

Minutes
of the meeting
of
The Bimetallic Question
February 4th, 2010

Date of next meeting

Thursday, April 1st, at 6:30 p.m. at:
The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Westmount, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

“A Case of Identity”
prepared by Marie Burrows

Minutes of the meeting of THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, February 4th, 2010 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, Mac Belfer, Paul Billette, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Patrick Campbell, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, Solange Himelfarb, David Kellett, Magdalena, Roy Mercado, Elliott Newman, Mietek Padowicz, Naomi Padowicz, Lawrence Reich, Arlene Scher, Helen Vaupshas, Ron Zilman

Regrets: Wilfrid de Freitas

CALL TO ORDER:

Acting Sovereign Carol Abramson called the meeting to order at 6:30.

The society regrets the passing of
long-time member

MARY FINNEGAN

in Australia

February 2nd, 2010

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Cheese and Crackers, Milque and Toast, This and That)

1. Food for the Sherlockian Soul

Chris Herten-Greaven has had it right, from the beginning: Feed them, and they will come. With cheese, crackers, and pâté sliding up and down the long table, we were riveted to the night's proceedings. Thanks again, Chris. It's always appreciated.

2. Robert Downey Junior Holmes

We weighed in on our appreciation of the Sherlock Holmes movie at the AMC. While most of us liked the movie, some of us didn't. Of course, we poked a few holes in the verisimilitude and non-sequitural departments. This was only to be expected because there are among us some world-class Sherlockians who take these things seriously, as well we should. Mietek Padowicz quoted a review from *The Guardian* (England: internet download February 4) which termed the film a "souped-up Victorian crime romp." It seemed that Victorian London was on steroids in this film. One question we had was, "Why didn't they invent some new characters?"

3. First Toast – To the Master

by Naomi Padowicz

Today if Sherlock Holmes wants to know something or when to leave, he would simply use one of the many apps on his mobile or just Google it on the net. One of the stops he would surely make often, but only with back-up sources, is Wikipedia which is only slightly more accurate than the Sun celebrity fun fact page on really bad days.

But it wasn't always so. You may ask, was there one accurate printed source that fitted in your pocket, that could tell you where to eat, where to sleep, and what people got up to AS WELL AS telling you what train to take from where? Why yes, the original *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: George Bradshaw's Railway guides.

First published in 1839, Punch deemed it the bearing of human intellect to bring order to the beast known as the Railroad. Holmes specifically mentions the book in *The Copper Beeches* (June 1892) and *The Valley of Fear* (1914-15). From this we conclude that like any plugged-in Victorian, Holmes would have used Bradshaw as a matter of course and Watson would not need to go out of his way to bring attention to this essential and ubiquitous pocket-sized tool. That Holmes

the prototypical Victorian who believes in the holy trinity of Logic, Industry, and Empire, spares little time to praise this landmark work, should not be interpreted as disdain; just his assumption that all printed reference works should be (however nervous and terse in language) complete, compact, and useful. George Bradshaw got on with the niggling details so that Sherlock Holmes could get on with the business of bringing order to a society that was far from as ordered or moralistic as it thought itself to be.

TO THE MASTER!

4. Taking a trip

We had the privilege of examining two different publications of *Baedeker's London and its Environs*. Naomi Padowicz's version was from 1900, while Chris Herten-Greaven brought one in from 1930.

5. The Great Sherlockian Works in Mysterious Ways

When the scheduled speaker for our annual dinner cancelled at the last minute, more than a few of us were wondering how the void would be filled. It could only have been divine intervention that enabled Dr. Joe Schwarcz to step up to the plate and bat a home run. His critique on what will go down in history (albeit a short-term one) as the Downey Holmes was perceptive and provocative. He pointed out inconsistencies in the film and also displayed an amazing eye for detail. It has long been the opinion of your Lowly Scribe (who can only write, and little more) that our society contains a treasure-trove of talent and power that one does not have to search for too long, to uncover.

6. On the Road – Journal of a Contemporary Sherlockian Beatnik

Our Sovereign, Wilfrid de Freitas, was *en route* by car to “the coast” when he e-mailed the following thoughts on our annual dinner.

Our dinner on January 23, celebrating The Master's 156th birthday, was the best attended ever. Notwithstanding the last minute cancellation (owing to ill health) of our guest speaker and forensic art analyst Paul Biro, we had fifty-six members and guests, so much so, that the Montefiore Club wisely suggested that we use their main dining room. As Stanley Baker observed during the somewhat hectic discussions in the week leading up to the dinner, and I'm sure he will not mind if I quote him “The main purpose for the event is to celebrate the Master's Birthday, also the camaraderie with other Sherlockians and to enjoy a good repast. These are the reasons for my attending.” Judging from the large turnout, it would seem that Stanley was echoing the sentiment of just about everyone else at the dinner.

Of course, such an evening does not just happen: quite a lot of advance planning (hmm... can one have retroactive planning?) goes into it. Paul Billette, Stanley Baker, Rachel Alkallay and I had a two-hour planning meeting back in December to work out the programme, and earlier Paul and I had gone to tea with our much-anticipated speaker Paul Biro, who gave us a fascinating tour of his forensic art laboratory. We're fortunate in having Rachel who works closely with the Montefiore Club to ensure that they will fall in with what must sometimes seem to them our somewhat eccentric requirements. Past Sovereign Patrick Campbell spends many hours working out the winner of the Bimetallic Quiz Trophy (donated ages ago by our long deceased member and good friend Arnie Jones). By the way, no need to feel the slightest sympathy for Patrick having to

spend so much time on this: it was he who devised the complicated and devilishly clever point scoring method which, as he explained at the dinner, makes it possible for someone who never actually wins a quiz, still to win the trophy! Apropos which, I may be mistaken but it would appear that in winning it for the third time in a row, Carol Abramson has now established a new record. She now has her sights set on the record for the most number of Trophies overall.

