

Baker Street Elementary

Presents

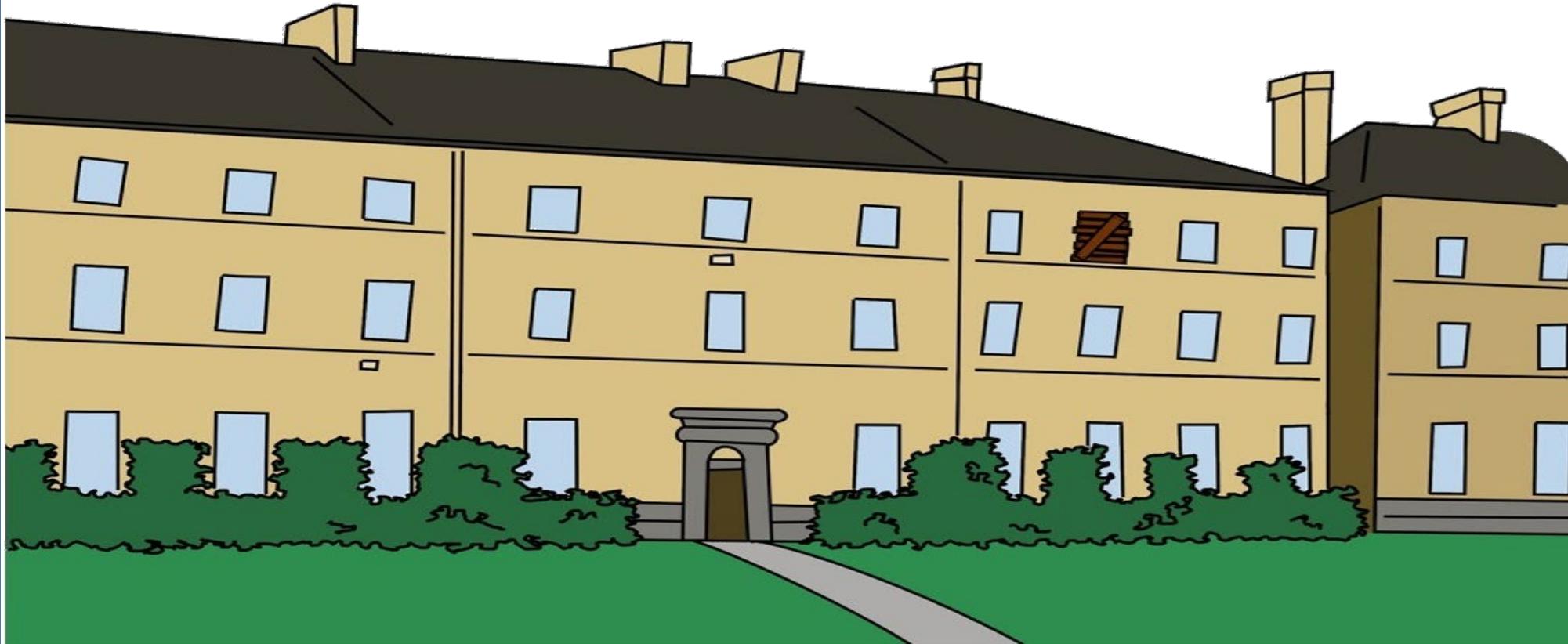
"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



Baker Street Elementary

The Life and Times in Victorian London

058 -- Shedding Some Light on the Subject -- February, 2022

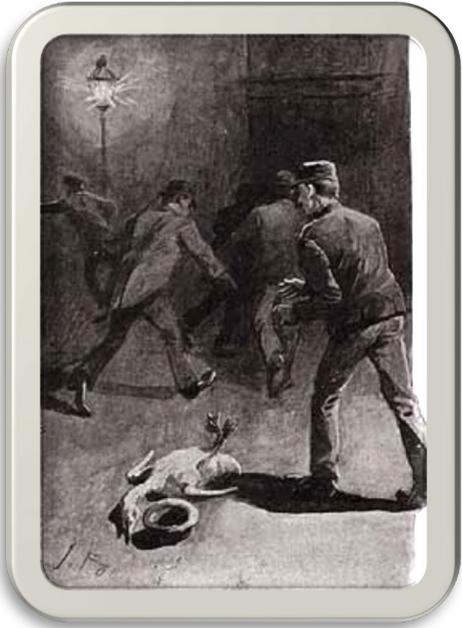




*Welcome to topic # 058...
Today, Master Gregson and I
will be discussing the use of
gas during the Victorian era...*



In numerous Sherlock Holmes' stories, gaslight and gas-lamps provide illumination on darkened streets and houses.

