

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
December 5, 2013

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, February 6, 2014
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 Blue Carbuncle”**
prepared by
Raf Jans

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, December 5, 2013 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Paul Billette, Louise Corda, Wilfrid deFreitas, David Dowse, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner, Karl J. Raudsepp, Arlene Scher, Rebecca Stacey, Ronnie Zilman

Guests: Julia Felske, Sheila Ferrando, San Leibner, Anne Millar, Andy Osuri, Rob Westwood

Regrets: Jack and Maureen Anderson, Tash Akkerman, Patrick Campbell, Kayla Piecaitis

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:35
by Sovereign Chris Herten-Greaven

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Winter and Wonderland, Snow and Ice, Salt and Sand)

1. The Mortal Challenge

David’s challenge at the last meeting was for us to find four characters in ONE canonical story who had bested Sherlock Holmes BEFORE the appearance of “A Scandal in Bohemia.” Your L.S. (lower than puffs of sand kicked up by passing camels in the summer drought region of Xanadu) had not noticed the merry twinkle in David’s eye when the gauntlet was tossed. When he called us on it at this present meeting, something of a sparkle was noted, and we were off. After a desultory scramble to appear erudite, we ended in a metaphorical heap whereupon David doused us down with a hose and suggested that the answer lay in the legendary 72

extra/pre canonical stories withheld in the Tin Dispatch Box by Watson. The reason for this persiflage was simple enough, David advised us. Seeing as how SH was purportedly upstaged by no less than FOUR characters (living, breathing people, actually), in no less than ONE story (actually), Watson did not want his dear friend to be embarrassed, and hid the story from us.

2. First Toast – To the Master

by Ron Zilman
(from *Sherlock Peoria*)

Who is Sherlock Holmes?

Who is Sherlock Holmes? *Who is Sherlock Holmes?*

Better to ask, “Who was Sherlock Holmes?” At this point, history has claimed him as its own. Although his death was never recorded and his obituary never appeared in any newspaper, one can safely say that Sherlock Holmes walks among us no more. Who was Sherlock Holmes?

Why, only the man who put the “detect” in detective, practiced forensic science and criminal profiling years ahead of the rest of the world, brought down a criminal empire, and made the occupation of private detective a very cool thing to be.

Sherlock Holmes started his career in London in the early 1880s. Not much is known of him before then, but he was quick to make a name for himself with Scotland Yard, and not long after, the rest of England. Eventually his fame would spread world-wide thanks to the pen of Dr. John H. Watson and the literary marketing genius of Arthur Conan Doyle.

What we don’t know about Sherlock Holmes is as intriguing as what we do know. For example, since Jack the Ripper’s murderous rampage suddenly and mysteriously came to an end, right at the peak of Holmes’s early career, many have quite naturally wondered if the detective had a hand in stopping the killer. And why not?

Almost all of what we know of Sherlock Holmes comes from a series of sixty memoirs, most of which were from the pen of his friend Dr. Watson. The first of these, published in 1887 in a magazine called *Beeton’s Christmas Annual*, was *A Study in Scarlet*.

These chronicles of Holmes suddenly came to an abrupt end in 1893 when “The Final Problem” reported Holmes’s death at Reichenbach Falls.

Holmes was assumed dead for years, until the stories started again in 1901 with *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The last of the sixty chronicles, “The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place,” appeared in March of 1927. And in the forty years in between 1887 and 1927, Sherlock Holmes made Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the man who popularized the detective and his adventures, a very wealthy man.

To the Master!

3. **Pounding Sense**

Chris Herten-Greaven informed us that SACD was writing for the *Strand* magazine, receiving £50 for 1,000 words in the early years. This in itself was good money for a writer. At the author's insistence, this fee was doubled, causing the observation: "No matter what the word's worth, your sentences are too long, fellow." (L.S. disavows any connection with the origin of this groaner which should have remained in the Tin Box).

