

# Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS  
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON  
# 124 - MARK OF A SINNER OR A SAINT - AUGUST, 2023



**WELCOME TO TOPIC NUMBER # 124... TODAY WE  
WILL BE LOOKING AT DISEASE OF LEPROSY AND  
HOW VICTORIANS VIEWED IT DURING THE  
VICTORIAN PERIOD.**



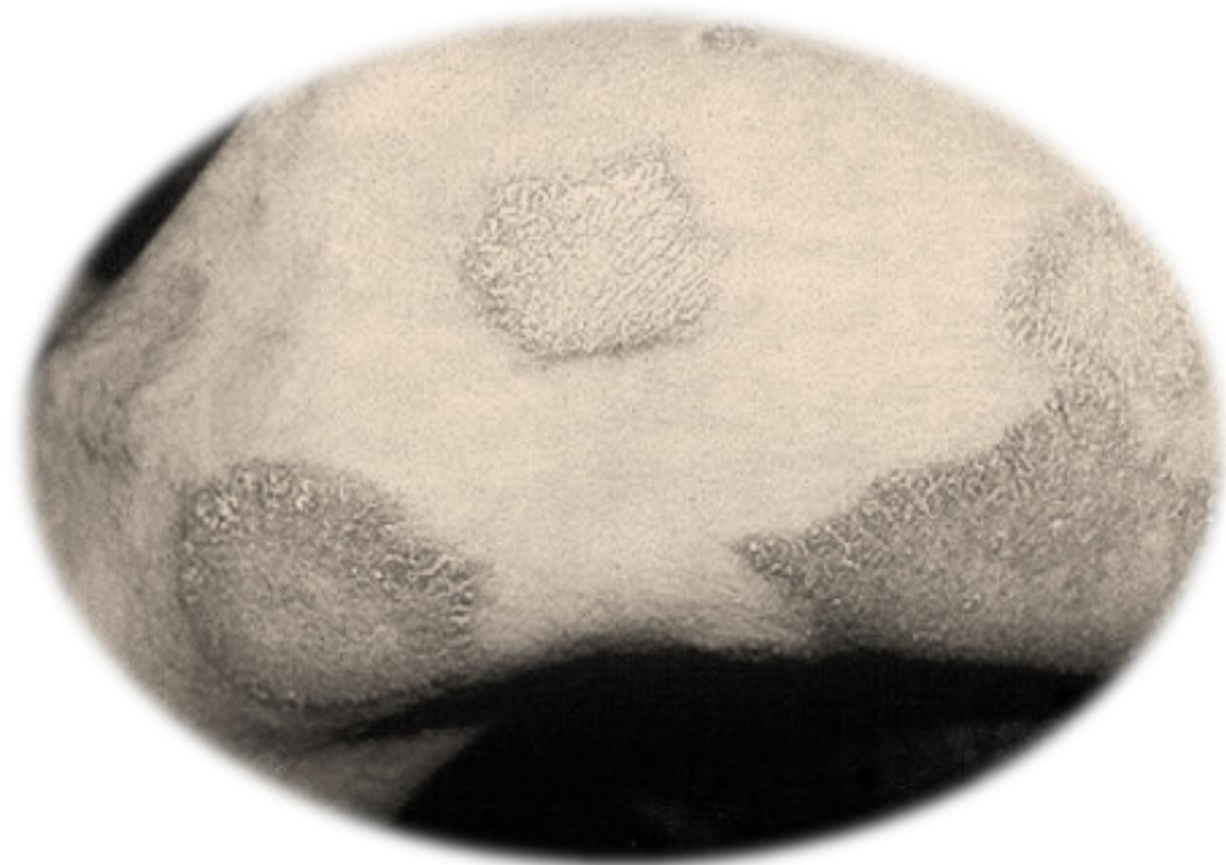
*IN 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLANCHED SOLDIER,' THE FEAR THAT GODFREY EMSWORTH HAD CONTRACTED LEPROSY WHILE IN SOUTH AFRICA WAS ENOUGH FOR THE FAMILY TO ISOLATE THE POOR MAN COMPLETELY FROM ALL SOCIETY.*



WHILE THEIR FEARS WERE MISPLACED, THE ACTUAL  
DISEASE—*ICHTHYOSIS* OR *PSEUDO-LEPROSY*—  
OFFERED A RATHER GRIM PROGNOSIS AS WELL.



