

Baker Street Elementary

Presents
"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



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& AboutBritain.com

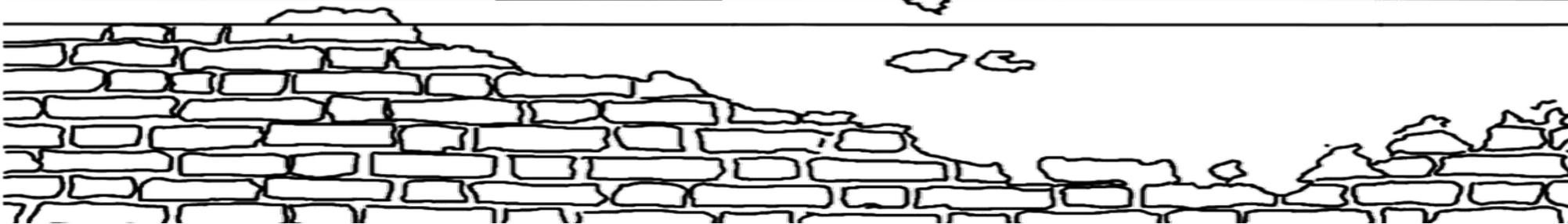
The Life and Times in Victorian London
AB003 -- Victorian Society -- February, 2022



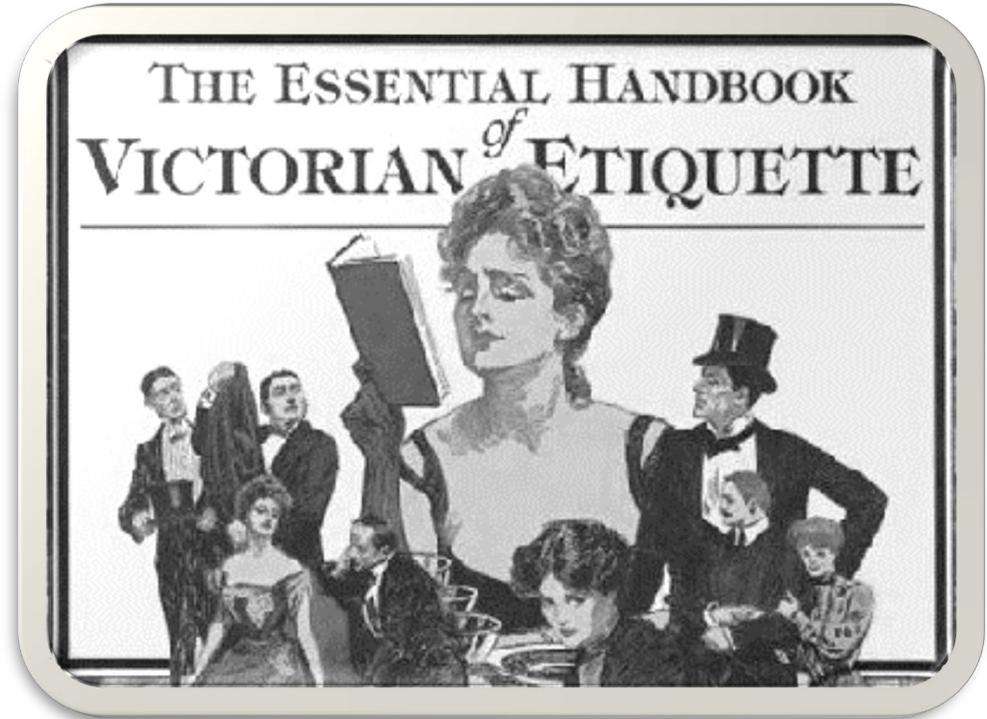
Welcome to topic # AB003... Today we will be looking at society during the Victorian period. Thanks so much to AboutBritain.com for use of their summary text for this lesson.



