

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
December 6, 2012

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, **February 7, 2013**
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 Adventure of the
Solitary Cyclist”**
prepared by
Roger Burrows

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, December 6th, 2012 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Paul Billette, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Louise Corda, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Elliott Newman, Karl Raudsepp, Lawrence Reich, Ron Zilman

Guests: Mark Altosaar, Tim Hornyak, Anne Millar, Rebecca Stacey, Robert Wringham

Regrets: Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Joan O'Malley, Arlene Scher

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order promptly at 6:30 by Sovereign Ron Zilman

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Show and Tell, Acne and Zits, Periods and Commas)

1. Getting to Know You

We were pleased to re-welcome the evening's guest Mark Altosaar, nephew of, Karl J. Raudsepp who attended our last meeting. We're overjoyed when we of the glass bowl become more than a curiosity and have the opportunity to merit a second look. Other guests included Robert Wringham, from Great Britain, introduced by Rebecca Stacey, a repeated guest and eventual (we hope) active member. Robert, a librarian, has been straddling continents while contemplating a return to the Scepter'd Isle with his wife. In the interim, we hope to provide a lea of refuge for him.

Tim Hornyak is a Westmount-based writer and photographer who describes himself a fan of the Jeremy Brett series. He is about to open an exhibition of his work. He has worked in Japan, in the travel promotion industry, for Lonely Planet publications. Our third new guest was Anne Millar, also introduced by Rebecca Stacey.

2. Nosh Stuff and Dietary Laws of the Westmount Public Library

As ever, Chris Herten-Greaven came laden with comestibles and quaffables, including a year-end bonus which he described as “quasi champagne” which sounded real enough as the onomatopoeic sound of the popping cork ripped through the reading room. The familiar imaginary pâté, cheese, and crackers appeared as if by magic, and then the choice of make-believe port and sherry which were poured into invisible glasses and drunk symbolically to implied toasts. Quite a delight to our invisible senses! In response to a question, Chris responded that our hypothetical bar is pretty well self-financing. Chris warned in real time that according to the rules of the library, there is to be no eating or drinking on the premises. Law-abiding citizens that we are, we have authorized an unknown hypnotist among us to cast all spells, jigger all intellects, bend reality, play with mirrors, and convince us that virtual booze is every bit as good as the real thing. Phantom burps of garlic following the conjuring of pâté serve to convince us of the efficacy of our collective gustatory fantasy. Children of the waking dream and the walking shadow, our buy-in is complete, and our compliance with THE LAW perfect. It is all those other miscreants before us, as Wilfrid de Freitas observed, who drop their food wrappers into the waste baskets who transgress. We are to be held blameless and innocent, as ever.

3. Birthday Shock

Ron Zilman, our outgoing Sovereign, announced that not everything is as it was to have appeared. We had been planning to hold our annual dinner at the Atwater Club, as we had last year. However, due to some crossing of wires, they had us down for Saturday January 12th, and not the 19th as we require, since that is the day we have finally managed to book our guest speaker, Josh Freed, Montreal TV producer, movie maker, and *Gazette* columnist. The 19th was eliminated by the Atwater Club because they are hosting an annual squash tournament that day/night. Instead, the banquet will be (actually will have been, since we'll all be receiving these minutes perhaps shortly after the event, unless this year turns out to be an exception) elsewhere. Therefore, for the purpose of keeping our Annals in Order, be it known that our reservation in the upstairs space of le Vieux Port Restaurant in Old Montreal, on St. Paul Street, has been *virtually* assured for Saturday night, January 19, 2013, 159 years, one week, and six days after the birth of Sherlock Holmes. We have had several annual dinners there in the rustic *quebecois* setting with décor in stone and wood. Fare has always been good. In past years, people sitting close to windows had complained of drafts and cold. We hope the establishment has either sealed the windows or upgraded its heating system. Street parking is available free on Notre Dame Street, one block up. As usual, be very certain to check for restrictions.