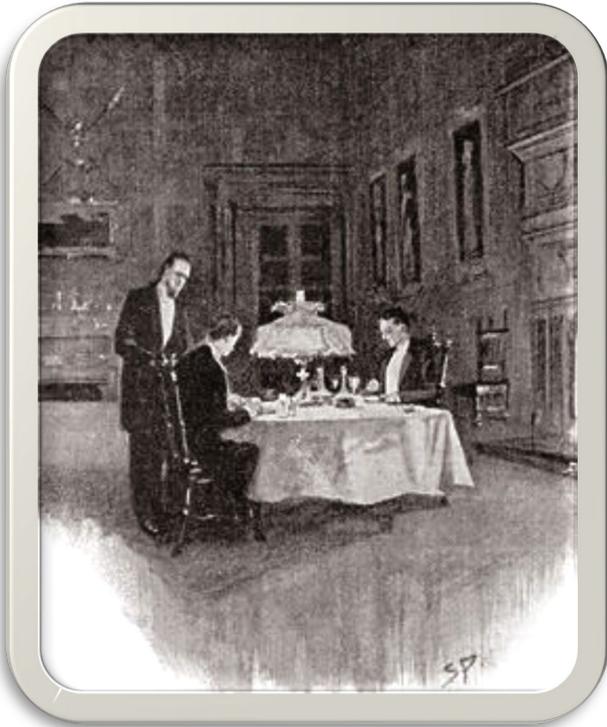




In "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," tallow stains indicate Henry Baker has no gas in his house and still uses candles.



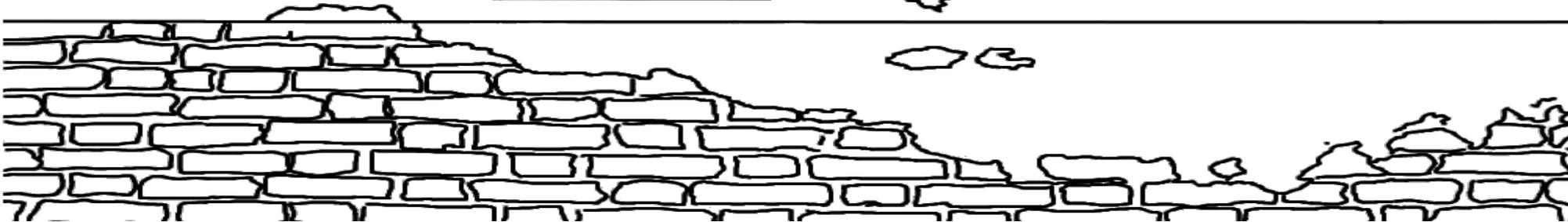
*By the time Sir Henry Baskerville inherits his title in **The Hound of the Baskervilles**, he proposes installing electric lights to brighten his inheritance, with a special Swan and Edison bulb at the front.*



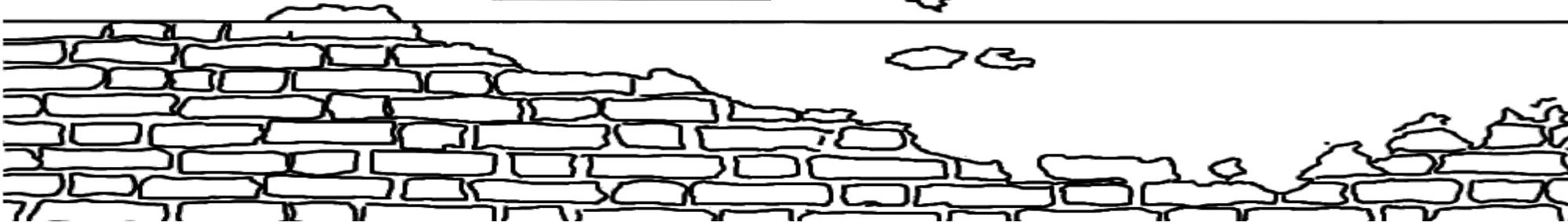
This shift from gaslights to electric ones reflects an historical competition between two forms of illumination, complete with patent wars and races to spread into new markets.



