



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
April 5, 2007

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, June 7th, 2007 at 6:30 p.m.at:
The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

**“The Adventure of the Noble
Bachellor”**
prepared by Erica Penner

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, April 5th,
2007 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West,
Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Stanley Baker, Art
Bartnicky, David Dowse, Patrick Campbell, David Kellett, Anita Miller, Elliott Newman,
Erica Penner, Kathryn Radford, Arlene Scher, Cheryl Surkes, Ronnie Zilman.

Regrets: Maureen Anderson, Wilfrid deFreitas, Joan O'Malley,

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called promptly to order at 6:32 by our co-sovereign Jack
Anderson, with promises of “a fun and activity-filled evening ahead” in which he
suggested we would talk about activities for the coming year.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Show and Tell, Bet You Don't/Bet I Do, Hither and Yon, etc.)

- 1) **Rupert Brooks**
Patrick Campbell showed a stock price list from Rupert Books in England. This list is about as close as most of us will ever get to their expensive and marvelous collection of offerings.
- 2) **Get the Wood Out**
Patrick enlightened us on the Toronto Bootmakers' "Silver Blaze Outing" at Woodbine racetrack whereat bootmakers, lacer-uppers, and loafers are wont to make and feel merry, we suppose in conspicuous Victorian attire presumably to catch the eye of appreciative horses although not too appreciative because – you know – the consequences could be disastrous and there would be nothing left for TWGCD to investigate.
- 3) **Up, Up, and Away**
Patrick then focused his eclectic show/tell on a balloon show during the Franco-Prussian War. Now honestly, folks, would any of us have anticipated that this treat would be on the Bimetallic buffet before the meeting? This was amazing; and all the more reason to tell your friends to come armed with appetite for port and/or sherry and the unabashed sense of excitement we all feel around the oak tables at the Westmount Library's Reading Room. Patrick showed us a map of this fascinating slice in time, a map where balloons went up, and – we hope – came down.
- 4) **Patrick Cloned? Nay!**
Patrick showed us a magazine article about a man building the same kind of airplane he is building. Rest assured, people, there is only one Patrick. The challenge is to find someone building a similar airplane *and* writing SH original plays and novels *and* writing books about Canada's maritime history *and* being instrumental in perpetuating the traditions of Clan Campbell *and* having been longstanding Sovereign of the BmQ *and* ... *and* ... *and* ...
- 5) **How to Show and Tell When You are Not (all) There**
Stanley Baker showed materials supplied by Wilfrid deFreitas who was prevented from attending the meeting at the last moment.
One such item was a card from the year 1877, showing the same calendar day/dates as 2007.
The other *truc* was our society flyer, on pink (we blush) paper. Printed on 8½" x 11" paper with two folds along the horizontal, the three-panel, six-page specimen is a marvel in conciseness, offering, as it does, the cosmos in a metaphoric nutshell. The front cover displays our Holmes/Watson coined image logo under the magnifying glass, with our society name underneath, and a further explanation: "The Sherlock Holmes Society of Montreal" lower down. The "Venatio Ad-est!" slogan is at the bottom, which means either "Venice Is Sinking in the East," or "Come if you Dare," or "Don't Stand on Ceremony, Just Come." A bold line border prevents all of these messages from escaping, and there is a shadow effect on the right and below. The left and center inside panels describe the society and the origin of our name in "The Adventure of the Bruce Partington Plans" in which "Holmes alludes to the intellectual prowess of his brother Mycroft,

stating that it extend to ‘... the Navy, India, Canada and the bimetallic question ...’” The third inside panel is our Membership Application form, citing annual dues of \$18. The left outside panel asks for personal marketing information such as how you heard about or were forced into the society. At the bottom is the SH oval, described in some detail in the following. The outside middle panel shows a cameo-type silhouette of TWGCD in a deerstalker, and a calabash pipe stuck to his mouth, and transcending the oval border. The extremely long chin on SH resembles a short goatee which requires a bit of barbering. The rest of the panel reiterates the society name, gives our web site and e-mail addresses, shows a leafy curlicue, and places us at the Stock Exchange Tower.

6. **Harper’s Bazaar**

Cheryl Surkes showed us a magazine issue featuring elegant ladies’ fashion from 1898. We’ve come a long way, baby!