4. Birthday Roast and Trimmings

This year we are planning to add a component to the annual dinner's entertainment, in the form of a roast of the birthday boy, Sherlock Holmes. His agent has informed us that this is entirely acceptable to him, since he will absorb with alacrity and good humor all of the impertinences of his loving fans, apostles, minions, and acolytes provided that they be willing to submit in kind. A sub-sub-committee of doers and consultants has been set up, with ground rules attached. Tentatively, one of the options is for several major characters from the canon to roast S.H. formally, each for a two-minute period of time. If five individuals participate, this will take up 10 minutes. Allowing for S.H.'s rebuttle, the entire segment shouldn't take more than 15 minutes. This celebrity roast would replace our traditional series of internet-sourced jokes. Stanley will be proud to see how we have evolved. Therefore, this entertainment module will not add time to the meeting.

The scheduling of activities will receive more attention this year than in the past. At the meeting, we discussed a formal "quaff-chew-and-chill" segment during the sit-down part of the evening. For the past several years, attendees of the annual dinner have expressed their wish to have some time to simply relax, eat, and talk during the meal, rather than having to eat quietly while one or another form of entertainment was going on.

Additional fixed points during the evening will be:

- the Main Speaker (Josh Freed) – 10-15 minutes
- Dr. Joe – 10-15 minutes
- the five toasts – 15 (?) minutes total
- "The Musgrave Ritual" poem – 5-10 minutes
- other?

5. First Toast – To the Master

by Karl Raudsepp

Sherlock Holmes. The master whose mysteries mattered much to his minion, Dr. John H. Watson.

Tips from the Master, Sherlock Holmes: "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories instead of theories to suit facts."

"As a rule, the more bizarre a thing is, the less mysterious it proves to be."

"Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook."

"There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact."

The Master and I - Our Intimate Relationship

It is quite clear to me that Sherlock Holmes is more than just a keen amateur musician. I know him to be very knowledgeable of the classical music canon, an avid concert-goer (particularly if the performer is first rate), a composer, and a studious, if not published, musicologist.

I know Holmes to be capable of going into a rhapsodic trance while attending concerts, yet when in my company his taste can be as eccentric as during any of his other activities. One of my most enjoyable moments with Holmes was when he was "observing the reaction on the common housefly of the chromatic scale."

I remember Holmes' famously quoting Darwin ... that the power of producing and appreciating 'music' existed in the human race long before the power of speech was

arrived at. Perhaps that is why we are so subtly influenced by music. There are vague memories in our souls of those misty centuries when the world was in its childhood.” I can certainly relate to that statement, unequivocally.

We both appreciate the more difficult pieces of the literature, Mendelssohn’s lieder, the Hoffman Barcarolle (one of the most haunting of tunes) and other favorites by Wagner and Chopin. For Holmes and me, German music is rather more to our taste than Italian or French. It is the introspective music which gives us the time to think and ruminate over the singular points of a remarkable problem.

I know Holmes to be a very enthusiastic musician, not only as a capable performer, but as a composer of no common merit as well. His exactness and astuteness represents the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominates in him, to which I am often his accompaniment. The swing of his nature takes him, at times, from extreme languor to devouring energy; and, as I know well, he is never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he lounges in his armchair amid his improvisations and scratchings.

At other times, the feeling is more akin to one of being abused, when he idly scrapes away carelessly while deep in thought. It is useless at those times to have it any other way.

Together we can revel at the sonorous or melancholic sounds that emanate from collaboration, which at times can seem even fantastic and cheerful. Clearly the music reflects the thoughts which possess him so deeply yet so poetically. I am often but a helpless participant, deeply under his spell. The exasperating solos often terminate with more familiar airs which compensate for the more somber and morose moments that are spent in such close quarters.

