

Minutes of the meeting of The Bimetallic Question February 2nd, 2012

Date of next meeting

Thursday, April 5th, at 6:30 p.m. at:
The Westmount Public Library (Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Westmount, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

“The Veiled Lodger”
prepared by Roger Burrows

Minutes of the meeting of THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, December 1st, 2011 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Florence Belfer, Mac Belfer, Paul Billette, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Patrick Campbell, Nitika Dosaj, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Elliott Newman, Joan O’Malley, Karl Raudsepp, Lawrence Reich, Arlene Scher, Heather Wileman-Brown, Heather Yampolsky (guest), Ron Zilman

Regrets: Maureen Anderson, Wilfrid de Freitas, Marlene Mandiuk

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order promptly at 6:30 by Sovereign Ron Zilman.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Fact and Fiction, Strophe and Anti-strophe, comments and ruminations)

1. Organ Work

We were privileged to have two very interesting guests at this meeting.

Karl Raudsepp is a music teacher whose new lease on life is in the restoration of organs. While your Lowly Scribe would prefer that this delicate operation be left to the deft hands of a medical surgeon, we are pleased to note that there is life after teaching music.

Heather Yampolsky also graced our table for the first time. Heather has been reading from the canon since she was a child, and expressed sincere interest in “getting up to speed” on the subject of Sherlockiana.

We bade them both a hearty welcome and hope to see more of them.

2. Digesting the Annual Dinner

The general consensus was that the annual dinner was a resounding success, from the canapés to the final farewells.

It was a warm and contemplative occasion in which to celebrate the achievements of the society (too numerous to mention) and to mourn the passing of David Kellett whose “Dorian Gray” portrait graced the meal from start to finish.

Our Sovereign, Ron Zilman opined that everything was excellent. The mood and setting reminded him of the now defunct Montefiore Club.

Roger Burrows expressed his appreciation for the functional fireplace, as well as easy parking. In addition, he observed, the tables were roomy.

Heather Wileman-Brown liked the impressive service and easy atmosphere. She found the soup too sweet, but the meal was very good, and the portions were just right. She requested that next time, we should ask for a choice of soup. It was pointed out that contrary to our halcyon days at Le Vieux Port, the Atwater Club is not a restaurant, so the menu is not as varied. We are confident, however, that whoever is on the planning committee for the next annual dinner will alert the manager in advance, not to sweeten the soup, and instead, provide personal-sized packets of sugar for those who like their soup sweet.

Chris Herten-Greaven said, “There is a limit to our ability to accommodate everyone ... People need to exercise judgment; it’s a question of personal choice.”

Rachel Alkallay took issue with the format of the dinner. She objected to the constant stream of speeches which she felt didn’t allow people time to eat. She would opt for an agenda that would allow people to relax with each other and enjoy the food a bit more.

Jack Anderson mentioned that if we had fewer jokes, this would give more time for relaxing and other things.

One participant said that if we are going to have jokes in the future, they should be better than some of the groaners we endured. (Groaning is a tradition perfected by our beloved Stanley Baker. Nobody delivered them better than he did.)

In response to one observation, Marie Burrows pointed out that there was a choice of desserts, although most people didn’t know that.

Your Lowly Scribe was one of those who took it upon themselves to clean up numbers of plates of sinfully delicious chocolate cake.

Roger Burrows advised that if we start planning early enough, we would have the time to vote on our choices throughout the planning process.

Joan O'Malley enjoyed the guest speaker, Mr. Saumier, although most members said that they began to think about other things when he got into the stock market and the economics of investment and speculation.

One further observation was that if we had smaller tables, this might promote conversation, since the distances among celebrants would be vastly reduced according to the diminished diameter of the tables. However, since most people nowadays have cell phones with wide-ranging plans, your L.S. sees no difficulty in everybody txt-ing evrby els if, as, + wen, thus obviating the need for tables of any diameter.

Lawrence Reich cogently informed us that the ultimate menu should include shrimp cocktail.

3. Evaluating the Process of Planning Our Annual Dinner

At our October 6 meeting, we were informed by Ron Zilman that he, Paul Billette, and one or two others had taken the initiative to scout out possible venues for our upcoming annual dinner. The team strongly recommended the Atwater Club. Ron and friends had done their homework and had found that the location in question would satisfy all our requirements at a price we would be comfortable paying.

