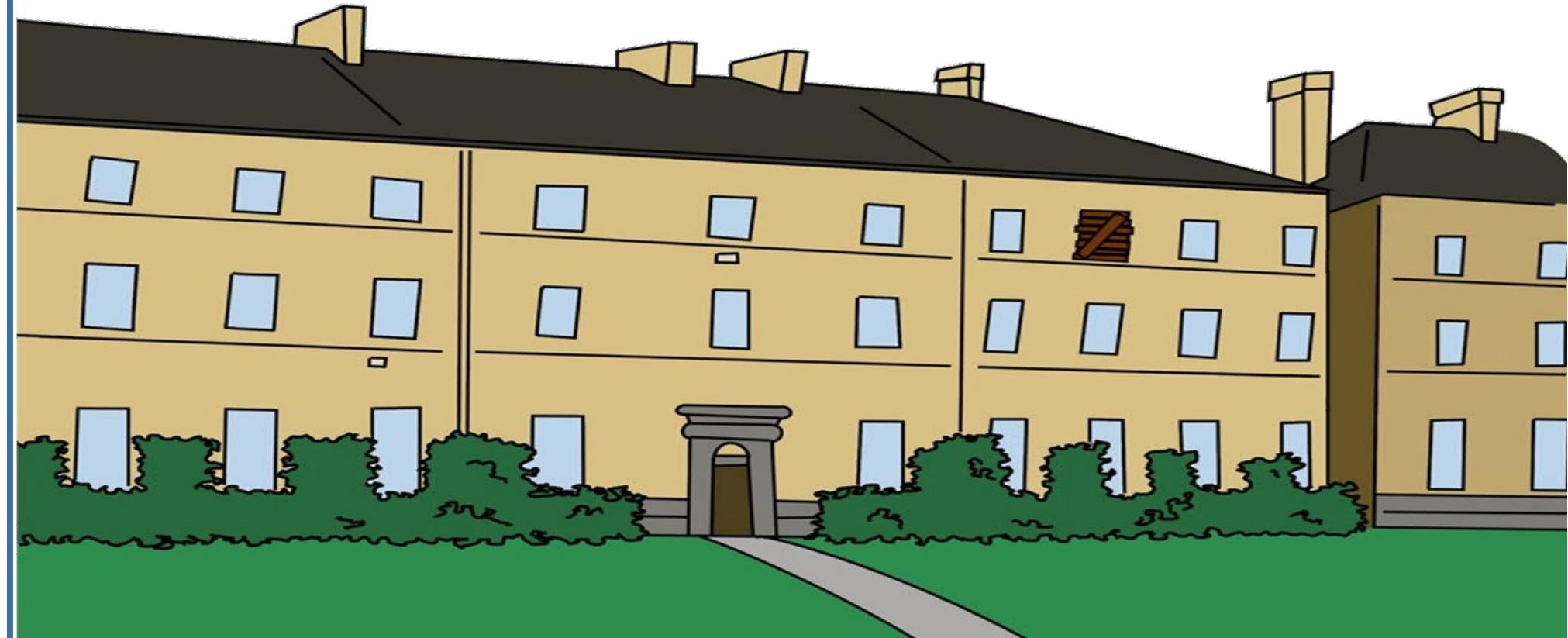


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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

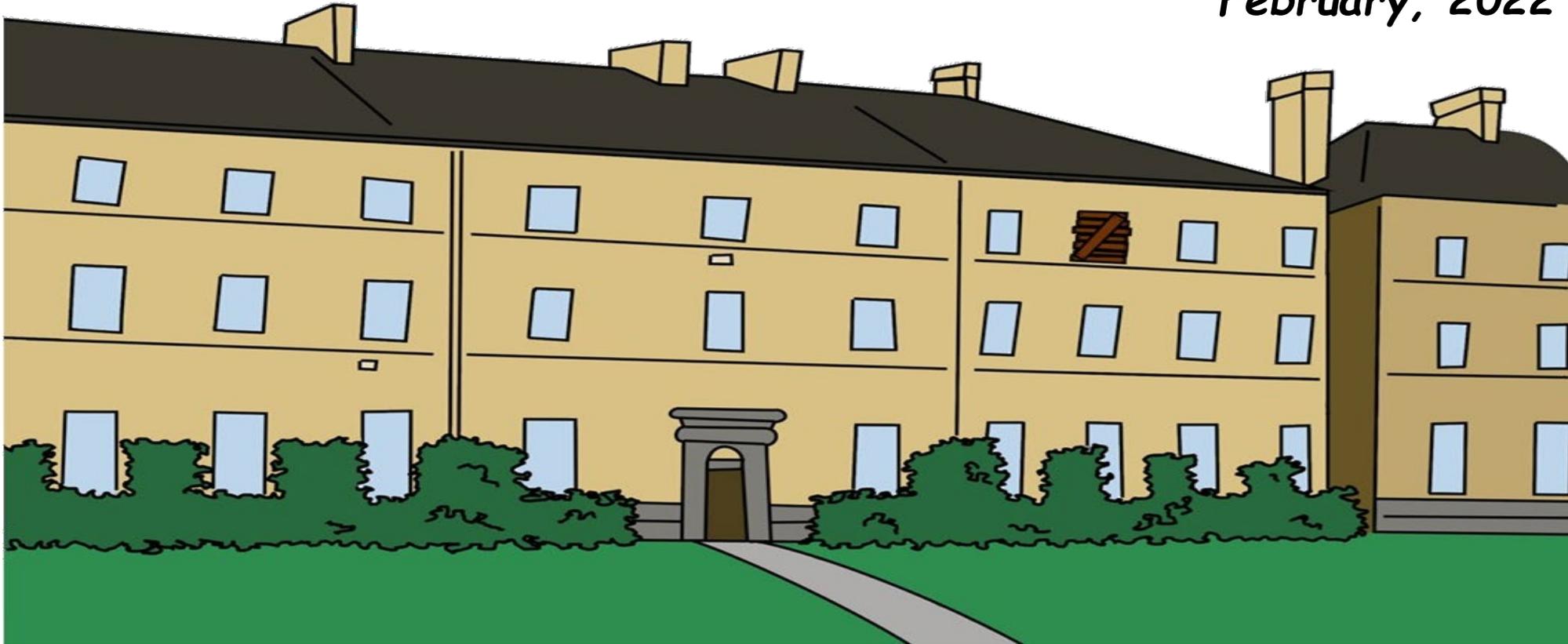


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The Life and Times in Victorian London