A large part of the evening's entertainment is, of course, the toasts and, without exception, they raised the standard to a new level which will be difficult to beat (now there's a challenge, if ever I heard one). Sherlockian poems, Carrollian parodies and birthday messages to the Master from friend and foe alike, all vied for our attention and, judging by their reception, met with everyone's approval. I cannot let the opportunity pass without acknowledging, again, our gratitude to Dr Joe Schwarcz who stepped in at the last moment in place of our planned speaker. Dr Joe is a staunch friend of our Society and provided us with a typically incisive and entertaining review of the latest Sherlock Holmes movie, with a practical demonstration of how Lord Blackwood could have rigged the rope so as to avoid strangulation and, *inter alia*, pointed out that the hangman's noose was American, rather than British.

So, our thanks are due to everyone who contributed to the evening's entertainments and, of course, to all who attended. Please keep in mind that it's never too early to start thinking about next year's dinner; if you have an idea for a short entertainment or would like to propose one of the toasts, please let me know. By the way, apropos toasts, we're always looking for new people to propose them, so please help us by volunteering when the subject comes up at our regular meetings.

7. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by Arlene Scher

Dr. John H. Watson is the sidekick of Sherlock Holmes, and a medical man of some experience. He served in the military in Afghanistan and was discharged following an injury received in the line of duty. In *The Sign of Four*, Watson meets Mary Morstan who becomes his wife.

In Conan Doyle's original stories Watson is portrayed as a capable and brave individual. Watson's intelligence serves as a foil to Holmes's insight. Both are brilliant, and each is useful for their purposes. They are remarkably different in their function, a clever literary pairing. Watson occasionally attempts to solve crimes on his own, using Holmes's methods; however, because he is not endowed with his friend's almost superhuman ability to focus on the essential details of the case, he meets with limited success. In spite of this, let's raise our glasses in a toast.

To Dr. Watson!

8. Oh, Dear! I Seem to Have Quoted All Over Myself!

David Kellett supplied us with three pages of quotations by Sherlock Holmes, from the canon and from pastiches. For more on this, go to

<http://www.shelfari.com/groups/13555/discussions/14252/Holmes-Quotes>

Please note that the above is not in error: the URL actually has "Holmes-Quotes." Somebody should tell someone. Who said: "There are few things more amusing than a dyslexic person giving directions?"

Note that the quotations are not always accurately sourced; for example, the following quote:

"Art is balm for the brain, especially in moments of decision."

is ascribed to "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" but actually comes from the Granada adaptation "The Master Blackmailer".

There are two references to art in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Chapter 5 (Reynolds and Steele), and one reference in *The Valley of Fear* (Jean-Baptiste Greuze).

9. Man is Born Free, Yet Everywhere He is in Chains

David Kellett announced that at 3:00 p.m., February 21, he was going to be a guest on Dr. Joe's radio show. The discussion was going to focus on spiritualism. Since both David and Dr. Joe are great fans of Houdini, the famous escape artist, we were led to expect a lively discussion.

10. Ars Aeternam, Vita Brevis Est

Stanley Baker spoke about an art fraud artist names Charles Augustus Howell, who was John Ruskin's secretary, and whose name is suggested as the source of the protagonist's name in this week's story.

11. Biting the Biscuit

Maureen and Jack Anderson shared biscuits they brought from Fortnum & Mason's in London.

12. The Great Unsung Canadian Mystery

Chris Herten-Greaven showed a book entitled *3800 Miles Across Canada*.

13. Sherlock Holmes in New England

Roger Burrows informed us about a Sherlockian conference called "Sherlock Holmes: The Man and His Worlds" that will be taking place at Bennington College, Vermont, June 24-27, 2010. You can find out more information about the conference at this web address:

http://www.bakerstreetbreakfastclub.com/conference_information.shtml

Bennington College is a school on a vast tract of land in the pastoral setting of southern Vermont. Bennington Museum is home to a large selection of the works of Grandma Moses who lived near the town. Norman Rockwell also lived near Bennington, in Arlington, and worked there actively before moving to Stockbridge, Massachusetts. There are museums in both towns.

14. Dark Lanterns

Some time ago, Patrick Campbell found himself in the stolen goods depository at Scotland Yard. Since they were all out of blueprints to Fort Knox, Patrick took photos of lanterns instead. From these, he built a dark lantern from metal. For the uninitiated, a dark lantern is not a source of black light, which itself may be seen only by people with black eyes and by dogs because we are told dogs see only in black, white, and shades of grey, thus explaining why when you ask your Shidoodle whether she prefers the red dress or the green one, she will sit on the carpet, stick her tongue out, pant, and then dance in circles, unable to decide because she won't know what you are talking about. If you own nothing but cats, or if they own you, you will have noticed they rarely dance. They do more than bundle up, sometimes in clusters, like tight little sphinxes, and stare at you wide-eyed at such questions, as if to say, "What'samaddayou? Can't you see I'm busy?" The non-Italian cats narrow their eyes to little slits and pretend to doze. They don't respond well to questions about colours either.

The dark lantern was invented as a light source for people who might have wanted to use a lantern, but did not want to be seen using light. This included merchant vessels at sea during wartime. In the days before Bruce Willis and Eveready DieHards, when men were men and batteries were definable groups of soldiers and artillery, it may have been advantageous for a ship or a thief to conceal quickly the fact that they had a lantern, for to throw light meant a light source, that source's being there for someone's benefit and perhaps someone else's detriment. (Mark Abley, take note: Can you please explain the etymological connection between "clandestine" and "candle"?) In terms of a land-based operation, it would be an ill-equipped burglar indeed who would spread out his tools on a dining table, his lantern's casting light to beat the band, shadows dancing larger than the original images, announcing to the world: "Ecce Homo Stupido" and bask in the glow of a full-fledged lantern as the constabulary descended upon him with the family Shidoodle muttering, "What a tapeworm. Hasn't he heard about dark lanterns?" and "He should have worn the green dress."