*PUBLIC OPINION OF THE SECOND, HOWEVER,  
LACKED THE STIGMA CARRIED WITH THE FIRST.*



**HUMANS HAVE BEEN AWARE OF LEPROSY, OR HANSEN'S DISEASE, SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, WITH REFERENCES TO THE ILLNESS APPEARING EVEN IN THE BIBLE.**



**CAUSED BY A BACTERIAL INFECTION, THE AILMENT IS MARKED BY PALE-COLORED SKIN SORES AND LUMPS OR BUMPS THAT DO NOT DISAPPEAR.**





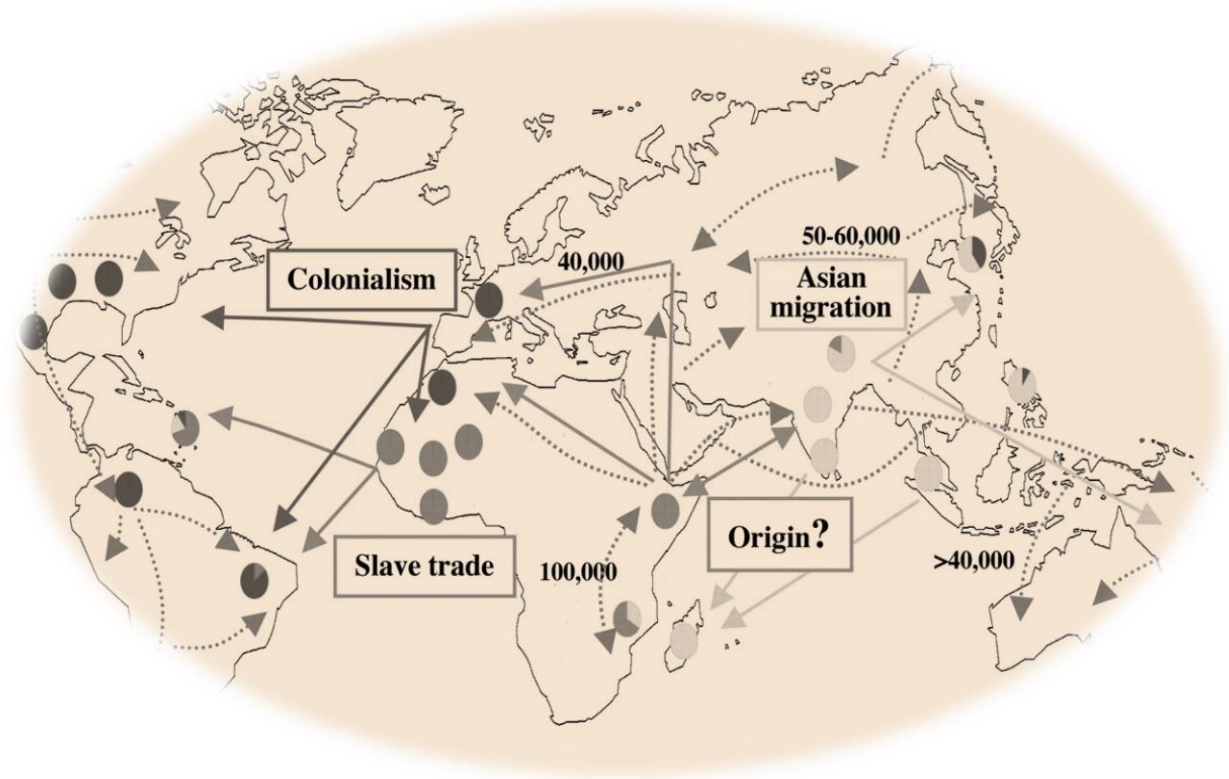
AS THE DISEASE PROGRESSES, IT ATTACKS THE NERVES,  
LEADING TO A LOSS OF FEELING IN THE ARMS AND LEGS  
AND MUSCLE WEAKNESS. DESPITE BEING CONTAGIOUS,  
IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONTRACT THE DISEASE.