7. **The Adventure of the Sleight-of-Hand Cards**

Erica Penner went to the McCord Museum to engage in a pastiche of “Card, Card, Who’s Got the Card?” with various poorly-informed workers there. Erica’s intention was to see more of the Valentine Card collection Cheryl had presented and described at our previous meeting. At the Museum, various researchers checked and said they didn’t have any such items in their possession. Therefore, Erica was thwarted in her goal. Cheryl clarified that if you want to see the collection, you should call ahead of time, get hold of a person who knows the collection, and set an appointment to view it.

8. **Eengelund Swings**

Jack Anderson showed a small pocket book of the Sherlock Holmes walk to places of interest in London in the canon.

He also showed a program of an SH play, *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*, with Jeremy Brett in the lead.

Other items Jack shared: a book, *The Science of Sherlock Holmes*, and a copy of *Strand Magazine*, and a poster of a photo montage of scenes from various SH films with the actors’ signatures which he bought on e-bay.

9. **Death Comes to the Director**

Rachel Alkallay announced that Robert Clark, director of *Murder by Decree*, an SH movie starring Christopher Plummer, died in a car crash April 4. No further details were available. Our thoughts and hearts go out to his family and loved ones. May they be spared further sorrow.

10. **David and Lola**

We knew David Kellett would do some digging into the story of Lola Montez. For instance, was she the real-life basis for Irene Adler? Is it mere coincidence that she spent time in a gold-mining town in Australia (referred background in an SH story)? David did not disappoint. He showed us Lola’s formal pearl portrait, so-named because of the string of pearls she wears in it. They were perfectly formed, pearly white pearls, each more perfect than the one beside it. The honorable Bimetallic gentlemen around the oak tables spent much time and concentration in appraising each luscious, voluptuous, well-formed, smooth,

round, curvaceous, symmetric, seductive, inviting pearl, never knowing before the meaning of the beauty of such baubles.
Thank you, David. You have brought Irene Adler to life! And resurrected some of us too!

11. **First Toast – To the Master**

By Patrick Campbell and Erica Penner

Erica Penner read Patrick's Toast to the Master, delivered by Patrick on December 2, 2004.

Here it is or was:

"First toast to the Master, in original poetry, was delivered by Patrick Campbell, as follows. The society of The Bimetallic Question is honored in that the *double-entendre* in this poem may well be the first in history to elicit not the usual groan, but admiration at Patrick's adroitness in tying the piece together. Bravo, Patrick, and thank you!

*At Reichenbach as I recall,
the roaring icy waters fall;
and down and down the waters go,
into a cauldron there below:
This roaring echoes face to face
to overwhelm this fearful place.
Here died our hero and his foe
or so the story has it so,
but Holmes escaped the deadly grip,
a masterpiece of brinksmanship!*

To the master!"

12. **Second Toast – To Dr. Watson**

By David Dowse

Intro by Lowly Scribe:

Each thing we do is influenced by each thing in the cosmos, and each thing beyond that – past, present, future. And yet, we retain a distinct identity of person, will, and spirit that dictates how we will be influenced by and give back to that great scheme of things. Therefore, our insight into David's fine tribute to Doctor Watson is informed by the knowledge that David composed the toast using a Porsche series fountain pen produced by Faber Castell, filled with Mont Blanc burgundy ink. David was drinking Chateau Mouton Cacoke at the time. Heavily. Somewhere in Mirable a cat was yeowling. The stars were in alignment. The muse was upon him.

The Toast:

There are three parts to John H. Watson's life:

- Before Holmes
- With Holmes
- After Holmes

This will be a brief resumé of Watson's life before Holes which has been gleaned from the *Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Vol. 1, Chapter 1, Part 9.

As conjectured by Dorothy L. Sayers, the noted mystery writer, Watson was probably of Scottish ancestry. He had early traits of sturdy common sense, coolness, and adaptability to rough conditions on Dartmoor or elsewhere which are the marks of that tightening of moral and physical fiber which come from the hard schooling of colonial life. Life with father probably took place in Australia's gold fields, or railways as suggested by analyst Mr. S.C. Roberts.

He finished his schooling at the University of London where he acquired his Doctor of Medicine. He then decided to become an Assistant Surgeon in the British Army. The situation in northern India precipitated the army to order him to duty with the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers and then the Princess Charlotte of Wales Royal Berkshire Regiment which fought at the Battle of Maiwand.

Since the Fusiliers were not sent to Maiwand and had Watson stayed with them, he would not have been wounded which invalidated him home and out of the service, and he would never have met Sherlock Holmes. But he was with the Berkshires, he was wounded by a Jezail bullet, he was saved by Murray, and then sent back to England where he "gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained."