On October 23, approximately three weeks after the meeting, the membership received the following e-mail from Marie Burrows, sent on Ron's behalf:

Dear Fellow Party Lovers:

It's now time to mark your 2012 calendars for the 158th birthday of Sherlock Holmes. The annual dinner will take place on Saturday January 21st, 2012.

Please note the new location -- The Atwater Club, located near the Westmount Library, at 3505 Atwater Avenue. Visit their website at www.clubatwater.ca and you will see a picture of this beautiful Tudor-style club. (Please don't quibble over the Tudor style -- it's Oldie Worldie and that's all that matters.)

We (yours truly) will be sending you a formal, written invitation in late December / early January, including a reservation form, return envelope, etc.

It's never too soon to start planning for the Big Night so our Sovereign, Ron Zilman, has asked me (begged me?) to send this email to you. We would be eternally grateful if you (yes, YOU!) would be so kind as to send us your suggestions for amusing pieces to entertain us during the meal. Ron wants us to keep in mind that all entertainment must be politically correct! (I thought that Ron was an accountant, not a lawyer.)

**** As well, Ron would really appreciate it if members could come forward and be a part of the Planning Committee. It takes time to plan the evening's activities and many hands make light work. The sooner we start, the better. I could add more clichés but I'll stop here.*

*To sum up, please reply to Ron with your suggestions for the evening's entertainment and/or to join the Planning Committee. ****

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the party,

Marie Burrows

Since by the October 6 meeting, we had had nothing firmed up regarding this most important annual event in the life of our society, we all expressed appreciation to Ron and friends for their initiative in scouting out the new location, and following through with the arrangements, with one exception.

As we can see in Marie's invitation of October 23, we were all invited to participate in planning the entertainment for the evening. There was just ONE response to this e-mail invitation.

Longstanding member of the society, Rachel Alkallay expressed concern at the December and February meetings, before and following the dinner, that proper procedure had not been followed in choosing the venue and organizing the agenda for the dinner. In the past, we had been presented with options for locations in advance. Rachel expressed deep concern that a standing committee had been formed without advising the members. Subsequent investigation (after this meeting) disclosed that Ron had thrown out the invitation to participate at the October 6 meeting (Rachel was in attendance) and, of course, this invitation was reiterated via Marie's e-mail.

Due to Rachel's excellent work, for several years we enjoyed the aura and hospitality of the wonderful Montefiore Club, alas now as defunct as last Christmas's goose. When the Montefiore Club closed unexpectedly, we were able to salvage the situation and find a venue in Old Montreal for the 2011 dinner. While that was an interesting location, it did not provide us with enough of our requirements to merit a second dinner this year. Therefore, a change was required.

Thus, with only three months until the 2012 dinner, we were relieved and vocally appreciative of Ron and friends' efforts to ensconce us at the Atwater Club. Certainly, they did not commit to the venue without the assent of the membership at the meetings. Democratic process was observed. What was lacking was the extended mulling-over period, the luxury of which we could not afford this time around.

In the spirit of cooperation and mutual support, it is admirable that we all pulled together to make the annual dinner the highlight of the year, our gala event, the *summum bonum* of recognition, festivity, and most of all, fun. Or to put it more accurately, a few of us pulled together with the strength and resolve of all of us. We owe them a big and sincere thank-you.

We are pleased to announce that our society's standing committee on the organization of the annual dinner actually does now exist, and it has room for more participants. Please feel free to add your name to the list, roll up your sleeves, share your ideas, and make 2013 a dinner to remember!

4. Dinner 'druthers

Florence and Mac Belfer asked if we could please hold the next annual dinner during a warmer month than January. They explained that this is the second year in a row they had missed the society's annual dinner due to winter colds or flu. We understood that illnesses such as winter colds and flu do not occur in the warmer months.

5. First Toast – To the Master

by Maureen Anderson

read by Jack Anderson

The word “master” may have originated before A.D. 900; Middle English maistre, maister, Old English magister < Latin; akin to magnus, great. Our Master’s origins: He is a fictional detective created by Scottish author and physician Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, named “Sherlock Holmes.” Sherlockians know better ...

An estimate of our Master’s age is in the story, “His Last Bow” which places his birth in 1854; the story is set in August 1914 and he is described as being 60 years of age. Commonly, his birth date is cited as the 6th of January.

