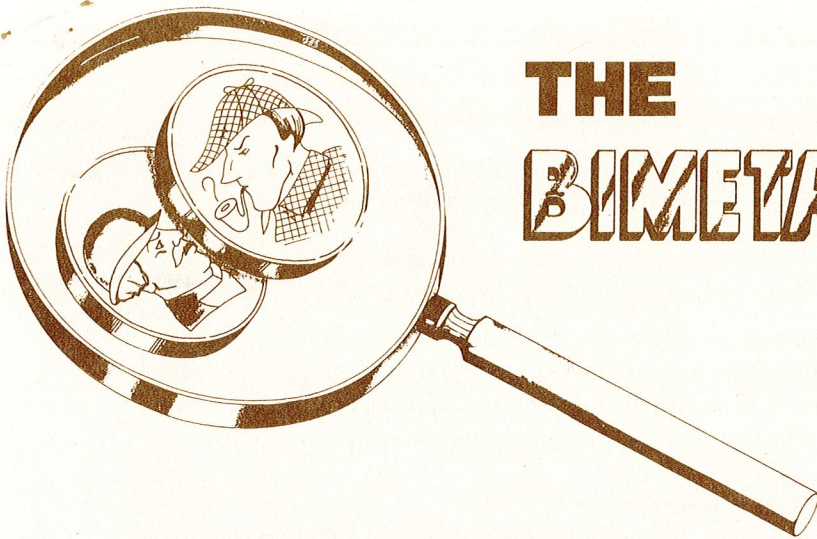


2 AUG 2001

August 9th, 2001 Minutes



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

The next meeting of the **BIMETALLIC QUESTION** will be held on Thursday, October 4th, 2001 at 6:30 p.m. SHARP at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec. All members, prospective members and their friends are most welcome. PLEASE PAY ATTENTION TO PARKING SIGNS!!!!

The NEXT QUIZ: A Scandal in Bohemia, prepared by David Kellett.

SAD NEWS: John Peter Reiner passed away, August 10th, 2001 in Montreal. He leaves to mourn his children, Louise, Therese (Richard Gatien), Paul (Chantale Marcotte), his grandchildren, Andre and Philippe Gatien, David and Gabriel Reiner. He also leaves to mourn his companion Loretta Payne, as well as many other relatives and friends. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated.

MINUTES of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, August 2, 2001 at the Westmount library (Westmount Library), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec.

Present: Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Charles Purdon, David Dowse, Paul Billette, Anita Miller, Wilfred de Freitas, Elliott Newman, David Kellett, Eva Newman and Heather Witeman-Brown.

Regrets: Patrick Campbell

Guests: Nawfal Sheikh columnist from The Westmount Examiner who was researching for his article on Sherlock Holmes which appeared in Thursday, August 9th edition of The Westmount Examiner. Copy of his article entitled: THE GAME'S AFOOT FOR LOCAL SHERLOCKIANS is included for your reading pleasure.

CALL TO ORDER: David Dowse opened the meeting at 6:38 p.m. and welcomed those present. He reminded us that meetings would be held on Thursdays, the only evening the library is available.

SHOW/TELL: Almost all the attending members brought a form of Sherlock Holmes memorabilia. Items ranged from a Sherlock Holmes computer tote bag, books, magazines, several trivia items and games such as: Where is Waldo, I Spy, Eleventh Hour. Paul circulated pictures of the Mount Philo Picnic/Garden Party. It was stated that although the weather was not pleasant it did not put a damper on the spirits. The most unique item "A Pardon" was brought in by Wilfred de Freitas. Queen Victoria herself signed this pardon. Now that's a find. The gauntlet has been thrown down. Expectations will be high for the next meeting.

PRESENTATION: “Holmes and Smoking” Given by: David Kellett. David’s informative and impassioned exposé had a few members pondering whether their initial impression of a three-pipe problem, as a measurement of time, was correct.

QUIZ: The Quiz commenced at 7:40 p.m. Jack’s first Sherlockian Quiz (“The Dancing Men - X Y X
Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y”) of 39 detailed questions began in complete silence. Full points required detailed answers and members took to the challenge with enthusiasm. Members without the correct responses tried to gain points with unique yet incorrect answers during the marking sessions thus filling the room with laughter. Jack would have made the Master proud with this eye for detail, in the preparation and marking of the quiz.