It was a comfortless, meaningless existence as he wasted his life at some hotel in the Strand. He soon realized that he must make a complete change in his lifestyle. He came to this conclusion while standing at the Criterion Bar where he met young Stamford who in turn introduced him to Holmes – they inspected rooms at 221b Baker Street and the Great Partnership was to begin.

All of this and more led Watson to fulfill his true destiny which was to be the complement to and chronicler of the World's first and greatest consulting detective.

I give you John H. Watson!

13. Quiz – Results

"The Adventure of the Lion's Mane" prepared by Carol Abramson.

Possible total: 110 points

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	Erica Penner	76	Earl Gray Tea
2.	Patrick Campbell	74	Mini Teapot and Warmer
3.	David Kellett	66	Shortbread

The next quiz will be based on "The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor," prepared by Erica Penner.

14. **An SAC Opportunity**

David Dowse tells us:

I have just finished reading *Whose Body* by Dorothy L. Sayers. In it a brilliant and egotistical surgeon attempts to commit the perfect crime. He murders a man and almost gets away with it.

Have you ever posed the analytical problem to yourself that if you ever wanted to do away with someone, how would you do it and not get caught?

I would like to see what your imaginations can come up with. I would like to challenge each of you to mastermind the Perfect Crime and submit a plot for our next meeting in June.

There will be a panel of judges to pick the best one and prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places.

Do we have a future Edgar laureate in our midst?

The game's afoot.

(Since the world's crime organizations do not collect toe prints, perhaps we should say, "The game's at hand!" Nah, it'll never sell.)

15. **Third Toast – To the Woman**

By Kathryn Radford

Cherchez la Femme

Believe it or not, some attribute this phrase to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

However, it was Alexandre Dumas (père) who first used the phrase in *Les Mohicans de Paris* (1864). This was translated in 1878 under the title of *Seek the Woman*.

But rarely translated, the phrase traveled in French to the USA. In 1909 O. Henry used it as the title of one of his famous short stories with the paraphrase, "there is somewhere the woman."

Since then the meaning of the phrase has changed slightly with usage, most recently with television's *La Femme Nikita*.

But we all know *la femme* Sherlock would have "sought."

Raise vos verres to *la femme* !

16. **Oi have travel'd wide
and oi have travel'd farre –
It's going to get worse
because oi have loste my carre.**

Jack Anderson, ably supported by those present who have withstood the effects of an ounce of port or sherry, itemized a list of possible excursions for us to consider:

- visit a brewery
- garden party at the Groves in Hudson
- Victorian potluck supper
- visit to a crime (forensic)lab
- billiard night
- airgun target shooting (need volunteer targets)
- serious play reading (are the plays serious, or do we need to be?)
- crime solving night (e.g. Who put the cat out? I didn't know she was on fire.)

If you are particularly creative, you may think in terms of combining several of the above into one truly memorable event, such as:

- Garden party at the Groves in Hudson featuring a Victorian potluck supper and specimens from a forensic laboratory, with loaded airguns buried in various locations in the garden, while we play a high-stakes game of billiards with curare-tipped stilettos in the cue sticks.
 - Crime-solving night at the Groves' garden in Hudson with a Victorian potluck supper, with forensic supplies displayed atop insect repellent poles, airguns set to go off at regular intervals, truncated ghosts wafting through from time to time, coinciding with Celine Dion's visit to Montreal.
 - Please feel free to add suggestions of your own.
- Suggestion to invite the Goose Club from Vermont.

17. **Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson**

By Rachel Alkallay

ex tempore (This means no notes)

Essentially, this was an amazingly detailed introduction to the nature of inspiration. It described Mrs. Hudson's devotion to Holmes, as she followed him to his retirement abode in Sussex.

18. **Fifth Toast – To the Society**

By Patrick Campbell

I think that you will never see
a group like our society.
We read the stories with great care,
and hope the quiz will be quite fair.
We learn the places and the names
of all the guys and all the dames.
We scan the plot and all the clues
and all the streets and all the mews.
But when the quiz is on the table
our memory fails. We are not able
to solve the puzzle that was set
without help from the Internet.
If Holmes were here it would be nice
For us to have his sage advice.

TO THE SOCIETY!

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, June 7th, 2007, at 6:30 p.m.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org