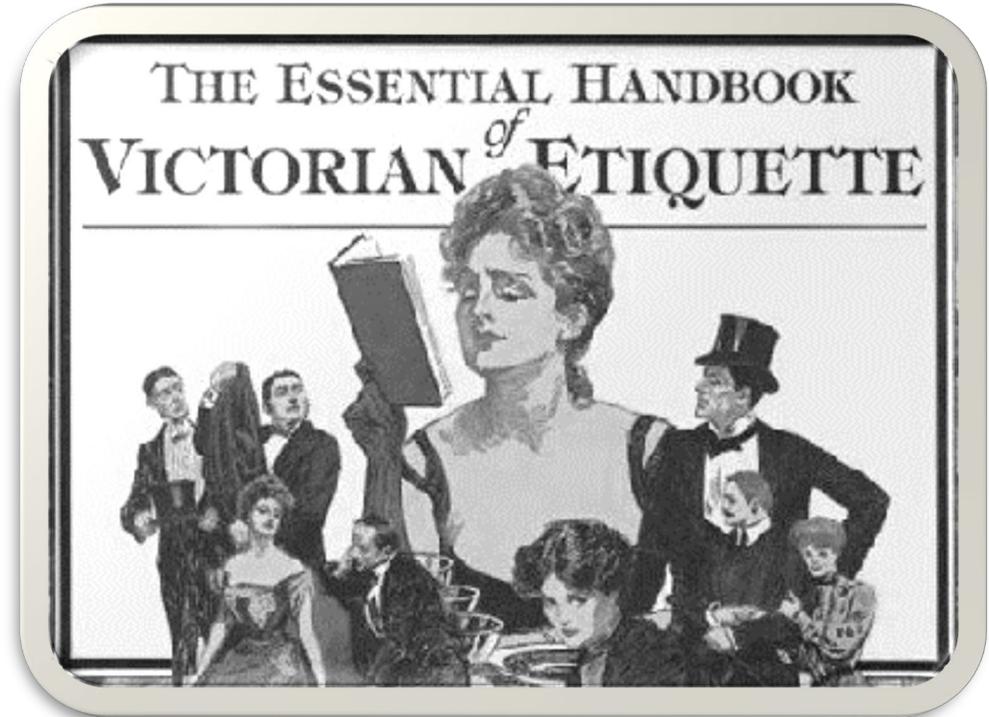
For Victorian society, "Etiquette" is the one word that aptly describes life during the reign of Queen Victoria.



*For those in the upper echelons
of society, rules such as the
proper forms of address, and
even what to wear...*



...(including which pieces of jewelry would be appropriate) were all considered very important.



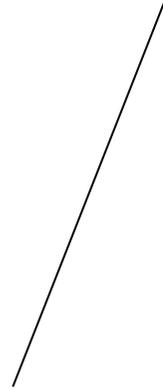


For the lower class, the poor, there wasn't time for etiquette.





For the Upper and Upper-Middle Class, the slightest burp (social ruin if it was heard) to how a gentleman spoke to a young lady...





...Victorian society was greatly concerned with every aspect of daily life.





From the moment the upper class left their beds, their days were governed by do's and don'ts. The horror of social ostracism was paramount.