071 -- An Italian-American Import -- The Carbonari --

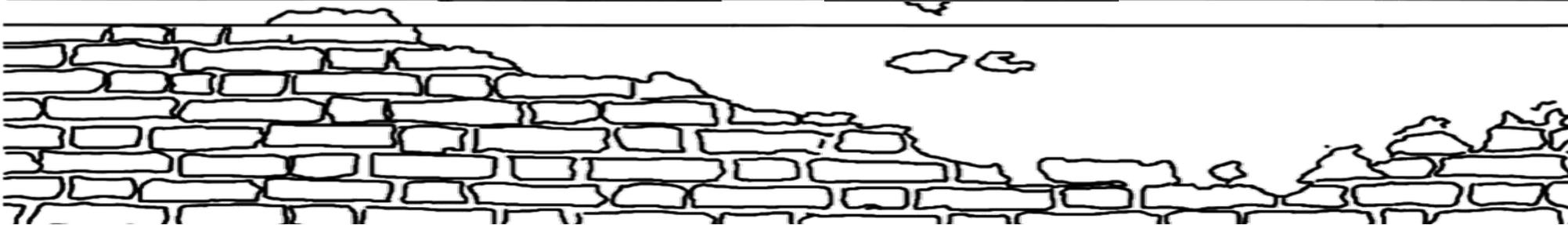
February, 2022



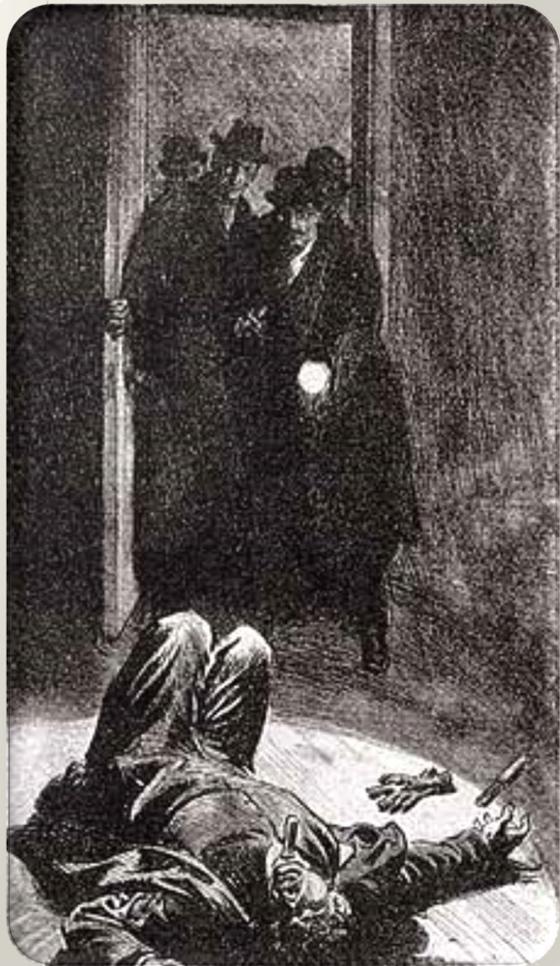
*Welcome to topic # 071... Today,
Master Gregson and I will look at The
Carbonari during the Victorian Period.*



In more than one Sherlock Holmes adventure, trouble from another country pursues an individual to London.



*Giuseppe Gorgiano
pursued Emilia and
Gennaro Lucca from
the US to England.*

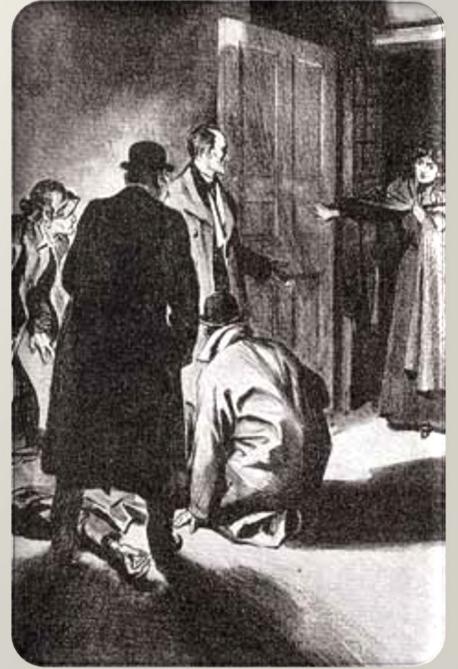




*Gorgiano had been a leader
in the Red Circle, a secret
organization allied to the
Carbonari in Naples, Italy.*



