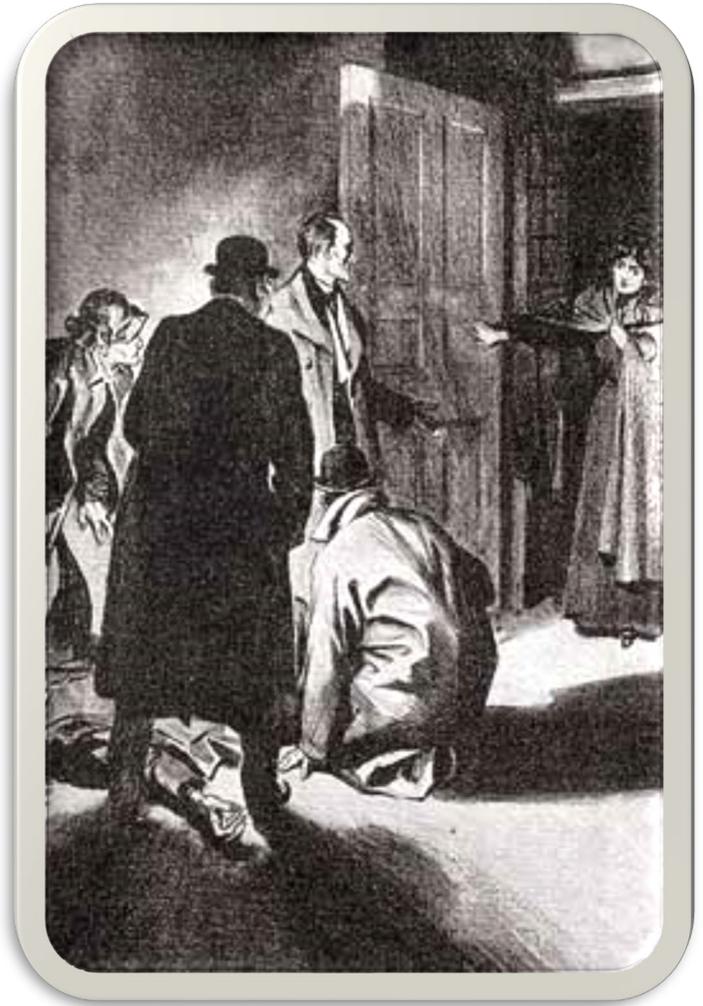
*In at least two cases,
Sherlock marked a
mystery's end by
attending an opera.*



In The Hound of the Baskervilles, he mentioned having a box for Les Huguenots, in which the Des Reszkes brothers were performing.



At the close of "The Red Circle," he noted he and I would be able to catch the second act of a Wagner opera at the Covent Gardens if we hurried.



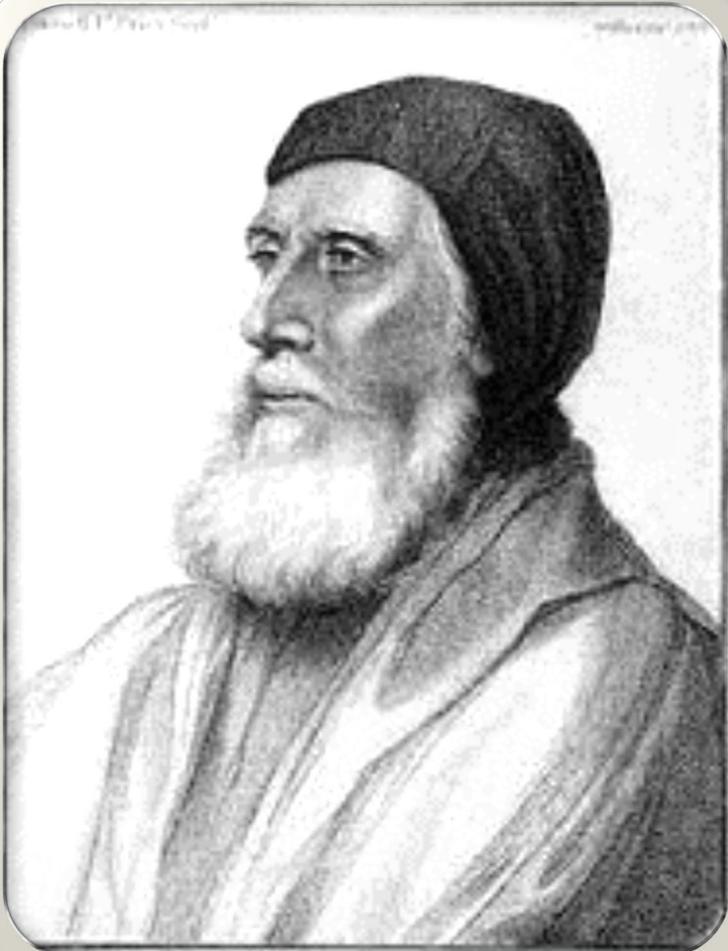
By 1888, when The Hound of the Baskervilles occurred, the opera house in Covent Garden was the third constructed on the same site.





