

Baker Street Elementary
& The Victorian Web

Presents
"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



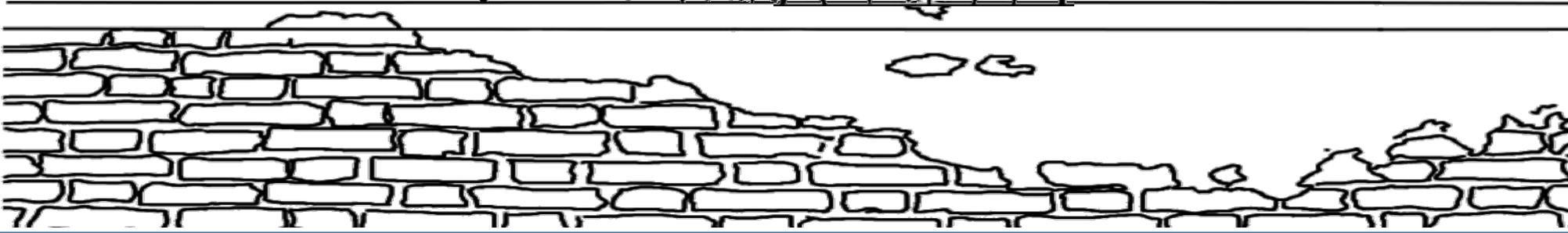
*Baker Street Elementary
& The Victorian Web*

*The Life and Times in Victorian London
51 - Wages, the Cost of Living, Victorian Money -- 07/02/2017*



Welcome to topic number 51... Holmes, today we will be looking at wages and the cost of living during our times through a series of questions and answers...

	Men	Women
Cotton workers	£1.47	93p
Shoe makers	£1.43	65p
Shipbuilders	£1.79	73p
Bakers	£1.45	63p
Printers	£1.84	61p
Leather tanners	£1.45	65p
Iron and Steel Workers	£1.95	-
Building workers	£1.65	-



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*This should be interesting...
OK, let's get started...*





*First question: what does
16/- signify?*

*It is listed as the weekly
wage of a Metropolitan
Police officer.*



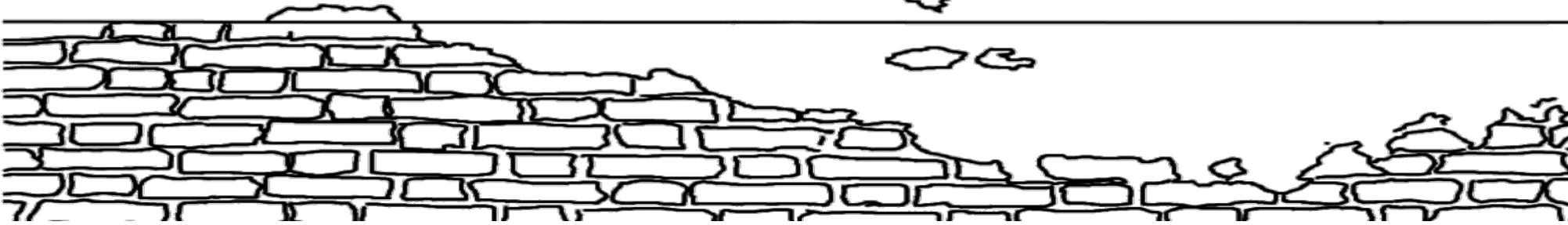


16/ = 16 shillings, which equals 4/5 of a pound sterling, and a pound (£) is worth about \$11.00 for much of our lives.





Before the recent introduction of decimal currency in the 21st century, our money is written as: pounds/shilling/pence, £/s/d.





*Prices less than one pound
generally appear as
shilling/pence, e.g., 10/6.*



Two things in particular about our money drive foreigners crazy, the first being that twelve pence, or pennies, make up a shilling, but twenty shillings make up a pound.

Adding up the cost of several items became quite a chore, as one can imagine,



A second thing involves a peculiar, obviously classed-based pricing scheme in which prices are quoted in guineas, the guinea being a nonexistent denomination worth 21 shillings (or a shilling more than a pound).