The wailing sounds are almost always inspired by the anguish of deep-rooted searches for the truth. I remember in “The Five Orange Pips” my master stated; “There is nothing more to be said or to be done tonight, so hand me over my violin and let us try to forget for half an hour the miserable weather and the still more miserable ways of our fellow-men.”

In “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” first published in *The Strand Magazine* in January 1893, Watson chronicled ... “We had a pleasant little meal together, during which Holmes would talk of nothing but violins, narrating with great exultation how he purchased, for fifty-five shillings on the Tottenham Court Road, his own Stradivarius, which was worth at least five hundred guineas. This led him to Niccolò Paganini, and we sat for an hour over a bottle of claret while he told me anecdote after anecdote of that extraordinary man.”

My Master, not unlike Paganini, is a supreme showman. He couples unsurpassed technique with dramatic flair, much to the delight of his patrons and consternation of his competition. He lives an almost “rock star” lifestyle, does what he wants to do and often treats boredom with cocaine. And, like Alexander Scriabin and others to follow, he has even been rumored to be associated with the devil.

Holmes had a fondness for the playing of Pablo de Sarasate and especially for the Austrian violinist, Wilhelmine “Wilma” Norman-Neruda, popularly known as the female Paganini. I certainly have wished that I could have been held in her arms in the same tender and passionate manner that she held her famous 1709 Ernst violin, by Antonio Stradivarius. But that was neither possible nor plausible.

To my master, Sherlock Holmes, in whose hands I have become all that I have been meant to be.

(Written from the perspective of Sherlock Holmes’ Stradivarius violin.

Karl J. Raudsepp

December 6, 2012), culled from various sources

6. Approaching Janus, Looking Back

Paul Billette, for some reason, chose to single out a rather shoddy example of pretentious prose in the second paragraph of Item #8 in the Bimetallic Minutes of October 2012. Apparently the Lowly Scribe had been puffing or dropping or snorting or mainlining something with too much ink and had attempted an aromatic metaphor of salubrious and flighty analogy. Too overcome with remorse over this act of unabashed hubris, your Obdt. and Lowly Scribe has seen the error of his ways, begs your forgiveness, and has asked Yours Truly, The Supreme Scribe Whom None Dare Name, to express sincere and humble remorse on behalf of the unworthiest of all unworthies. We are working out a system of penance even though all concerned know full well that nothing can restrain Your Lowly Scribe when the Spirit moves him. Such a pain!
Thank you, Paul.

7. Train of Thought

Roger Burrows showed us a fat, red *Bradshaw's* train schedule book for Great Britain and Ireland, and prompting the thought that long ago, the rail system there was reliable. Today, it is not so, according to Wilfrid de Freitas, who informed us that the six rail companies do not talk to each other. Our guest Tim Hornyak talked about the rail service in Japan which is very popular and very well-run. They too have a giant catalog of train schedules.

8. What Oft Was Thought But Ne'er So Well Expressed

We fell into a speculative (another word for “unguided” but fascinating) discussion on the differences between being able to study the evolution of a successful manuscript today versus long ago (gee, at least 20 years), before the rise in popularity of computer-based word processing. In ages past, we had access to manuscripts of prime works of literature, sometimes from the first draft through the tortuous mazes of rewrites and editing. These remain as testaments to the adjustment of ideas and the application of individual techniques of writers who set their works down upon paper (hard copy, to the younger generation) whether themselves, or dictated to amanuenses, scribes, and secretaries. In the case of SACD, it is a privilege to peer into the genius of the mind which would write whole gobs of prose with few deletions, always under the pressure of a deadline for the next issue of the magazine that would publish the effort. A subsequent printing, this time in book form, would require a revisiting of the manuscript, and amazingly, relatively few changes. What alterations are there are of interest to us, naturally. Your Lowly Scribe pointed out that in a similar vein, the consolidation of all of Shakespeare's works into the Folio of 1623 witnessed certain adjustments in prose, scene directions, prepositions, articles, etc., many of which seem to be for the purpose of elucidation. Major changes in plot and characterization were simply not in evidence. This is all the more amazing when we consider that Shakespeare's early drafts were often still damp with ink as they were rushed off to the performers to be memorized in rehearsal shortly before their performance. The contemporary Folger Library Editions of the Bard's show many of these changes in parentheses, and we can see that the additions and changes have been intended, back in 1623, to clarify a word or a direction, or fill in a missing