*While coal gas had
been known to provide
both heat and light,
William Murdoch...*



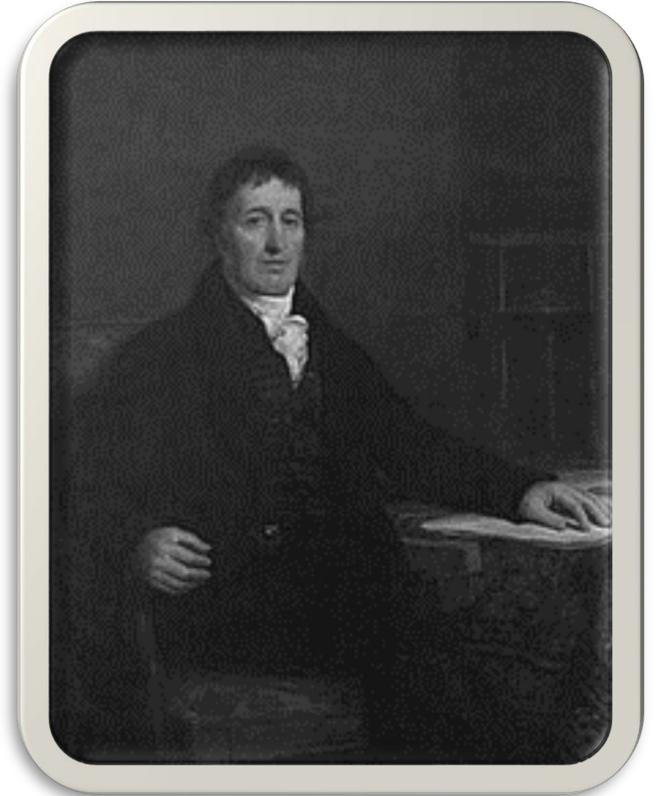
...was the first to install pipes to carry the gas and light lamps throughout his house in 1792 in Cornwall.



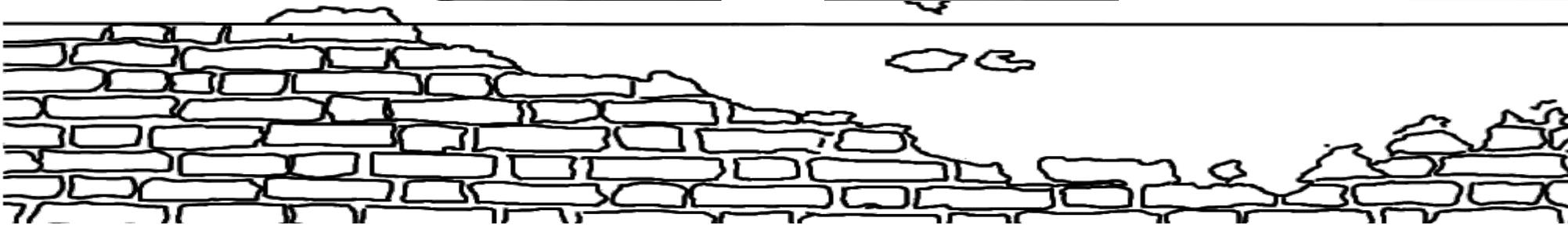
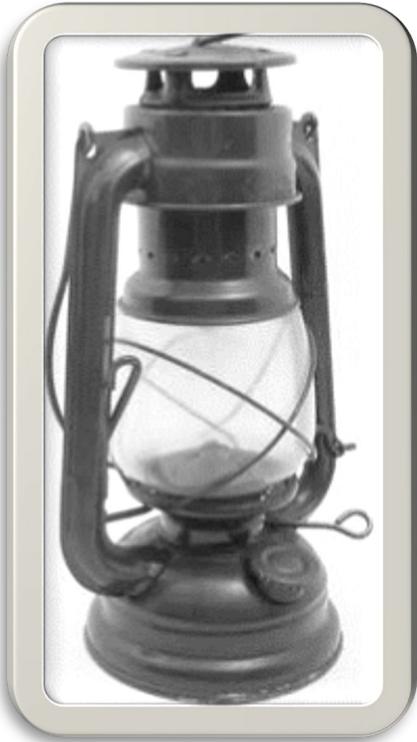
A natural gas, coal gas was manufactured by heating coal in a sealed oven to keep out the oxygen, filtering it for purification, pressurizing it, and piping to a fixture where it was ignited.

