# Baker Street *Elementary*

***Presents***

**"The Life and Times in Victorian London"**

Baker Street *Elementary*
& The Victorian Web

## *The Life and Times in Victorian London*
## *# 062 – Victorian Society -- 09/02/2018*

***Welcome to topic number 62… Victorian Society… Thanks so much to AboutBritain.com for use of their summary text for this lesson…***

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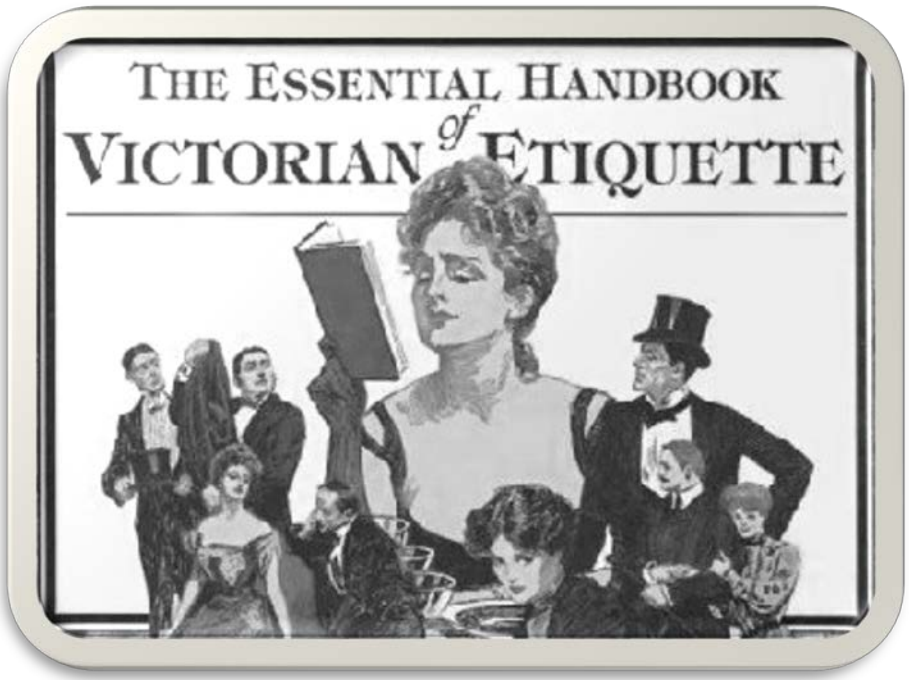
"Etiquette" is the one word that aptly describes life during the reign of Queen Victoria.

***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) are all considered very important.***



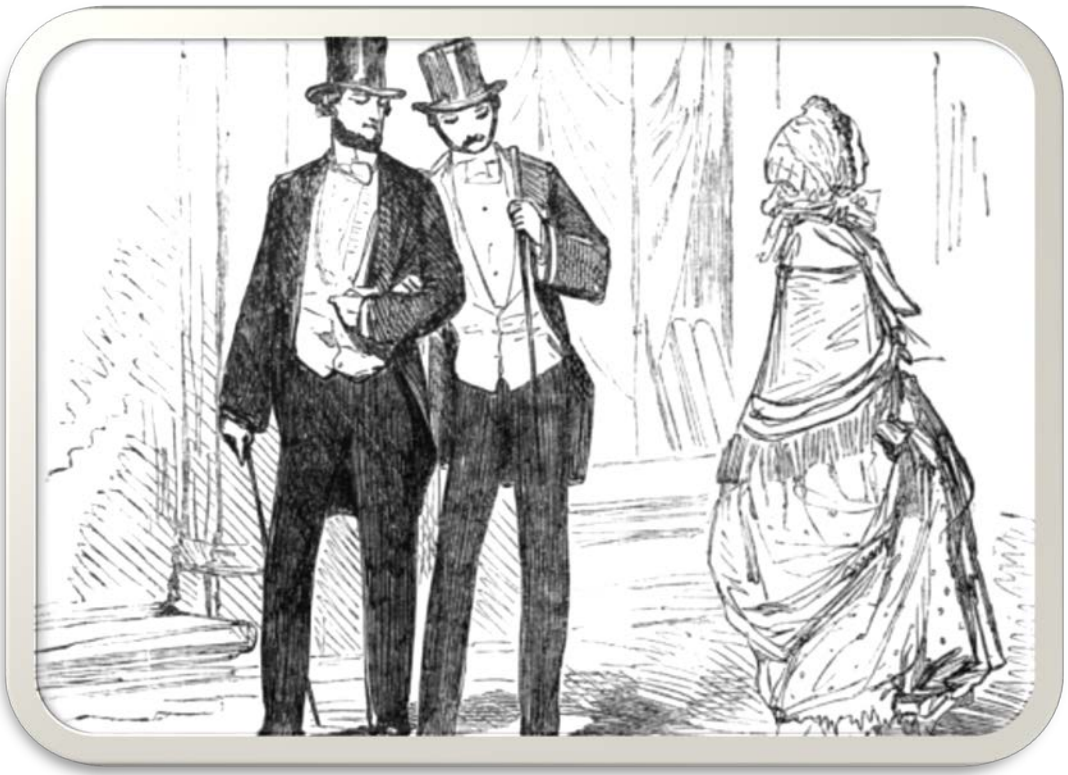
*For the lower class, the poor, there isn't time for etiquette.*

