

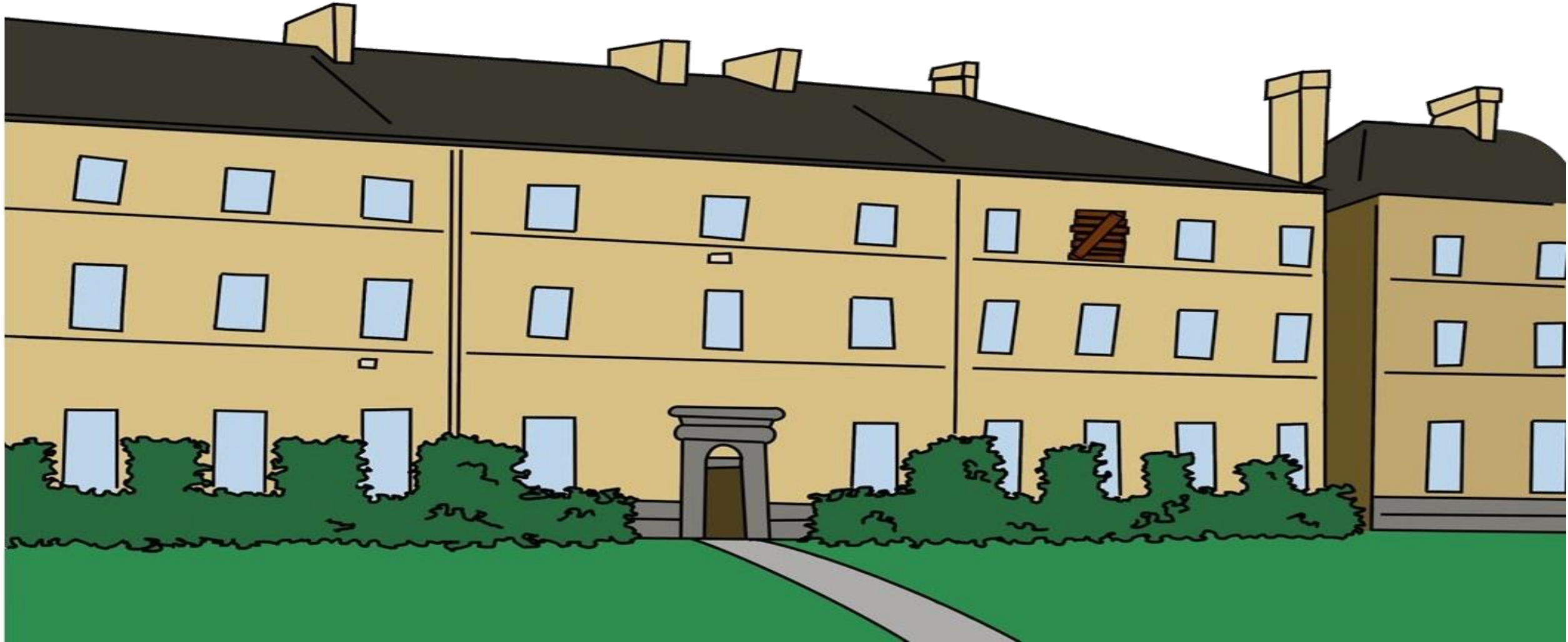
# Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS  
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



# Baker Street Elementary

THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON  
# 085 -- (YELLOW) PAPERBACK READER -- FEBRUARY, 2022





**WELCOME TO TOPIC # 085... WATSON AND I WILL  
BE DISCUSSING THE YELLOW-BACKED NOVELS OF  
THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.**





*I TRIED TO AMUSE HIMSELF WHILE WAITING FOR  
YOUR RETURN IN 'THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY  
MYSTERY' BY READING A YELLOW-BACK NOVEL...*



*...AND VIOLET HUNTER READ ONE TO HER EMPLOYER  
RUCASTLE IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE COPPER BEECHES.'*