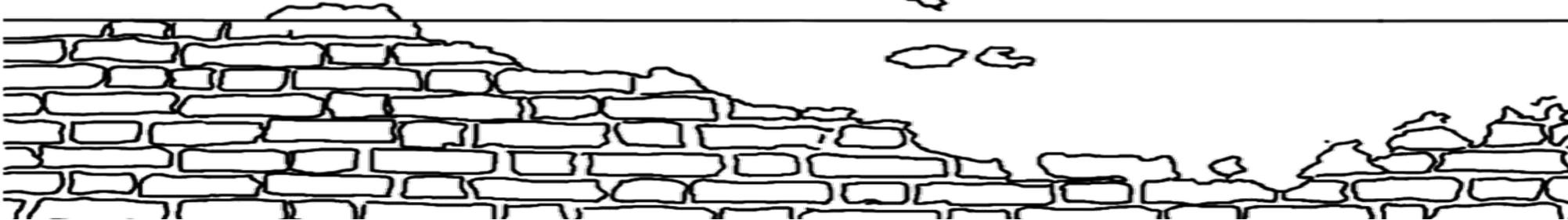
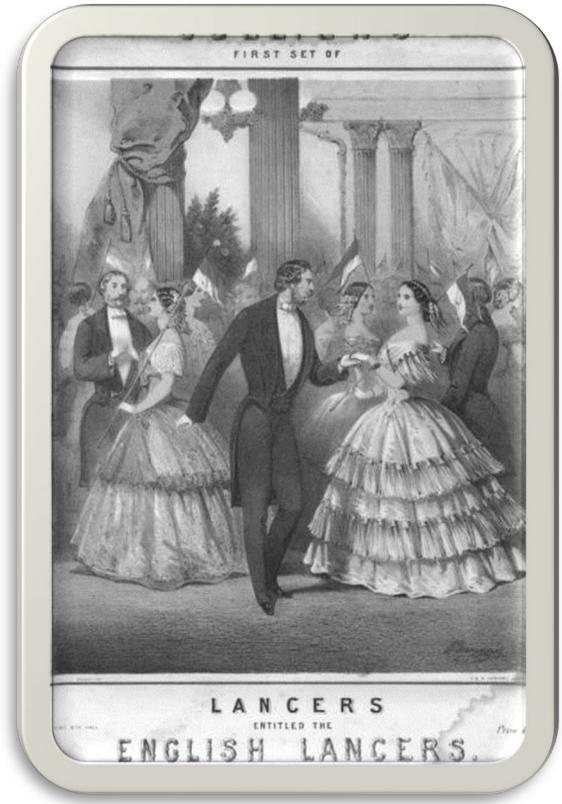
To be caught in the wrong fashion at the wrong time of day was as greatly to be feared as addressing a member of society by the wrong title.



It was important to know whom you could speak with - especially if you hadn't been properly introduced.



For a woman, being asked to dance by a complete stranger could pose an etiquette problem which might have repercussions for days.



Young ladies were constantly chaperoned. To be found alone with a gentleman who was other than family was tantamount to social death.



Her reputation would be ruined and her gentleman companion would find himself the object of gossip, and most usually derision.





The established career for society women was marriage - full stop. They were expected to represent their husbands with grace and provide absolutely no scandal.



*Charity work would be accepted,
but only if it was very gentle...
sewing for the poor, or putting
together food baskets.*





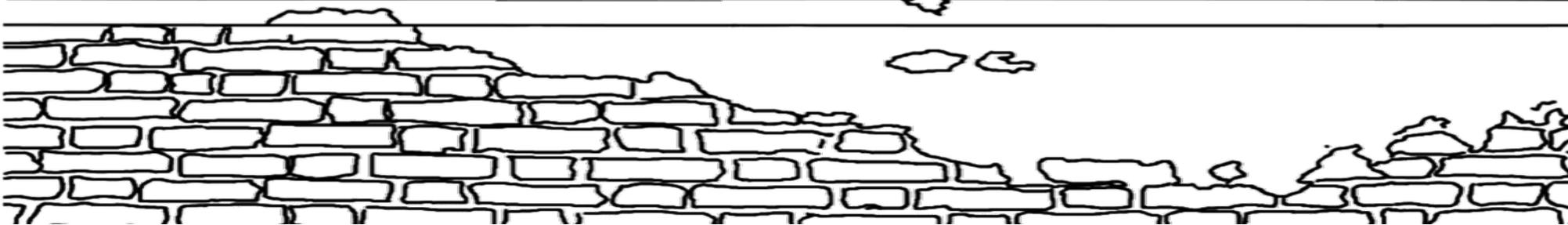
*Gentlemen had to keep track
of when it was proper to
either smoke or have a glass
of sherry in front of ladies.*



When to bow and to whom to tip your hat could cause gossip if the wrong decision was made.