*From the slightest burp (social ruin if it was heard) to how a gentleman speaks to a young lady, Victorian society is greatly concerned with every aspect of daily life.*

*From the moment the upper class leave their beds, their days are governed by do's and don't's.*

*The horror of social ostracism is paramount.*

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

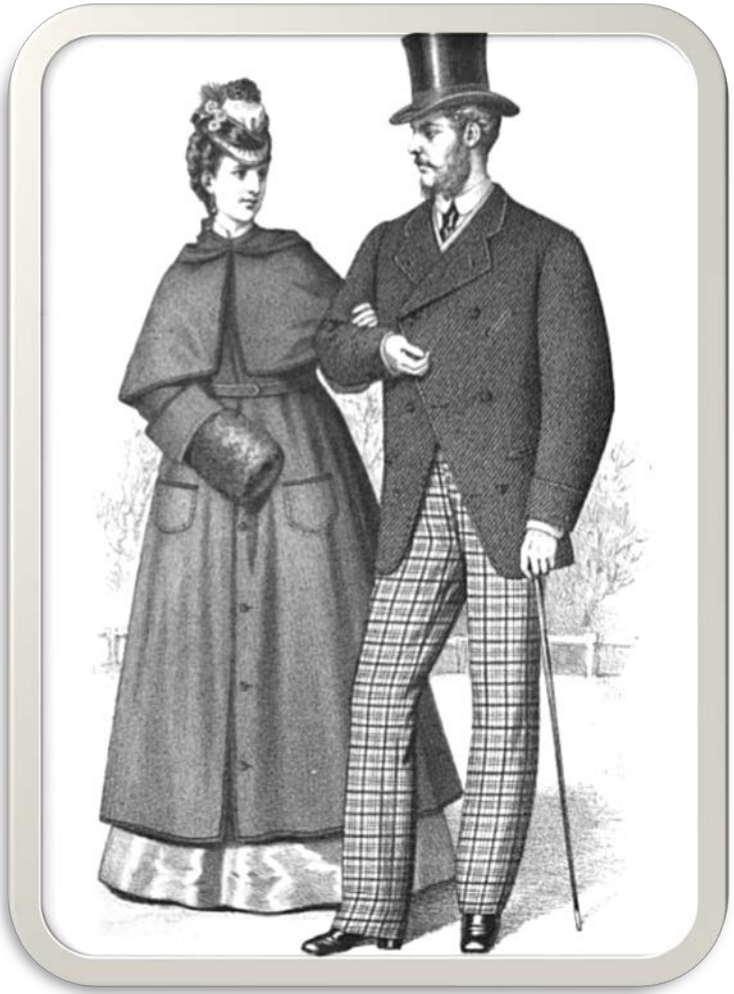


*It is important to know whom you could speak with - especially if you haven't been properly introduced.*

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

*Young ladies are constantly chaperoned.*

*To be found alone with a gentleman who was other than family is tantamount to social death.*



*Her reputation is ruined and her gentleman companion finds himself the object of gossip, and most usually derision.*

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

*Charity work is accepted, but only if it is very gentile... sewing for the poor, or putting together food baskets.*

*When to bow and to whom to tip your hat can cause gossip if the wrong decision is made.*

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

*Keeping track of what other people in your social class are doing is also a full-time occupation.*

*Being a servant in one of the grand Victorian houses is a position which guarantees shelter and food.*