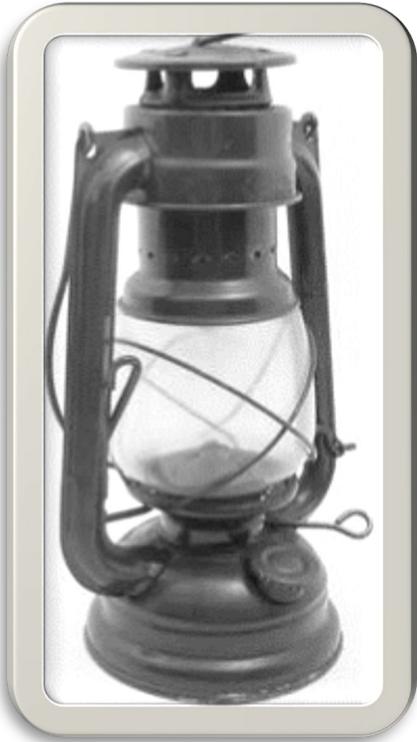


Additional experimentation and pipe-laying led to the first industrial use of gaslights inside the Soho Foundry where he worked in 1798 and the outside of the building in 1802.



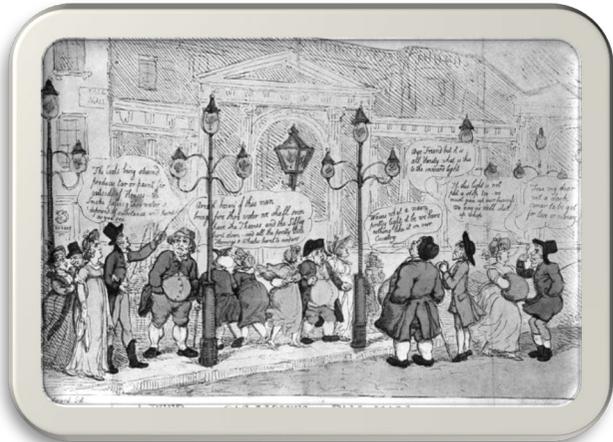
Prior to these efforts, street lighting came into London (and from there to other cities) in the 1600s when certain householders, (those in more fashionable areas...



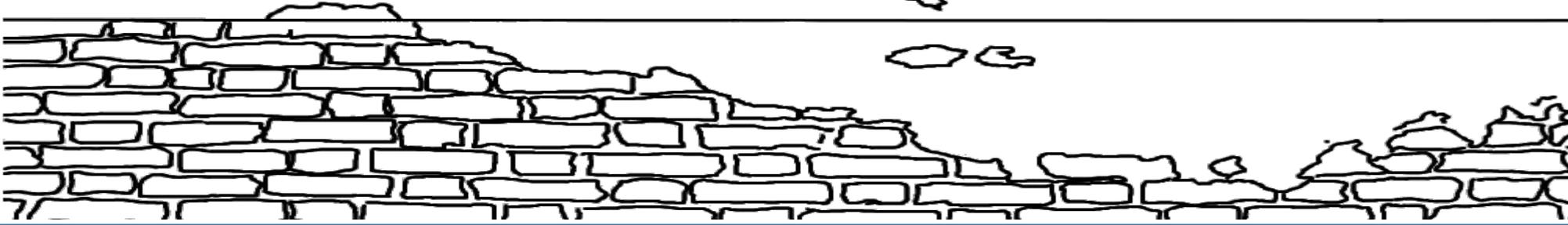


...and, later, shopkeepers) were required to hang a lantern outside their house, usually an oil lamp, to allow pedestrians some light after dusk.