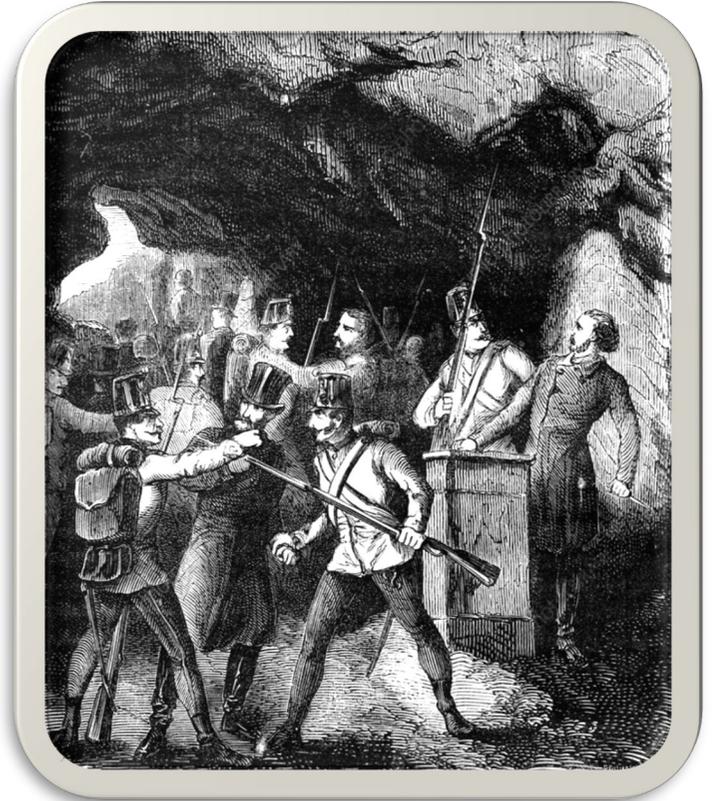
Originally, Conan Doyle had identified the Camorra as the Italian organization but later changed it to the Carbonari.



While different histories and operations exist between these two groups, as well as the Mafia, confusion between the aims and operations of each continued into the 1940s.



The Carbonari formed as a secret political society during the Risorgimento — an effort to unify Italy finally achieved in 1861 with the creation of the Kingdom of Italy.



With a connection to Freemasonry, the Carbonari modeled their organization after the Freemasons by having symbols, initiation ceremonies, and a hierarchy.





*When the Freemasons were
outlawed after the end of
Napoleonic rule, the adherents
were accepted...*

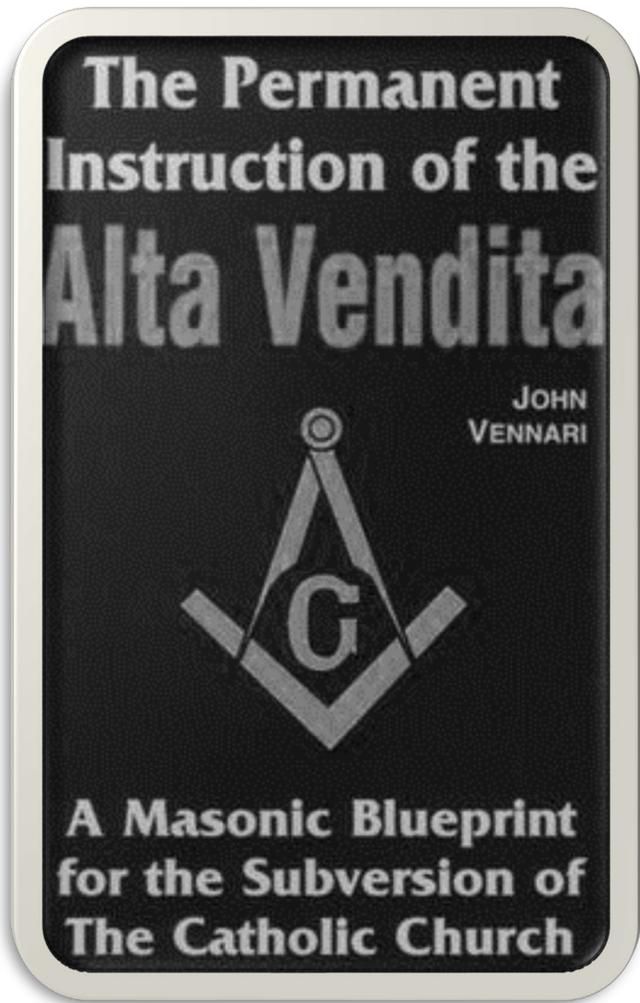




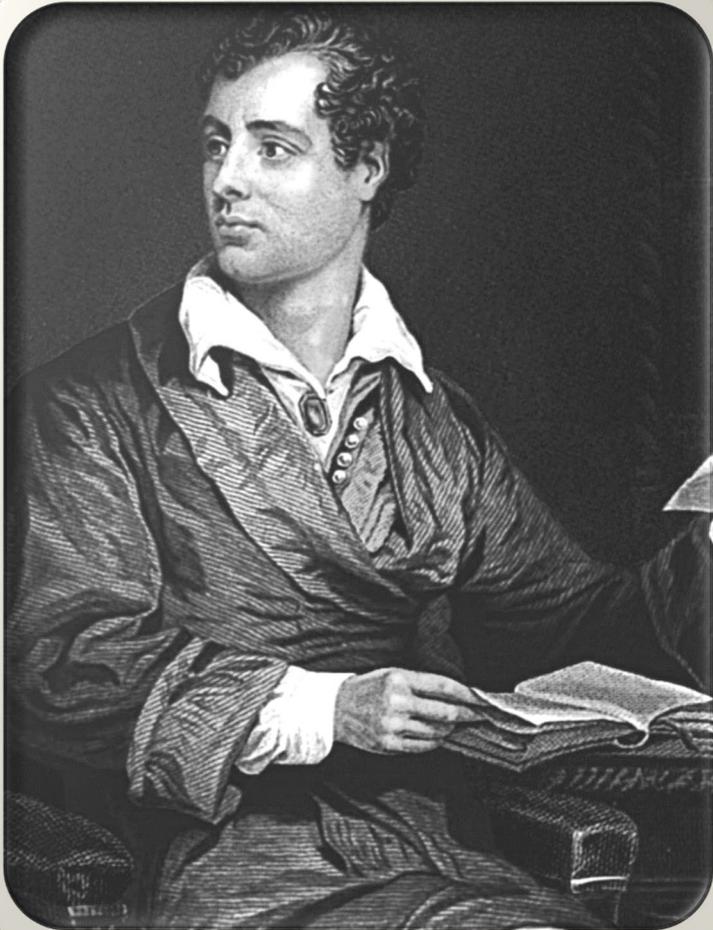
...into the order at a higher level than a new recruit and referred to as "cousins," rather than "brothers."