*However, there is etiquette to be learned.*

*The upper class is never to be addressed unless it is absolutely necessary.*

*If that is the case, as few words as possible are to be uttered.*

*Using the proper title is of the utmost importance.*

*"Ma'am" or "Sir" is always appropriate.*

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

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

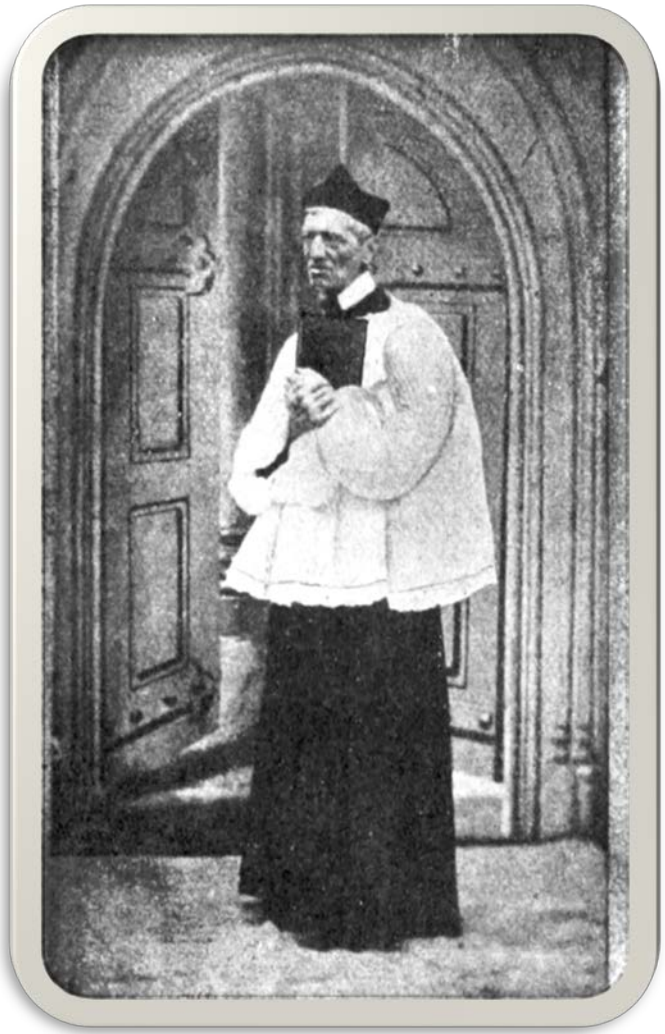
*Although private fraternization is frowned upon, it isn't against the rules for those 'below stairs' to enjoy singing, dancing, and other social activities together.*

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

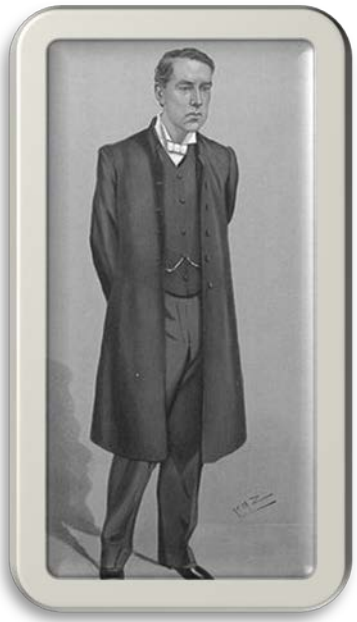
***But come the morning, they reign supreme once again.***

*Having a profession is another way of being a member of the middle class of Victorian society.*

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



*Often times, the only difference between being a member of the upper-middle and the middle class is the amount of wealth you gather, and how it is flaunted.*