The dark lantern, therefore, had an internal shield (inside the glass) which was easily and quickly lowered around the flame which produced the light. This shield meant that one could cover the light without blowing out the flame. We assume this shield was not airtight, for this would have extinguished the flame by depriving it of oxygen. Theoretically, this imperfection would also have allowed slivers of light to escape from the lantern through tiny cracks; a necessary evil.

The dark lantern was a brilliant invention altogether, since it meant that the holder of the lantern would not have to go through the annoyance of opening the glass and fumbling for the wick – in the dark – as he groped for his matches – in the dark – and tried to strike one of them – also in the dark – in order to relight it after blowing out the light. The further challenge was that not everyone in Victorian London wore coarse Levis, which in turn meant that not everyone was likely to enjoy the convenience of scratching the sulphur-tipped match on their hindquarters, which for most people are easy enough to find – even in the dark. Extending this thought (if, indeed, there is one at all), the British match industry might not have been amused at this invention, since it would have had the *de facto* effect of cutting down on the use of matches. On the other hand, up went the consumption of candles, since without all that blowing out, more candles

were used. This yin-yang relationship between matches and candles is what is known as “balance in nature” and was invented by the Chinese or maybe God. It also has relevance in the guns-butter issue, one of the first lessons of basic Economics. We wonder if TWGCD himself has not written a monograph on the subject.

Another inconvenience resulting from the invention of the dark lantern was that lost matches at crime scenes would not have been in evidence because perpetrators no longer would need to fumble in the dark. Gone would be a brilliant source of clues – type of match, how much wood was burned in the lighting, matches fallen on the rug or the wood floor, split fingernail fragments as a result of flicking the match against one’s fingernail while lighting, and so on. While the issue of lost matches has never come up in the Canon in this way, we note that subsequent generations of writers of Sherlock Holmes stories, novels, and plays have been deprived of describing the many ways in which a perpetrator or criminal could swipe a match against his pastoosh – in the dark.

Although primitive by today’s standards, the dark lantern represented a breakthrough in efficiency and must have gleaned for the genius who put the idea in the company suggestion box, free kippers for at least a year.

Does anyone remember the radio program, *Orson Wells in the Black Museum*? Was this the same Scotland Yard museum that Patrick visited?

15. Coins and Owen Sound

Patrick Campbell showed us British coins.

He informed us that he uses *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*, printed in five volumes in Owen Sound, Ontario.

16. Mietek’s Quest

Mietek Padowicz will research information on the Diogenes Club and regale us with the fruits of his labours at our next meeting. Will Chris Herten-Greaven provide us with the Devon cream to dollop on Mietek’s fruits? These and other intriguing questions will be answered when you attend the next meeting of The Bimetallic Question!

17. The Pedigreed Hound

Paul Billette was at a recent rare book show. He saw a vintage *Hound of the Baskervilles* priced to sell at \$7,500. Because your Lowly Scribe travels in less lofty circles, he recently saw a new one selling at one dollar. With \$7,499 in change, he was contemplating eating for the next few months.

18. Splish, splash, I was taking a bath ...

Carol Abramson presented us with copies of an excerpt from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 20/09, front page, Section N, forwarded to her by Wilfrid de Freitas. A delightful article on the Swiss village of Meiringen, near Reichenbach Falls is quite revealing. The other article is a summary of *The New Finding Sherlock’s London* by Thomas Wheeler, an intelligently arranged walking guide and arrangement of maps of London-based locations in the canon.

19. Third Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Susan Fitch

Why is the persona of Mrs. Hudson so memorable, so meaningful to us, when at the same time so much of her life remains a mystery? After all, the frequently heard refrain of Sherlockians is “Ah, yes. Mrs. Hudson. We know so little about her.”

But what little we are told about her in Dr. Watson’s reminiscences reads to us as potent fact. We can speculate that this is perhaps due, at least in part, to the young Conan Doyle’s own challenging experiences while serving as assistant to a country doctor in a village in Shropshire.

As he wrote to his mother, Mary Foley Doyle on October 19th, 1878:

“ ... I vow and declare (as the janitor says in the song) that the medical assistant is the most ill used, underpaid, hard-worked fellow in the world. He does the work of a footman, for the wages of a cook ... and tho’ not acknowledged as a gentleman, or treated as one, he must keep up the appearance of one under pain of dismissal ... Good Heavens! What a life! I am very glad that I got this post, but the life is very different to what you or I expected. I have half a mind to write a letter to the *Lancet* to ‘disillusion’ young fellows who may have formed such notions as I did. I am not a hothouse plant, nor do I mind answering rings, or opening doors, but it is the loneliness that I have felt most. You must know that the assistant is not supposed to consort at all or see the family except at meals ... So now I sit in my room working and answering rings and concocting drugs all day ...

“This is a fine long grumble – but I don’t mind airing my grievances now, as they will soon be over.”

Over, but not forgotten; rather, woven into the fabric of life at No. 221B Baker Street.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Society, please raise your glasses to our favourite and most memorable of all landladies, Mrs. Hudson!

(ACD quoted from *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*,” edited by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower, and Charles Foley)

20. Surely, Shirley Lives as Who

Naomi and Mietek Padowicz expounded on an hypothesis that Sherlock Holmes is alive because there has been no notice of his death. Furthermore, they suggest that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Who (who is 908 years old) could be one and the same person. The framing criteria for this bold position, which fortunately caught us sitting down, are listed at the beginning of their dissertation.