If one were to look up “Master” in the dictionary, one would discover the noun:

1. A person with the ability or power to use, control, or dispose of something:
Example: To be master of one’s fate. Sherlock recently celebrated his 158th birthday. I would say definitely, he is the master of his fate.
2. The male head of a household.
Example: The master of 221B Baker Street is none other than Sherlock Holmes. Mrs. Hudson may have something to say about that.
3. A person eminently skilled in something, as an occupation, art, or science.
Example: Sherlock, an expert in the study of cigar ash, wrote a monograph upon the distinction among “The Ashes of the Various Tobaccos.” His expertise was used in his cases such as “A Study in Scarlet”, “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” and “The Hound of the Baskervilles”. This is repeatedly used as an example of deduction or the Baconian method in philosophical accounts of science and reasoning. Sherlock stated that he first developed his methods of deduction while an undergraduate.
4. One who defeats another; a victor.
Example: Sherlock Holmes, our Victor, fought to the death with his arch nemesis, Professor Moriarty, at the end of “The Final Problem.”
5. A worker qualified to teach apprentices and carry on the craft independently.
Example: The fantastic London-based “consulting detective,” Holmes, is famous for his astute logical reasoning, his ability to take on almost any disguise, and his use of forensic science skills to solve difficult cases.
6. One whose teachings or doctrines are accepted by followers.
Example: He has a passion for definite and exact knowledge, and uses this knowledge to educate Police inspectors and constables, private detectives, and agents in solving crimes.
7. An artist or performer of great and exemplary skill.
Example: “Education never ends, Watson. It is a series of lessons with the greatest for the last.” – from “The Adventure of the Red Circle”

There is something about Holmes that makes him the Master to each of us. After all, an entire industry of homage and satires, pastiches, and parodies sprang up around Sherlock Holmes.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson said: “Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control – these alone lead to power.” Sherlock Holmes was a powerful man.

To the Master!

6. Commercial Opportunity at the BmQ

Jack Anderson offered for sale at deep discount prices, two pastiches from his personal, private collection. He stated that these were duplicates. Those of us over the age of 35 understand about acquiring copies of books we already own, don't we? Been there, done that. We ought to take a poll of our members to see who among us have acquired duplicates from our brethren at the BmQ in the heat of our accelerated acquisition modes when the lights are dim, the oak tables gleaming, and we are transported back to the nights of horses clopping on cobblestones, fogs rolling in from the river, and thin flames struggling vainly in the enshrouded gas lamps.

7. Jack + London ≠ Jack London

Jack Anderson showed us a book, currently available at Hampstead House in Toronto, for about \$20, or one-third of the regular price. It contains about 500 photographs of London from the 1800s. We are confident you have not seen many of these fascinating historic photos, unless you already have seen the book.

8. Sherlock and the Baby-Boomers

No, this is not an X-rated whodunit featuring our one-and-only.

It is a completely X-free observation by our own Paul Billette who attended the recent annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars in New York City. At that fête, there was an assemblage of well-known current writers in the field of Sherlockiana. (We understand fully that it is redundant to say "current" since if there was an assemblage, it could not have been of past writers since they would have been dead, or worse, alive and non-functioning.) Famous personages included Laurie R. King (*The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, etc.), Peter Blau (you name it, he knows it), Leslie Klinger (not to be confused with Maxwell from TV's *MASH*). All writers sold out all their stock at the gala. At this not-to-be-missed (but we did, didn't we?) whirlwind event, Paul rubbed shoulders with the luminous Who's Who of the Sherlockian world.

9. What's in a Title?

Check out the following opening stanza from "The Beekeeper's Daughter" by Sylvia Plath:

A garden of mouthings. Purple, scarlet-speckled, black
The great corollas dilate, peeling back their silks.
Their musk encroaches, circle after circle,
A well of scents almost too dense to breathe in.
Hieratical in your frock coat, maestro of the bees,
You move among the many-breasted hives,

My heart under your foot, sister of a stone.

Can we find any influences on Plath by the canon?

Can we trace some kind of genealogy or literary DNA from the canon through Plath, and to Laurie R. King and her creation, Mary Russell?

10. Around the Neck – In a Good Way

Heather Wileman-Brown shared with us a Victorian-looking necklace, a lovely piece, really.

11. Sticky Mementos

Nitika Dosaj shared with us a collection of Sherlock Holmes refrigerator magnets with quotations on them.