**INFECTION ONLY OCCURS AFTER REPEATED EXPOSURE TO NASAL OR MOUTH DROPLETS AND THE INCUBATION PERIOD, WHEN SYMPTOMS APPEAR, CAN BE FROM THREE TO FIVE YEARS TO UP TO TWENTY YEARS.**



WHILE LEPROSY'S SOURCE IS NOT KNOWN,  
TRADITIONAL THEORIES SUGGEST IT MIGHT HAVE  
ORIGINATED IN INDIA, AFRICA OR THE MIDDLE EAST.



**MORE RECENT RESEARCH OF ANCIENT EUROPEAN BURIAL SITES INDICATES ITS EXISTENCE ON THE CONTINENT MUCH EARLIER THAN PREVIOUSLY BELIEVED.**



**THE SAME STRAINS HAVE BEEN FOUND IN CURRENT SQUIRREL POPULATIONS, LEADING TO THE BELIEF THAT THE SPREAD MAY HAVE BEEN RELATED TO VIKING SQUIRREL FUR TRADERS.**





**DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF THE SAME DISEASE AS  
IN ANCIENT TIMES, EUROPEAN INFECTIONS PEAKED  
IN THE MID-1500s.**



*LEPROSY WAS SO COMMON THROUGHOUT  
MEDIEVAL EUROPE, IT WAS ESTIMATED  
THAT ONE IN 30 WERE INFECTED.*



**WITH NO CHANGE IN THE ILLNESS' GENETIC MAKEUP, RESEARCHERS THEORIZE THAT PRESENT EUROPEANS HAVE DEVELOPED A GENETIC RESISTANCE TO THE DISEASE.**





**BELIEFS ABOUT LEPROSY DATE BACK TO  
BIBLICAL TIMES.**



THE HEBREW TERM FOR A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT SKIN DISEASES, TZARAAT, RENDERED AN INDIVIDUAL RITUALLY UNCLEAN AND REQUIRED PHYSICAL SEPARATION FROM THE COMMUNITY TO AVOID ITS MORAL CONTAMINATION.



TZARAAT WAS LATER TRANSLATED INTO GREEK AS  
LEPRA AND SERVES AS THE BASIS FOR THE  
CURRENT TERM LEPROSY.



WHAT TAZRIA-METZORA  
**THE TZARAAT  
PURIFICATION  
RITUAL: WHAT  
DOES IT MEAN?**



THE TERM, HOWEVER, DID NOT REFER TO WHAT IS NOW RECOGNIZED AS LEPROSY, WHICH WAS REFERRED TO AS ELEPHANTIASIS GRAECORUM.



**ALTHOUGH THE SKIN DISEASES REFERRED TO AS LEPROSY IN THE EUROPEAN MIDDLE AGES HAD NO RELATION TO THE BIBLICAL AILMENTS, THE PUBLIC REACTION TO IT MIRRORED ANCIENT BELIEFS, SPLIT BETWEEN IT BEING A PUNISHMENT FOR SIN OR ENDURING A LIVING PURGATORY.**



*WITH THE LEPERS' SUFFERING MIMICKING THAT OF CHRIST, THEY WOULD IMMEDIATELY ENTER HEAVEN... IN ADDITION, THOSE WHO TENDED TO THE DISEASED WOULD ALSO REDUCE THEIR OWN TIME IN PURGATORY.*



AS A RESULT, AT LEAST 320 LEPER, OR LAZAR, HOUSES WERE ESTABLISHED IN ENGLAND ALONE, WITH MORE ACROSS ALL OF EUROPE.