Members of Victorian society kept busy with parties, dances, visits, dressmakers, and tailors.



Keeping track of what other people in your social class were doing was also a full-time occupation.



*For people in the middle of society,
being a servant in one of the grand
Victorian houses was a position which
would guarantee shelter and food.*



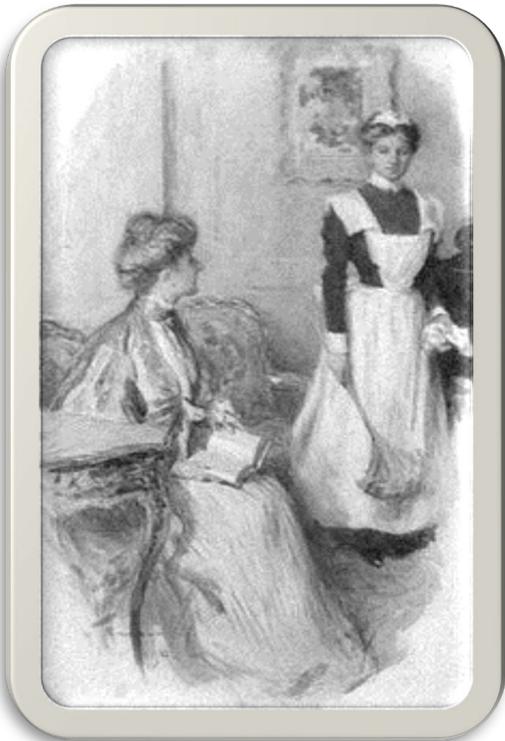
*However, there
was etiquette to
be learned.*





The upper class was never to be addressed unless it was absolutely necessary. If that was the case, as few words as possible were to be uttered.





*Using the proper title was
of the utmost importance.
"Ma'am" or "Sir" was
always appropriate.*





If "Ma'am" was seen, it was necessary that you 'disappear', turning to face the wall and avoiding eye contact.



*Life was easier,
though, amidst your
fellow servants.*



Although private fraternization was frowned upon, it wasn't against the rules for those 'below stairs' to enjoy singing, dancing, and other social activities together.



Quite often the 'upper class' of the servant world, the butler and housekeeper, would put aside their lofty roles in the household and join their fellow servants in gaiety.

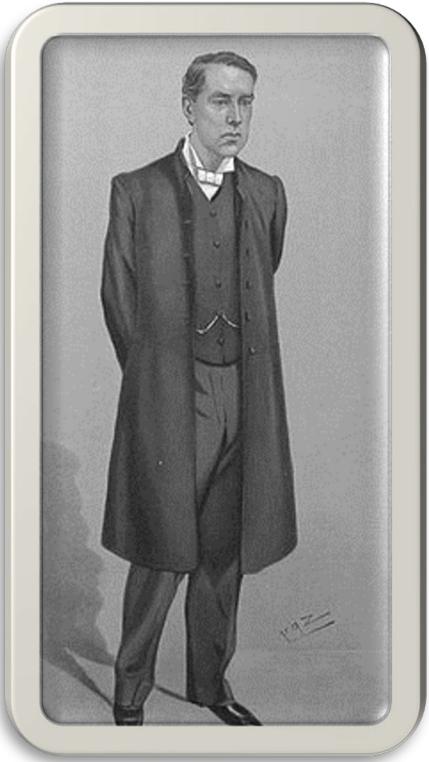


But come the morning, they would reign supreme once again. Having a profession was another way of being a member of the middle class of Victorian society.