The roadways,
however, remained
dark.



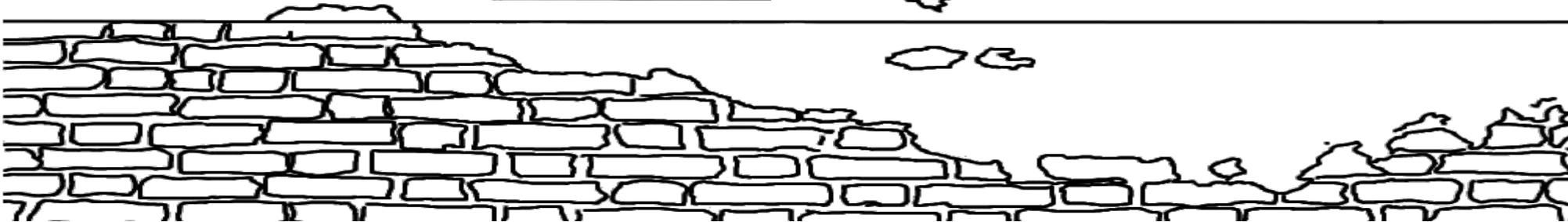
The brighter and more efficient gaslight, however, made great headway in 1807 when Pall Mall in London received the first streetlamps.



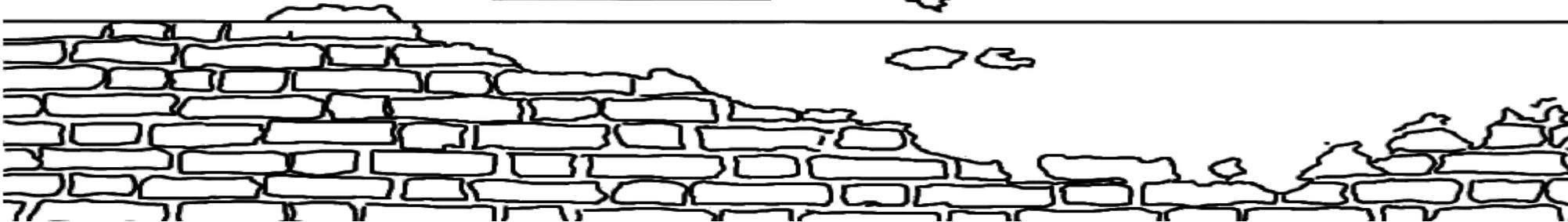
Paris followed in 1820.



These lamps were on posts and had to be lit by hand each night by a lamplighter who opened a valve to let out just enough gas to be ignited and avoid an explosion.



*With pipes laid for street lighting,
they could easily be extended to
residences and businesses, ending the
reliance on candles and oil lamps...*