Before sharing with you the product of their research, should we not consider that we who have been so fixated upon Sherlock Holmes’s proof of death, ought one day to turn our attention to his proof of birth? The newspapers have obviously been remiss in both cases. Such unforgivable errors are not hard to find. Dear friends, it is sad to say that newspapers are not infallible. We may conclude, therefore, that British newspapers have been similarly deficient in the case of the birth of Sherlock Holmes? May we suggest that the Royal Society sponsor research that will unearth the registration of the birth of Sherlock Holmes, failing

which a sworn attestation to this effect from any paid-up member of The Bimetallic Question would suffice? If this is not enough, we are confident that formal representation to Her Majesty's Keeper of Domestic Records Regarding Births would effectively induce the appropriate inscription and apologies. We have incontrovertible proof that "in the early hours of the morning of Friday, January 6 ... (the birth of) the third and last son to Siger and Violet Holmes at their farmstead of Mycroft in the North Riding of Yorkshire, England" took place, according to one Mr. W. S. Baring-Gould who was there and must have known.

What this does to the thesis of Naomi and Mietek Padowicz one can only hypothesize. We do anticipate that we will get to the bottom of it, however long it takes.

Here, then, is their story; well-wrought, intriguing, and worthy of the consideration of our Society ...

The Extraterrestrial Nature of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson?

My wife and I were talking a while back and found a number of similarities between Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Who. It got us to wondering if we could prove without a doubt that the two were in fact the same person. In order to do this we would need to prove several points:

- Sherlock Holmes is very old or an eternal being.

Easy one to start, clearly he hasn't died yet as the obit hasn't appeared in *The Times* of London.

Also, there are no photos of the young Holmes or of any of the Doctors.

- He is alien in nature

His physical strength despite his frame and his "unique" talent in detection, in an age where this was considered ground breaking.

His case of the Giant Rat of Sumatra, clearly an otherworldly creature not normally encountered by police, and yet he found a way to solve the matter..

- His means of travel

The Tardis is the only explanation for Sherlock Holmes's ability to be in a place long before Watson has arrived and yet the latter had left before Holmes. Most notably in *The Hound*.

The Tardis comes in again as the one choice to get Holmes to the site of the Giant Rat and back to London in less than the month or so required for an ocean going ship.

And lastly it's the best way to explain how Holmes survived the alleged fall from the Reichenbach Falls.

(How did he hide the Tardis? Well, easy again as the Tennant regeneration speaks of an invisibility setting, thus making it possible not to call attention to a call box from the 1950s . There is also the well-known phenomenon, the "Somebody else's problem field" which transforms the out-of-place object into something one would rather ignore than think about.)

Clearly he is a Time Lord regenerated into a new form, like all Time Lords keeping all memories and basic personality traits of the previous regeneration. This would allow Holmes to meet Watson for the first time at the Criterion bar and tell him whatever he felt like.

Next we need to connect the two persons into one person:

- Dress
Holmes and the various Doctors all have a deep and abiding love of smoking jackets and Harris Tweed
- Appearance
We passed around a sheet with the photos of Jeremy Brett and the various incarnations of the Doctor, pointing out the strong similarities in build, facial structure and deep peering look. In the case of the first televised Doctor, William Hartnell was of the age (if you take into account the slow aging process of Time Lords) to be an older Holmes who by then had gone somewhat squirrely and odd whilst caring for his teen-aged granddaughter in 1963. As well, there were two photos of Tom Baker in the “Talons of Weng Chiang” looking very Holmesian and convincing when facing the evil time travelers and a giant rat in London
- Characteristics
Both seem to go into a deep funk when not working, but when working become agitated and dismissive of others around them when the game's afoot.
Both share a strong specific sense of justice in which they don't always let the alleged evil-doer get arrested, executed, or punished by the more conventional means available. In some cases, The Doctor/Holmes lets the offending individual go free.
Both work best with an assistant
Both have only ONE WOMAN Irene Adler and Rose Tyler
They are first and foremost British, despite the Doctor being Gallifreyan by birth
- Use of tools
In both cases they are able to enter some of the most secure places on the basis of their tools: Holmes with his uncanny ability so good he could have been a very successful criminal and The Doctor with his Sonic Screwdriver and magic paper pass.

Finally, the clinching evidence points to Holmes being a regeneration of the Doctor:

- The doctor has been in one regeneration or another in Victorian England about as often as you could without missing any major personalities. AND YET.... he never once met Holmes, Doyle, or Dr. Watson. He did, however, meet Queen Victoria, Charles Dickens, and many more people too numerous to mention here. This is possible because if he is in fact the

Holmes regeneration, the Doctor has to be very careful about bumping into himself as we saw in “The Five Doctors” Special.

- The Jack the Ripper case was never taken up by Holmes, despite him being at his height when the events broke. How can Holmes not have been called upon? Surely Watson would have written up the case in the Canon. Well, the answer is that Holmes couldn't do it on Earth but the Doctor does in the "Matrix" episode. In it, the Sylvester McCoy doctor (who resembles our own dearly departed Colin Semel) defeats the Valeyard inside the dark matrix (the repository of all dark Gallifreyan secrets) where the Valeyard is killing people in Victorian London calling himself The Ripper.
- Lastly some of you may argue that in one very clear regard, Holmes does stand apart from the other Doctor incarnations. This would of course be the drug addiction. Holmes is well known for indulging a habit of a 7% solution of cocaine, while none of the Doctors ever seem to be seen going near anything more addictive than danger. And herein lies the rub. The Holmes regeneration is in Victorian London where he finds himself less challenged than any other time of his life. Thus bored and frustrated he chooses to stimulate himself with drugs. All the other Doctors have little choice but to be in the direct line of danger, facing Daleks, Cybermen, The Autons, The Sontarans and of course the Master who keeps trying to destroy Time itself. They are never too relaxed or too far from imminent danger to be tempted by drugs.