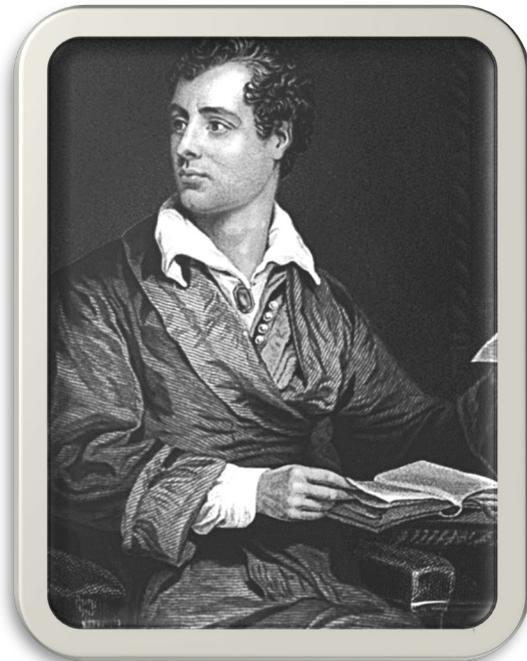
Local groups were organized into baraccas (huts) that were united into a republic, and governed by one of two alte vendite — one in Naples and the other in Salerno.



The Italian Carbonari included high government officials, military officers, and the clergy as well as many in the middle class.



*Even Lord Byron was
counted among its
sympathizers at one
point.*



*The name "carbonari"
refers to "coal burners."*

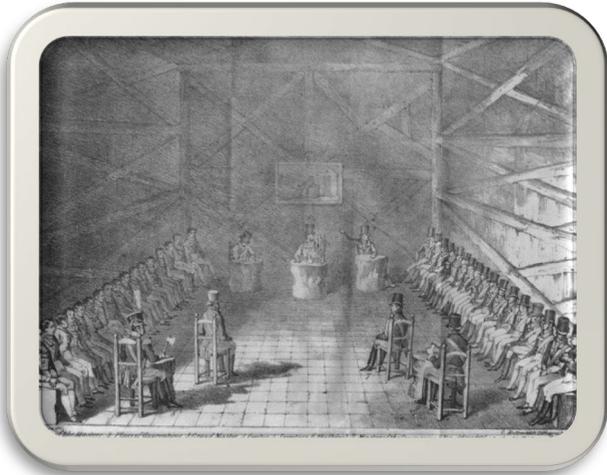


Members often met secretly in the mountains (primarily in central and southern Italy) and if approached by the police, they would explain they were "charcoal burners."

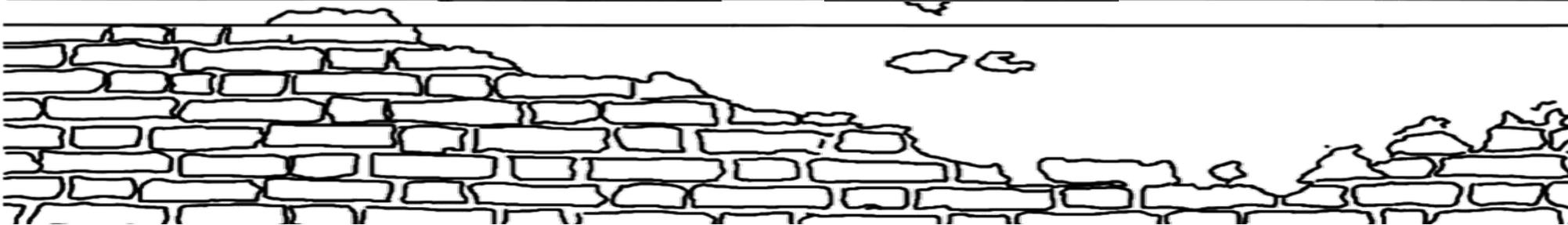


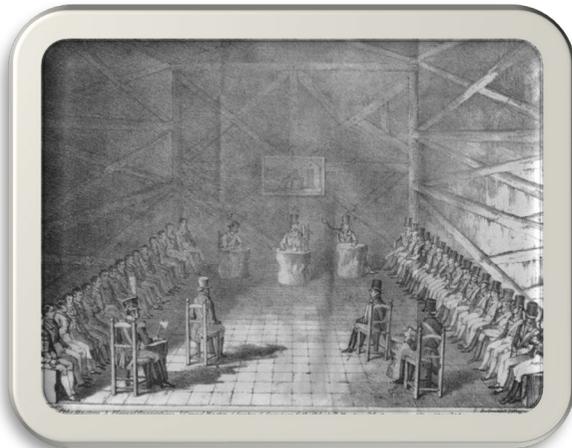
True carbonari were a nomadic people who spoke their own language and burned wood to create the charcoal used to heat homes and cook food.