*Covent Garden was originally
a Benedictine convent
garden where monks grew
their vegetables.*





In 1536, King Henry VIII seized the land as part of his dissolution of the monasteries and finally awarded it to John Russell, the first Earl of Bedford.

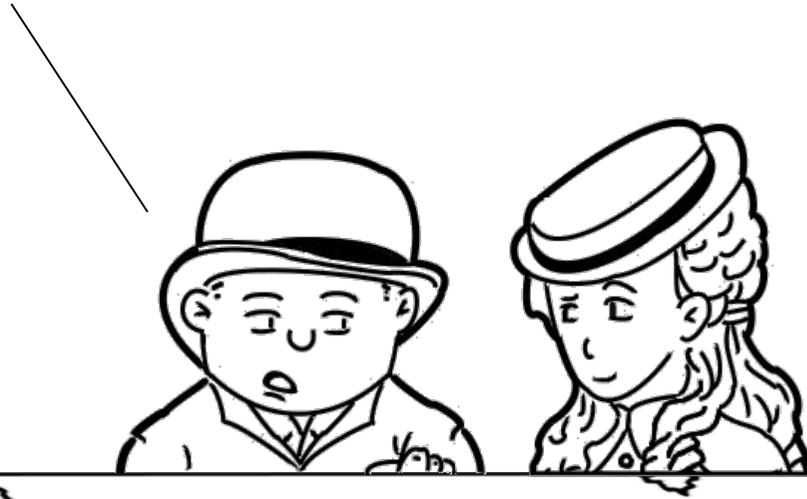




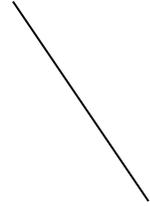
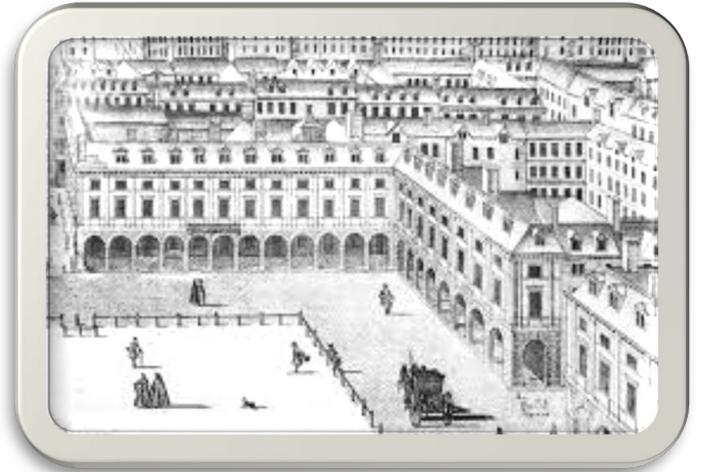
It remained ignored until the 1630s when the 4th Earl of Bedford, Francis Russell, hired the Royal architect Inigo Jones.



At that time, the Earl of Bedford decided to develop the 20-acre pasture that was part of his estate and open it to leases.



Jones designed a piazza (the first in England) bordered by houses, including three built by the Earl himself to serve as models for later construction.