preposition or small word, to avert a hiccup that may have occurred during the earlier stage performances. The rise of computers and their use by just about all writers, would-be writers, and non-writers, has pretty much cut off our access to the evolution of manuscripts from rough to ready. By working in a computer file, writers make changes electronically, often squeezing their works through many changes and forms, so that the final product is vastly different from the initial one. Almost as if by tacit, universal agreement, the notion of posterity in this age of rapidity is non-existent. Even when hard copy is outputted, these may be used as the bases for changes by pen which are then entered on the computer, with the marked-up papers' being scrapped. While there must be writers out there who believe that one day they will be famous, and that every word written, no matter how inopportune or messy, will be of interest to somebody, precious few of them are actually saving their hen-scratchings in boxes for posterity. What we need are hackers who can break into their computers and arrive at the hundreds and thousands of emendations, sort them by date, and offer prayers that we have got past the Stone Age where erasures and changes must have taken blood, sweat, and tears, and would have totaled in the tonnes for the final creation of a single sonnet.

9. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by Paul Billette

written by Tim Payne, member, Norwegian Explorers (Minnesota)

Reach for the well-worn book and find a favorite chair,
We'll slip into a world that is always there.
Hear the cobblestones against the horses' hoofs,
See the clay chimney pots stacked upon the roofs.
We'll join in adventures with a loyal friend and the master
As time stands still, and yet – passes faster.
And so we peer through the dim lamplight of gas
To catch a glimpse of the duo, as they surely will pass
Through the thick shrouds of fog and into our sight
In the company of Sherlockians on this very night.
Let us toast the whetstone for Holmes' sharp mind,
The chronicler of a far more captivating time –
Dr. John H. Watson.

10. More Fooling Around

David Dowse showed two old Sherlockian board games from his collection, as well as a Sherlock Holmes scarf from his days as a member of the London society. He also showed a small assortment of stamps from The Turks and Caicos Islands, all featuring Sherlock Holmes. He presented these to Karl Raudsepp who had brought in a vintage Rotring draftsman's pen, and presented it to David.

11. New Vintage Holmes

Rebecca Stacey showed a humorous memorabilia book from BBC publications, based on the Benedict Cumberbatch series, including the productions of: *A Study in Pink*, *The Blind Banker*, *The Great Game*, *A Scandal in Belgravia*, *The Hounds of Baskerville*, and *The Reichenbach Fall*.

12. The Quiz

“The Man with the Twisted Lip”
prepared by Raf Jans

Possible total: 62

Winners were:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Prizes</u>
1.	Roger Burrows	56	<i>Sherlock Holmes and the Red Devil</i>
2.	Carol Abramson	50	<i>Confessions of an Opium Eater</i>
3.	Wilfrid de Freitas	42½	<i>The House of Silk</i>

Next Meeting's story: “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist”
Prepared by: Roger Burrows

13. Third Toast – To the Woman

by Raf Jans

The following poem is by Robert Graves, but it might have been written by Sherlock Holmes, depending on your view of his relationship with Irene Adler:

In her only way

When her need for you dies
And she wanders apart,
Never rhetoricize
On the faithless heart,

But with manlier virtue
Be content to say
She both loved you and hurt you
In her only way.

Here is to the woman.

14. About This Meeting's Story

Raf Jans observed that there was not one action set in Baker Street in "The Man with the Twisted Lip." Other canonical stories bypassing this hallowed setting, our members and Raf pointed out, are: "Lion's Mane," "Devil's Foot," "Boscombe Valley Mystery," "Stockbroker's Clerk," "Crooked Man," "Three Students," and "His Last Bow." Raf wasn't certain if the "Final Problem" also fit into this category.

