

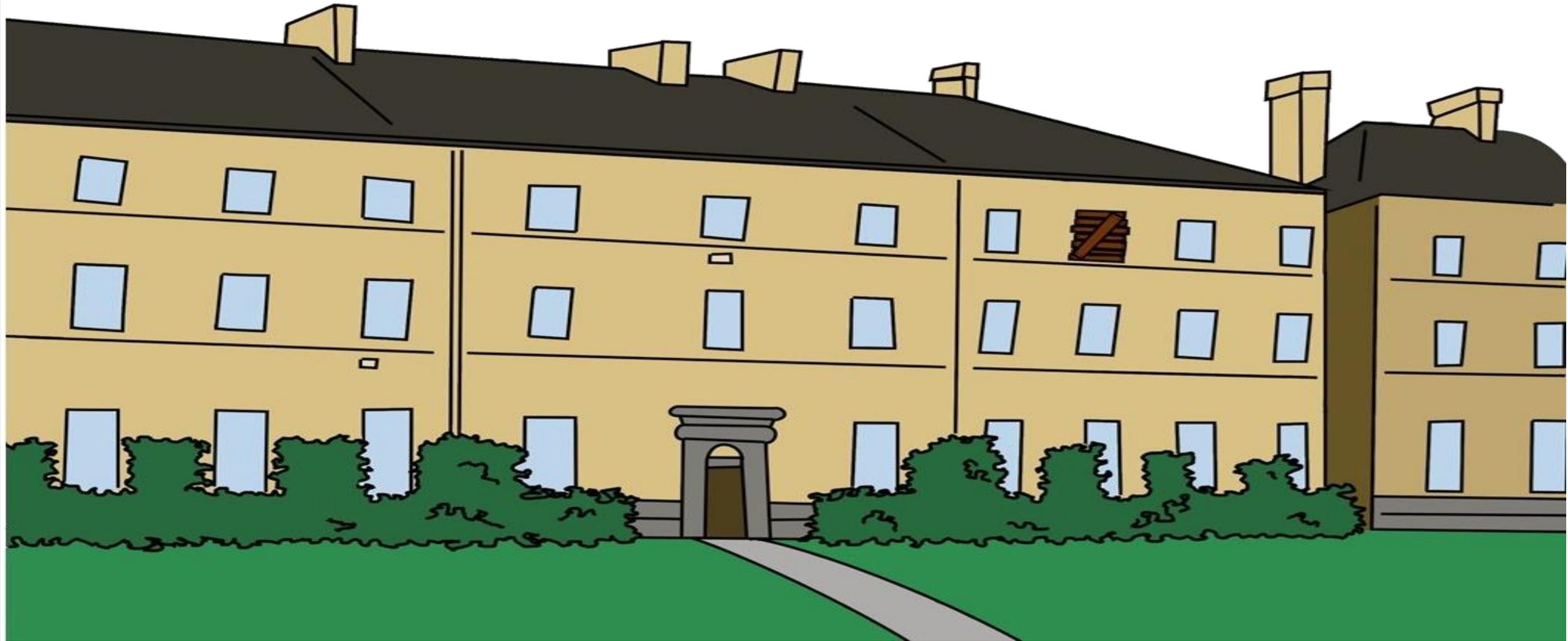
# Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS  
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



# Baker Street Elementary

THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON  
# A037 - I'VE GOT THE FEEVAH! - JANUARY, 2022



WELCOME TO TOPIC NUMBER 37... TODAY HOLMES  
AND I WILL BE DISCUSSING THE DISORDER KNOWN  
AS 'BRAIN FEVER', USED THROUGHOUT THE 60  
SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES.



**IN FIVE STORIES, 'BRAIN FEVER' STRUCK FIVE  
DIFFERENT CHARACTERS: ALICE RUCASTLE IN 'THE  
ADVENTURE OF THE COPPER BEECHES,' NANCY BARCLAY  
IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE CROOKED MAN,'...**



...RACHEL HOWELLS IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE  
MUSGRAVE RITUAL,' SARAH CUSHING IN 'THE  
ADVENTURE OF THE CARDBOARD BOX,' AND PERCY  
PHELPS IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE NAVAL  
TREATY.'