WHEN INFECTIONS SUDDENLY DROPPED IN THE 16TH CENTURY AND CONCERN OVER OTHER CONTAGIOUS DISEASES (SUCH AS THE BLACK DEATH) INCREASED, THOSE INFECTED FACED GREATER RESTRICTIONS AND ISOLATION.

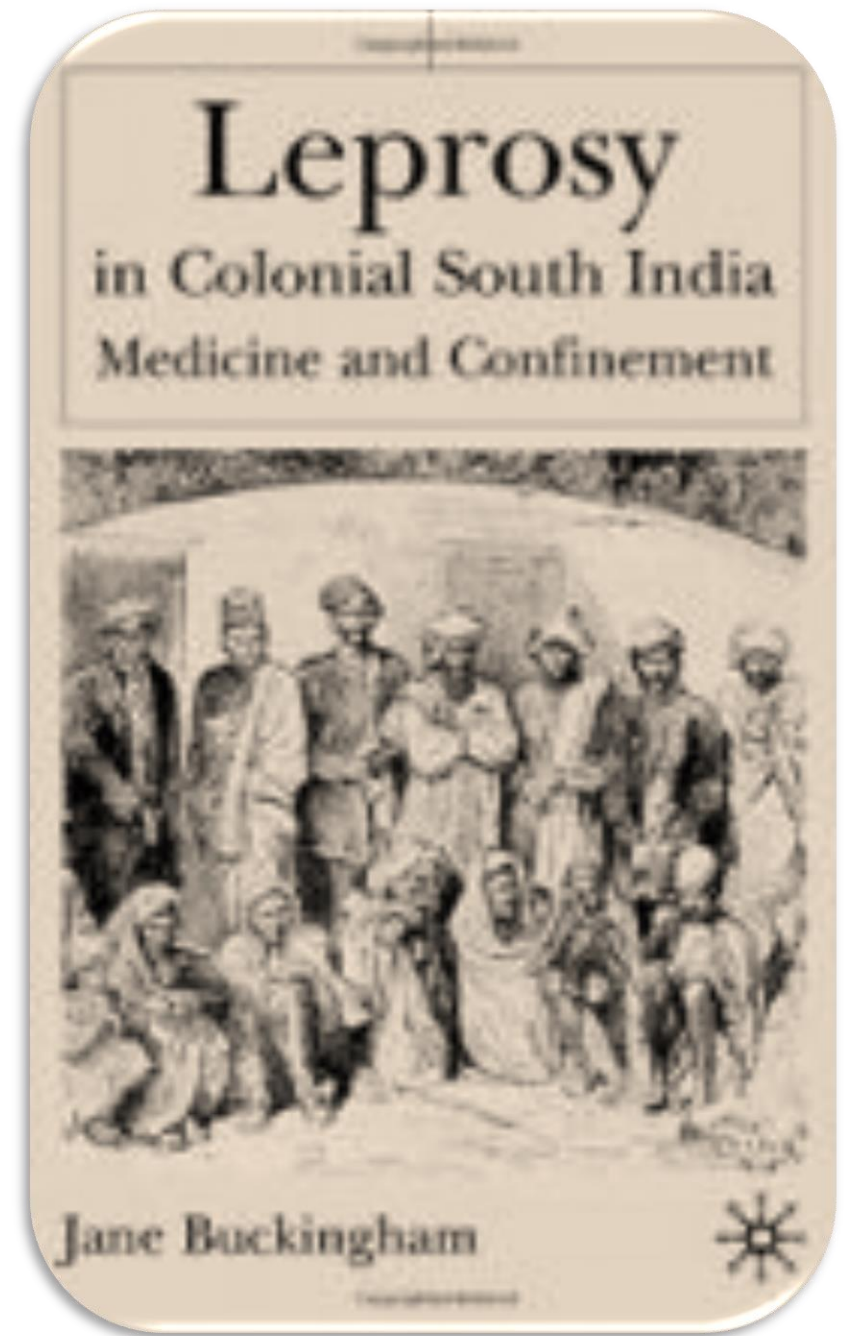




**THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY SAW A RE-EMERGENCE OF LEPROSY AS A HUMANITARIAN CAUSE, NOT ONLY IN ENGLAND, BUT ACROSS THE BRITISH EMPIRE.**