4. **SH and CSI: What's in an Initial?**

Initially, nothing. But upon closer inspection, a television documentary, *The Real Sherlock Holmes*, according to Karl J. Raudsepp, establishes Dr. Bell's influence on forensic science in solving crimes. Ron Zilman said that Dr. Bell's methods, as interpreted by SACD and fed through the mouth of Sherlock Holmes, has set the early standard for forensic exploration. Scientific evidence is best. Louise Corda reminded us that from the pen of SACD: "It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment."

5. **The Black Queen**

Chris Herten-Greaven drew our attention to a semi-annual philatelic event in Montreal: an auction of world-class proportion. He showed us a catalogue in which a "penny black" (one penny stamp in black, showing Queen Victoria) was up for auction, with an opening bid of \$10,000. You too may attend this auction which takes place in December and January at 1878 Ste. Catherine Street East.

6. **Patrick's Hat Tricks**

We know we are mixing metaphors, but our hats are off once more to Patrick Campbell, Bimetallic Sovereign Emeritus, who calculates our annual quiz winner through an intricate system of formulas involving an Indiana Jones-like alignment of light's passing through prisms, dodging among cactus needles, and refracting off wave-tips on a moderately-roiled oasis pool outside Khartoum in February, cross-referenced against the cryptic instructions in "The Musgrave Ritual" on a ratio of 35,001:1.5. For the benefit of our many (six) guests, Chris Herten-Greaven explained the process in simpler terms.

7. **Second Toast – To Dr. Watson**

Officially, by Kayla Piecaitis (busy with finals and graduation: congratulations!)

Written by Tash Akkerman (severe cold: speedy recovery!)

Read by Karl. J. Raudsepp

To the man who had the patience and the skill to describe Sherlock Holmes's adventures, and without whom the so-called great detective would be forgotten.

To Doctor Watson!

(We understand that the toast is shorter than the attribution, but please, look at the quality of the words in the toast! Thank you Tash and Kayla. Hope to see you at the next meeting.)

8. Almost Together

In our Gee-Isn't-It-Great-How-Sherlock-Holmes-Brings-People-Together Department, Rachel Alkallay recalled how she met a young man in the bookshop of the St. Mary's Hospital, who appeared interested in Sherlock Holmes (due to a book he was perusing.) They engaged in conversation and she invited him to attend a BmQ meeting.

And so, ...

Gee, hope he comes ...

9. Not All Mugs Can Be Blamed on Genetics

Rebecca Stacey has been looking into a promotional mug worthy of representing our fair society. More of that anon.

10. Let's Face It: We Can't Hide

We are now on Facebook, at: [facebook.com/bimetallicquestion](https://www.facebook.com/bimetallicquestion) -- Good stuff will be coming soon.

11. The Game is Afoot: Lend Us Your Ears

The popular phrase, "The game is afoot," is commonly associated with our very own SH, referring to his enthusiasm for the hunt (of the felon).

Chris Herten-Greaven took this a bit further by opining (or else, he knew) that it had something to do with hunters chasing game, or a cricket match. Wow! For a dentist, Chris knows a lot about feet! Yes, an online dictionary tells us the expression relates to cricket, and means: "The process is in active existence; for example, 'The teams are on the pitch - the whistle blows - the game is afoot.'" The first time we see this expression is in the year 1597, in Shakespeare's *King Henry IV Part I*; "Before the game is afoot, thou still let'st slip." Our online source says that this is really the origin of the phrase. Your L.S. believes the true meaning is locked in the Tin Dispatch Box along with everything else, naturally.

12. Today Atwater, Tomorrow Broadway

The day after our last meeting of the BmQ, Wilfrid deFreitas delivered a presentation on Sherlock Holmes in particular and Sherlockian societies in general, at the Atwater Public Library. Wilfrid said it went well. He was also interviewed by Thomas Shnurmacher of radio station CJAD, and informed us that everything went well.