The winners were:

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|------------|--|
| - | David Kellett | - 61/100 | 1 st Prize (Miniature Assortment of Sherry) |
| - | Elliott Newman | - 57.5/100 | 2 nd Prize (Bottle of Graham’s Port) |
| - | Charles Purdon | - 48/100 | 3 rd Prize (Two British Beers) |

TOASTS:

David surprised members by supplying the toasts type written. He stated there would be no struggling with his writing this meeting. This meetings toasts were selected by David’s daughters and were read by:

Charles Purdon – **To The Master** followed by Jack Anderson - **To Dr. Watson** then by Wilfred de Freitas - **To Mrs. Hudson** supervened by Maureen Anderson – **To The Woman** succeeded by David Dowse – **To The Society**

Any members who have particularly good toasts please submit them to David Dowse for future use.

TOAST TO THE MASTER

Read by: Charles Purdon

Douglas Wilmer, the fine British actor, when asked to take on the role of the Master, claimed that he was well aware of the difficulties of the part he was taking on. A life long fan of Conan Doyle, Wilmer bore an uncanny physical resemblance to the original Sidney Paget’s illustrations of Holmes in The Strand.

Said Wilmer, in February 1965, “Holmes was a genius, of course – that’s the main thing – though an erratic one. I’d say he was the classic example of a manic-depressive – a man in the mould of van Gogh, swinging violently from one extreme to the other. He was a savage genius too.

“He was astringently unsentimental. A man who could experiment in a laboratory, beating corpses to find out if the flesh bruised after death – even today, in this reputedly unsentimental age, such a man might shock even the hard-boiled of mods and rockers!” And anyway, he didn’t give a hoot about what people thought about him.....” In any event, we think a lot about him! **To the Master!**

TOAST TO DR. WATSON

Read by: Jack Anderson

While we all appreciate Dr. Watson's qualities as an author, there could be doubts as to his abilities as a physician. Think for a moment; until his marriage he was content to live on his wound pension and share quarters and adventures with the Master. Even after his marriage he was ever ready to make use of a substitute so that he could accompany Sherlock on an investigation which he would later chronicle and publish. From this we can infer that the majority of his income came from his narratives of Holmes' adventures instead of his practice as a medical man.

If this were true we should be thankful for, without these reports we would have no reason for existence as an organization. This being the case, as Sherlockians it would be improper for us to be critical of any possible failings in his practice of medicine.

Therefore, let us salute the Master's companion, not as a doctor, but as an author.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to Doctor Watson!

TOAST TO MRS. HUDSON

Read By: Wilfred de Freitas

The word "landlady" is an anathema to many. It suggests nosiness and endless complaints. If there is truth in this stereotype, Mrs. Hudson was an exception. She was interested but not interfering: she was concerned and caring in a kindly, reliable way. Yet the impression Watson gives us in the Canon is not of an unreal ideal but for a genuine person – a fellow human being. I would be pleased to have known her. I might even have liked being one of her tenants, although I don't believe she ever did "take in" women as well as men in the same house. She was a conventional woman of her day, and highly respectable. However, she was not narrow-minded. When one of her lodgers turned out to be unusually untidy, not to mention eccentric, she rose to the occasion. More: her life was greatly enriched by the presence, for so many years, of the Master, Dr. Watson, and all those clients – some of them distinctly unsavory. I believe she enjoyed every minute of it!

Let us drink to her memory. **If only all landladies were like her: Mrs. Hudson!**

TOAST TO THE WOMAN (Irene Adler)

Read by: Maureen Anderson

THE WOMAN: This toast traditionally honours one woman, THE WOMAN, Irene Adler and, of course, she is mostly worthy of our respect and admiration. However, this evening I propose we take a moment to reflect on some of the other "Woman of the Canon", without whom Sherlock Holmes would surely have been deprived of some of his most fascinating cases: Helen Stoner, who braved the wrath of her stepfather, the infamous Dr. Grimesby Roylott, keeper of the "Speckled Band"; the practical and independent Violet Hunter of "Cooper Beeches" fame; and, of course, Mary Morstan, whose inquisitive nature and timely arrival at 221b Baker Street released Holmes, at a time, at least, from the grip of cocaine and placed Dr. Watson in the grip of romance in the "Sign of Four".