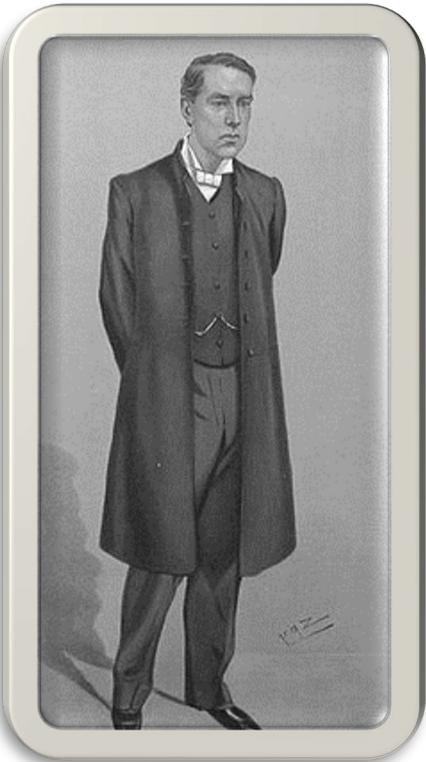
Shopkeepers, doctors, nurses, a schoolmaster, or parish priest were all notable professions.





*Often times, the only
difference between being a
member of the upper-middle
and the middle class...*





*...was the amount of
wealth you had gathered,
and how it was flaunted.*



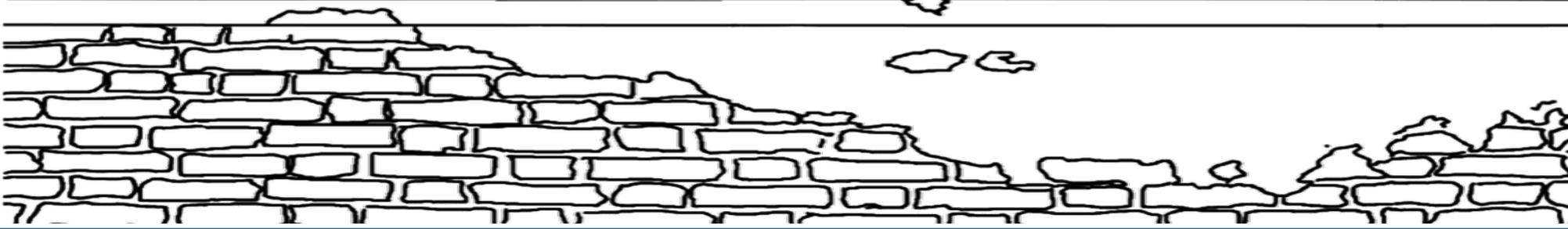
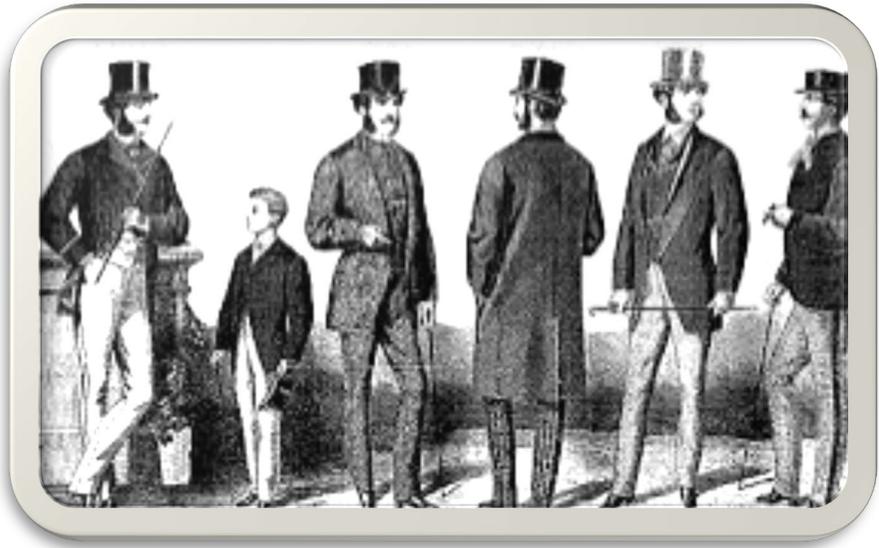
Another indicator was the number of servants you employed. Having more than one servant was a sure sign that you had money.