So my friends the next time we toast the Master, we should in fact be toasting The Doctor!

21. Quiz - Results

“The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton” prepared by David Kellett.

Possible total: 57

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	Marie Burrows	54	A long umbrella
2.	Roger Burrows	54	A longish telescopic umbrella
3.	Carol Abramson	49½	An average-sized telescopic umbrella

The next quiz, based on “A Case of Identity”, will be prepared by Marie Burrows.

22. Quiz Story - Insights

Mietek Padowicz discussed the various titles applied to the Milverton story. The original title was “The Worst Man in London” but this was changed before publication. In the Granada series, the story was changed quite a bit and the title used was “The Master Blackmailer”.

Mietek opined that “This is the one story where Holmes puts body and soul into his work.”

23. The Bad Old Days

Patrick Campbell and Stanley Baker reminisced about living in and around London during the Blitz.

24. Fourth Toast – To the Woman

by Roy Mercado

The Woman... must she always be the woman out of reach?

We believe Holmes knew what many of us have suspected all along: Allow the love of your life to slip through your fingers...and she will remain inside your heart forever.

And remain forever in your thoughts...

... be it gazing out from a ship's porthole at the raging seas, or from an upper window at 221B Baker Street, while ghostly images play tricks in the gaslight.

You must now imagine an abandoned attic. And there lying upon the dusty floorboards an early manuscript, perhaps the very original of "A Scandal in Bohemia." A slight draft filters in. It ruffles the brittle pages. Holmes and Adler lay lonely in their tombs, thousands of miles apart, he in Sussex, under the frosted ground, and she beneath the shade of fig trees upon a gentle rise in Eilat overlooking The Red Sea.

Or, when Doyle's back was turned had they actually found one another somewhere along the final length of their journey?

FAST FORWARD – to the barren Sunday corridors of Charing Cross. A kindly nurse looks up sympathetically as Irene returns bearing compresses and a basin of fresh water. The two exchange glances of recognition and from nearby Holmes can be heard muttering softly, incoherently.

Irene: 'My husband is in final preparation...'

Nurse: 'Ma'am?'

Irene smiles: 'To meet Moriarty of course...'

Thunder rumbles overhead and somewhere in another wing of the hospital a child is being born – while Sherlock Holmes, his eyes once sharp as crystal as sharp as the razor's edge, at times even predatory, now stare out blindly at the raging storm.

Are we the reader the real culprits?

Did WE wish to see OUR Holmes happily wed; Our Holmes bouncing a toddler on his knee while Irene knits by the fire? Certainly not! Much like Doyle and perhaps even Watson we had become intoxicated by the lure of the chase.

Only Sherlock and Irene left to suffer for our indulgence...

Or maybe, on a worldwide scale it was nothing more...

...than just a winter's tale.

To "The Woman" and to a love that was never destined to be...

25. Getting a Leg Up

Paul Billette suggested it isn't too early to reserve a speaker for next year's dinner.

Rachel would like us all to come in costume.

Marie wondered if we could make our own?

Since we always have the dinner around the birth date of Sherlock Holmes we would be looking at January 22nd, but not if it conflicts with Wilfrid's rendezvous with *The Dharma Bums* (the Kerouac gang) on the West coast.

26. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by Mietek Padowicz

Back in 1979 (that's 31 years ago for those with weak math skills), this fine society joined an already existing larger body of similar groups of Holmesian anoraks. It was a great time to be a Sherlockian. New books were coming out almost weekly and the pastiche industry was going strong. I still recall warmly how my bank balance would dip significantly when I visited book shops or ordered through the post the latest rare unsigned copy of something. And should some of us not have access to Toronto or the post, our Wilfrid was always there to keep our addiction going. It was also during this time I learned of the unique fields of Sherlockian Maths and scholarship ... Both tinged with a hint of humour and surrealism.

So many years on, surrounded by friends who haven't changed a bit in all that time, I can say without risk of contradiction, that being a member of The Bimetallic Question is the second or third best thing I have ever done with my time. You keep me sharp and feed my curiosity.

Also I'd like to thank those who have taken to bringing food to our gatherings as well as the usual drink.

To the place where the laws of physics and time are mere suggestions and order is a matter of interpretation.

TO THE SOCIETY!

27. Future Toasts

To The Master	-	Chris Herten-Greaven
To Dr. Watson	-	Ronnie Zilman
To The Woman	-	David Kellett
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Stanley Baker
To The Society	-	Roger Burrows

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, April 1st, 2010, at 6:30 p.m. Bring a friend.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to:

<http://www.bimetallicquestion.org>

Snowfall in Montreal

by Mac Belfer

The snow keeps falling
Gently whitening the streets
The unhurried flakes
Are met by charging tires
In violent embrace
While wheels are spinning
The engine roars
In deep frustration
Trying to escape
The soft relentless mass
To no avail
Amid shrill shrieks of protest
From churning tires
The car slides deeper
Into helplessness

The man behind the wheel
Whips the bucking car
Into mechanical convulsions
Until the stench
Of smoldering metal
Brings him to his senses
And stops his useless toil
Where is our prowess now
When buttons pushed
No longer heed our urgent call
When nature's force
Weary of our arrogance
Punishes us for our puny claim
To powers such as hers

Toasts and Speeches from
the Annual Dinner
of
The Bimetallic Question
January 23rd, 2010



Photograph courtesy of David Kellett

First Toast – To the Master

by Sarah Dowd

Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you to have a look around the room. Take a good look at the attire, the menu, the décor, the overall theme. We used to be the only ones who would preserve the name of Sherlock Holmes. However, if there were any doubt as to whether Sherlock Holmes would still be a familiar name in the new decade, it would have been dispelled with the runaway box-office success that is sure to keep the public's eye on our favourite detective, for some time.