WHILE THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY READER MIGHT CONSIDER THIS ILLNESS A QUAIN TROPE OF VICTORIAN LITERATURE (IT APPEARS IN NUMEROUS NOVELS AND STORIES FROM THE TIME)...





*...THE MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT RECOGNIZED IT AS  
A SERIOUS PHYSICAL AILMENT AND TREATED  
ACCORDINGLY.*



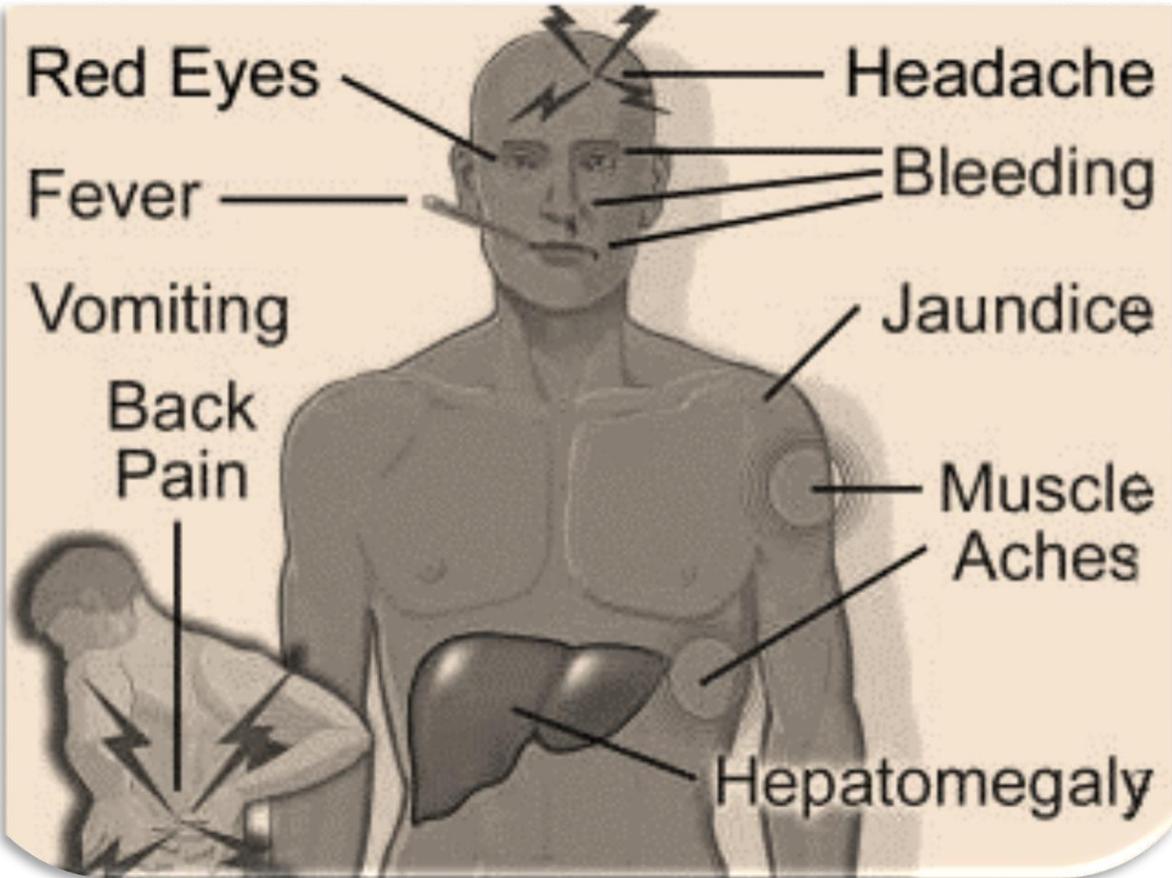
THE CONTEMPORARY CONCEPT OF 'FEVER' AS AN  
ELEVATED BODY TEMPERATURE DOES NOT  
CORRESPOND TO THE 19TH CENTURY DEFINITION.