*Sometimes, the
'uppers' and the
'middlers' would mingle.*



*With a successful business deal,
both parties could increase their
wealth and for the 'middler',
their station in life.*



*However, the Lower Class
Was not recognized by
Victorian society.*



*'The Poor' were invisible.
Those members of England who
worked as chimney sweeps,
ratcatchers...*



...or spent their days in factories had no place in the echelon of the upper class, although their services would be needed from time to time.





The prevailing attitude was that the poor deserved the way they lived. If good moral choices had been made, the poor wouldn't be living the way they did.

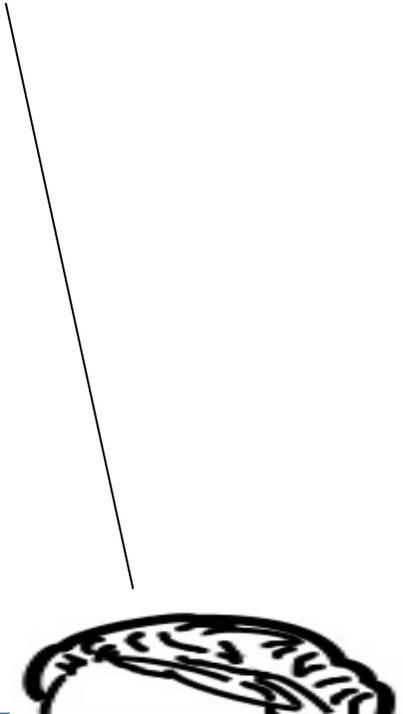




The best way for society to deal with the poor was to ignore them. They were 'burdens on the public'.



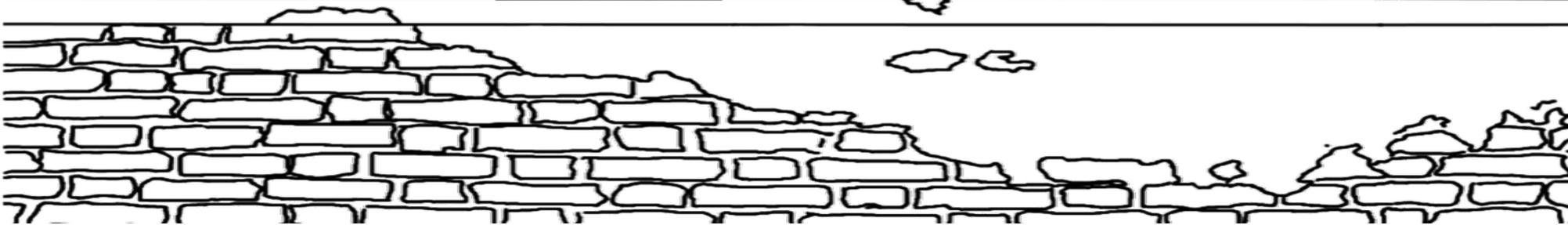
There were people who cared, however. Unfortunately, in trying to help the lower class, conditions usually did not improve.