These Victorian women were not resigned to life in the shadows; they were not prepared to live with uncertainty and fear. They level-headedly sought advice from the Master and of ten placed their very lives in jeopardy to aid in solving the case.

I do not believe that Sherlock Holmes dislikes women, but he may misunderstand them. Women are certainly not completely fact and logic, to be cast in plaster like a footprint or scrutinized under a microscope. They are as multi-faceted as blue carbuncles and often as disjointed as engineers' thumbs, but women have played an integral role in the Canon.

I ask you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to raise your glasses, first to THE WOMAN, Irene Adler who certainly "eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex", and then to the other "Women of the Canon" – long may they distract! To The Woman**The Woman!**

TOAST TO THE SOCIETY

Read by David Dowse

"When two or more gather, so I am with you". This I think is Sherlock Holmes's message to the ages of followers and devotees. We are all not that much different in our addiction for the atmosphere, language, manners and social order of Victorian England. Most of all, we share our love of the presence, silhouette and smoke rings of the Master. From beaver-hatted gentlemen, to farm boys curled up by the fire, to Holmesian junkies scavenging the trade shows and conventions to future colonists in transit to the unknown. We have been, are and will be brothers and sisters bonded by the glue of wonder and admiration for good literature and very real people.

To our members past, present and future, I give you the Bimetallic Question. To the Society!

THE JONES-LINGARD-KELLY ARCHIVES:

Maureen supplied several samples of possible bookplates that were circulated among the members. The existing logo and Maureen's favourite were tied. It was decided to keep the existing artwork and have it computerized for ease of use on bookplates and other documentation. Maureen to receive original artwork to discuss with graphic firms on the computerization of existing logo.

Discussions continue on whether the items should be provided as quiz prizes or whether the items should be donated or sold. Several members acknowledged their interest in buying some of the collection items. An itemized list will be made available to members shortly..

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting closed at 9:03 p.m.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Members who would like to actively participate in contributing articles, recipes or information on upcoming events, etc. for the newsletter are welcome. Please contact Maureen Anderson at j-m.anderson@sympatico.ca.

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MINUTES: Recipes from Mrs. Hudson's Corner, Clues on Global Events and the Puzzler.

MRS HUDSONS CORNER: In honour of our next Story: **A Scandal in Bohemia**

Bohemian Scandal Pickled Eggs:

Ingredients:

12 Eggs & 4 Cups (1 Litre) malt vinegar

Boil the eggs for 10 minutes. Run them under cold water until they are cool enough to handle and remove the shells. Put the eggs in a wide-mouth jar with a tight-fitting lid. Bring the malt vinegar to a boil in a saucepan. Let it cool for 1 minute, and then pour it over the eggs, leaving a ½ inch (1 cm) space at the top of the jar. Seal the jar. Store in a cool, dark place. The eggs will be ready in 2-3 weeks. They should be brown on the outside and their yolks should be soft and creamy.

Makes 12 pickled eggs.

Perhaps Watson has deduced that pickled eggs go well with cold meat and cheese. Beer is a must.

Clues on global events: There are many events each year devoted to Sherlock Holmes. From large annual events that draw people the world over to the monthly gathering of a few friends of Sherlock Holmes. A few are listed below:

Vancouver, BC - Sherlock Holmes & the Clocktower Mystery

Now until January 2, 2002
It would be a crime to miss out!

The heavy scent of incense fills the air. The sounds of Victorian London set the scene for a gruesome crime. A murder has been committed and it's up to you to solve this baffling mystery. Follow Dr. Watson's story through eight chapters, collecting important clues along the way... but beware of red herrings! Your journey ends in an elegant study where you will meet a character from the story - when all will be revealed. It would be a crime to miss this exhibit! . It's up to you to solve this baffling mystery . . . at the Vancouver Museum, June 17, 2001, through January 2, 2002.