Items intended for the wealthier classes were listed in guineas.



Charlecote Servants
RATES OF PAY PER ANNUM
1851

John Foster	Butler	£70
Ellen Hatchett Piercy	Governess	£80
Mary Horton	Cook	£42
William Edwards	Valet	£50
Jane Hughes	Housekeeper	£35
William Freeman	Groom	£20
William Brown	Coachman	£16
Mary Eboral	Laundress	£14
Ann Nichols	Kitchen Maid	£13

What is an example of the wages someone would earn during our times?

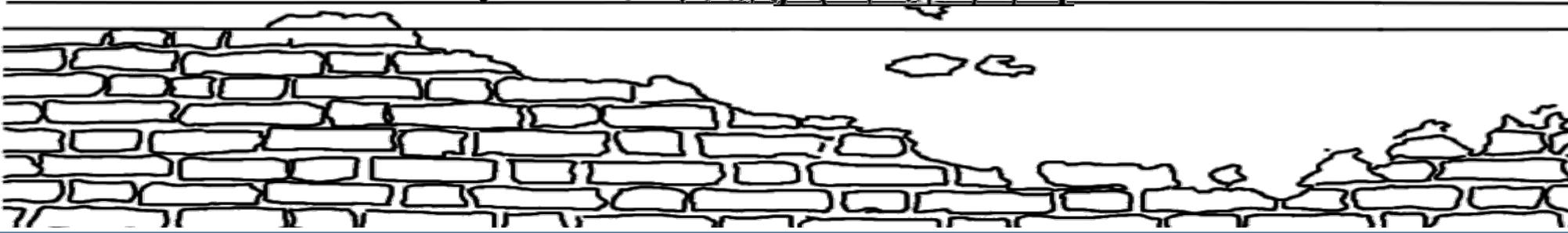




*Some poor vicars
at mid-century
earn as little as
£40-50/year.*



*What will the pound be worth
in 21st century dollars?*



*As a rough guess,
I'd say that for
most of our era, a
pound now might
buy \$100 in the
21st century.*



But, answering such questions becomes complicated, the first is that the Victorian period will last a good long time...



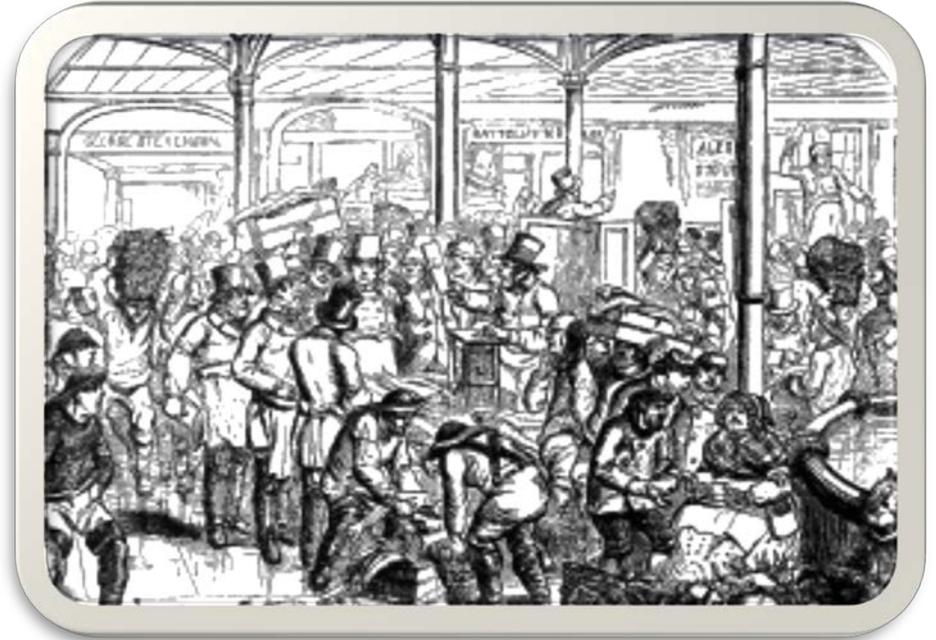
During this period, the UK will go from being a largely rural, lightly industrialized country to a heavily industrialized urban nation.