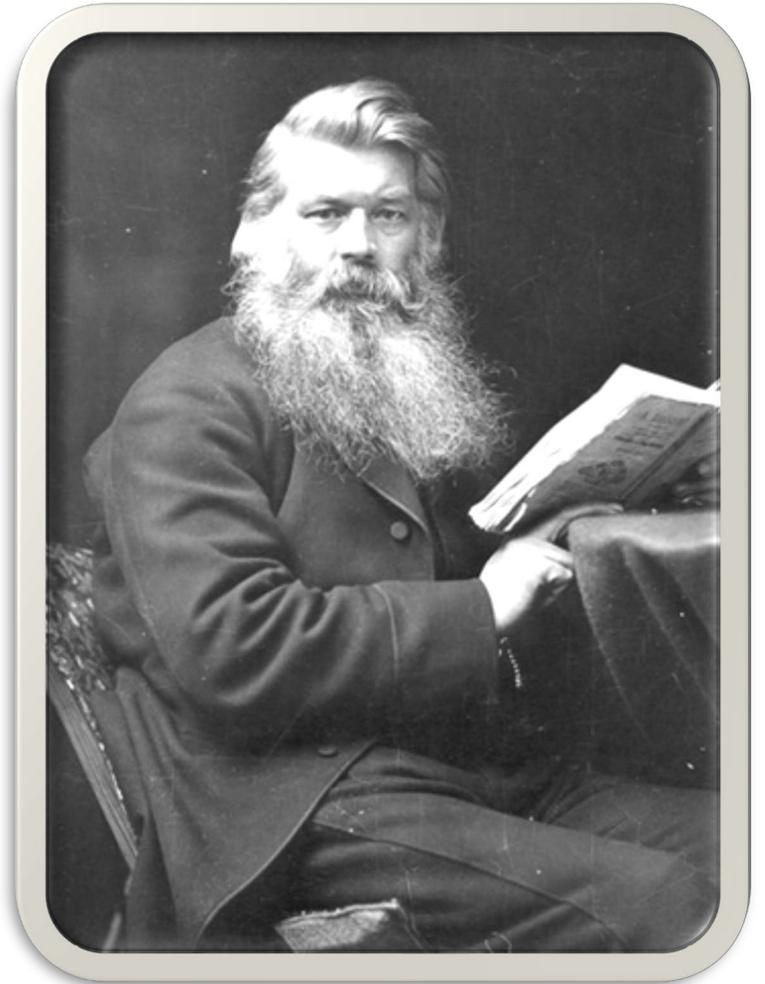
...and often becoming the first utility to be contracted (with water and sewers often arriving much later).



Despite the improvement over candles and oil lamps, the invention of incandescent electric lamp proved a powerful competitor to gaslights.



A number of inventors, including St. George Lane-Fox and Joseph Swan in England; Moses Farmer, William Sawyer, Albon Man, Hiram Maxim...



*...and Thomas Edison in the US; and
Carl Auer von Welsbach in Austria
all worked on better and more
brilliant light bulbs.*

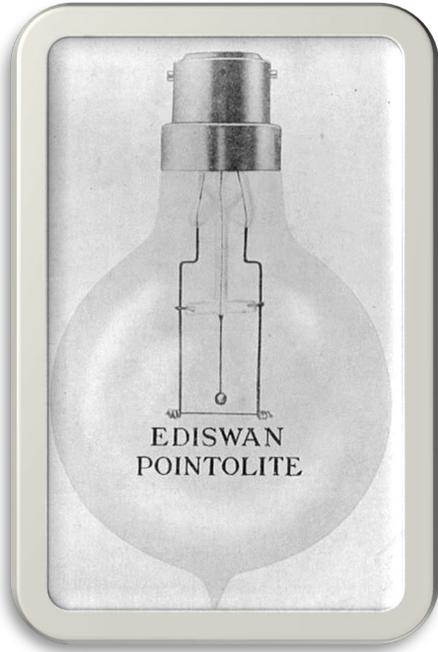




*Swan patented several of his lamps, resulting in a lawsuit against Edison and ending in a merger (the Edison and Swan United Company referred to in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*).*



While gaslights had a head start, electric lighting offered some advantages to consumers: gas pressure was not always reliable and explosions and fires did occur.