However, this film has been causing debate that Sherlock Holmes was too modernized, and that his legacy would be ruined. A concern raised in the society was that Sherlock Holmes is being portrayed as an action character, a superhero, Iron Man with a deerstalker cap, all so that he would be more acceptable to a modern audience. However, what's to say that Sherlock Holmes isn't a superhero? Not just a superhero of his time, but one that could save ours. Let's examine what kind of positive effect The Master himself could bring to a society almost 150 years more advanced than his own.

There are some little ways in which Sherlock Holmes could shape the world towards preservation. He is the role-model the diet obsessed fashion-industry has been waiting for since thin became in. He is an icon who can say, "Dieting makes me smarter." He could also bring back the critical acclaim of the long-running drama, CSI. Imagine David Caruso, and Sherlock Holmes as crime scene investigators, working together!

But that's just on a small scale. What role could Sherlock Holmes play on a global stage? We currently have a honey-bee crisis looming over our heads, and what could possibly be the explanation? Why, Moriarty, of course. Sherlock Holmes is long since retired, currently beekeeping in the Sussex Downs. But is this simply a hobby he took up for a relaxing old age? Or did Sherlock Holmes see this honey-bee crisis coming 150 years away, and decide to brew a plan for global salvation?

Sherlock Holmes could be the saviour we've been waiting for. It's not so ridiculous to use his name for what essentially is a superhero movie! While it used to be the strong and the few who clung on to his legacy, Sherlock Holmes has now been reintroduced on a global scale so that for the next few years we can look forward to an abundance of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and not one moment too soon.

To the Master.

* * *

Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by Elliott Newman

A good marketer, like a priest, a rabbi, or someone in serious trouble, knows you need to leverage a higher power to get over a serious hurdle.

In this day and age, small software solution providers leverage huge names like Microsoft, IBM, Apple, and other giant forces in order to establish a mark of their own; register some sort of victory; get their face on the cover of a magazine; become a hero, sometimes catapulting themselves into the ionosphere of fame, wealth, and power in the process.

Going back in time, where would Noah have been without his flood? Jacob without his ladder? Our recourse to mnemonics and symbols is in our nature.

We soar on the wings of metaphor, glancing the beams of our imaginations as tangents against the suns and stars of our dreams, and in so doing, burst beyond our physical limitations.

James Boswell, the biographer of Dr. Samuel Johnson, was a case in point. Without Boswell, Dr. Johnson might have been just another genius in a white wig with a bilious expression on his face, as the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds shows us. However, it was due to James Boswell, the ninth Laird of Auchinleck in Scotland, that Johnson shines today. Genius as he might have been, Johnson posthumously lent the gossip of his life to what arguably is the world's best biography ever.

In our Bimetallic Society, we have compared Sherlock Holmes's Dr. James Watson with Samuel Johnson's James Boswell. This juxtaposition is accurate in only one sense, and even in that single sense of Boswell's role as Johnson's biographer, it is a stretch. Everything in Boswell's life, from his tormented childhood under a strict Calvinist father, to his early unhappy years at a private school away from his family, and his well-deserved reputation as a rake and a roué, point to his reluctance to make a commitment to anyone or anything. He began the Johnson biography after the death of Johnson. They had seen each other only occasionally, often no more than once a year. Johnson with his tics, later considered to be Tourette's Syndrome, and Boswell with his depression and seventeen acknowledged cases of venereal disease must have made an odd pair. When one twitched, the other itched. How's that for symbiosis?

Holmes and his Watson, on the other hand, grew and moved through a relationship that included friendship, Watson's devotion, and his sacrifices to his friend's whims and genius. They interacted with each other, fed each other.

Was it not a stroke of genius by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, to plumb secret chasms of the body, the mind, science, and the spirit, in addressing the myriad complexities of human nature through the mouthpiece of his creation Watson? Holmes's Boswell? I think not. Watson has no literary precursor. Although other estimable writers have tried to emulate and recreate him in subsequent works, their characters have all tumbled painlessly onto the pastel pages of pastiche.

In bringing Sherlock Holmes to his lofty and influential position in popular literature, his creator indeed leveraged a higher power.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Society: I give you that higher power, Doctor Watson.

* * *

Third Toast – To the Woman

by Joan O'Malley

The first line in “A Scandal in Bohemia” is: “To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman.”

In my version “the” is in italics, but “woman” is not italicized, and none of the words are bolded, or in capital letters. So why, when read, do some people say “THE WOMAN” as if “the woman” were in caps or in bold? They absolutely shout it out: “To Sherlock Holmes she is always THE WOMAN.” I have also heard it read “To Sherlock Holmes she is always ‘the woman’” as if the woman were in italics. Notice that these people also bend their head to emphasize the italics. Some individuals even put in quote marks and make annoying gestures with their hands: “To Sherlock Holmes she is always ‘the woman.’” Why do we misread this sentence? I think it is because we want to read more into it. Perhaps we want Holmes to be in love with the woman Irene Adler?

Why do we so want Holmes to be in love with Irene Adler? I think it is because we want Holmes to be less lonely and less aloof. We want to believe that he has known love. This in spite of the fact that in “The Adventure of the Devil's Foot,” published in 1917, Holmes says “I have never loved, Watson.” We wish for Holmes the dimension of a love life, something we think he is denied or is denying himself. We imagine that he suffers because of this denial. And this in spite of what he states in “The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone.” “I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix.”

The problems that entail from misreading something or someone, or even a situation are numerous. We can only wonder that Sherlock Holmes so misread Irene Adler. Upon learning that Adler has left England: “Sherlock Holmes staggered back, white with chagrin and surprise. ‘Do you mean that she has left England?’ he asked.”