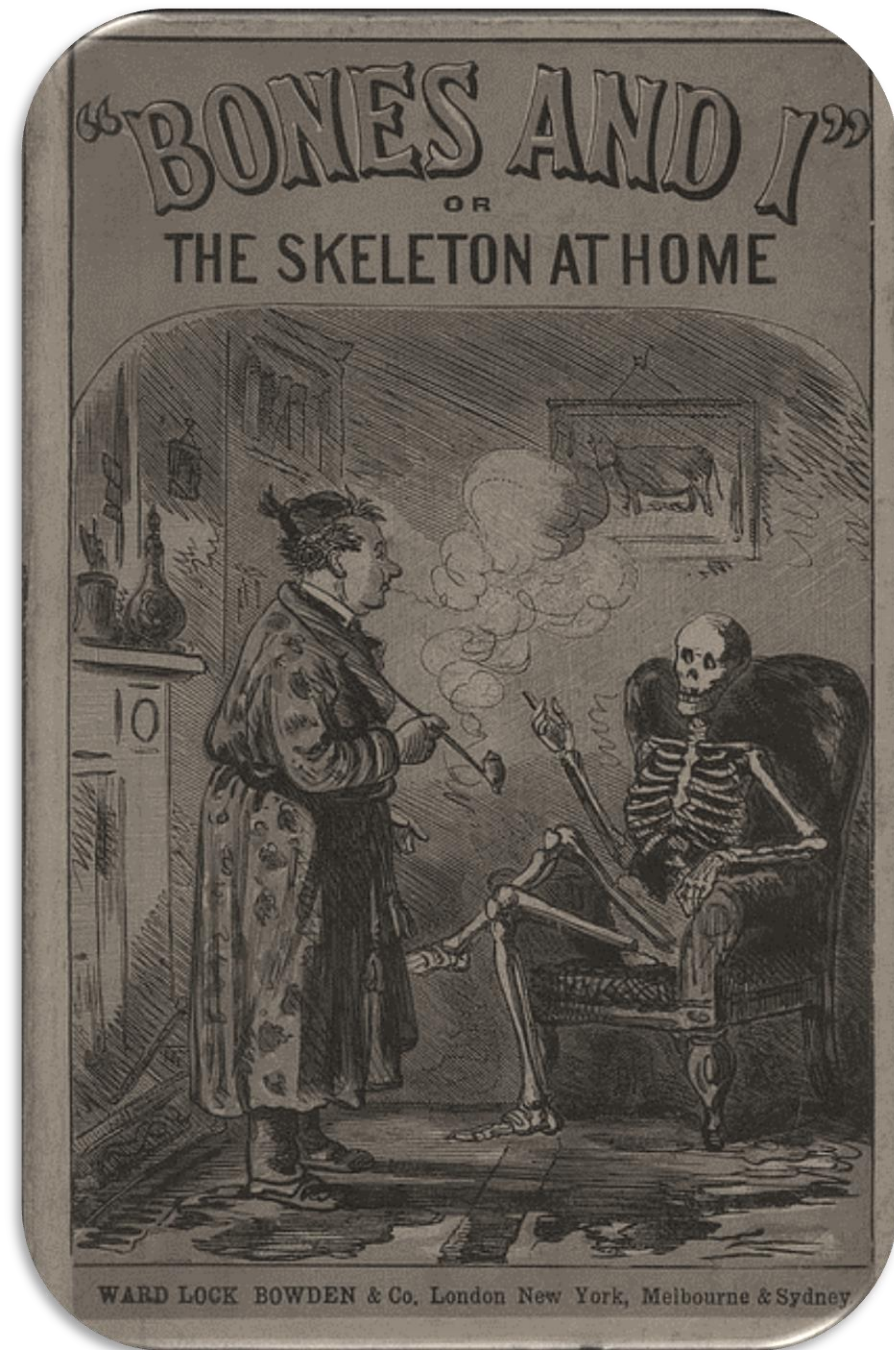


**THE CREATION AND POPULARITY OF THESE NOVELS  
COINCIDED WITH INCREASED RAILWAY TRAVEL  
AND REPRESENTED A HIGHLY POPULAR  
INNOVATION IN BRITISH PUBLISHING THAT...**





...THOUGH SHORT-LIVED, PROVIDED A MORE LITERATE POPULATION WITH CLASSICS AS WELL AS ORIGINAL WORKS.



ALEXANDER PUSHKIN



THE QUEEN OF SPADES

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALEXANDRE BENOIS

THE PUBLIC HAD ACCESS TO JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS  
AND THE FIRST BRITISH TRANSLATION OF  
PUSHKIN'S THE QUEEN OF SPADES, AMONG OTHERS.





**The Queen of Spades and other Stories**

**Alexander Pushkin**



**Published by the Library of Alexandria**

**Made in the United States of America**

**FOR CURRENT HISTORIANS, THEY PROVIDE A GLIMPSE INTO THE INTERESTS AND LIVES OF VICTORIANS.**





**THE TERM 'YELLOW BACK' COMES FROM AN  
ADVANCEMENT IN ENGRAVING DEVELOPED BY  
EDMUND EVANS.**





THE WOOD ENGRAVER DEVELOPED A PROCESS IN 1847 USING THREE PRINTINGS — ONE WITH THE OUTLINE AND TWO ADDITIONAL BLOCKS PROVIDING COLOR TINT.