13. The Study of Sherlock Is the Study of Life

At our last meeting, Arlene Scher described to us how she was roughly pushed down some stairs outside a restaurant, and sustained a broken wrist. Not only was the injury inconvenient, but the perpetrator, obviously in a rush, continued on past Arlene who was sprawled on the pavement and in pain. Arlene is working on two items of literature related to this incident. For us, she is summarizing her epic quest to track down the cold-hearted, narcissistic b---- who left her twitching. This is a story of sleuthing at an impressively high level. Her discovery of the perpetrator is a result of hard work, diligence, and perhaps a bit of inspiration (or at least osmosis) from being in the aura of the BmQ and the many discussions about the methods of Sherlock

Holmes in nabbing the bad guys. Arlene's second tome relates more to the legal route she will take to collect financial damages from the aforementioned individual, when Arlene has to go to physiotherapy. Bravo, Arlene. Quite a story.

14. Third Toast – To the Woman

by Susan Fitch

(Susan was absent, but we toasted The Woman anyway.)

To the Woman!

15. We Bay Our Thanks

We offered a special thank-you to Tash Akkerman for showing us the Russian movie version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. All who saw it loved it.

16. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Patrick Campbell (absent, his wife was released from hospital on the day of the meeting: best wishes for a speedy recovery!)
previously read by Maureen Anderson April 4th, 2002, and who now sends her best regards to everyone

In Baker Street were rooms to rent,
and to these rooms our heroes went.
For many a year they plied their trade
but never thought to hire a maid.

There was no need for such a one
for all the chores were always done.

Poor Mrs. Hudson, so we are told,
did all the work as good as gold.
She washed, and cooked, and scrubbed the floor
and brought the clients to their door.
A Paragon, you will agree.
But liberated? No SIR-EE!

To Mrs. Hudson!

17. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by David Dowse

(David read us "Six Highlights of My Membership in *The Bimetallic Question*" as they appeared in our very special 25th Anniversary publication.)

1. "You have been in Afghanistan I perceive" – My first meeting with Wilfrid de Freitas on Saturday, March 31, 1979.
2. A visit to the forensic crime labs of the Quebec Provincial Police at 1701 Parthenais St. on Saturday March 29, 1980 as arranged by (one of our members) André Morin. Particularly memorable was a photo of a man pierced through the neck by the hood ornament of a Cadillac, in their Museum of the Macabre.

3. Our Victorian Garden Party on Saturday July 8, 1989 at the home of Wendy Zubis and Ed Tanona in Hudson, Quebec, and the Great Scavenger Hunt.
4. The trip to Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario for the Weekend with Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle, in July 1980, Costumed as Brunton with heavily waxed-down hair and moustache, I accompanied Wilfrid as Dr. Grimesby Roylott with his snake friend.*
5. The first Sherlock Holmes Colloquium of The Bimetallic Question, held in June 1990 at McGill University.
6. The visit to our Society by Miss Pauline Rathbone and her husband Mr. John Dapery on December 2, 1981 to give a talk on the life and times of her famous Uncle Basil Rathbone.

*It was a baby boa constrictor (which doesn't drink milk); when I enquired of the friend who lent me the snake if it would be necessary to feed it during the week-end, he replied casually, "Not at all. It had a hamster last week." (W. de F.)

Take a quiet moment and I am sure that each of you will be able to discover in your Tin Dispatch Boxes, six or more special events of the Bimetallic Question that make you proud to be a member.

I give you our Society!

18. Gazette Byliner's Unwitting Sherlockian Reference Nets January Penance

The *Gazette's* Mark Abley's inclusion of a reference by a Mr. Robin Lewis to the Victorian custom of referring to a person, even directly, as "Mr. Sherlock Holmes," raised the issue of why our top political leader is referred to as "Mr. Stephen Harper," while south of the border, journalists refer to "Mr. Obama," omitting the Christian name. The real point of this note is to establish that with the discovery of the reference to Sherlock Holmes's name in the October 26 edition of the *Montreal Gazette*, Mark Abley is now our guest speaker at our annual dinner.