Roger Burrows stated that this is one of the stories where the reader is in control of the facts at the same time as Sherlock Holmes, thereby giving us equal opportunity to come up with a solution.

15. A Meeting of the Minds

Wilfrid de Freitas announced that during the second week in January there will be "a huge orgy going on in New York City" celebrating the 158th anniversary of the birth of Sherlock Holmes. The festivities, under the auspices of The Baker Street Irregulars, will kick off with The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes' ASH Wednesday dinner beginning at 6:30 p.m. at O'Casey's (22 East 41st Street). Let Susan Rice (125 Washington Place #2-E, New York, NY 10014, susan221bee@gmail.com) know if you are planning to attend. Sadly, you will have to pay your own check. Also, it's not specified if this event is open to non-Irregular members, thus raising the question: if something is non-Irregular, does this mean it is now Regular? There are many, MANY mouth-watering events at some pretty impressive venues, featuring some fairly heavy dudes from the Sherlockian scene. This birthday bash is more like a Who's Who Symposium. For more info, find Peter Blau's newsletters of October 12 (#5) and October 12 (#6), or go to the BSI web site.

16. Sherlock at the Segal

World-famous Montreal-born actor Jay Baruchel will be featured in a Sherlockian play at the Segal Center for three weeks, from May 5-26, 2013. Paul Billette is looking into pinpointing a date for seating ability that will accommodate most of our busy schedules.

17. Third-and-a-half Toast – To Inspector Lestrade

by Rebecca Stacey

So I like Sherlock Holmes. I think that's probably, if you knew nothing else about me, a safe assumption to make just from the fact that, you know, I'm here and I've come to a few meetings and I definitely plan to come to a many more if you'll have me.

We celebrate the mindfulness and skill of the great consulting detective and we cherish the commitment of friendship and the depth of loyalty that are embodied in the most interesting doctor-turned-soldier-turned-doctor-who-writes-stories-sometimes ever to be committed to the page. As far as I'm concerned, both characters deserve attention. Holmes and Watson are magnificent.

I'd like to take one self-indulgent moment to talk about my favourite part of Sherlock's Universe. He isn't a man with unrivalled strength of character who is prone to feats of bravery (and also possessing, let's not forget, the patience of a saint) nor is he a man with a brain like a computer who can tell you what you had for breakfast last Tuesday based on your choice of smoking jacket. No, instead, he is – well – he's just a man, a good important, and unfortunately, an often overlooked one.

"He is," according to author and fellow Sherlockian H. Paul Jeffers, "the most famous detective ever to walk the corridors of Scotland Yard, ... [Although] he appears thirteen times in the immortal adventures of Sherlock Holmes, nothing is known of the life outside the Yard of [this] detective whom Dr. Watson described unflatteringly as sallow, rat-faced, and dark-eyed and whom Holmes saw as quick and energetic... but wholly conventional, lacking in imagination, and normally out of his depth—the best of a bad lot who had reached the top in the CID by bulldog tenacity."

He is, of course, Inspector Lestrade.

Despite Sherlock's dismissal of Lestrade's 'methods' I think it's safe to say that the two men share a great deal of mutual respect which has grown and developed over time. For his part, Lestrade, although often referred to as a practical man, begins to see the value of Sherlock's approach to detective work – and Sherlock, despite a disregard for Lestrade's single-mindedness, develops a great deal of affection for the Inspector. He comments to Dr. Watson in *Hound of the Baskervilles* that Lestrade "is the best of the professionals, I think." It goes without saying that getting any kind of compliment out of Sherlock Holmes is nearly on par with drawing blood from a stone.