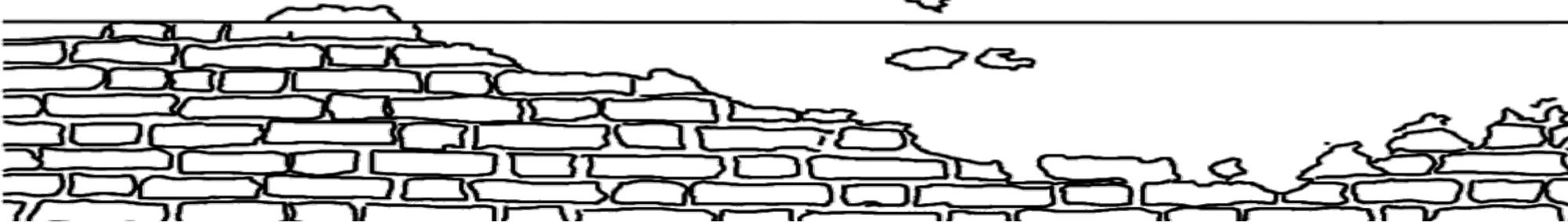
*Therefore, one often
has to phrase a
question in the following
manner: "What was the
cost of living in 1850?"*



A second factor is specific goods and services cost far less or far more than they do in the 21st century, so any comparison inevitably misleads.

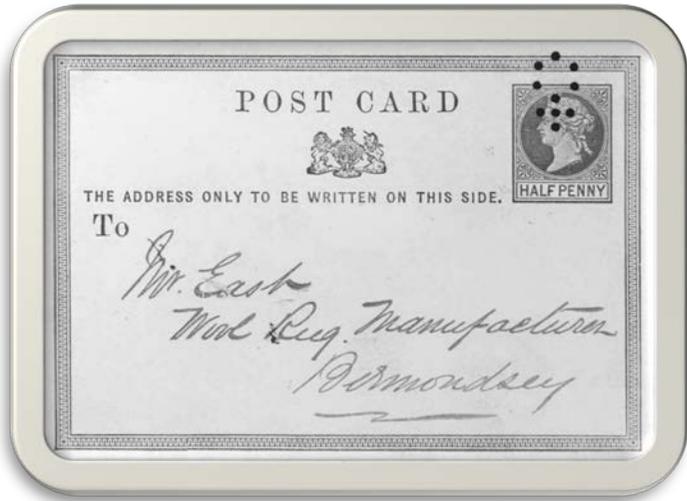


For example, during our time and into the early 20th century, the post office delivers two or three times daily...

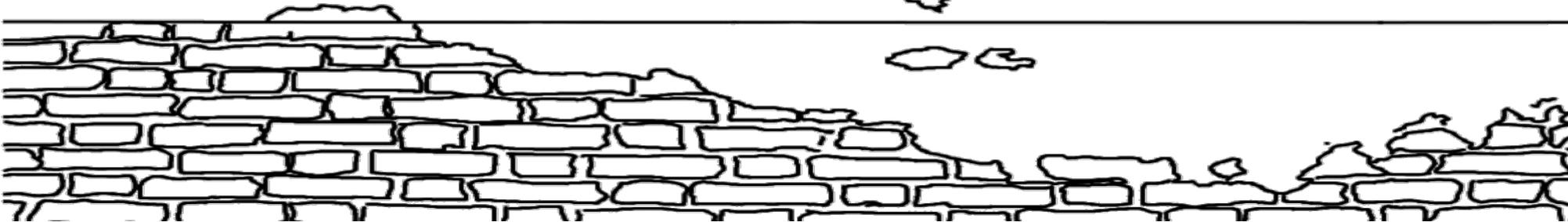


...the system is so efficient Londoners arrange social engagements, sending queries and receiving answers within a few hours.

