



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES of the meeting of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION October 11, 2007

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, December 6th, 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

" A Scandal in Bohemia"
prepared by David Kellett
This meeting's quiz: "The Adventure
of the Priory School" prepared by
Wilfrid deFreitas

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, October 11th, 2007 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Stanley Baker, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Anna Chubchenko, Wilfrid deFreitas, David Dowse, Ann Elbourne, David Kellett, Elliott Newman, Joan O'Malley, Maureen Peters-Anderson, Arlene Scher, Cheryl Surkes, Ronnie Zilman and Paul Billette

Regrets: Patrick Campbell, Kathryn Radford

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called promptly to order at 6:40 by our sovereign Jack Anderson.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Bloehm and Voss, Astaire and Rogers, Tunney and Firpo, and others)

1. **Now You See Him, Now You See Him**

The Westmount press had a heyday with what was purported to be a cover-up over the disappearance of David Kellett last August. While the BmQ had reported in its minutes the contribution on many significant levels of our resident encyclopedia and general *Presto Al Factotum*, certain individuals who will go nameless, let it out that David was in fact not at the meeting. This, from a group that if nothing else, strives for accuracy! Of course, David laid the entire matter to rest at our October 11 meeting by re-emphasizing that he has recorded five uninterrupted years of attendance at our meetings. Verily.

2. **So Sayers We One, So Sayers We All**

David Dowse repeated his admiration of the acclaimed mystery novelist Dorothy L. Sayers by showing us her facial portrait mounted on the body of a very attractive woman. On our part, we saw nothing wrong with a mystery writer's being built like Venus. David discussed Ms Sayers' particular approach to her craft. She goes into research and detail in her novels, which lends them a distinctive air of verisimilitude. Her protagonist, Lord Peter Whimsey, shares a relationship with his batman Bunter which is an in-depth variation on the Holmes-Watson leader-supporter motif. Wilfrid added that Sayers was no stranger to the study of TWGCD, since she has written two Sherlockian essays.

3. **Doth Not a Merchant Bleed?**

Jack Anderson introduced us to "The Merchant of Menace." It's a newsletter from The Sleuth of Baker Street, in Toronto. It offers what might be one of the largest commercially-available offerings of mystery literature in Canada. They are at:

sleuthofbakerstreet.com
sleuthbooks@sympatico.ca
1600 Bayview Avenue
Toronto, ON M4G 3B7
(416) 483-3111

4. **Hardcorecover**

Wilfrid shared with us three priceless tidbits, the more to tempt us with:

- 1) a hardcover edition of *Strand Magazine*, finding all issues from January to June, 1904.
- 2) *The World of Sherlock Holmes* by Martin Fido. This is a guide to the places frequented by TWGCD, replete with impressive illustrations. Possessing a keen nose for the hunt, Fido also offers a murder guide to London under separate cover. Woof!
- 3) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's middle name was Ignatius. We are aware that the more disrespectfully rambunctious among us can wreak havoc with this fact, so in chest and arm restraints, your Lowly Scribe will forebear.

5. **Man is Born Free, Yet Everywhere He Is In Chains**

David Kellett contributed:

1. Reference to a December 2006 article from the *Montreal Gazette* which posed: "Was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle behind Houdini's Death" as a result of the contortionist's being punched in the vitals in Montreal and then dying of peritonitis.
2. His fears about major thoracic surgery from which he is making a steady recovery.
3. His own new cosmology. David believes that as long as somebody supports you with their thoughts, you can't possibly die. We are all committed to thinking positively about David.
4. Concerning the proper way to clean silver, David quoted Holmes who said, "The human hand is best, Watson." This is a broad statement.
5. David Dowse responded that in one of the mysteries, Holmes looked down at polish-blackened thumbs.
6. David K. concluded this part of the evening by saying, "I thank you for your telepathic butterflies."