How could Holmes have so misread Adler? Perhaps Watson has a good explanation: “Holmes used to make merry over the cleverness of women.” Or perhaps Holmes misread Adler because he had her biography “sandwiched in between that of a Hebrew rabbi and that of a staff-commander who had written a monograph upon the deep-sea fishes.”

Perhaps Dr. Watson also is guilty of misreading. Events in “A Scandal in Bohemia” strongly suggest that the most celebrated sleuth in the civilized world experienced feelings akin to love for Irene Adler. Perhaps Watson totally misread his friend's emotional state with regard to Irene Adler. Support for this hypothesis is given by Watson himself. Watson writes in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “I had seen little of Holmes lately. My marriage had drifted us away from each other. My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention.”

My hypothesis about Watson's misreading Holmes's true feelings for Irene Adler would explain why we misread the first sentence in “A Scandal in Bohemia” and why — to Sherlock Holmes, Irene Adler is always the woman.

I ask you to raise your glass to The Woman.

* * *

Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Paul Billette

However it happened, at that fabled address, Mrs. Hudson is, for us, the perennial constant, usherer of clients and replenisher of the sideboard, attending to the daily routine, picking up Holmes's dirty socks, dusting off the cocaine box, keeping an ear to all the locks. She was the lady who prepared, cooked, and cleaned for those two fine gentlemen of indeterminate means living under her roof.

As scholars of the Canon well know, there are few mentions of food in the stories. However, the deduction (actually an induction) that the Master was a lover of fine food is quite reasonable. On Mrs. Hudson's cooking, he said: "Her cuisine is a little limited, but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotswoman." No doubt in the mind of this Englishman, this was the height of culinary delight.

Holmes's disdain for women did not include Mrs. Hudson, the only woman to share his daily life for two decades. Without being facetious, "It was from her, perhaps, that he developed his remarkable gentleness and courtesy in dealing with women."

Mrs. Hudson's lodging arrangement at 221B Baker Street even made it into the law books. A court decision rendered by Justice Albert Rosenblatt, citing Mrs. Hudson, ruled in the case of *Sypek v. Sypek* that living under the same roof with a man, or men, did not necessarily mean cohabitation.

A cynic once opined that, in reality, Sherlock Holmes's greatest mystery is how Mrs. Hudson ever put up with him for so long.

Finally, if you ever wondered what Mrs. Hudson's life after Holmes and Watson became, my research has solved this query. She eventually sold her home and purchased a small cottage in Sussex where she is now earning a princely sum breeding non-smoking, non-intellectual, non-scientific, non-musical bees.

To the lady who chose to retain the worst tenant in London within her domain, to this uniquely capable, adaptable and steel-nerved woman, I propose a toast:

To Mrs. Hudson of Baker Street!

* * *

Fifth Toast – To the Society

by Chris Herten-Greaven

Ladies & Gentlemen,

This evening I have been granted the distinct privilege of proposing the toast to The Society. Sherlockian societies must have originated some time in the late 1880s, or early 1900s, though I cannot give you precise historical data about it. We do know that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was under contract to *The Strand* magazine to write a certain number of new mysteries or adventures within a given period of time, on several occasions. Obviously there was demand. His stories were selling, and being read, but whether the first society met regularly and had a name and discussed his work(s) and their meaning, I do not know. There may be several claimants. Certainly there are Sherlockian societies worldwide nowadays; in fact, to use a Victorian phrase, it is probable that the sun never sets on a Sherlockian Society, at least, not for long. Two reasons that come to mind are that the stories of Sherlock Holmes stimulate one's imagination and exercise one's memory; two commodities that sadly have fallen into decline in the present educational system, with the advent of electronics and computerology.

David Dowse and Wilfrid de Freitas were the founders of our society some thirty years ago, following their attendance at a meeting of the Toronto Sherlock Holmes Society. Wilfrid told me just yesterday that we will need a larger table due to increased membership and attendance, so obviously the mystical appeal of Sherlock Holmes is still there and growing. Congratulations to these two gentlemen for their foresight and enthusiasm.

And now, dear friends, I ask you to raise your glasses and toast our society – its good health and perpetuation.

To our Society!

* * *

Presentation to the Lowly Scribe

by Paul Billette

NOT JUST A PEN – A REFINED WRITING INSTRUMENT

While our self-described lowly scribe beavers away in his obscure quarters, how many of us realize that in so doing, he follows a noble tradition for whom writing was invented about 5,000 ago in Mesopotamia.

Research revealed that what is a little less known is that the first everyday luxury objects were created by the Egyptians, The objects had to be functional and beautiful. Many objects were made with that intention: mirrors, perfume bottles, vases, and of course, writing instruments. For 4,000 years, then, we have liked our writing instruments to be as beautiful as they are useful.

From the land of the Pharaohs, scribes, far from being lowly, shared the daily life of the living God committing their every utterance to posterity. Next came the Muslim scribes writing the word of God and transforming calligraphy from mere writing into works of remarkable art.

In the Middle ages, monasteries housed whole scriptoriums where skilled craftsmen assigned the word of God to parchment. They produced splendid Books of Hours and Bibles for the grandees of the time. They produced illuminations inspired by the divine while their lowlier brethren, also under divine inspiration, were concocting the ancestors of today's great wines. But, that is another story!

So our distinguished scribe ought to be proud of the lineage of his craft. His is a very artistic endeavour. His pen is not just a pen but a refined writing instrument.

A pen collector once recollected that he often heard the following comment: "Three hundred dollars for a pen! I hope it writes well!" After all what is the difference between a three-dollar pen and a three hundred-dollar pen? Before the arithmetic geniuses among us reply with crass levity, 297 dollars, I can assure you that it is the difference between a mere pen and a refined writing instrument.