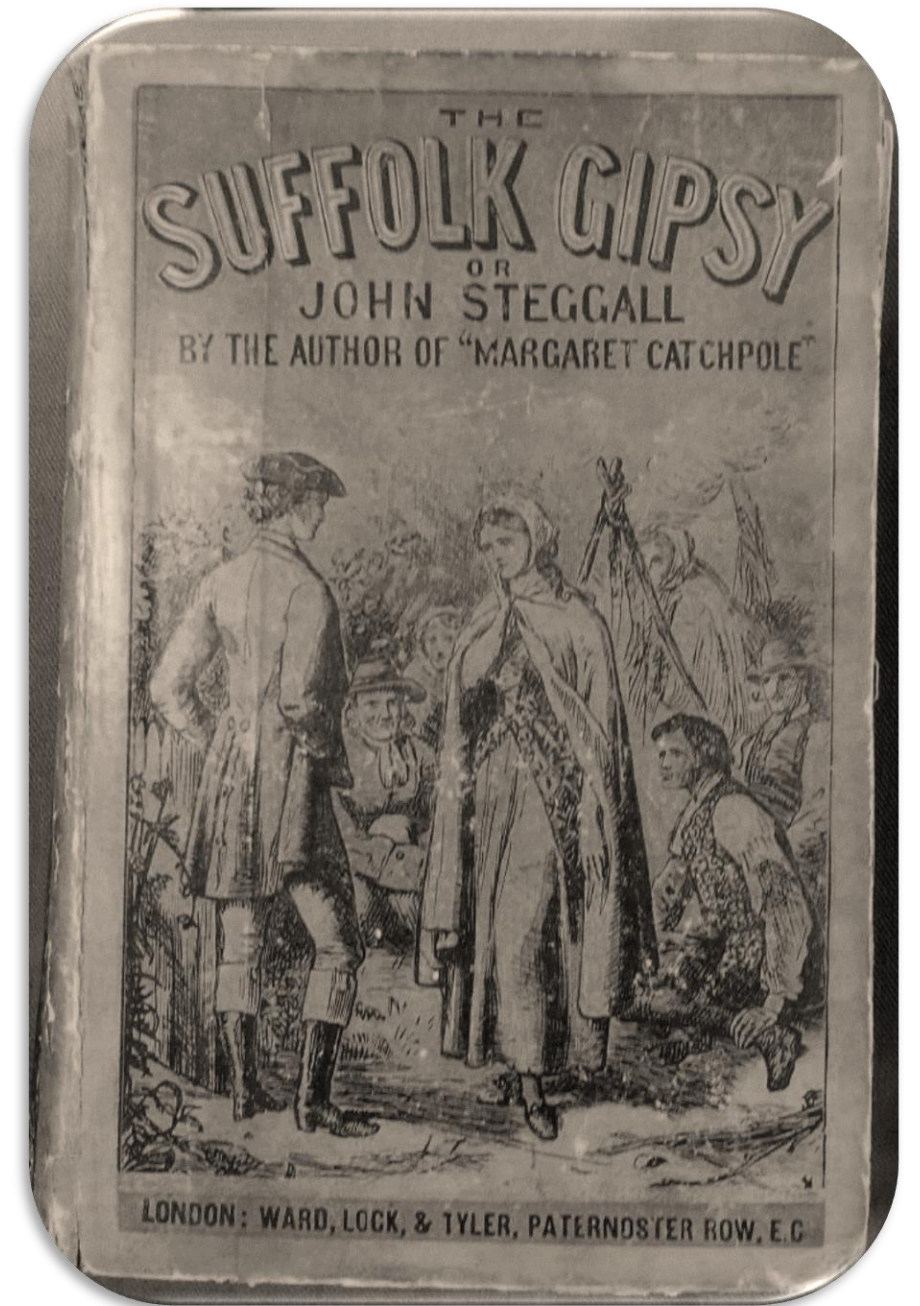




**IN ADDITION, HE PRINTED THESE ON YELLOW-GLAZED PAPER TO GIVE BOOKS AN EYE-CATCHING COVER.**

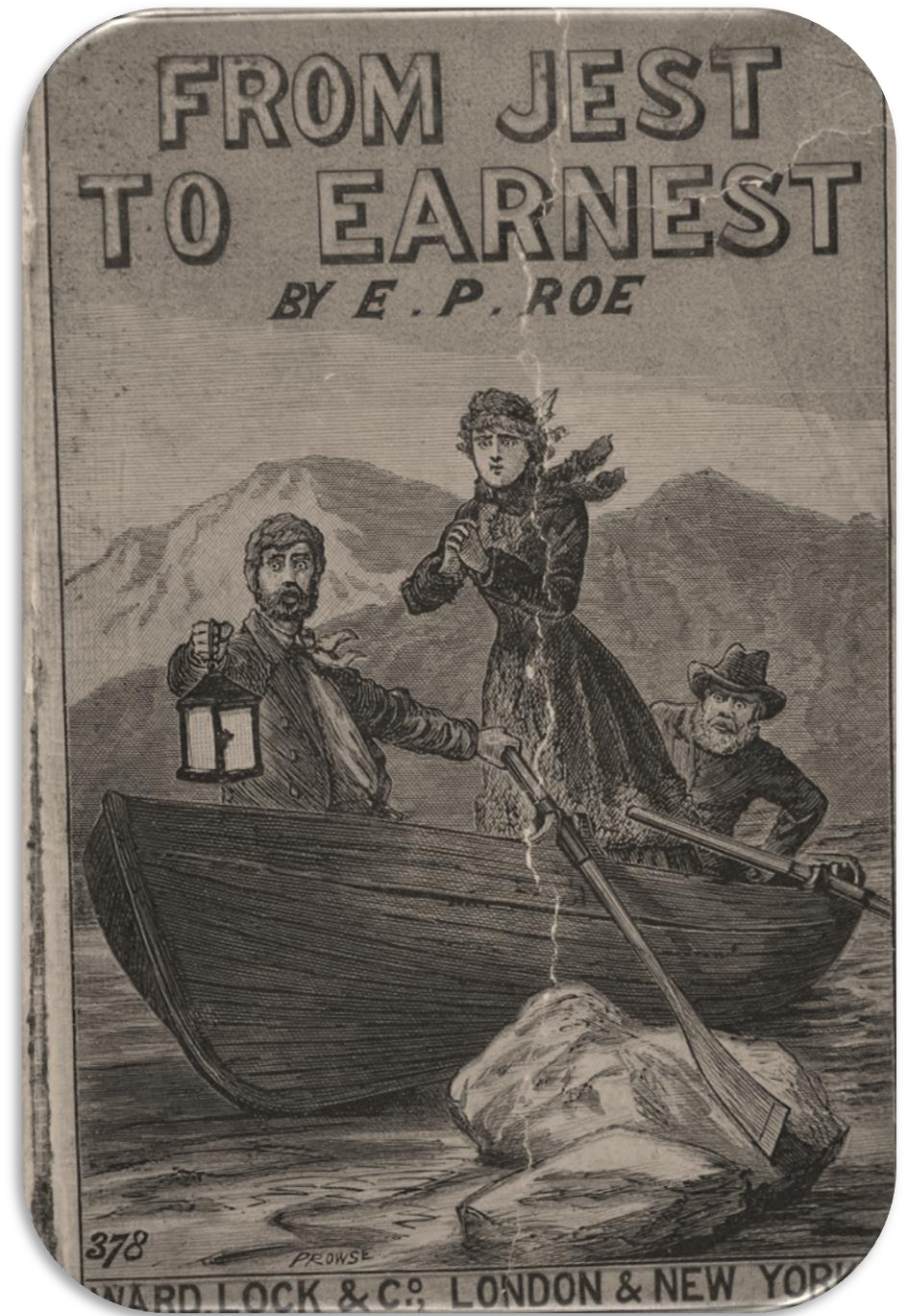


**WHILE PAPERBACKS WERE CHEAPER (12.5 PENCE, OR 25 CENTS VS. 25 PENCE OR 50 CENTS), THEY WERE WORTH THE ADDED EXPENSE.**





THE FIBERBOARD WAS STURDIER, AND THE TYPE HAD BEEN RESET, MAKING THE TEXT EASIER TO READ.





**WHILE SEVERAL PUBLISHERS PRODUCED THESE BOOKS, GEORGE ROUTLEDGE WAS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL WITH HIS 'RAILWAY LIBRARY' SERIES, OFFERED FROM 1848 TO 1899.**



**MOST OF THESE WOULD HAVE BEEN SOLD BY  
WILLIAM HENRY SMITH (W.H. SMITH) FROM HIS  
RAILWAY BOOKSTALLS.**



**SMITH OPENED HIS FIRST KIOSK IN THE EUSTON STATION IN 1848, AND BY 1860, HE HAD STORES ON ALL MAJOR AND MANY SECONDARY LINES.**





**BOTH THE BOOKS AND THE STALLS WERE DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO THE RAILWAY TRAVELER, PROVIDING LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE TRIP...**





...AT THE END OF WHICH THE BOOK MIGHT BE TRADED FOR ANOTHER, THROWN AWAY, OR PASSED ON.





THE COVERS, WITH THEIR BRIGHT COLORS AND ACTION SCENES, WERE DESIGNED TO BE SEEN FROM 20 YARDS AWAY.



*GIVEN THAT YOU VISITED THE RAILWAY STATION  
PRIOR TO STARTING YOUR YELLOW-BACKED NOVEL,  
YOU MOST LIKELY PICKED IT UP AT THAT TIME.*





THE POPULARITY OF THESE BOOKS WAS ALSO DUE TO THEIR SUBJECT MATTER.



ACADEMIC CIRCLES REFERRED TO THESE AS 'SENSATION' NOVELS WITH STORIES ATTRACTING AN AUDIENCE THROUGH TALES DEPICTING LIVES OF MORAL AMBIGUITY: FALLEN WOMEN, EXTRAMARITAL SEX, AND MURDER.