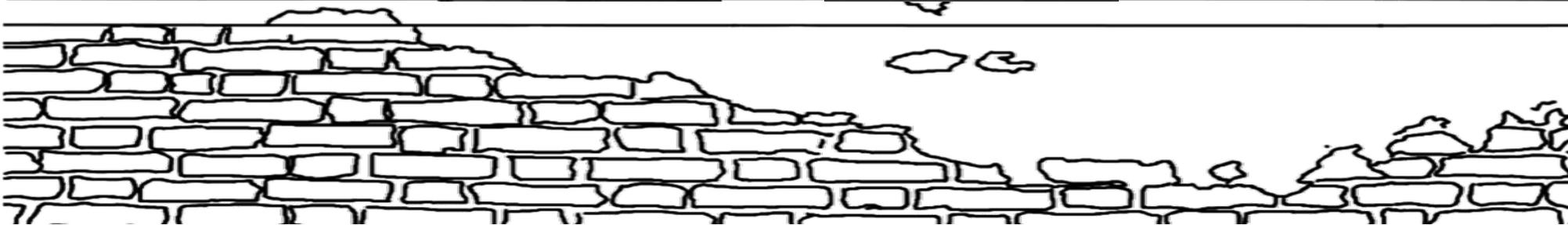


*Similar groups spread to France
(where they were called
"Charbonnerie") but with much
stricter rules regarding secrecy.*

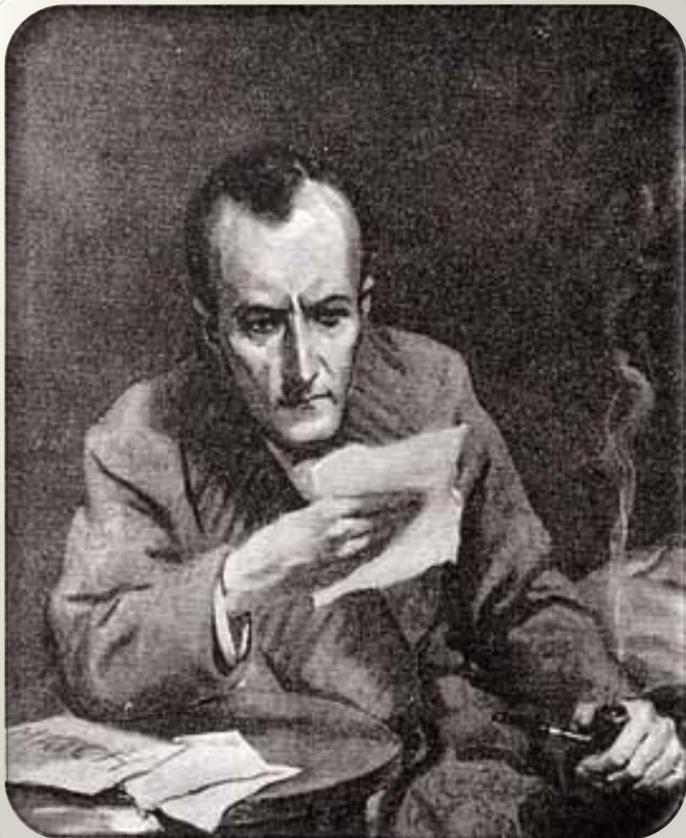




*Any mention of the group or
written communications was
punishable by death.*



By the time "The Adventure of the Red Circle" appeared in print, the original Carbonari had lost much of the power they had held in the 1820s.

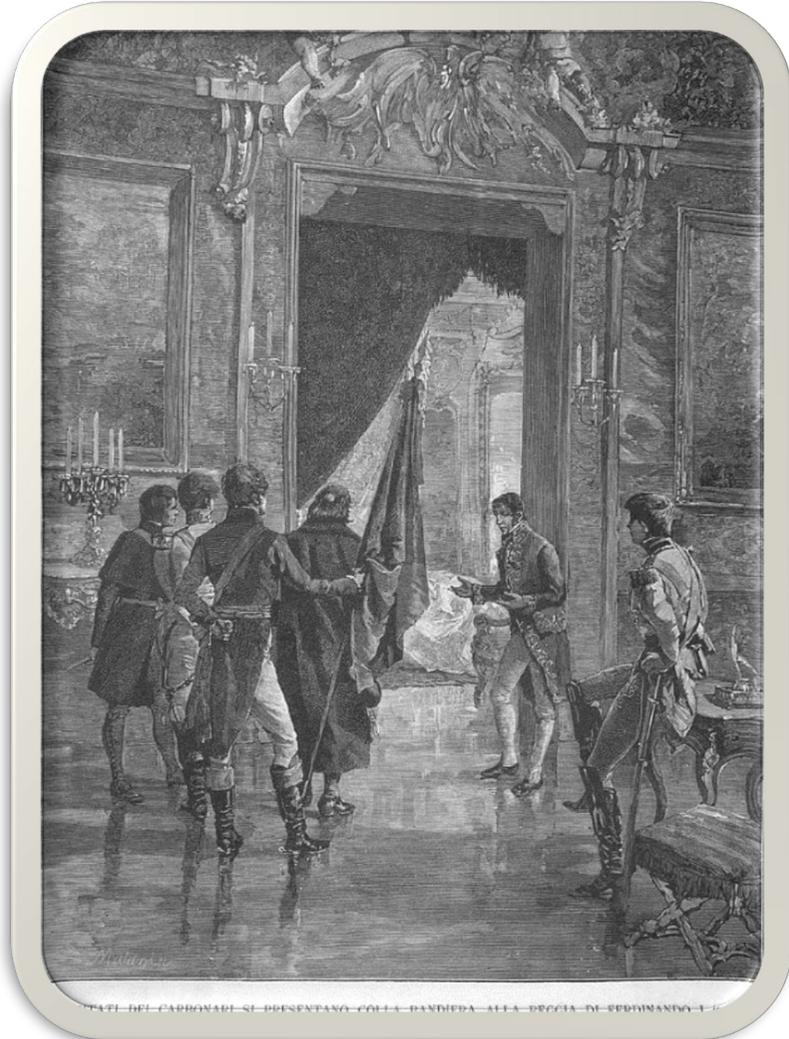




*While the Red Circle
described by Emilia Lucca
suggests a political origin
for the group...*