12. Do Falcons Wear Hats? Only If They Make Them

Heather Yampolsky, one of tonight's guests, showed us hats made by an acquaintance of hers, Renée Falcon, in Toronto. Washable and flexible, these headpieces would have been a hit in Victorian England, although before cleaning, you would have to remove the peacock feathers, which these didn't have anyway, so that would be alright, then, wouldn't it? This merchandise was a big hit with some of our members. The occasion prompted Joan O'Malley to ask, "Would Victorian women wear hats after five o'clock in the afternoon?" The answer may be the subject of a future quiz, since no one knew.

13. The Viewers Viewed

Patrick Campbell pointed out that our own Susan Fitch wrote an article printed in the Westmount *Independent* about our trip to the Sherlock Holmes movie.

Ever multi-tasking and multi-talented, Susan was asked by Wilfrid de Freitas to take pictures of this evening's meeting for our posterity department. This too was done.

14. Trotting the Boards

Susan Fitch reminded us of Patrick Campbell's offer to put on a reading of his play, *Tides of the Wight*. The play has 16 speaking parts, and is in four acts, with 16 scenes. Paul Billette suggested that we could do the rehearsals at the Greene Centre, since the library where we have our meetings is usually booked. Rachel asked how long the play runs. Patrick said he would check. While roles were not assigned at this meeting, it appears likely that the project will get underway soon.

15. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by David Dowse

"He is a loyal friend and a chivalrous gentleman," said Holmes, holding up a restraining hand. Let that now and forever be enough for us."

- "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client"

It seems that the contemplation of Sherlock Holmes leads to pastiche upon pastiche. Here are some thoughts on the subject of Dr. Watson, from the pen – or computer – of Graham Moore in his novel, *The Sherlockian*. Bram Stoker (author of *Dracula*) is with his friend Arthur (Conan Doyle) and Conan Doyle is putting forward his thoughts (as imagined by Graham Moore) on the necessity for the existence of Watson:

They were such pleasant trifles then – his brooding, cantankerous detective and the oblivious, dim-witted assistant. Holmes was too cold-blooded, too remote for Arthur to become attached to him.

But Watson, well, Watson one could come to love. He was Arthur's stand-in; not Holmes; it was Watson who shared the author's biography, the author's voice, the author's hotheaded romantic afflictions. Watson was the one he would now miss.

Now, the imagined Stoker takes off the gloves:

Watson is a cheap, efficient little sod of a literary device. Holmes doesn't need him to solve the crimes any more than he needs a ten-stone ankle weight. The audience,

Arthur. The audience needs Watson as an intermediary, so that Holmes's thoughts might be forever kept just out of reach. If you told the stories from Holmes's perspective, everyone would know what the bleeding genius was thinking the whole time. They'd have their culprit fingered on page one. But if you tell the stories from Watson's perspective, the reader is permitted to chase in the darkness with the bumbling oaf. Watson is a comic flourish. He's a gag. A good one, all right. I'll give you that, but I hardly see how you'll be needing one of him.

Ladies and gentlemen, to Dr. Watson.

16. Valuable Pointers

Patrick Campbell, who has written voluminously in several fields, including creating Sherlockian pastiches as novels and plays, talked about how to write a book, in this case, his play, *Tides of the Wight*. First, the research is important. Facts need to be put in place. Then comes the manuscript, which is easy compared with the vast amount of time one must put into rereading, rewriting, and editing. Finally, the proof review of the galleys, or long sheets sent back from the printer's prior to publication.

17. The Third Toast – To the Woman

by Elliott Newman

Who forgot and therefore delivered the quickest anything of his life.

To the Woman!

18. Quiz – Results

Story: *The Reigate Squires*, prepared by Raf Jans.

Possible total: 60 points

Winners were:

| Rank | Name | Score | |
|------|----------------|-------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Roger Burrows | 53 | Victorian Short Stories |
| 2. | Marie Burrows | 51 | Malicious Mysteries |
| 3. | Carol Abramson | 38 | (not noted) |

The next quiz, based on *The Veiled Lodger*, will be prepared by Roger Burrows.