**SOME THEORIES ALSO SUGGEST THAT RAILWAY TRAVEL ITSELF SUPPORTED THE POPULARITY OF SUCH THEMES.**



*GOING LONG DISTANCES AMONG STRANGERS GAVE PASSENGERS MORE FREEDOM IN THEIR READING CHOICES WITHOUT CONDEMNATION OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS.*





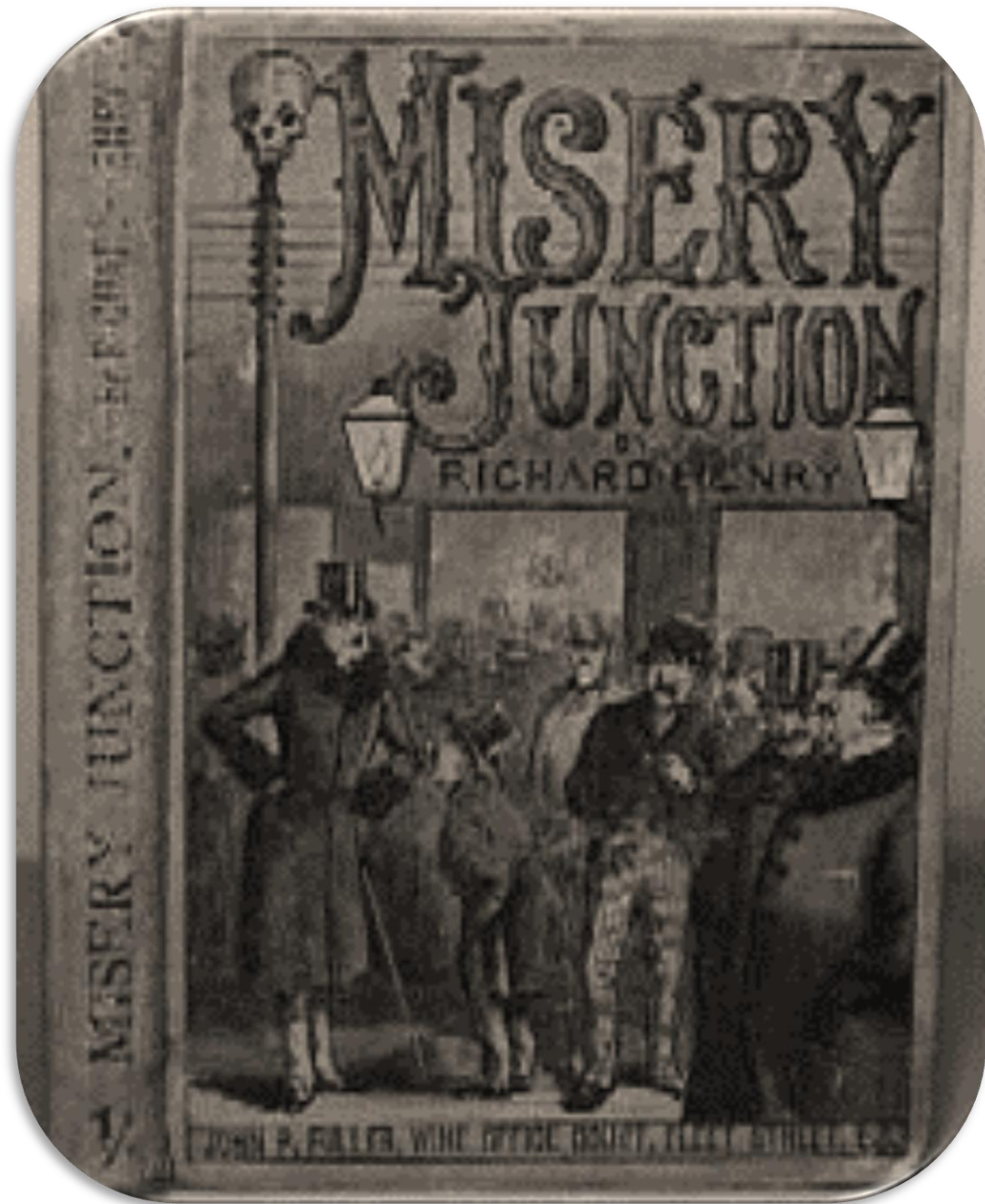
# 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA



BY JULES VERNE

WHATEVER LAY BEHIND THEIR POPULARITY, CRITICS  
BECAME CONCERNED ABOUT THE INFLUENCE THESE  
BOOKS HAD UPON THE POPULATION.