6. **Dancing in Cement – Sicilian Retribution**

Wilfrid deFreitas showed us photos of the brickwork over the garage in his home, taken by Paul Billette. Weird shapes seem to be oozing out of the bricks, reminiscent of the sketches of the Dancing Men, as if they knew where to dance, having been imprisoned in the parallel universe of fiction, and waiting for the proper ratiocination of the spheres to appear on the outside of Wilfrid's house. Before Hallowe'en. Wo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!

7. **First Toast – To the Master**

by Patrick Campell

Jack Anderson read Patrick's toast from last August

8. **The Magisterial Sleuth**

Laurie R. King, a noted author of post-Holmes novels, has released a new novel entitled *The Art of Detection*. It's about the death of Philip Gilbert, a Holmes fanatic. Please read it and tell us about it, then lend it to us.

9. **The Rain Was in Spain (It wasn't in England)**

Maureen and Jack Anderson informed us that their recent trip to England, was rain-free for 17 of its 18 days. They had even more fascinating tidbits to offer. Welcome back!

One of these tidbits was the introduction of a novel, *Mrs. Hudson and the Spirit's Curse*, by Martin Davies. Although Mrs. Hudson is a mainstay of the canon's smorgasbord, she is not allowed a lot of dialogue, and she rarely appears. This novel, we feel, is her opportunity to break with the band and launch her solo career. See #8 above for instructions.

**10. When want's hollow eyes
to satiation's cornucopia come**

We are targeting with focusing crosshairs, the third Saturday in January for our annual banquet. The following menu is the result of Rachel Alkallay's effort in contacting the Montefiore Club. Our other traditional haunt, Le Vieux Port, may also be in the running. We may have a menu for our December 6th meeting when we will vote on the location. Various Sherlockians are trying to discover the identity of our mystery speaker.

Montefiore Club (Guy St.)

Cost: \$43/pp. Drinks at bar (bring money)

- Hors d'Oeuvres consisting of:
Montefiore Chips, Smoked Salmon on cucumber, Goat cheese with hazelnuts, Cocktail Wieners, Mini vegetarian dumplings with plum sauce.
- Butternut squash soup
- Pan seared Orange Roughy, lime and basil sauce
or
Prime rib of beef au Jus
or
Chicken breast stuffed with cranberry stuffing, wild mushroom sauce
- Potato du jour, two seasonal vegetables
- Double Shocolate Cake
or
Key Lime pie
or
Ice Cream (non-dairy?)
- Coffee and Tea
- Montefiore Cookies and Squares

12. Second Toast – To the Dr. Watson

We misplaced the toastmaker.

We discovered our profound admiration for and appreciation of Dr. Watson. Words failed us as each member lifted a glass in silent and solemn tribute to the good doctor, in this wordless toast.

13. Stash it – Now!

We were informed that the Bimetallic visit to the RCMP crime lab would take place Thursday, October 25 at 1:00.

Perhaps someone will recount the visit at the meeting?

14. Third Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Paul Billette

She is a woman with no first name.

She is the only major 221-B personage not illustrated by Sidney Paget or any other canonical artist.

She is the preparer of an impromptu breakfast to rival any Scotswoman's.

She is a landlord flexible enough to fill in as cook, porter, message taker, and stealthy mover of waxed busts to ensnare Sebastian Moran.

She still lives among us in the corporeal shape of our very own Carol Abramson

So, we salute the inimitable past and present Mrs. Hudson.

15. Quiz – Results

"The Adventure of the Priory School" prepared by Wilfrid deFreitas.

As a preamble to the quiz, Wilfrid thanked David Kellett for stepping out of the room long enough at the last meeting, so that he could win the quiz.

Possible total: 35 points

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	David Kellett	23	<i>Mrs. Holmes of Baker Street</i> , by Canadians C. Alan Bradley and William A.S. Sarjeant
2.	Carol Abramson	23	A collectible can of Red Bull.
3.	none		

David and Carol tied at 23 points each. Wilfrid's first tie-breaking question, "When and where was the first Sherlock Holmes story published?" was missed by both contestants. (Your unworthy L.S. forgot to note the correct answer.)