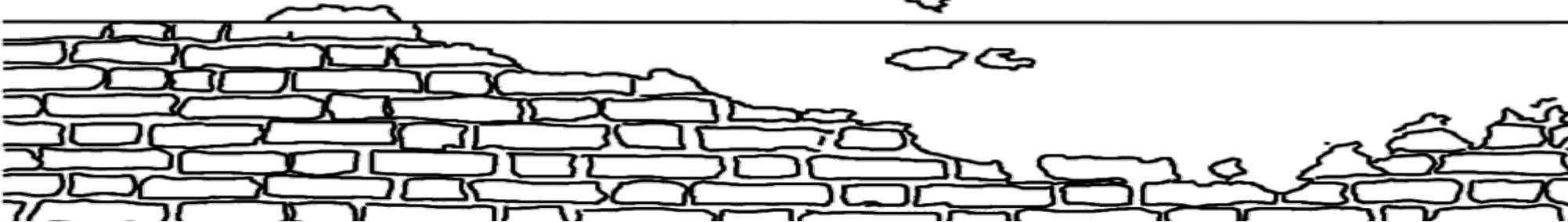


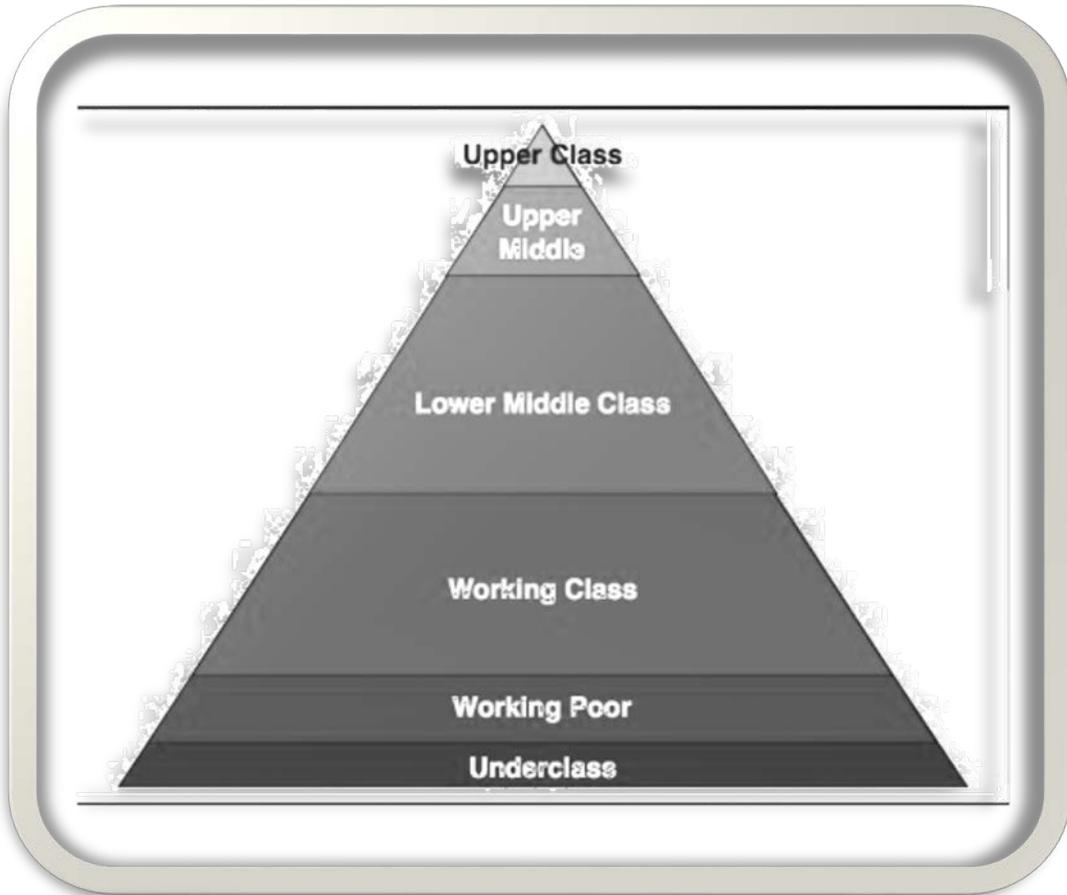


*A penny postcard, in other words,
brings one something very like a
personal courier service.*