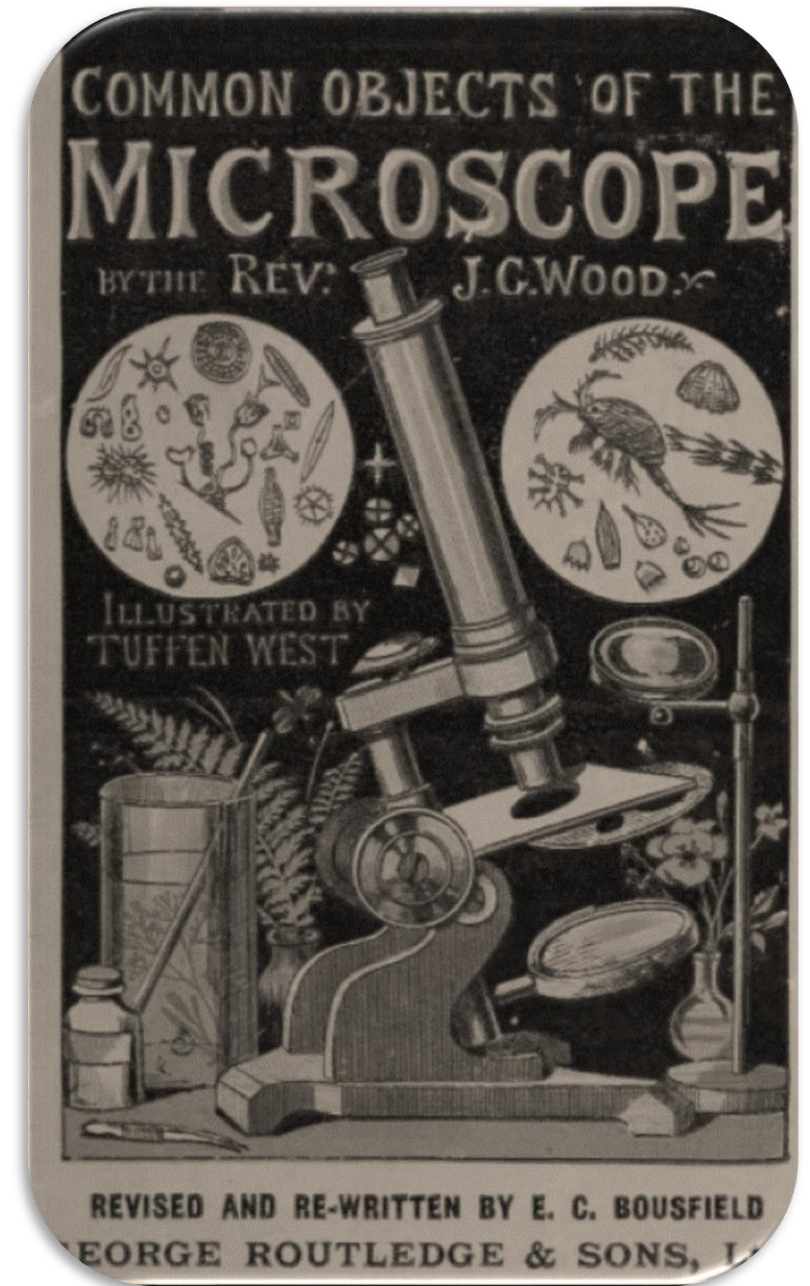


**W.H. SMITH PERSONALLY REVIEWED THE BOOKS  
AND THEIR ADVERTISEMENTS TO ENSURE THEY  
WERE NOT MORALLY CORRUPT.**

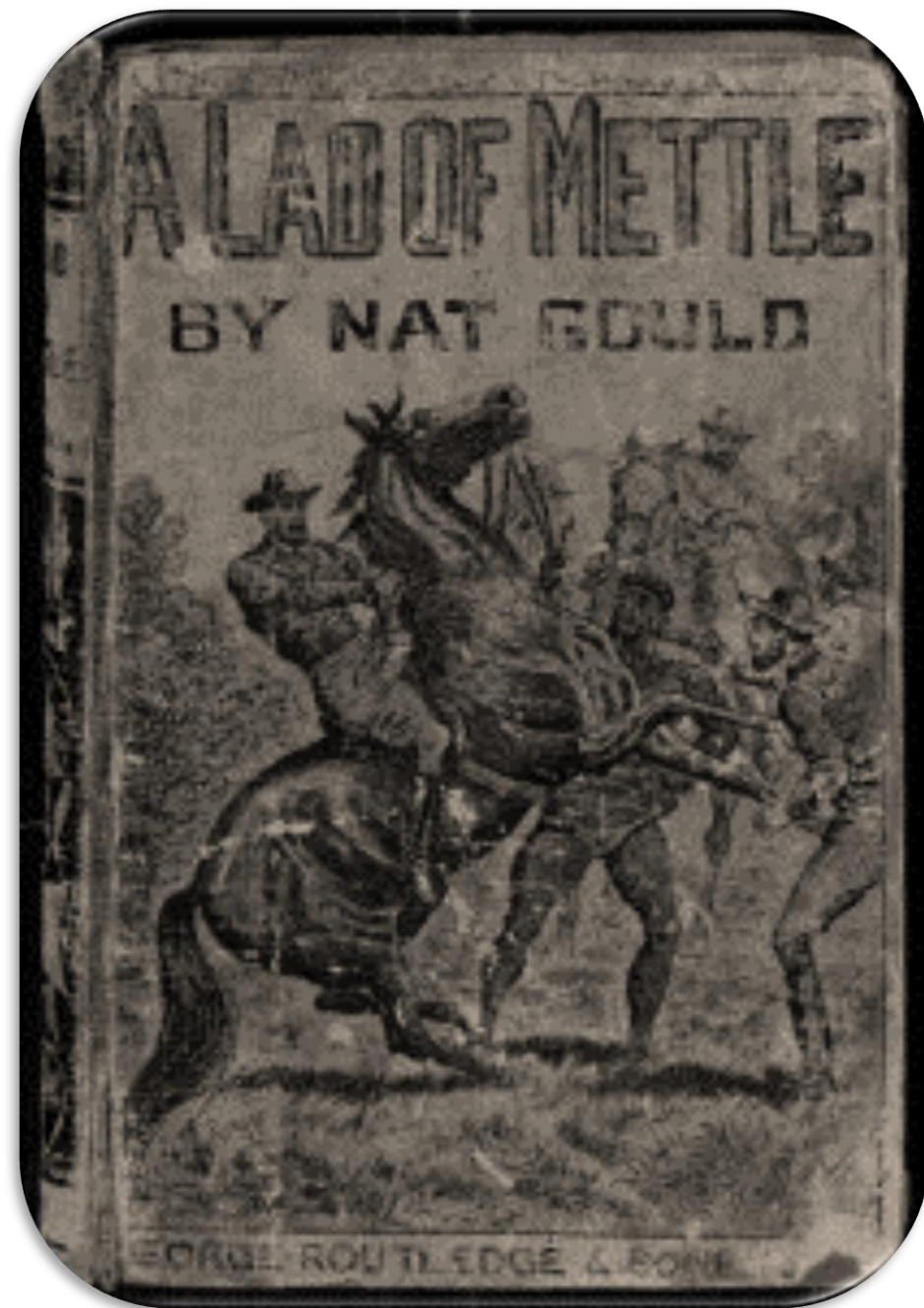




WHILE MAINLY FICTION BOOKS, OTHER TOPICS  
WERE ALSO OFFERED, INCLUDING SCIENCE,  
MEDICINE, AND SPORTS.