**NUMEROUS SOCIETIES WERE FORMED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM THE DISEASE—PARTICULARLY IN INDIA AND AFRICA.**



**HOSPITALS AND COLONIES WHERE THE INFECTED  
COULD LIVE OUT THEIR DAYS, AND CONVERTED TO  
CHRISTIANITY, WERE FUNDED THROUGH SEVERAL  
MISSIONARY SOCIETIES INTO THE 1930s.**



**FUNDRAISING EFFORTS FOCUSED ON THE STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH THOSE AFFECTED.**





**GIVEN THE IMAGE OF THE LEPER PRESENTED  
IN CONTEMPORARY PUBLICITY AT THE END  
OF THE 1800s, THE FAMILY'S REACTION TO  
GODFREY EMSWORTH'S OWN AFFLICTION  
WOULD HAVE BEEN A COMMON ONE.**

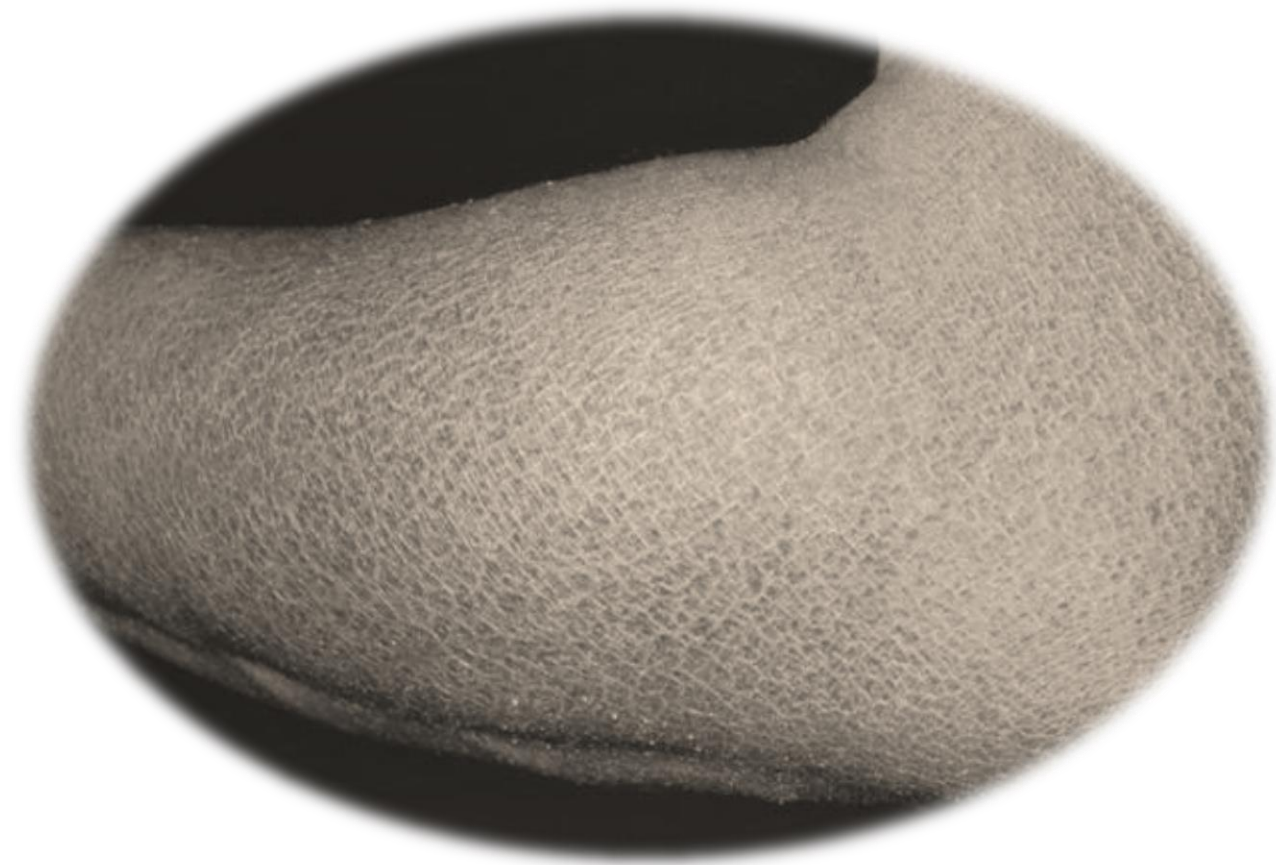




THE ALTERNATIVE DIAGNOSIS OF HIS CONDITION BY HOLMES' DOCTOR, THEN, PROVIDED A GREAT RELIEF TO THE FAMILY... ICHTHYOSIS, OR PSEUDO-LEPROSY, PRESENTS WITH SIMILAR SYMPTOMS AS TRUE LEPROSY.



THE TERM COMES FROM THE GREEK WORD,  
'*ICHTHY*,' MEANING FISH AND REFERS TO  
THE SKIN FORMING SCALES RESEMBLING  
THOSE OF FISH.



THAT EMSWORTH CONTRACTED THE DISEASE LATER  
IN LIFE SUGGESTS HIS CONDITION WAS ACQUIRED  
ICHTHYOSIS, WHICH HAS VERY DIFFERENT  
UNDERLYING CAUSES.





**IT HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH MALIGNANCIES, DIFFERENT DISEASES (INCLUDING LEPROSY), AND CERTAIN MEDICATION USE.**



**IN ADDITION, WHILE THE SKIN CAN BE TREATED TO RELIEVE THE SYMPTOMS, NO CURE EXISTS FOR THE SUFFERER.**





**WHILE EMSWORTH'S SECOND DIAGNOSIS MIGHT  
HAVE SAVED HIM AND HIS FAMILY FROM THE  
STIGMA OF LEPROSY, HIS TRUE DIAGNOSIS  
WAS NOT AN END TO HIS PROBLEMS.**





**THE ACTUAL DISEASE PRESENTED A NEW  
SET OF MEDICAL PROBLEMS WITH VERY  
SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.**