19. Lucknow, Sir, You Must Be Mistaken

A recent search for hidden gold beneath a 19th century fort in India has been terminated after the government threw about \$25,000 into a hole it had dug. Prompted by a holy man's dream of a \$50 billion cache in which a former king appeared with a story (with or without a map), a flurry of excitement ensued. There was no word if the holy man was a closet Sherlockian, had read *The Sign of Four*, or had been in Agra, but there seems to be some overlap between the canonical novel and reality. We of the BmQ always opt in favor of the canon, and believe they should keep digging. Or send the Holy Man to us as our annual dinner speaker for 2015.

20. The Reichenbach Reversing Falls

We need to preface this item with an observation that usually Sherlockians take an interest in Reichenbach Falls because of the locale's portentous presence in the canon, as the scene of Sherlock Holmes's first and only demise. As the Sherlockian bug digs more deeply into the bored psyche (i.e., of people who have nothing better to do), once-perfectly normal individuals make a pilgrimage of sorts to a claustrophobic place in the Swiss Alps where they risk being deafened, and will get wet. The conventional way of arriving at that place, is as a Sherlockian. Any other way is almost unthinkable. How, then, may we explain the curious case of a family

who has not been corrupted by the Sherlockian bug, visits the Falls as unassuming tourists, sees the plaque bolted into a rock by our very own Bimetallic Society, and allows – yes, actually allows – its daughter to work backwards, in reverse, as it were, to a meeting of the great Bimetallic Question, to inform us that they had seen the plaque, without consciously planning the pilgrimage, burning the incense, sticking pins in the Moriarty effigies, etc., etc.? Julia Felske, one of this evening’s guests, explained this curious sequence of circumstances which led her to our Society. We thank her for the visit, we hope to see her again along with her entire family, and of course, we are ever thankful to Patrick Campbell and the others who intrepidly, and with dedication and cause, bolted their passion to a rock in the Alps. Wow, guys! Super stuff!

21. What Big Hands You Have

Chris Herten-Greaven pointed out that SACD had huge “Westphalian” hands. The creator of Watson (fictional) who in turn created Holmes (non-fictional) was spared the torment of performing eye surgery (as were all those potential patients who would have submitted to it) by becoming a writer and wrapping that ham-fisted mitt around a pen. Additional interesting details about the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may be found in *Teller of Tales* by Daniel Stashower.

22. Annual Dinner

By the time we receive these Sherlockian Minutes, we will already have eaten and digested the fare of our annual dinner.

This is what we agreed to:

Dinner (fixed at \$50 pp)

Appetizer

Soup

Main Course: Grilled Chicken or Salmon or Vegetarian plate

Cake

Bottled wine begins at \$35 + tax, \$6.50/glass, beer: \$5.50

23. The Quiz

“The Adventure of the Speckled Band”

prepared by Anne Millar

Possible total: 73

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prizes
1.	Raf Jans	66	Hand-made Sherlock Holmes pillow
2.	Carol Abramson	55	Handkerchief with bee motif
3.	Karl J. Raudsepp	47	Handkerchief with magnifying glass motif

Next Meeting’s story: “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle”

Prepared by: Raf Jans

Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

To the Master	-	Carol Abramson
To Dr. Watson-	-	Rebecca Stacey
To the Woman	-	Raf Jans
To Mrs. Hudson	-	David Dowse
To the Society	-	Rachel Alkalley

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favor upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, February 6, 2014, at 6:30 p.m. Bring a friend. Bring two. Airport shuttle available. For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org

E-mail Contacts:

Editing, amendments to Minutes: Rebecca Stacey, 221b.detective@gmail.com

Send toasts to: Elliott Newman, meinshafer@gmail.com