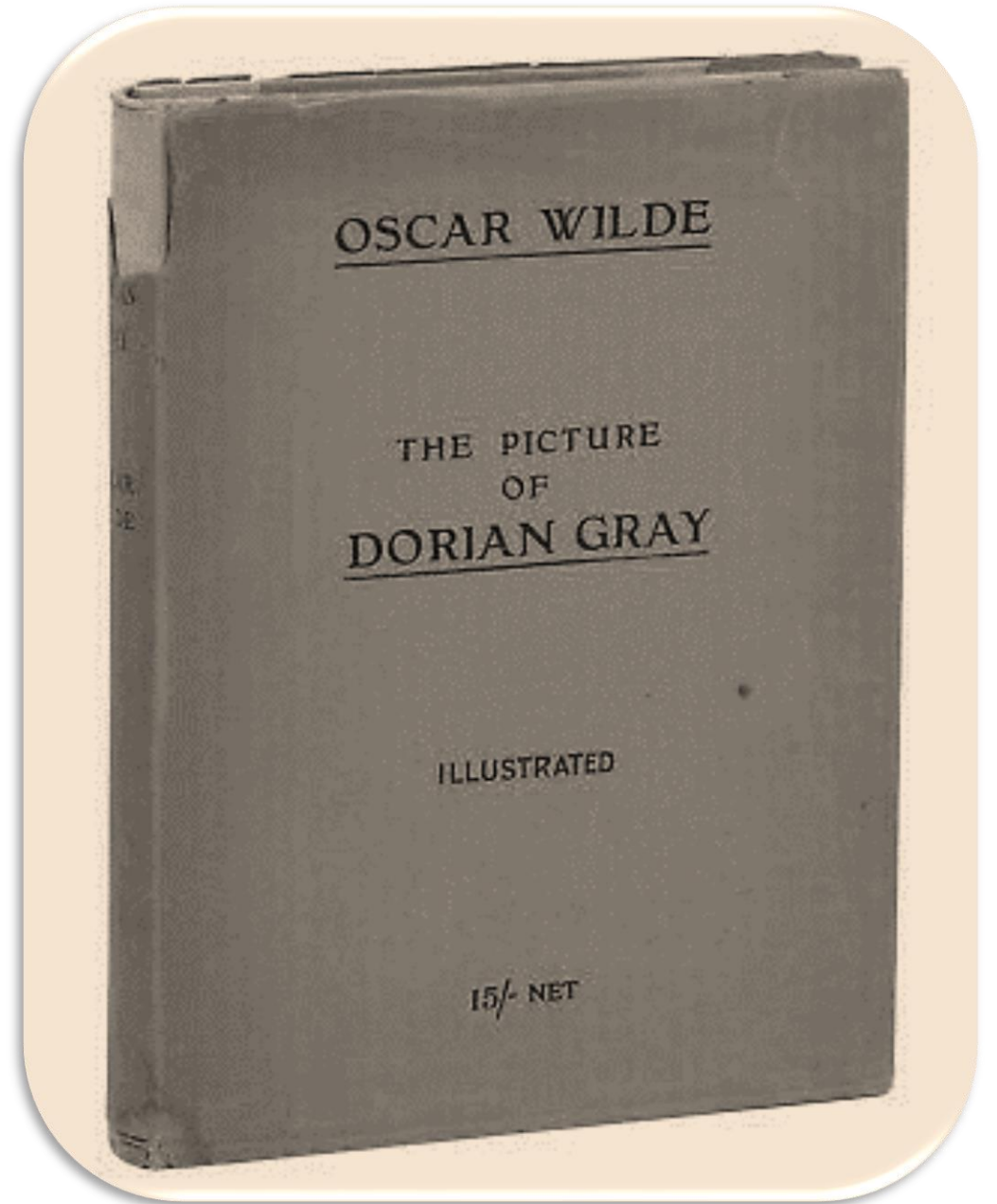


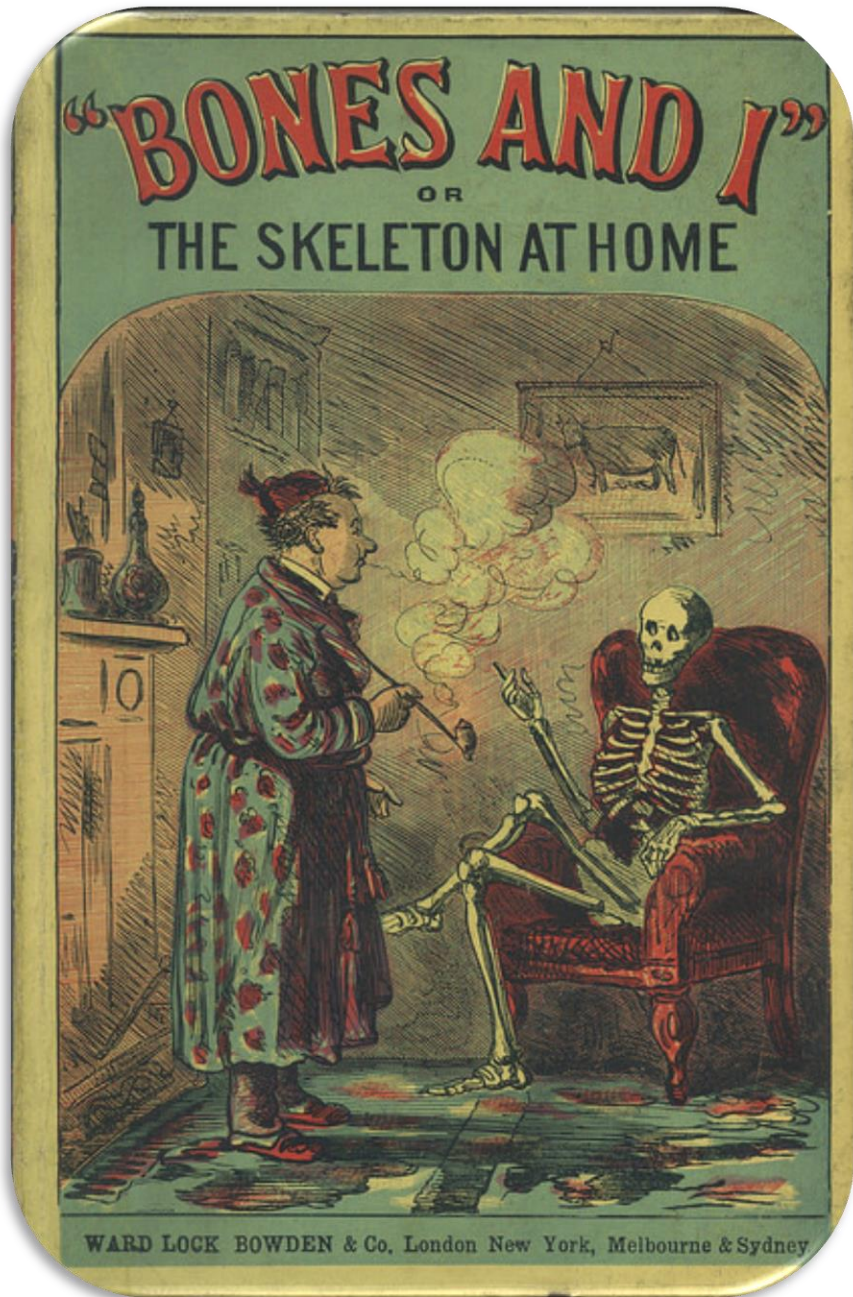
DESPITE SUCH EFFORTS, THE BOOKS HAD  
THEIR CRITICS.