*PRIOR TO THE DISCOVERY OF MICRO-ORGANISMS AND THEIR ROLE IN DISEASES, 'FEVERS' COULD BE CONTRACTED FROM THE ENVIRONMENT ('MIASMA' OR BAD AIR) OR BY THE BODY CREATING ITS OWN POISON.*



**THE TERM 'FEVER' WAS USED TO DESCRIBE THE DISEASE ITSELF, RATHER THAN A SYMPTOM...**



*...AND WAS USED AS THE DIAGNOSIS FOR CHOLERA,  
INFLUENZA, TYPHUS, AND SMALLPOX, THE RESULT OF  
INJURY, BAD AIR, VIOLENT EMOTION, IRREGULAR  
BOWELS, AND EXTREMES OF HEAT AND COLD.*



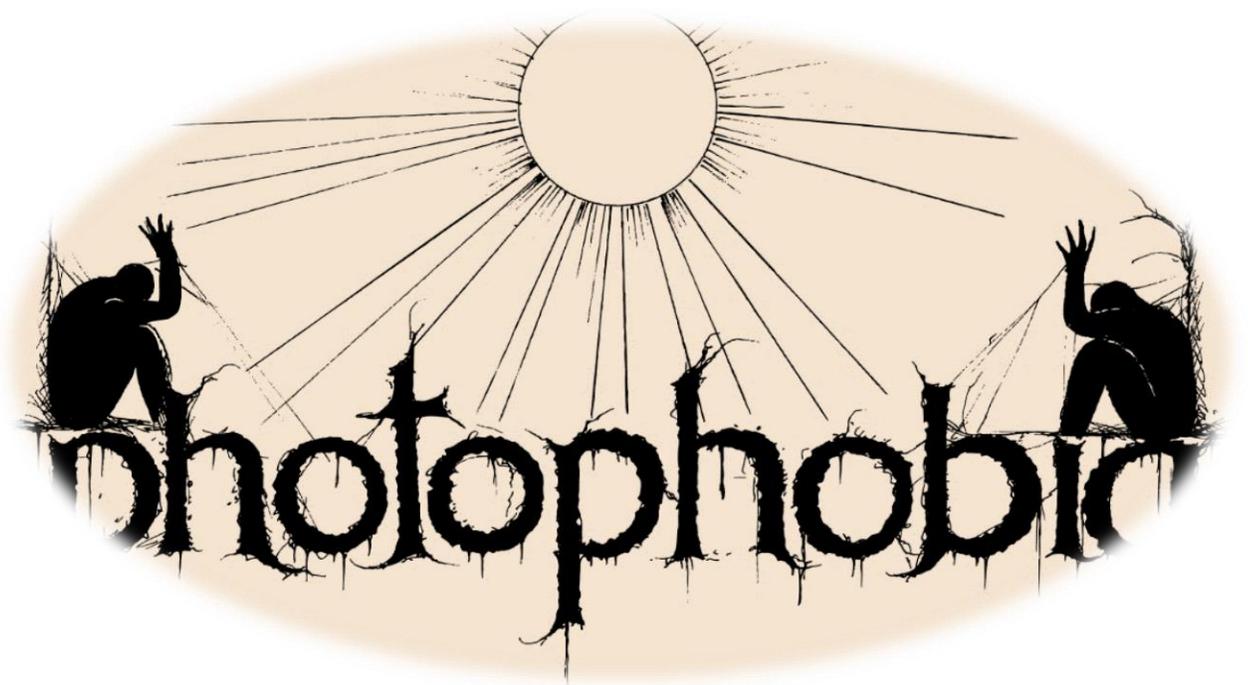
**THE SPECIFIC DIAGNOSIS OF BRAIN FEVER GREW OUT OF THE CLASSICAL CONCEPT OF 'PHRENSY,' USED TO DESCRIBE A DELIRIUM BROUGHT ON BY FEVER AND AN INFLAMMATION OF THE BRAIN.**



**EVEN AFTER THE DELIRIUM SUBSIDED, MENTAL  
CONFUSION COULD REMAIN AND PERMANENTLY  
AFFECT THE INDIVIDUAL.**



A DESCRIPTION OF BRAIN FEVER APPEARED IN MEDICAL TEXTS UP TO THE LATE 1800s AND WAS MARKED BY 'ACUTE PAIN IN THE HEAD WITH INTOLERANCE OF LIGHT AND SOUND...