Toronto, Ont. - Footprints of the Hound

Everybody's heading for Toronto, October 19-21 this year, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The conference will be held on October 19 - 21, 2001 and is sponsored by The Bootmakers of Toronto, The Toronto Public Library, The Friends of The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, and the Authur Conan Doyle Society. The program promises to be an excellent one. The registration brochure is available from Doug Wrigglesworth (16 Sunset St., Holland Landing, ONT, L9N 1H4, Canada or <dougwrig@idirect.com> or <<http://www.acdfriends.org/hound>

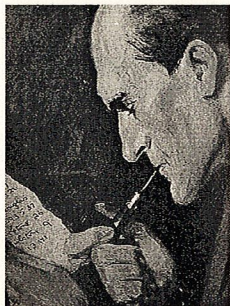
France - "The Secret of Sherlock Holmes"

The annual meeting of the JBSF will take place on November 2001, Friday 2, Saturday 3 and Sunday 4. It will be dedicated to Jeremy Paul's play *The Secret Of Sherlock Holmes*. During those Brettian days all will be invited to take part in some events. Giving you some clues about our activities, there will be a preview of an exhibition about Jeremy Paul's play (set up by the JBSF), which will open to the public during the week following the meeting, at "La Maison Des Associations", rue Tavan, in Aix-en-Provence's town centre. Numerous photographs of Marcus Tylor and Keith Harding and some stills from

the Granada series "Sherlock Holmes" will be displayed. You will also see handbills and the theatre programmes of the play. There will be information on the origins of the play, the two actors involved and he author. The link with the Granada series will be explained, with particular reference to "canonical fidelity". During the preview, we will launch our publication dedicated to the play. There will also be a beautiful surprise; but as it is a surprise, one will not say you what it is!

If you wish to participate contact by mail (JBSF, rés. Le clos de l'Arc, entrée 5, av. Gaston Berger, 13090 Aix-en-Provence) or by email (JBSF.com@wanadoo.fr). This will be not, of course, considered as a firm commitment on your part, but will allow them to estimate, as soon as possible, the number of participants, and to best organise their reception (in particular, renting of the conference room).

All that remains is to end the minutes by challenging you with the **Puzzler**:

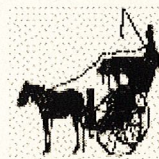


- 1) Holmes' favourite possession: _____
- 2) Holmes' weapon: _____
- 3) His favourite paper: _____

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the October 4th meeting.

Must dash to the next adventure,

Maureen



THE GAME'S AFOOT FOR LOCAL SHERLOCKIANS

Nawfal Sheikh

For those with a minimal knowledge of Sherlock Holmes, he is simply a great detective—the fictional creation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—a tall, slender man clutching a magnifying glass or perhaps smoking a pipe.

But for the 29 members of The Bimetallic Question, Montreal's own Sherlockian society, those images are like the outer shell of an egg. In order to taste the yolk, one needs to crack the surface—and this is what they do every second month at their meetings in the Westmount Room of the Westmount Public Library.

Coming from all walks of life, Bimetallic Question members share a passion for Holmes and Victorian England, and as was evident at their latest meeting last Thursday, this passion runs deep.

David Dowse, a founding member of the small society, said one of the reasons why the group likes to theorize about the life and times of Sherlock Holmes is to trace the probability of his stories.

"There are many debates as to locations and different places in the stories," said Dowse. "People like to go out and follow the paths of the stories—is this the train station where he got on, or is this the pub he visited?"

Heading of a society paying homage to Sherlock Holmes with such vigor can cause apprehension for some. Images of die-hard Star Trek like fans decked out in costumes kept two-year member Jack Anderson from joining the club sooner. Introduced to Sherlock Holmes as a child, Anderson said he was reluctant to join the group after seeing photographs where members were dressed in costume at an annual dinner.

"I decided to go and try a meeting with my wife," said Anderson, a construction supply manager. "We both enjoyed the meeting, and we've only missed a couple ever since."

Members do not dress up in the style of the Victorian and Edwardian era at general meetings. Instead, they tend to reserve such lavish attire for special occasions. At last Thursday's meeting, for example, Dowse wore a bright, multi-coloured shirt, looking as if he was ready to attend a tropical luau.

"When he comes in wearing a Hawaiian shirt or something, that really takes the edge off any worries people have about dressing up in Victorian costume," said Anderson. "Every effort is made to make people feel at home."

Founded in April 1979, The Bimetallic Question was the brainchild of two Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts, David Dowse and local book seller Wilfrid de la Roche. The two

met after Dowse had given a quiz on hopping on the 401 to make the long and expensive journey to attend Sherlockian meetings in Toronto. Having received de Freitas's phone number from the Toronto society, Dowse said he called his co-founding partner and the process began.