OSCAR WILDE IN DORIAN GRAY HAD HIS DEPRAVED MAIN CHARACTER USE SOME OF THESE NOVELS AS A GUIDE FOR HIS LIFE ALTHOUGH IN THE END HE DECIDED SUCH CORRUPTION CAME FROM WITHIN AND NOT THROUGH THE READING MATERIAL.

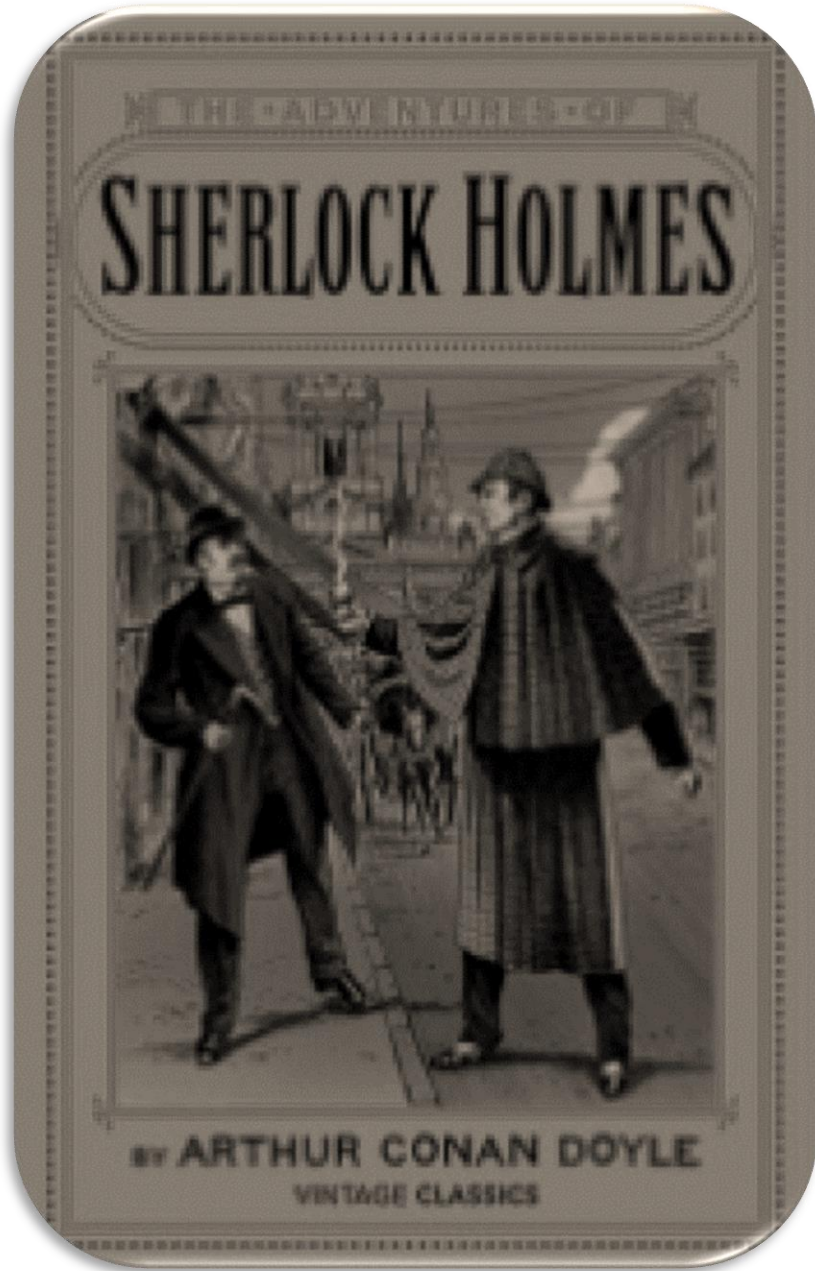




*GIVEN THE DISPOSABLE NATURE OF THESE BOOKS, NOT MANY EXIST TODAY, ALTHOUGH W.H. SMITH...*

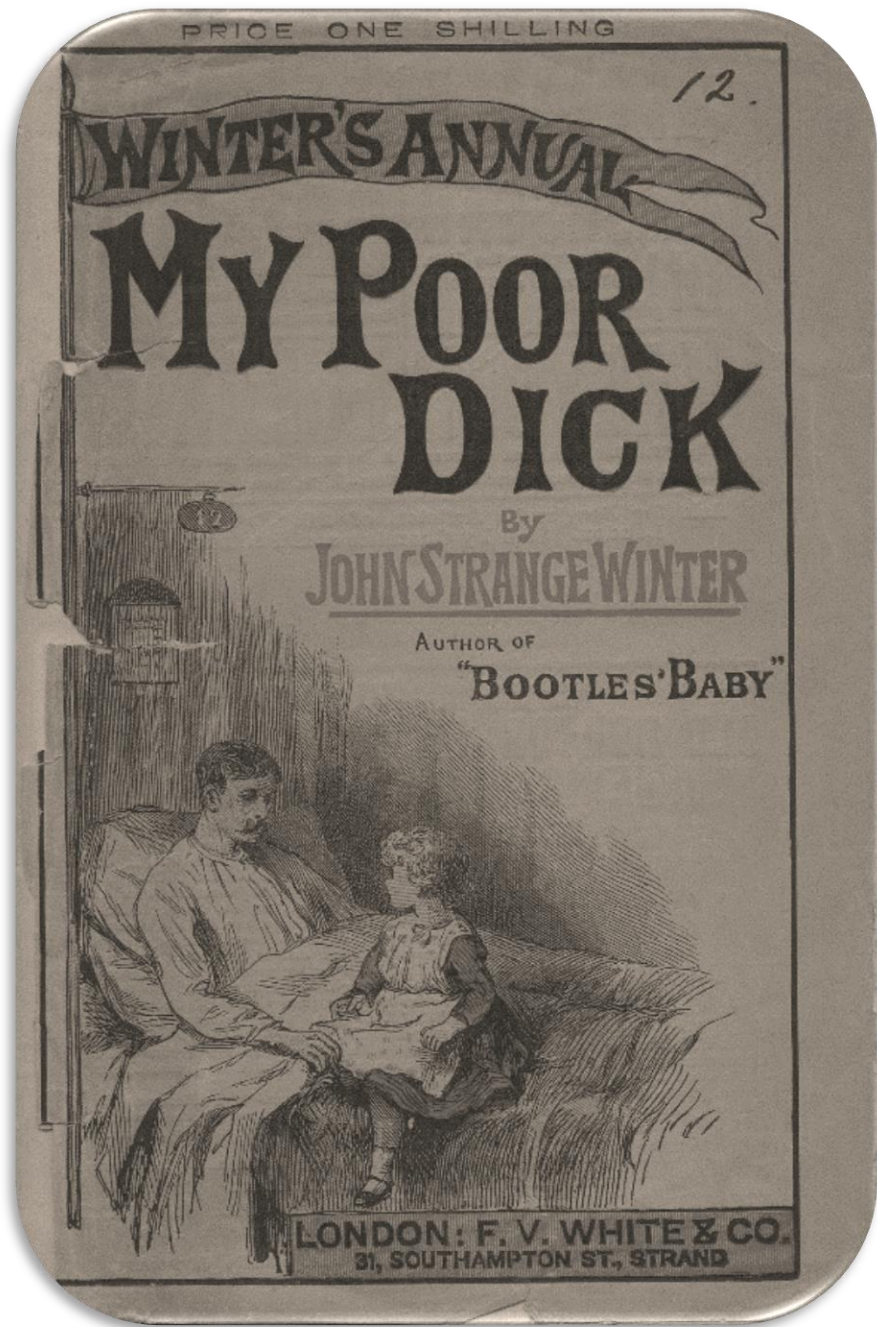






*...DID REPRODUCE SOME FOR THEIR 225TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2017, INCLUDING THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.*





OUTSIDE OF THE 'CLASSICS,' MANY WERE NEVER PUBLISHED EXCEPT IN THIS FORMAT AND IN AN EFFORT TO PRESERVE THEM FOR SOCIAL HISTORIANS AND OTHERS, SOME PROJECTS HAVE DIGITIZED THEM FOR FUTURE READERS.