*In addition, each light
had to be separately
lit by hand.*

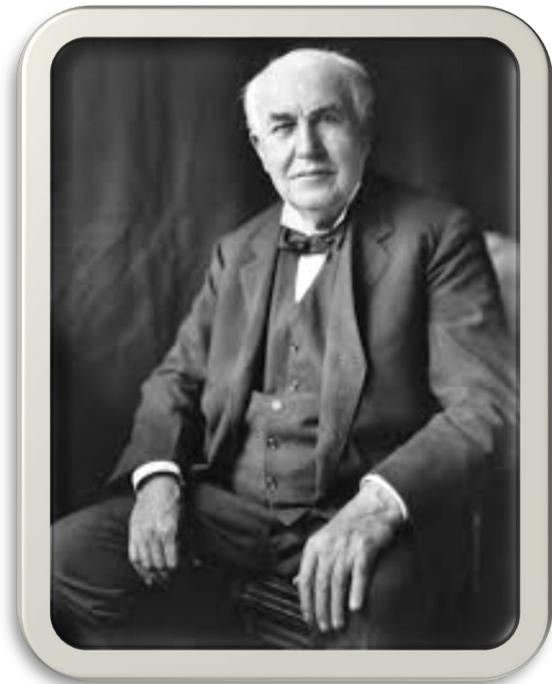




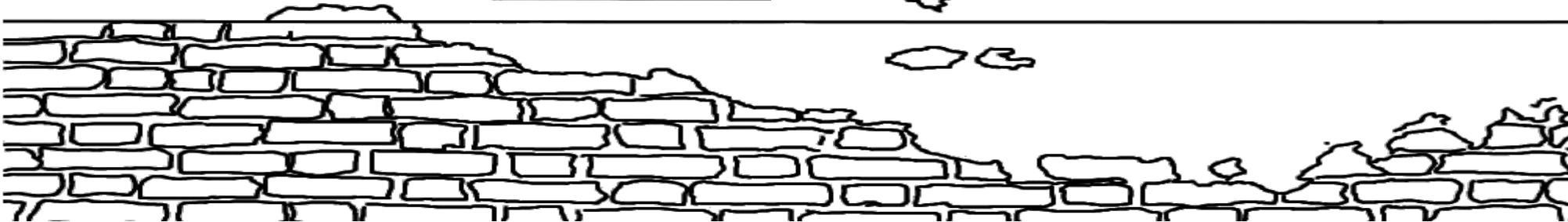
Another drawback with gaslights was spotty quality pressure, making it a more dangerous and less reliable service.



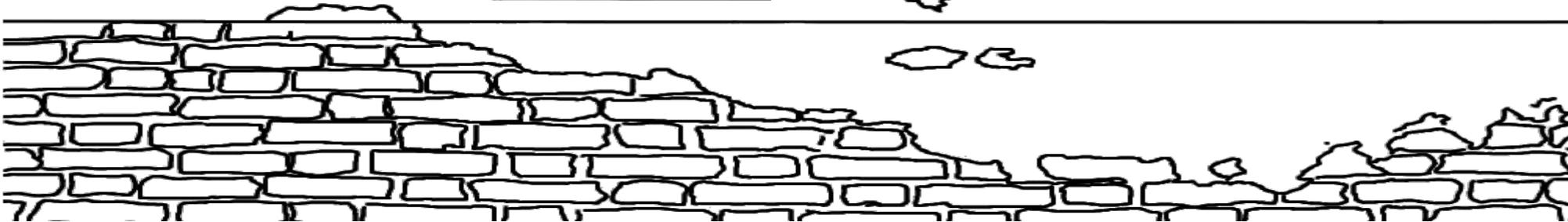
Edison was quick to exploit any news of problems or dangers as he worked to promote his own electrical power grid and lights.



For about twenty years, many buildings had dual-fuel fixtures (gas and electric) until electricity finally won out...



...because when William Coolidge developed a much brighter tungsten-filament lamp, far superior to gaslight.



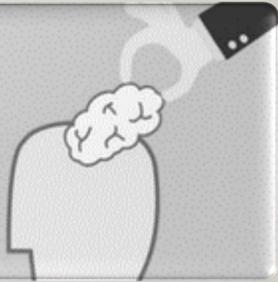
Gaslights have been identified as an instrument of both economic development and social control.



Streetlamps reduced the darkness needed for criminal activity, allowing for more commerce during the evening hours.



The Tactics of
Gaslighting

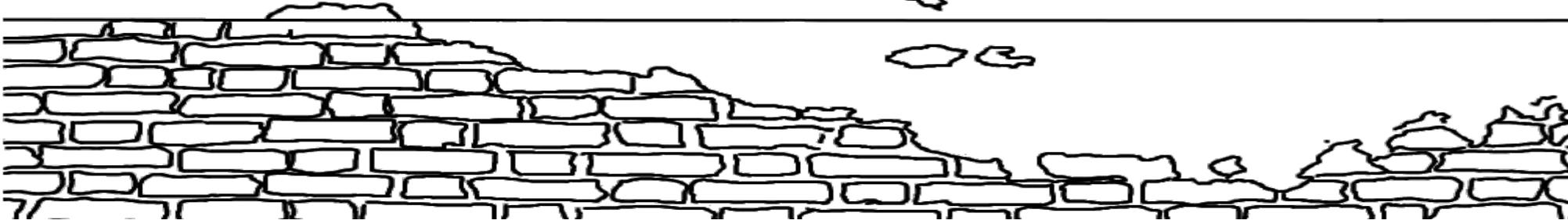


While reducing one illegal pursuit, gaslights became associated with another malicious endeavor.