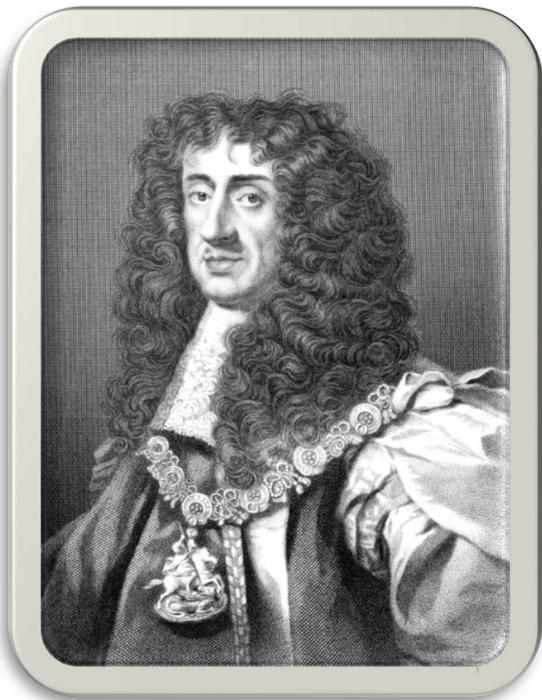


The Earl's ownership are memorialized in Russell and Bedford Streets within the Covent Garden area.



In addition, he commissioned Jones to design a church for the inhabitants — St. Paul's Church.





*In 1663, Charles II gave
a charter for the first
Royal Theater — also built
in the area.*





This edifice followed a market that appeared in the square as soon as construction began and granted a royal charter in 1670.



While theater-goers might have added prestige at night, the attraction of those interested in profiting from them...



...(from flower vendors to prostitutes to thieves) as well as the merchants during the day soon pushed the original nobility out of the area's homes.



In 1732, a second theater, Covent Garden Theatre, opened.



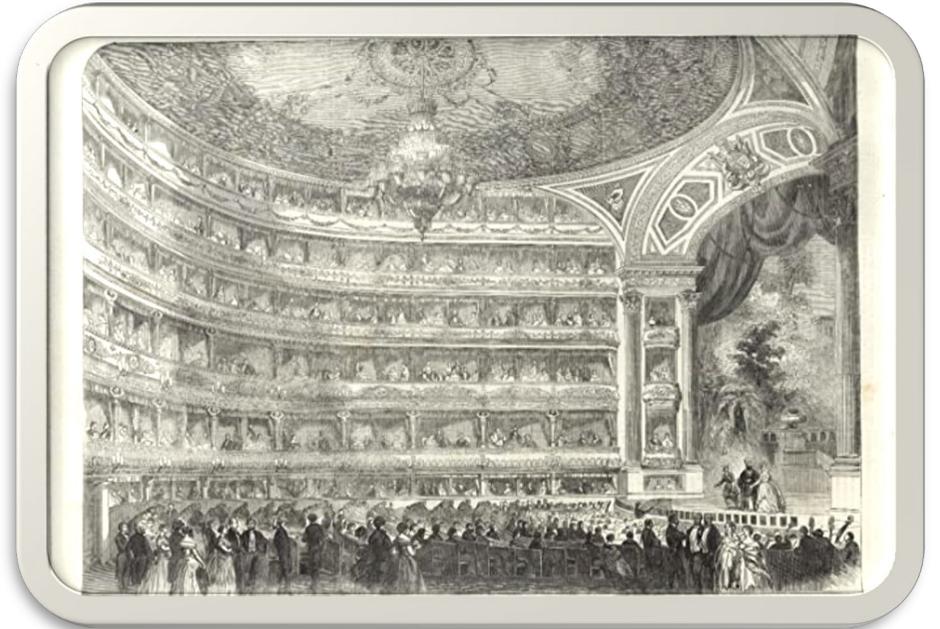
George Fredric Handel, who favored opera, administered much of the repertoire, making it primarily an opera venue.



*In 1808, this structure
burned down and was
rebuilt on the same site.*



Because of financial problems, the theater was reorganized as the Royal Italian Opera House in 1847, well-named as it presented the British premiere of Verdi's Rigoletto and Il Travatore.





The emphasis on "Italian" opera reflected a dominance of that language (regardless of the original libretto) throughout the nineteenth century.