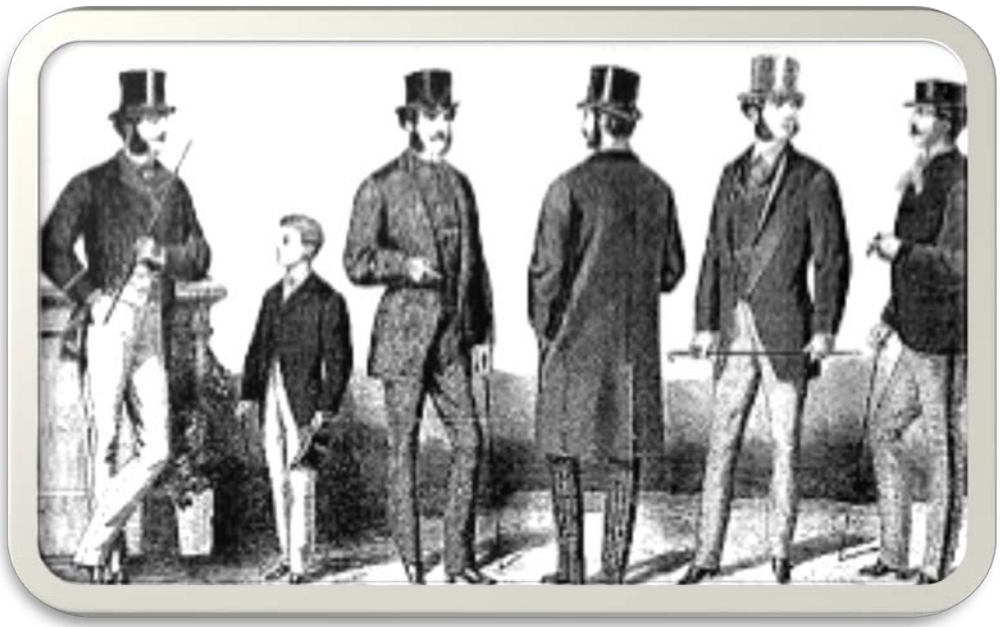
*Another indicator is the number of servants you employed.*

*Having more than one servant is a sure sign that you have money.*

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

*If the proper introductions can be managed, it is possible for a tradesman to receive backing from a prominent 'upper' member.*

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



*Victorian society do not recognize that there is a lower class.*

*'The Poor' are invisible.*

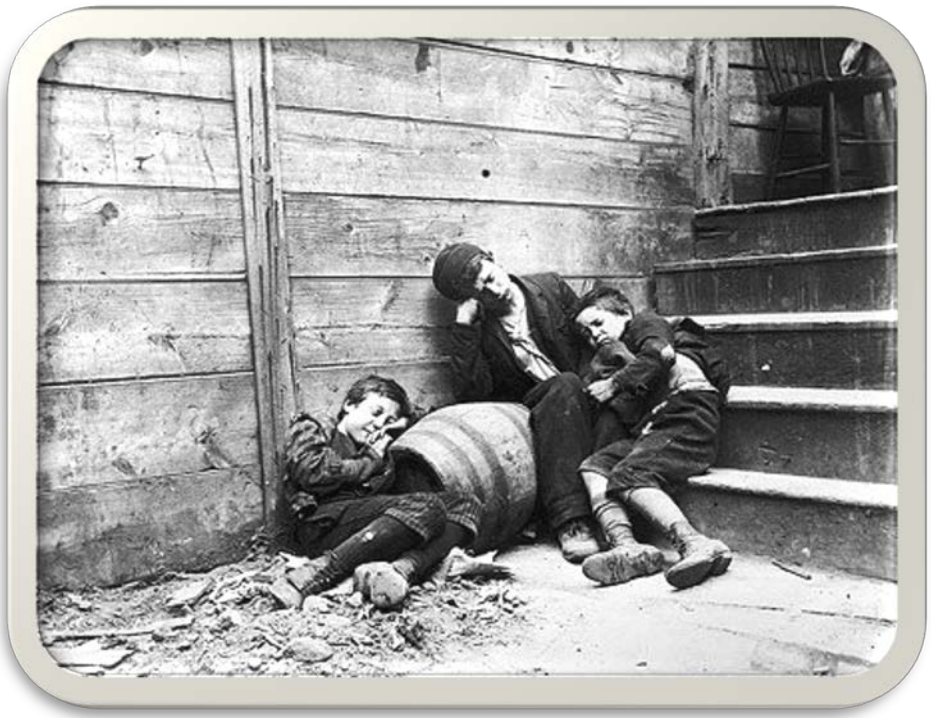
*Those members of England who work as chimney sweeps, rat-catchers, or spend their days in factories have no place in the echelon of the upper class, although their services are needed from time to time.*

*The prevailing attitude is that the poor deserve the way they live.*

*If good moral choices have been made, the poor wouldn't be living the way they do.*