"He (de Freitas) could have been equally blasé about the idea and could have kind of pushed me off," said Dowse. "But no, he had the same spark in him and we kind of set the flame going."

In the tradition of other Sherlockian societies around the world, the name Bimetallic Question was chosen from a citation in the canon—what members call the complete anthology of Doyle's Holmes works, the 56 short stories and four novels. In this case it was from a line in *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans* that refers to "Canada and the bimetallic question." This is the only instance where Canada is mentioned in any Sherlock Holmes story.

Every January 6, The Bimetallic Question joins many other Sherlockian societies around the world in a celebration to mark Holmes's 1854 birthday. Anderson said that anyone interested in Holmes can come to the society's banquet in Old Montreal to celebrate the event. "People usually do dress up for that one," he said, describing the atmosphere in the 18th-century building as tremendous.

There is an aura of fun-filled seriousness surrounding the Bimetallic Question.

For example, before the commentariat of last Thursday's meeting, Paul Bilette poured a glass of sherry or port before making five separate toasts. The 11 attendees who sat around the wooden table raised their glasses, vociferously exclaiming, "To the master!" just before sipping their beverage.

"The first one is always to the master, and then Dr. Watson, Mrs. Hudson, the woman and the society's the last," said Anderson. The woman is Irene Adler of *A Scandal in Bohemia*, the only person ever to out-wit Holmes.

Meetings are held once every two months in the historic library, where a pastiche of activities take place, including a colourful show-and-tell session. Members bring in not only Holmes-related memorabilia, but present and discuss theories about the master and his times. For example, this month Dowse brought in a series of animated picture books, a board game and photographs from an event the group attended in Vermont.

This was followed by a quiz on the assigned reading. The *Adventure of the Dancing Men*, prepared by Anderson, pens moved frantically, eyes stared towards the heavens, while lips moved without uttering a sound. A feeling of nervous tension seemed to engulf the room as silence dominated.

(Continued
from page 4)

"People say television is a conversation killer well say is this," said de Freitas with a graceful laugh, inclining others to acknowledge his humour.

Not being a rudimentary ten-question true-or-false quiz, the test was anything but easy. With dancing stick figures cleverly transposed onto the three-page quiz, two of which were double-sided, this exam had 39 questions and was out of an overall 100 marks. Full points required detailed answers.

"Sorry if I made it too hard: I was all Sherlocked up after my trip," said Anderson, who recently visited the Sherlock Holmes Museum in London.

For marketing manager Elliott Newman, who received a bottle of Graham's Port for his second place score of 57.5, the quiz is not a joke.

Newman joined the club last November after hearing about the society at a Sherlock Holmes play in Old Montreal. "It was a tough one," he said of the quiz. "I actually prepared for it. I'm still out to win the prize. If only for the glory. It's one thing to joke about it, but come on: we're here by the company of equals and we don't dare not take it seriously."



A 19th-century portrait of Sherlock Holmes

The Bimetallie Question is not a happenard group when it comes to showing its adoration for the master. On May 3, 1992 the society consecrated the far-landstandoff between Holmes and Moriarty in The Final Problem by mounting a trilingual bronze plaque at the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland.

"Some of our members were able to make a pilgrimage to the shrine at Reichenbach Falls," said Dowse. "This is our way of speaking. It's not an

actual religious shrine, but it's a shrine to Sherlockans because it holds such an important influence in the life of Sherlock Holmes."

Out of all Dowse's artifacts relating to The Master, one of the oddest pieces from his collection is a bottle filled with water from the infamous Falls.

The line between fiction and reality can often be blurred, but for The Bimetallie

Question, the master is not a hoax. "There are those that believe and there are those that don't believe," said a confident Dowse. "We believe that Conan Doyle was a literary agent for Dr. Watson, who wrote the stories and passed them to Conan Doyle... We as devotees of Sherlock Holmes feel he was a real person and still is."

The master is said to be retired and living a life of peace at an undisclosed location in Sussex, England. "They say that he's raising bees and the royal jelly from the bees is very good for stimulating the growth of cells in the brain, and the body," said Dowse.

The Bimetallie Question's next meeting is in early October at the Westminster Public Library. For more information contact Charles Puchon at 528-2667.