Only a refined writing instrument is *de rigueur* for our esteemed, indispensable scribe. For a perfect gift that will last for years to come, it is my honour to present to Elliott, with our gratitude, on behalf of The Bimetallic Question which he delights so artfully, a refined writing instrument to confide our words of wisdom to posterity.

* * *

Special Presentation by Naomi & Mietek Padowicz

This is the part of the evening where we read messages from absent friends, people who for one reason or another could not be with us due to weather, traffic, bees...

These are telegrams received over the last few days and hours (e-mails really).

We kick off with a note from Inspector Lestrade: "Happy birthday Holmes, hope retirement is treating you well. Could have used you in that nasty drug business in your Sussex backyard. Ringleader goes by the name of Tim. Anything you do to assist would not be refused."

From Dr. John H. Watson: "Capital! you're 156. I myself don't feel a day over 125. Remember you're only as old as the woman you feel. This chap Timothy introduced me to the new Mrs. Watson. You'll like Ludmila. See you soon old Chum!"

And this from Wiggins of the BSI: "Evenin' Guvner! On behalf of the lads, I is sending you this note wot I hope finds you in good nick. Me and the missus named our first-born after you..... Shirl is now 20 and hopes to be Keith Richard's new wife. Guttled about the Stella strike, don't know what I'll do for drink now? BTW Tim was wanting a word with you."

Holmes's brother Mycroft writes: "Thank you for the simply marvellous honey dear brother. All quiet at the Diogenes. All this will change soon. Have been given the ultra secret job of making sure England will win the World Cup. STEP 1: No official song, "Vindaloo will do." STEP 2: Make sure Cristiano Ronaldo is rubbish at penalties. STEP 3: Insure Italy, Germany and Brazil lose their football boots!!! Watch out for that Dr. Joe Schwarcz. He once ruined my jacket trying to prove salami is a vegetable."

Here's an odd one: Irene Adler wants to be *Facebook* friends, and suggests you join her in Farmville Somebody has time on her hands.

Carrying on Mrs. Hudson sent this: "Still going strong, Mr. Holmes. Nothing and no one will keep these old Scottish bones down. Mind, things have changed since you were here. Your old rooms now reverberate to the sound of something called 'Cradle of Filth.' They won't eat my cooking, preferring take away and cheap lager. Don't get me wrong, one day they'll be terribly important. One of them is studying to be a life coach. I've sent along some of my shortbread I know you love so much & thanks ever so much for the honey."

Then there's this mysterious message from an unknown friend. Let's put our thinking caps on and see if we can't figure out who this is from: "H. Things are hotting up, can't deliver your regular "t-shirts". Will have to lie low till the heat is off. I'll get word to you soon, and you still owe me for the last batch. Don't worry about me, Amy Winehouse is keeping me in plenty of lolly. Signed T."

Moriarty took time to write as well: "See you have got away from my minions for yet another year. Perhaps I need better minions? But you didn't succeed in stopping my plot to plunge the world into recession! MWoohahaha..... Where was I? Oh yes. Happy Birthday Sir and beware, tomorrow could be your last."

Lastly, a message via unusual channels from beyond the grave ... It's Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. I'll try to do it justice: "I JUST DON'T BELIEVE IT! I MEAN I REALLY CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW THIS HAPPENED! HONESTLY! All those lovely greetings from people who are at least 140. How mad is that??? Here I am DEAD now 80 years, LITERARY AGENT INDEED!!! You wouldn't have so much as a drink without me! And to

add insult to injury, in 1991 they put up a statue in Edinburgh in front of my house, but not of me, noooooo it's that usurper HOLMES! I'm watching you.....”

On that note, we hand things back to Wilfrid.

* * *

Notes on the Musgrave Ritual

by Susan Ravdin

Some of you may remember being puzzled when, a couple years ago, we added the following line to the Musgrave Ritual:

“What was the month?”

“The sixth from the first.”

Before printing out this year’s copy, Wilfrid asked me to double check and make sure it was correct and, of course, I stumbled on a puzzle.

It seems this couplet was left out when the story was first published in *The Strand* in May 1893, but was reinserted when the story appeared in the first edition of *The Memoirs* in 1894. It was then left out of the first US edition. According to *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, the couplet has appeared in all subsequent UK editions, but has been left out of all subsequent US editions. Hmmm

Why is this important; why should we care? You see, a shadow is longer in the fall than in summer, and in the winter longest of all, and because of that the couplet is crucial to finding the Musgrave family’s hidden treasure because it tells Holmes when to look for the oak’s shadow as it falls under the elm; and so where to start stepping “... by ten and by ten ...”

If we take it literally, the line means the sixth month after the first of the year - from January 1st, Holmes should look for the shadow on July 1st. Straightforward, right? But there’s a problem: Charles I, whose crown jewels make up the Musgrave treasure, was beheaded in January 1649.

The British calendar changed in 1752 when the country abandoned the Julian calendar in favour of the Gregorian one that better reflects the actual length of a year; and, more confusing still, until that reform the year legally began on Lady Day (also known as the Feast of the Annunciation) – March 25th. So this means that, reckoning by the year as it was in 1649, Holmes should look for the shadow six months after March 25th, in other words September 25th. But there’s a further problem: the Julian calendar was eleven days out.

As part of the calendrical reform, and to bring it into line with other countries already using the Gregorian system, Britain dropped eleven days from its calendar – September 2nd was followed by September 14th.

So, when should Holmes be looking for the oak’s shadow? Six months from the first of the year (March 25th as was in 1649) or September 25th, plus 11 days, to bring it into 1893 terms. That is to say Holmes should begin stepping “North by ten and by ten ...” on October 6th.

So, I think we should leave this critical line in the text that we read each year.

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