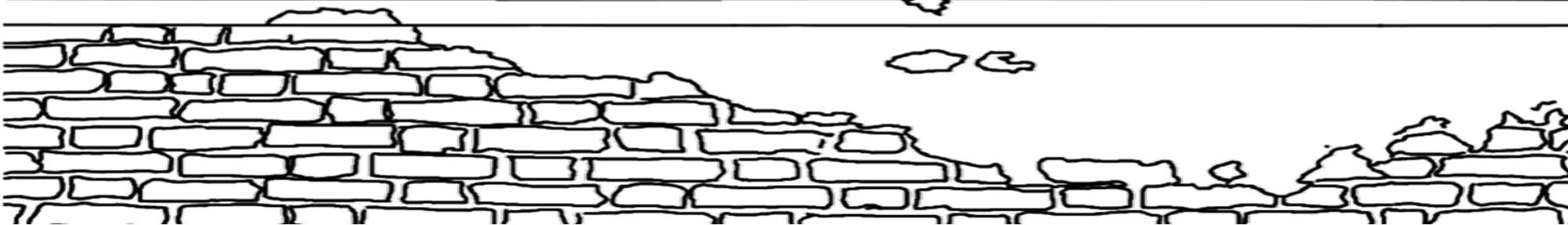
*Workhouses were developed,
but the living was horrendous
and it was almost better to
be back on the street.*



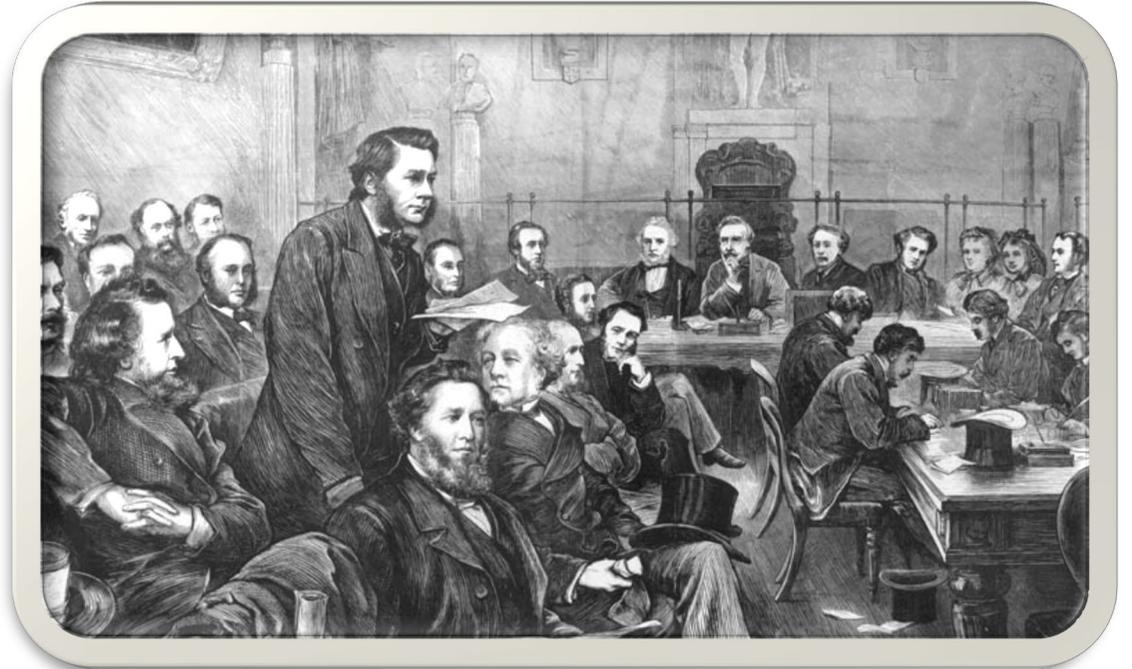
Being just too busy trying to survive, etiquette played little part in the poor's daily existence. But that's not to say that pride wasn't available.