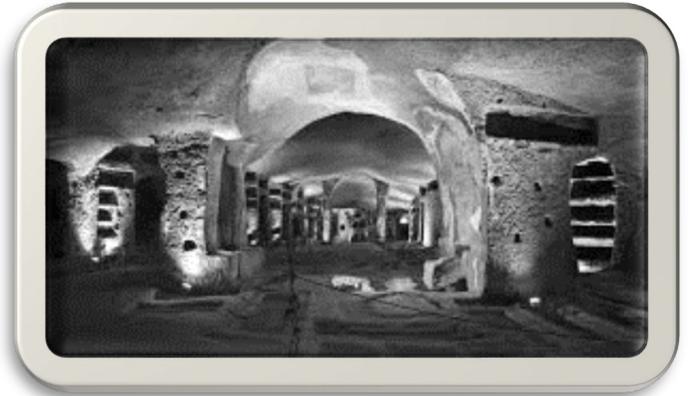
...the brotherhood in New York was more involved in extortion, similar to that of the Mafia operating at the time.



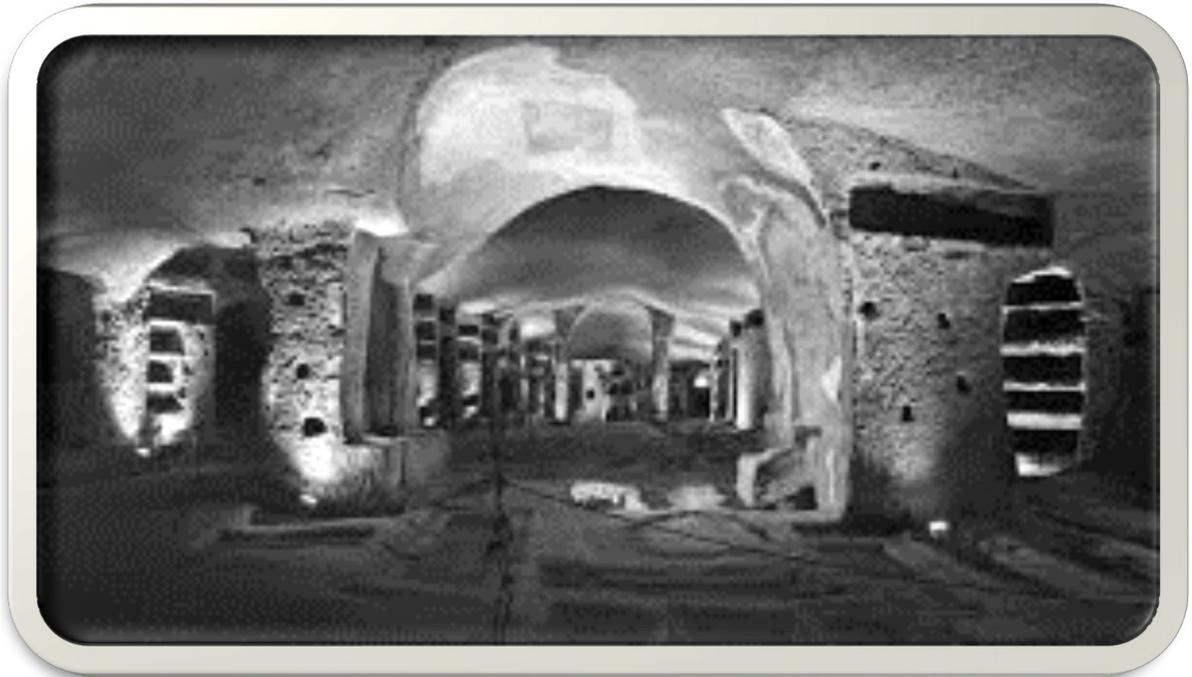
Although assassination and armed revolt were part of their efforts to achieve a republic, they did not resort to the type of criminal activities suggested by Emilia Lucca.