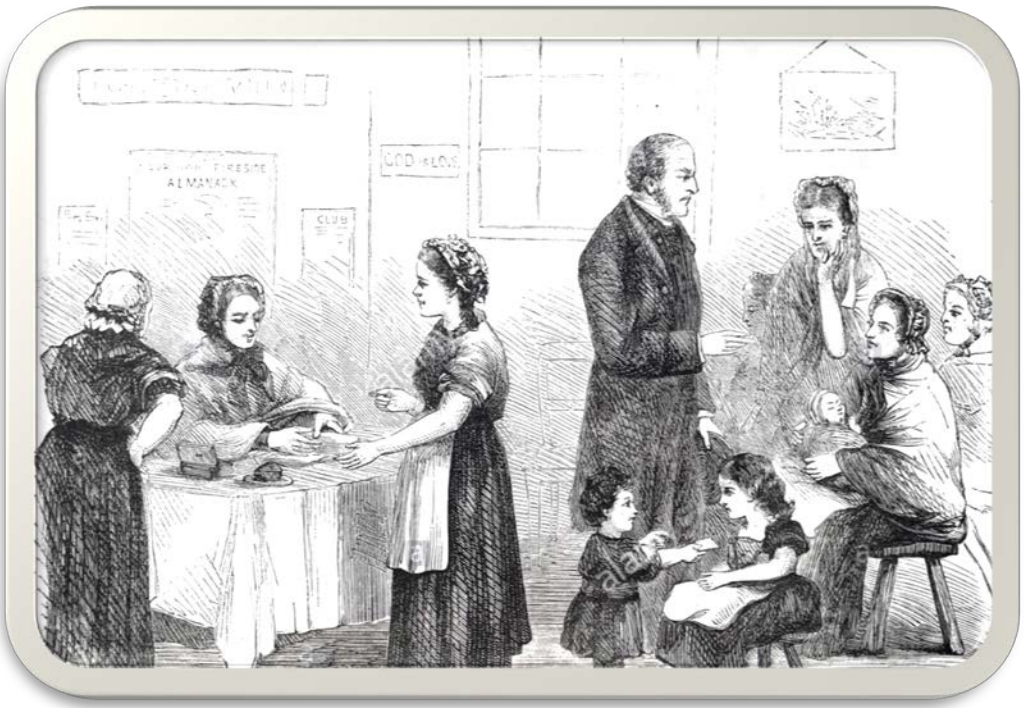
*The best way for society to deal with the poor is to ignore them.*

*They are 'burdens on the public'.*



*There are people who care, however.*

*Unfortunately, in trying to help the lower class, conditions usually do not improve.*



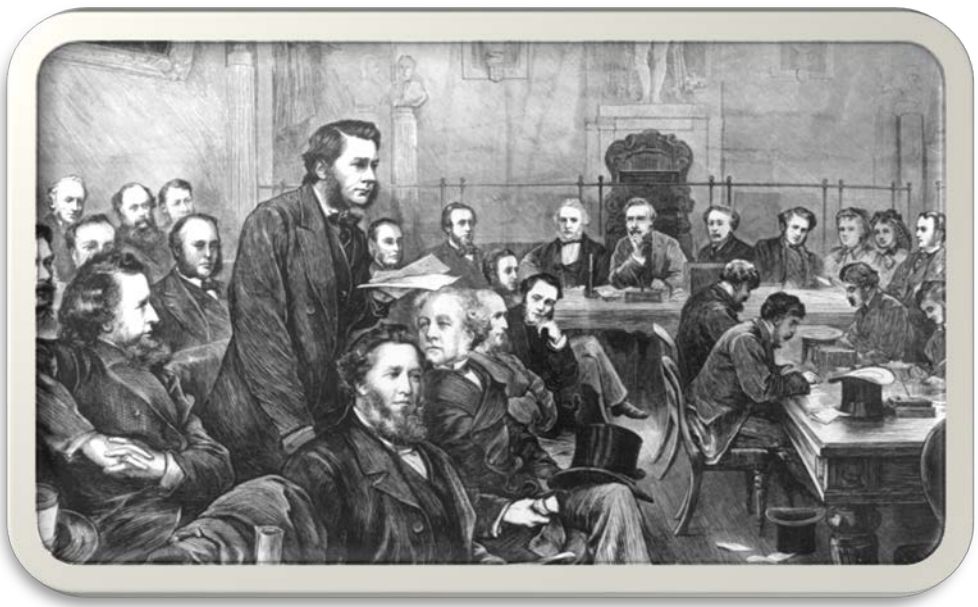
*Workhouses exist, but the living is horrendous and it is almost better to be back on the street.*