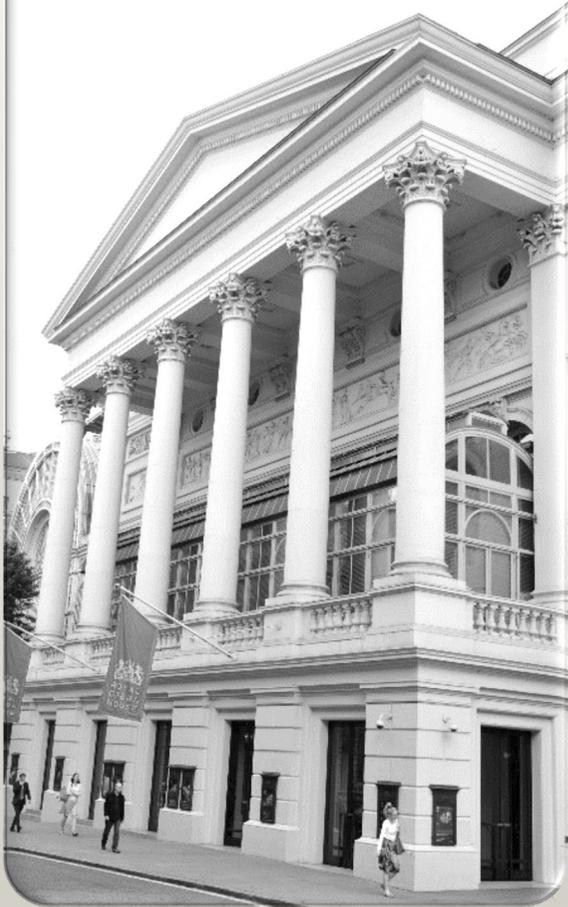




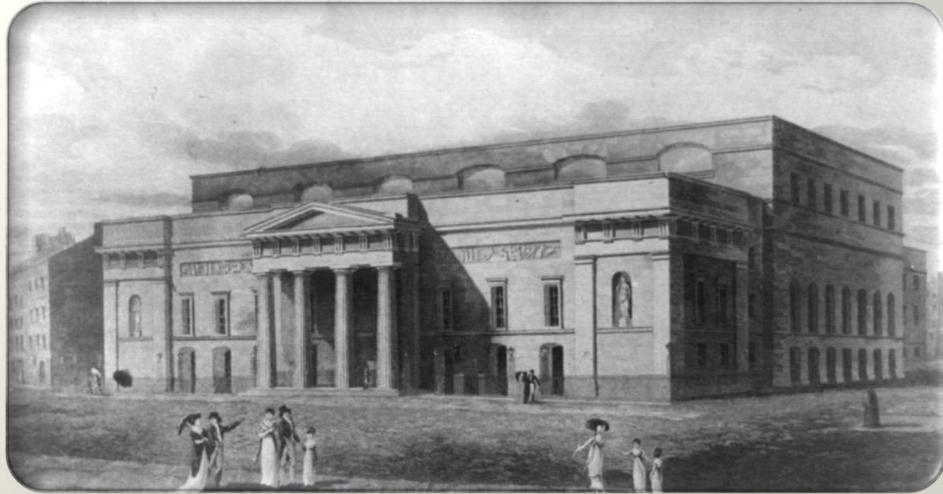
Once again, the theater burns down in 1856 and is reopened in 1858.



It became The Royal Opera House in 1892 after offering the British premieres of Wagner's Lohengrin and Verdi's Aida.



This theater also had economic difficulties and was sold and reopened in 1888 as Royal Opera Company.



In keeping with the tradition, most of the works were still be Italian.



In 1892, it became the Royal Opera House and more German and French pieces were performed.



According to one account, Jean de Reszke, a Polish-born tenor, was indeed at the Royal Opera House in 1888...



...and sang in a number of operas, including Les Huguenots and Wagner's Lohengrin.





His brother Edouard, a bass, often appeared with him — just as Sherlock mentioned — and performed at the Royal Opera House in 1888 in Les Huguenots.





Baring-Gould's summary of research, however, indicatee the brothers were performing in New York...





*...during that time, but will
leave open the possibility
they did appear in London
while on tour.*



By 1902, both brothers had retired
and couldn't have appeared in the
Wagnerian opera (most likely
Tristan and Isolda)...



*...which just might have been
in German (instead of the
traditional Italian).*



*During both world wars,
the opera house will
close but reopen
afterwards.*



While parts of the structure will be renovated throughout the years, the first major reconstruction of the building will not occur until 2000.



At that time, the building will be opened to the public during the day for tours, allowing the modern aficionado an opportunity...



...to imagine the great detective and the good doctor strolling through its doors in formal evening attire on their way to a performance.



*So we have completed
topic # 038 in our
series...*

*Yes, but we'll be back
with another topic
soon...*



References for this topic:

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- 11) William Baring Gould, *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes, Volume 2*, (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1967)



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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

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