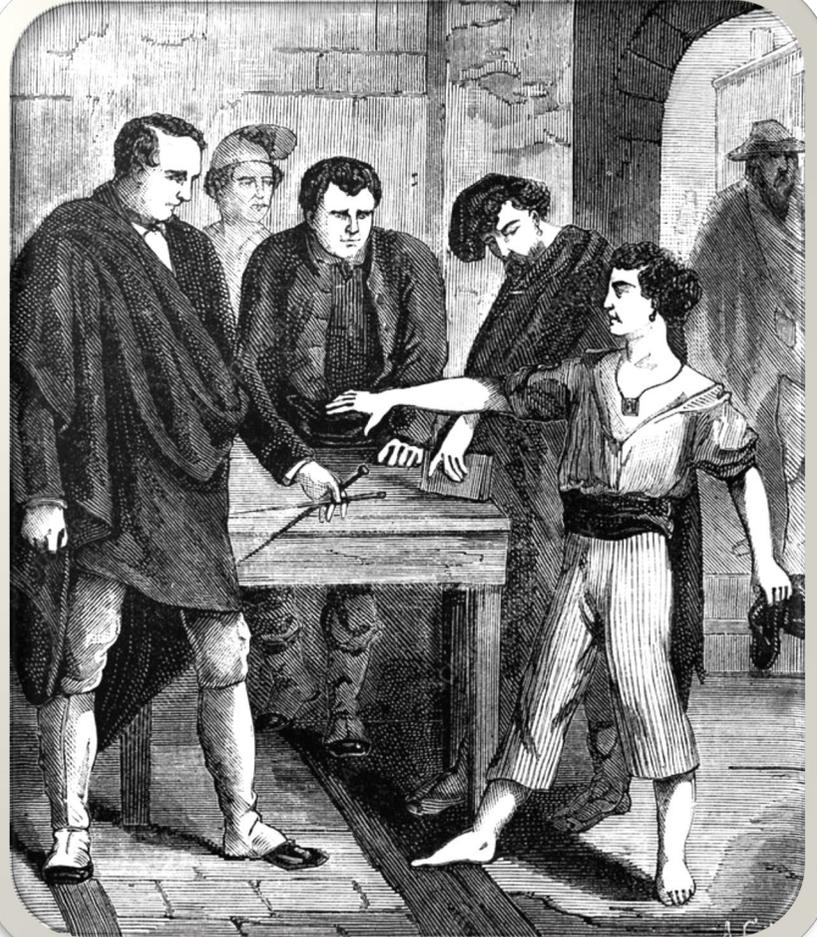
Like the Carbonari, another group, the Camorra, also originated in Naples with a similar goal of revitalizing the region.



The Camorra organization lacked the hierarchical structure of the Carbonari and Mafia. Instead, each group operated as a separate clan.

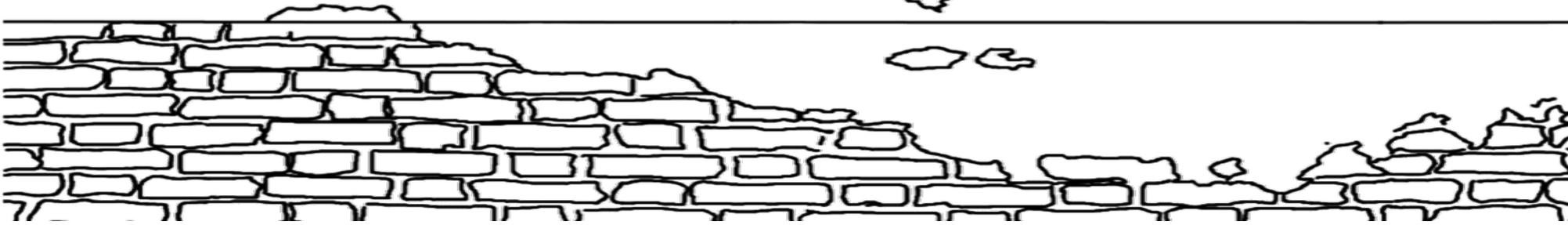


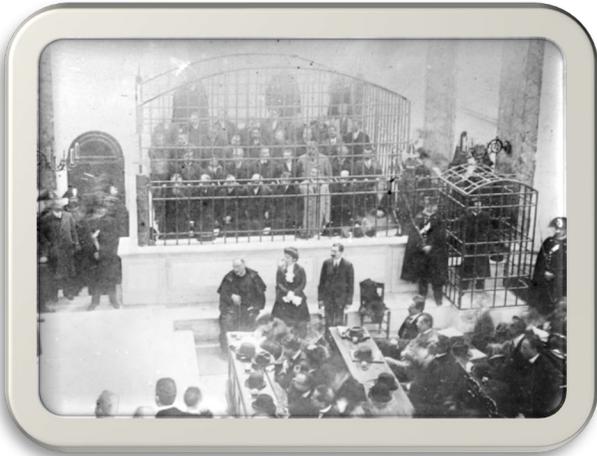
Their illegal enterprises included extortion as Emilia described as well as trade in black market goods.



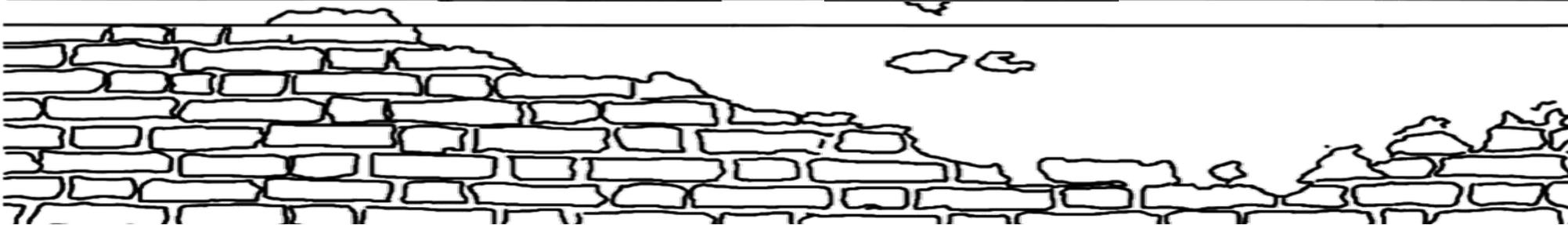


With the goal of profit by any means, this organization controlled those living in their areas through threats and bribes — as needed.