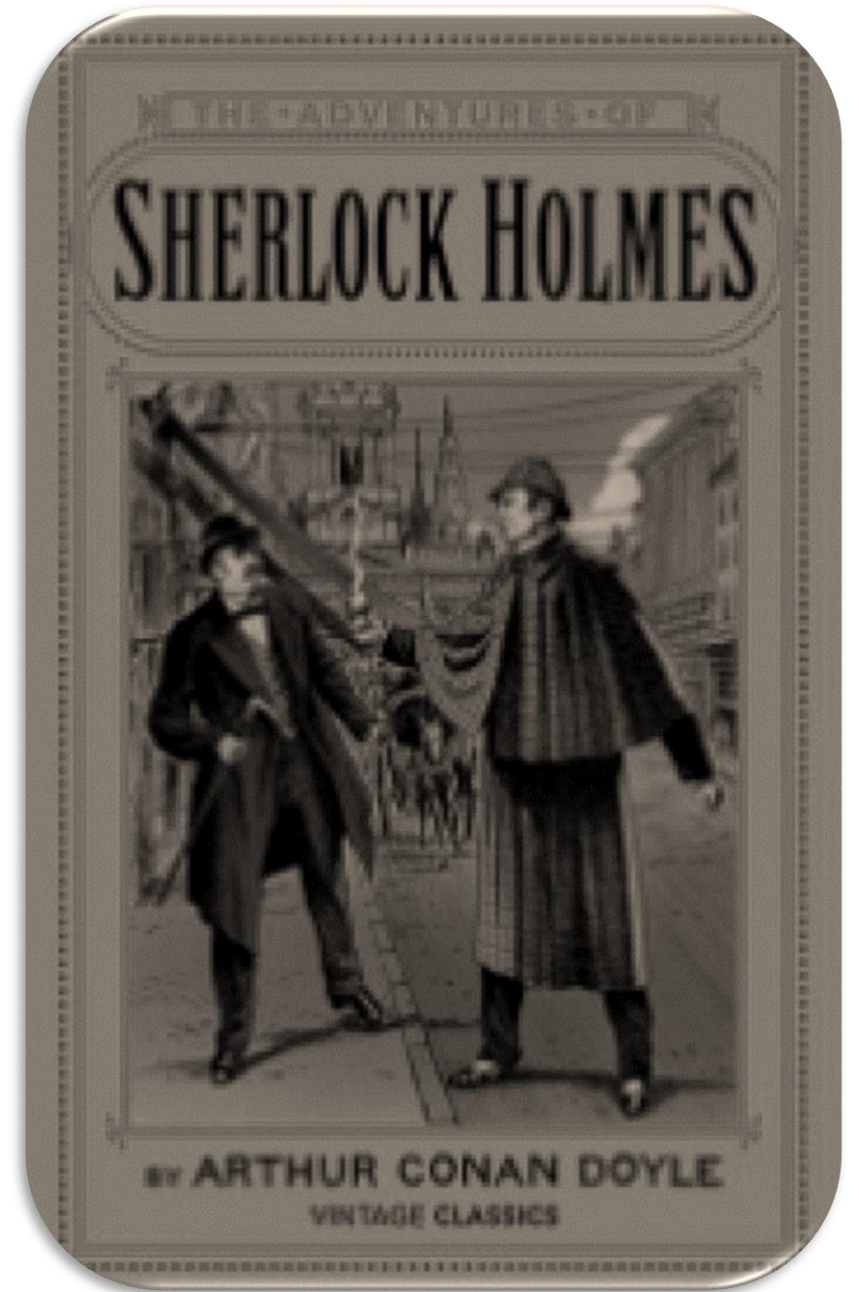




**EMORY UNIVERSITY HAS MORE THAN 1000  
AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD FROM THEIR WEBSITE.**



WHILE I FOUND THE PLOT IN MY OWN YELLOW  
BACK THIN, READERS OF YOUR YELLOW-BACK  
ADVENTURES WOULDN'T HAVE FOUND THE SAME.





SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 085 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 086, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT HANDKERCHIEFS DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.



## REFERENCES FOR THIS TOPIC:

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# Baker Street Elementary

"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

JOE FAY  
LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE  
RUSTY MASON  
&  
STEVE MASON