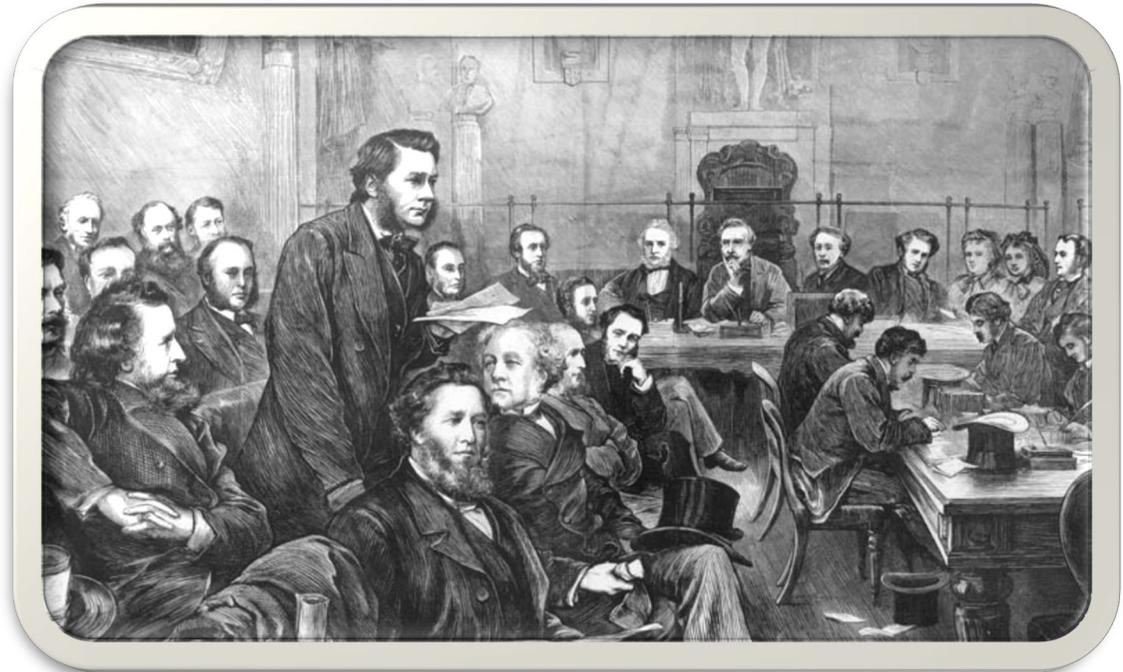
There was a 'social stigma' to applying for aid, and some families preferred to keep to themselves and figure out their own methods of survival.



Although Poor Laws were put into place, it wasn't until after the Victorian age ended that 'the lower class' was able...



*...through education,
technology, and reform, to
raise itself, in some cases
literally, out of the gutter.*



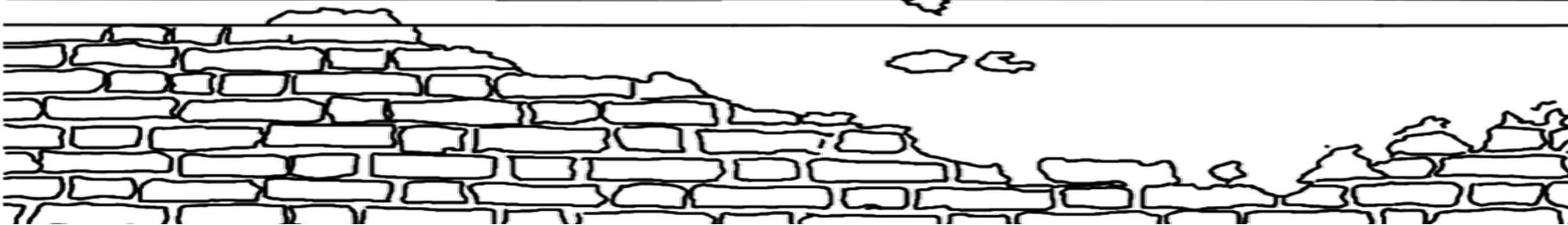


Victorian society could be quite pleasant, but only depending on your financial status.



*Again, thanks to AboutBritain.com
for their help... So we have
completed topic # AB003 in our
series...*

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





Original Source Material for this topic:

1) <https://www.aboutbritain.com/articles/victorian-society.asp>