19. Authentic Manual Repro Folio Comes to Light

Patrick Campbell showed us a facsimile of the original draft manuscript for "The Adventure of the Dying Detective," written in the hand of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It has an introduction by Julian Symons and Afterword by Owen Dudley Edwards. Limited to 100 copies, Patrick's volume is #42. Published by Westminster Libraries under the auspices of the Arthur Conan Doyle Society, it is signed by Symons, Edwards, and Jean L.A. Conan Doyle. It was a particular thrill for Your Lowly Scribe to hold this volume and marvel at the paucity of corrections on its handwritten pages. If this is indeed the one and only draft of the story, it is miraculous that it has gone from start to finish with so few changes. On the basis of that evidence alone, it is likely that the story took SACD less time to complete than it takes your LS to grind out these minutes – and on a computer, no less. *Voila*, the difference between talent and genius.

20. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Paul Billette

I thought that this particular toast should be to our very own Mrs. Hudson.

This virtuous person who, on the night of our meetings, anonymously goes around the table supplying us with the libations without which our toasts would not be complete, is a true avatar of the legendary Mrs. Hudson.

She is, in the accomplishment of her duties, notably ignored in the hubbub of our initial conversations. Although she provides an essential contribution to our meeting, for all practical reasons, she is invisible to all and sundry.

Unless a replacement is required, I do not remember her being mentioned as such in our literary minutes. Yet over the years she morphs effortlessly, from time to time, into a new incarnation of either gender. As a matter of fact, I once was her for a time.

For the past several years, Maureen Anderson, who due to the exigencies of her new calling, cannot be with us tonight, has, succeeding a long line of BmQ Missuses Hudson, plied us with port or sherry on the nights of our meetings.

Tonight, as the *tastevin* is passed to the new incarnation of Mrs. Hudson, I want formally to recognize the selfless dedication of our very dear Maureen and to welcome Chris as our newly minted Mrs. Hudson.

To Maureen Anderson!

(Marie Burrows added her appreciation to Mrs. Chris Hudson.)

21. The Scribble Doesn't Fall Far From the Tree

Prompted by the use of handwriting as a key clue in this evening's story, we had a free-ranging discussion on the influences upon our handwriting, and the similarity among handwriting styles within a family. It was concluded that we model our handwriting on that of people close to us. In extending this concept, it is likely too that we emulate not only handwriting, but other characteristics of those near to us, and of people we admire.

22. Restoration of the Crown

Patrick Campbell presented the annual Quiz Trophy to Carol Abramson.

23. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by Patrick Campbell

It may have been President Kennedy who said, "Ask not what you can do for your Society; ask what your Society can do for you," or perhaps I have it backwards. But I am pleased to summarize a plethora of memories that the Society has given me, and for which I am ever grateful.

There has been a succession of meeting places, from the Armed Forces Headquarters on Atwater to the Royal Montreal Regiment, the McGill Women's Club, and then for several years, here at the Westmount Library.

Memories also of visits and special events – the delightful Garden parties of 1989 and 1999; Rawdon Falls, Colchester, and Bennington, Vermont, and the Goose Club of the Alpha Inn, Stewart Hall, and the National Press Club in Ottawa, several visits to the Bootmakers in Toronto, and the Baker Street Irregulars of New York, the first and second colloquia at Royal Victoria College, the Von-Bork automobile rally, and the Col. Sebastian

Moran target shoots arranged by Charles Purdon, the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto, and, in England, our group tour of London, and later, the Metropolitan Police Museum and Sidney Sussex College in Cambridge, where Holmes was a scholar, and the Watson-Thurston Billiards match on the McGill campus. Then there are the banquets: Les Trois Arches in 1988, the TelleMara, the Brochetteerie Vieux Port, the Auberge le Vieux St. Gabriel, where we nearly froze, and latterly, the splendid Montefiore Club, now gone but not forgotten.

And last, and best of all, the never-ending stream of new members – and friendships that were, perhaps the best of all.

So, please raise your glass to toast: The Society!

24. Free Books! Cheap at Half the Price!

Arlene Scher informed us of a way to download e-books free from the web site of our Bibliothèque Nationale, and it's legal!

Here's how:

- in your web browser, type: banq.qc.ca/accueil/index.html
- change to English
- go to Online Resources
- go to Electronic Books
- ONE CLICK DIGITAL

25. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

| | | |
|----------------|---|-----------------|
| To the Master | - | Susan Fitch |
| To Dr. Watson | - | Roger Burrows |
| To the Woman | - | Raf Jans |
| To Mrs. Hudson | - | Rachel Alkallay |
| To the Society | - | Ron Zilman |

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 5th, 2012, 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>