The next question was: "From which story is our society's name taken?" David won with "The Bruce Partington Plans."

The next quiz will be based on "A Scandal in Bohemia," prepared by David Kellett.

16. Future Toasts

To the Master	Wilfrid deFreitas
To Dr. Watson	Stanley Baker
To The Woman	David (Kellett or Dowse?)
To Mrs. Hudson	Rachel Alkallay
To The Society	Patrick Campbell

17. A Literary Moment

Various voices waxed intellectual in a discussion of elements of "The Priory School" story.

18. Wait, wait, don't tell me

David Dowse read us three urban legends. They all might have been true, but only one was. The winner would get to act superior until facing the spouse. Briefly, here they are:

- (a) a news story re someone's popping a poodle in a microwave (a new take on French Fries?)
- (b) a father dressed in a Santa suit tries to get down the chimney, but suffers a heart attack (in an attempt to lose weight over a long period of time?)
- (c) a man ties 25 weather balloons to a chair, goes aloft, and in order to get safely down to earth again, judiciously pops the balloon with a bb gun (he was playing B.B. King on his ipod?)

We believe that #c was the correct answer.

19. Psst ... Want to make a quick \$13.7 million?

Stanley Baker warned us about e-mail hoaxes. Beware of offers to share estates, rewards, get your bank account, or other information. You may forward these notices to the RCMP.

20. Fourth Toast – To the Society

by David Dowse

(Written in calligraphic style by using an extremely broad nib and what appears to be Mont Blanc violet ink.)

The Bimetallic Question is first introduced to lovers of Sherlock Holmes in a reference to Mycroft in the adventure of the Bruce Partington Plans.

For most of the 19th century, all countries practiced bimetalism except England which had established a gold standard in 1793 and 1816. In 1895 Mycroft's expertise not only encompassed the world issue of the bimetallic question, but it extended to the colonial problems of Canada and India. Both locales were leading sources of the precious metals, gold and silver. In Mycroft's capacity as the final arbiter to decide many national policies, he was, I am sure, keenly attuned to any private or governmental plans to corner the market on gold or silver and their effect on world economies.

Bringing such worldly matters closer to home, namely the birth of the Bimetallic Question in Montreal, Wilfrid deFreitas at one point in his working life was a bullion trader. He followed the ups and downs of the value of gold and silver. I was a sporting enthusiast who loved ball hockey, gold, and long bicycle rides. What could possibly bring two such widely contrasted young men together? It was the gold and silver of Holmes and Watson. It has bound us in a friendship that has lasted over 25 years.

Thank you, Bimetallic Question, thank you Wilfrid, thank you members, friends, and guests who have enriched my life much more than gold and silver.

I give you ...

The Bimetallic Question

21. Gone again

Your L.S. regrets the absence of a toast to The Woman in this month's minutes. Either no toast was proffered, or L.S. lost his note of one. Usually never at a loss for words, the L.S. would ordinarily have whipped up a simulated toast with necessarily darkly seductive adjectives adorned with literary embellishments and saccharine bad taste, but the hour is late, and *Notre Belle Dame des Chats* is awaiting these few spare pages.

22. Coins

We have been told that we all possess a hidden fortune.

This fortune is in coins.

At home, we have them all over the place – in pockets, in dresser drawers, in cans, in cracks in floors.

Investment banks make a lot of money out of coins that we never see. They calculate interest and justifiably cannot post fractional cents to our account. But through divine logic, they may post these fractional cents to their account, thus proving that there is great value in paltry little coins.

We have also been told that the late, flamboyant city councilor, Frank Hanley, used to let coins fall out of his pockets in Point St. Charles, during the Depression, so that his electors could pick them up.

Coins go beyond monetary value. Think of the stories that cling to them as they pass from hand to hand. Wouldn't de Maupassant and O. Henry have had a field day with them?

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, December 6th, 2007, at 6:30 p.m.

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