The term "gaslighting" refers to an abuser who manipulates the truth, making the victim question his/her own sanity.



It originated from a play, and later a movie, where a husband lowered and raised the gaslights in his house to make his wife believe she was seeing things.



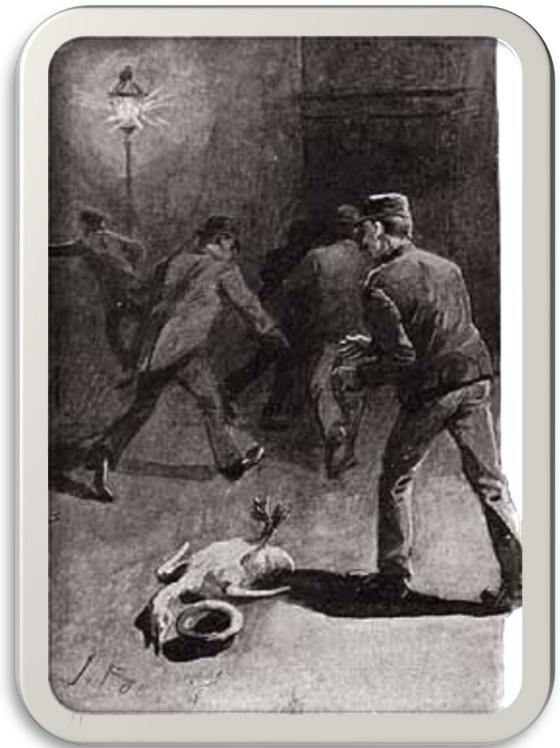
Despite the rise of electric lights, gaslights have not been completely eliminated. London still has 1,500 work gas-lamps, although they no longer require a lamp lighter, having switched to electric timers.



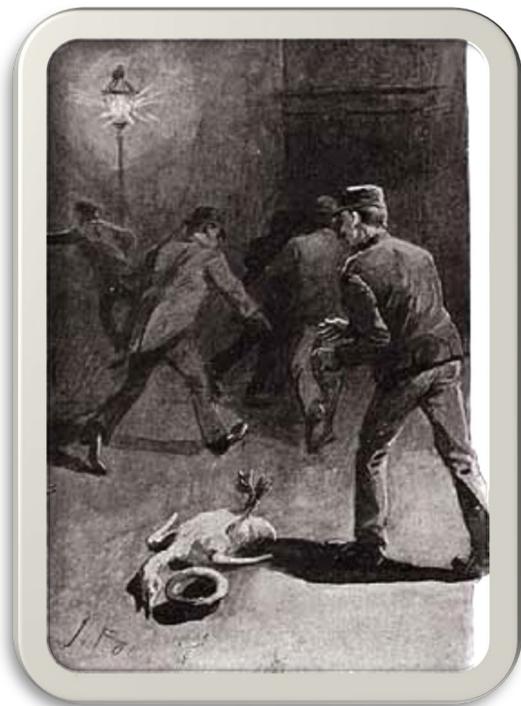
Other places, including some historic homes, have also continued to light areas with gas because of its nostalgic effect.



Such lamps provided opportunities to cast light on crimes and criminals, such as the ruffians...



*...that attacked Henry Baker,
that might have not have been
discovered until the
perpetrators had long vanished.*



*So we have completed
topic # 058 in our
series...*

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



References for this topic:

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- 2) <https://www.thespruce.com/the-gaslight-era-21750>
- 3) <http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/street-lighting/street-lighting.htm>
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- 5) <http://americanhistory.si.edu/lighting/19thcent/comp19.htm>
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- 8) <https://www.guidelondon.org.uk/blog/around-london/11-interesting-facts-about-london-gas-lamps/>
- 9) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gas_lighting



Baker Street Elementary

"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

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