**...WATCHFULNESS, DELIRIUM; FLUSHED  
COUNTENANCE, AND REDNESS OF THE  
CONJUNCTIVA, OR A HEAVY SUFFUSED STATE OF  
THE EYES QUICK PULSE, FREQUENTLY SPASMODIC  
TWITCHINGS OR CONVULSIONS, PASSING INTO  
SOMNOLENCY, COMA, AND COMPLETE RELAXATION  
OF THE LIMBS.'**





THE MOST NOTABLE ASPECT OF THIS PARTICULAR DISEASE, AND VERY RELEVANT TO THOSE AFFECTED IN THE STORIES WAS ITS SUDDEN ONSET IN SEEMINGLY HEALTHY PEOPLE, OFTEN OCCURRING AFTER A PARTICULARLY 'SEVERE SHOCK TO THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.'



*THE SHOCK COULD OCCUR FROM FEAR, ANXIETY,  
DISAPPOINTMENT, INTENSE STUDY, LACK OF  
SLEEP, AND, OF PARTICULAR CONCERN, INTENSE  
THOUGHT OR STUDY.*



**FOR THOSE IN THE STORIES, AN INTENSE SHOCK  
WAS BEHIND THE FIVE CASES: ALICE RUCASTLE  
WAS PESTERED BY HER FATHER TO SIGN OVER HER  
INHERITANCE TO THE POINT OF HER EXHAUSTION...**



*...PERCY PHELPS SUFFERED FOR MORE THAN TWO MONTHS FOLLOWING THE THEFT OF THE TREATY HE HAD BEEN COPYING; NANCY BARCLAY WAS RENDERED UNABLE TO TESTIFY IN HER OWN DEFENSE FOLLOWING HER HUSBAND'S MURDER...*



*...RACHEL HOWELLS WAS A 'BLACK-EYED SHADOW'  
AFTER SHE WAS INVOLVED IN THE DEATH OF HER  
FORMER LOVER; AND SARAH CUSHING TOOK TO HER  
BED AFTER SHE UNDERSTOOD HER ROLE IN THE  
DEATH OF HER SISTER AND FORMER LOVER.*



*IN SOME OF THESE CASES, THE VICTIM RECOVERED  
ONCE THE MYSTERY IS SOLVED AND THE TRAUMA  
ALLEVIATED BUT SOME WERE FIRST TREATED AS  
PRACTICE DICTATED AT THAT TIME.*





*FOR EXAMPLE, ALICE RUCASTLE HAD HER HAIR CUT  
OFF TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE ON HER BRAIN.*



*OTHER CONVENTIONAL TREATMENTS INVOLVED BLEEDINGS, PURGES AND EMETICS, WHICH WERE NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN THE SHERLOCK HOLMES' STORIES.*



**VICTORIAN LITERATURE EMPLOYED THE CONCEPT OF BRAIN FEVER AS A MEANS OF INDICATING THE POWER OF THE EMOTIONAL TRAUMA OR SHOCK A CHARACTER RECEIVED BUT FOR THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY OF THE TIME, IT WAS A TRUE AND IDENTIFIABLE CONDITION REQUIRING THE SAME ATTENTION AND TREATMENT AS A BROKEN BONE OR LACERATION FROM PHYSICAL TRAUMA.**



FOR YOU AND I, AN ATTACK OF BRAIN FEVER  
SERVED AS AN ADDITIONAL INDICATION OF THE  
IMPACT OF THE CRIME UPON THOSE AROUND IT.



*SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 037 IN OUR SERIES...*

*IN TOPIC # 038, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT A NIGHT AT THE OPERA AT CONVENT GARDEN.*



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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

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