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 124 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 125, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT MY MERRY BAND OF INVESTIGATORS, THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS.



## ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FOR THIS TOPIC:

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- [HTTPS://WWW.SMITHSONIANMAG.COM/SMART-NEWS/DID-LEPROSY-ORIGINATE-EUROPE-180969061/](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/did-leprosy-originate-europe-180969061/)
- [HTTPS://WWW.NPR.ORG/SECTIONS/HEALTH-SHOTS/2013/06/13/191337793/SCIENTISTS-GO-MEDIEVAL-TO-SOLVE-ANCIENT-LEPROSY-PUZZLE](https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2013/06/13/191337793/scientists-go-medieval-to-solve-ancient-leprosy-puzzle)
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- [HTTPS://HISTORICENGLAND.ORG.UK/RESEARCH/INCLUSIVE-HERITAGE/DISABILITY-HISTORY/1050-1485/TIME-OF-LEPROSY/](https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/disability-history/1050-1485/time-of-leprosy/)
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- [HTTPS://WWW.FIRSTSKINFOUNDATION.ORG/WHAT-IS-ICHTHYOSIS](https://www.firstskinfooundation.org/what-is-ichthyosis)
- [HTTPS://WWW.JAAD.ORG/ARTICLE/S0190-9622\(06\)012229/FULLTEXT#:~:TEXT=ACQUIRED%20ICHTHYOSIS%20\(AI\)%20IS%20A,INFECTIOUS%20DISEASES%3B%20AND%20MEDICATION%20USE.](https://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622(06)012229/fulltext#:~:text=ACQUIRED%20ICHTHYOSIS%20(AI)%20IS%20A,INFECTIOUS%20DISEASES%3B%20AND%20MEDICATION%20USE.)



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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:  
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