Does one then say that a British penny in 1879 is equivalent to \$10 or \$15 in 2017, the cost of modern commercial delivery services?





A third complicating factor is that unlike the relative closeness of 21st century economic and social classes, which form a spectrum...



...large gaps separate those in Victorian England so that moving from one class (or really set of classes) to another requires a kind of quantum leap.



THE VICTORIAN ERA

values and social class system



Doubling a worker's wages will not, as it would in future years, markedly improve his or her lifestyle...

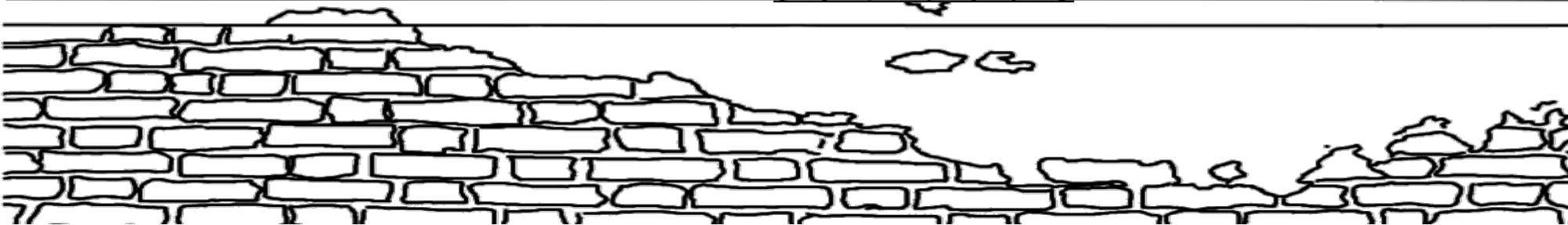




...particularly in regard to sanitation and healthiness, because such enormous gaps exist between the costs of housing for the working and middle classes...

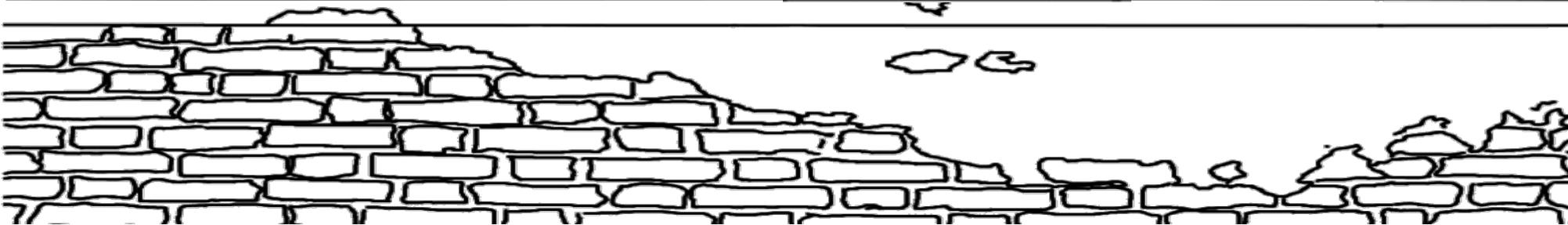


...that one would have had to raise the wages enormously to affect the kind of available housing.



*So we have completed
topic 51 in our series...*

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





The Victorian Web

literature, history, & culture in
the age of Victoria



Original Source Material for for this topic:

- George P. Landow, Professor of English and Art History, Brown University,
<http://www.victorianweb.org/economics/wages.html>



Baker Street Elementary

"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

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