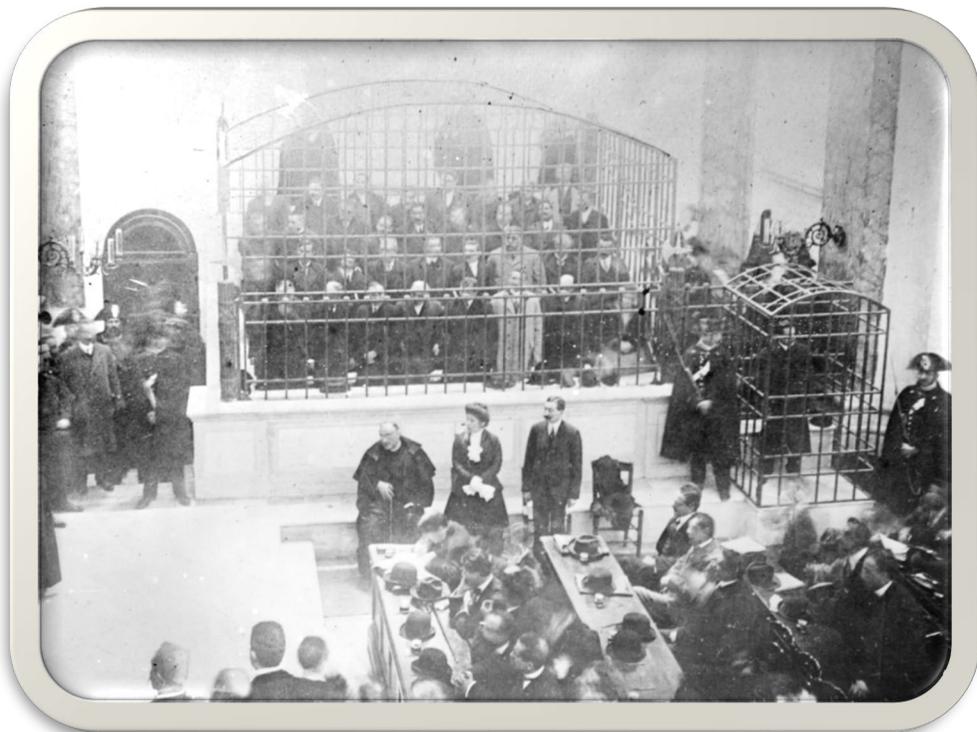




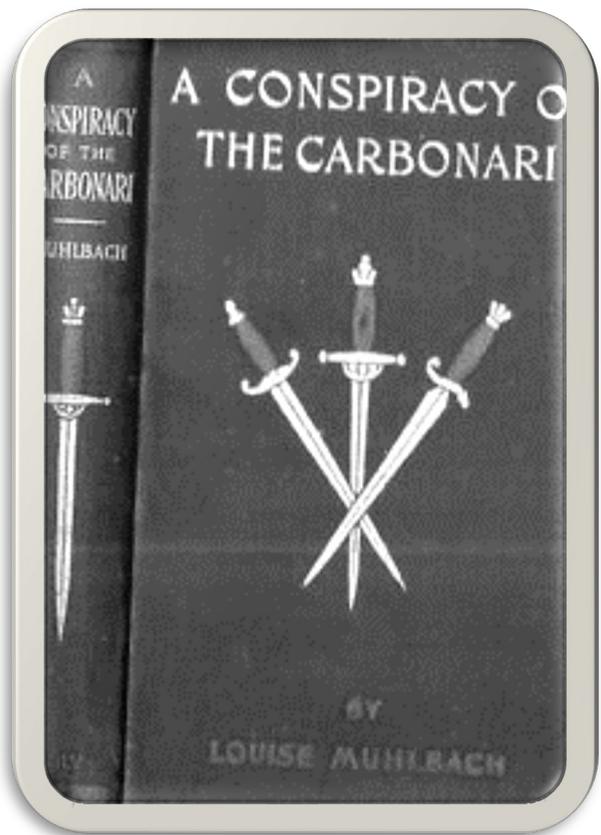
Following the reunification of Italy in 1861, the government pursued this group for twenty years.



The final blow to the organization occurred in 1911 when more than 20 members, including their boss, were arrested and convicted of major crimes.



The depiction of the Carbonari in "The Adventure of the Red Circle" suggests a much more criminal and gruesome organization than occurred in their true history.



*Had Conan Doyle left
"Camorra" as The Red Circle's
affiliation, rather than
changing it to "Carbonari"...*



*...he would have provided
a more accurate
portrayal of the group's
lawless character.*



*It would not be the only
time these secret
societies were confused.*



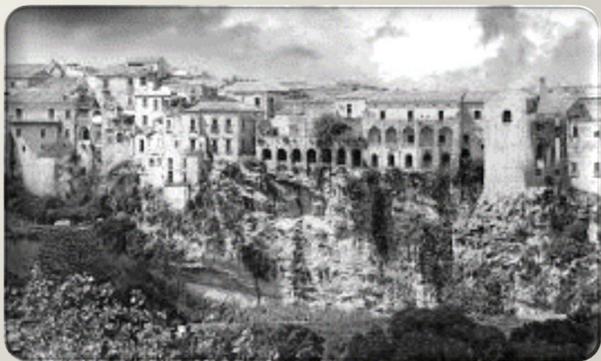
A report of a murder in 1902 in New York suggested it was the result of the operations of one of three secret societies (Carbonari, Camorra, or Mafia) operating in the city.





Similarly, in 1941, a discussion of these groups again equated the societies.





Given their similar origins in both geography and time such confusion — including Conan Doyle's — can be understood.



*Their aims and operations,
however, make each a
separate — and very
different — society.*



*So we have completed
topic # 071 in our
series...*

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



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- 9) <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1902/07/27/117980252.html?pageNumber=21>
- 10) <https://time.com/5435772/elena-ferrante-hbo-mafia-camorra/>
- 11) <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/camorra.htm>
- 12) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Camorra>
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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

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