While Sherlock may not always agree with Lestrade's opinion when he's on the job, this praise of the Inspector remains one of the few times, according to Watson, that Holmes is visibly moved by someone else's words:

"We're not jealous of you down at Scotland Yard," Lestrade said to Holmes, "No sir, we are proud of you, and if you come down tomorrow there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand." ("Six Napoleons")

Sherlock often implies that he has no friends in the world but Watson (the famous scene at the end of *Sign of Four* comes to mind). When met with news of Watson's impending marriage Holmes announces that he still has, at least, the companionship of his cocaine bottle – it is revealed in "Six Napoleons" that Lestrade is quite the frequent social caller who often pays visits to Baker Street to gossip about Scotland Yard and share theories about new cases with Holmes.

If Lestrade is a welcome guest in Sherlock's sitting room, we can afford to raise our glasses to him on this occasion.

To Inspector G. Lestrade, because every Bulldog deserves his day.

18. Comments on the Toast

Chris Herten-Greaven said that the toast to Lestrade was very well-rehearsed, a subtle put-down on things French. He recounted that during the Sherlockian period, “Britain ruled supreme,” and SACD was enabling SH to “damn with faint praise Lestrade’s efforts, ... (merely) reflecting the feelings of the times.”

Roger Burrows doubted that SH’s anti-French sentiment would have run too deep, since the great consulting detective had, after all, accepted the *Legion d’Honneur!* Rebecca Stacey, author and proposer of the toast added, throughout the canon, “you can see the growth of their relationship improving.”

19. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Patrick Campbell, read by Wilfrid de Freitas

Mrs. Hudson appears in 15 of the stories in the canon, yet she speaks only a few words in all those tales.

Her cuisine is referred to in NAVA; her payments only in DYIN, as is her awe of Holmes. She is thrown into hysterics in EMPT, and Holmes sends her a telegram in LADY. She visits Watson in DYIN and, for some reason, seems to be identified as MRS. Turner in SCAN.

Yet without her bed and board at 221B Baker Street, where would Holmes be?
Please raise your glasses to Mrs. Hudson!

20. Toast #5 – To the Society

by Ron Zilman from internet: www.sherlockian.net/societies/bvw.html
written by Bill Vande Water

What is a scion society? According to John Bennett Shaw, it’s two Sherlockians, a copy of the Canon, and a bottle. In a pinch, he says, you can dispense with one of the Sherlockians.

This is exactly what Helen Yuhasova had to do in 1946. When she couldn’t locate any other interested women, she formed The Solitary Cyclist of Washington DC and met at unspecified intervals with herself. Most groups do contain more than two people. In fact most contain more people than their name implies. There are about 15 members of the Sacred Six in New York City; the Three Garridebs of Westchester, NY have four people just as officers, and there are more Napoleons in the Six Napoleons than busts in a typical issue of *Playboy*. The Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers, however, have never quite equaled the full strength of that illustrious regiment.

...

What happens at meetings? There are of course, the usual papers, quizzes, and general debates on Holmesian matters. But a remarkable number of other things are done.

The American Firm, headed by the appropriately named Ed Smith, raises funds to distribute Large Print editions of the Canon to hospitals and nursing homes. The Shadows of the Elms write, direct, and act in Sherlockian videos of impeccable canonicity, for which they themselves make the costumes, sets, and props. Beryl Kolafa and Judy Lyen of the Sound of the Baskervilles sacrificed themselves on the altar of the committee to insure a strong Sherlockian program at the 1994

Bouchercon in Seattle. The Priory School began with a group at Fordham University making Sherlockian radio plays. Live radio plays, historic and original, are still performed at meetings.

Raise your glasses to The Society!

(for more, go to the web address above)

21. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

To the Master	-	Susan Fitch
To Dr. Watson-	-	Rebecca Stacey
To the Woman	-	Elliott Newman
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Raf Jans
To the Society	-	David Dowse

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, February 7th, 2013, at 6:30 p.m. Bring a friend. Bring two. For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org