*Being just too busy trying to survive, etiquette plays little part in the poor's daily existence.*

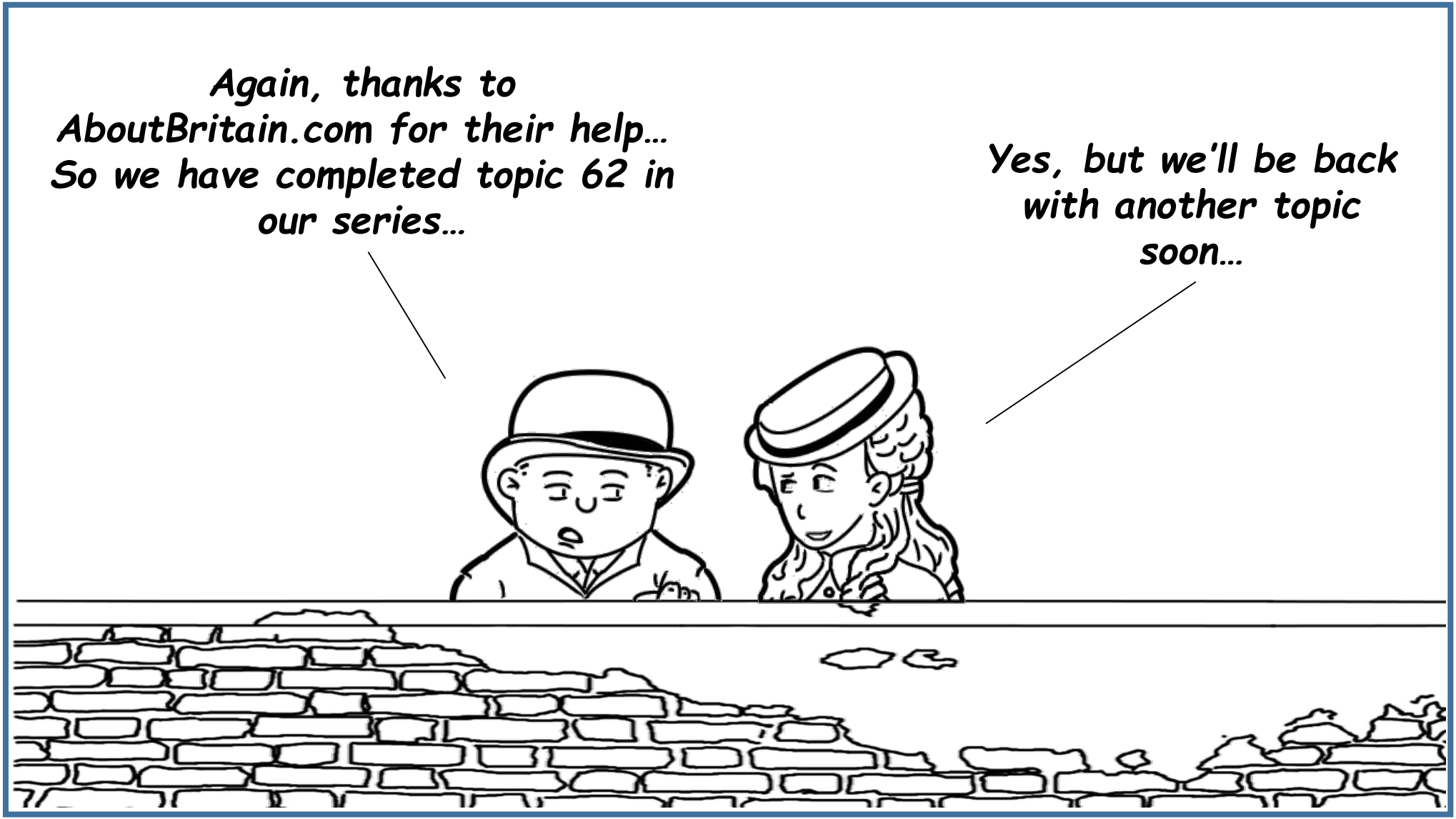
*But that's not to say that pride isn't available.*

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

*Although Poor Laws are put into place, it won't be until after the Victorian age ends that 'the lower class' will be 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 62 in our series…
Yes, but we'll be back with another topic soon…

**Original Source Material for this topic:**

1) http://www.aboutbritain.com/articles/victorian-houses.asp

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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

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