

**Minutes of the meeting of
The Bimetallic Question
February 7, 2013**

Date of next meeting

Thursday, April 4th, at 6:30p.m. at:
The Westmount Public Library
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Westmount, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

“The Adventure of Silver Blaze”
prepared by Raf Jans

Minutes of the meeting of THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, February 7th, 2013 at the Westmount Public Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec. Our Society Minutes are diligently recorded and artfully composed by Bimetallic Question Lowly Scribe Elliott Newman, with contributions from many members.

Present: Carol Abramson, Natalie Akkerman, Mark Altosaar, Paul Billette, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Kayla Piecaitis, Karl J.Raudsepp, Ronnie Zilman

Regrets: Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Joan O’Malley, Arlene Scher, Rebecca Stacey

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order as promptly as possible at 6:35 by incoming Sovereign Chris Herten-Greaven. The delay was due to the rearranging of seating materials due to a previous meeting in the Westmont Room.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Show and Tell, Scotch and Rocks, February and Ice)

1. Maslow's Feast

If the BmQ were to embark on a rerun of Scott's race to the South Pole, there is no question but that we would want to have Chris Herten-Greaven along. For the past several years, Chris has generously "not" been providing us with pates, cheeses, crackers and other tidbits, such imaginary fare "not" being in accordance with the regulations of the Westmount Public Library "not" to eat in the reading room. While these ailments have been thankfully and graciously received, chewed, and gusted, and occasionally audibly digested by us, Lowly Scribe included, the non-tradition has presented a daunting challenge to the aforementioned scribe in dealing with double negatives and transcending the thin mylar that exists between reality and illusion. Compound this with the nonexistent toasts drunk with ersatz alcohol from invisible glasses and you begin to see the dilemma, *n'est-ce pas?* The metaphysical discussion on what is real versus what is not is one gargantuan and giant conundrum, surpassing by far the most serious three-pipe-problem ever encountered by the Master. Leaping from the tentacles of self-strangulation (also known as writing oneself into a corner), your Lowly Scribe has grappled with the challenge on your behalf so that you may continue to enjoy these minutes, find validation in time well spent at our wonderful meetings, and offer silent prayers to the divinity of Pens for the restoration of sanity of said LS. Not only do we wish to welcome Chris to the Sovereign's chair, but we would also like to thank him for doing what we did not: meeting one of the primary needs of Maslow's Hierarchy, namely, that of sustenance. While we did not see any of this at the meeting, we somehow managed to chew on tender morsels of air and for those of us who had gone without dinner, were able to "oaisize" (new word) a rather nice spread on the table, once again generously (not) provided by...We will describe how we will maintain the illusion of food in the item immediately below. In the interim, thank you and good luck in your new role, Chris.

2. Welcome, Mr. Hudson

We of the BmQ are proud to offer another first in the annals of the global network of scion societies. We are delighted to welcome Raf Jans not only as *sommelier*, but also as the first Mr. Hudson in our – and possibly any – Sherlockian society's history. Non-alcoholic non-beverages suitable for non-toasting will continue not to be offered for \$1 (no pennies = makes you wonder if we will be changing our definition of a dollar = 10 dimes = what's a dime? = a tenth of a dollar = L.S. can't deal with circular definitions = why, oh why, didn't they consult us before melting pennies into...what? Oblivion? = ah, tradition! This is why we and our friends assemble every second month in the Westmount Room = what was I talking about?). In addition to *sommelierizing* or *-ating*, Raf will also be maintaining the non-tradition of non-pate, non-cheese, non-crackers, non-crumbs, and non-paper wrappings in the very real wastebasket in the corner. Check for non-evidence, if you dare. We formally proposed and seconded a budgetary amendment with much more ease than US Congress has been able to do, toward the non-accommodation of the non-purchase of these non-items. The membership failed to agree unanimously to a non-fee (for the negligible want of another word, of \$1 per person to cover the hypothetical cost of this spiritual upliftedness. Welcome Raf, and thank you. Really.

3. New Guests

We were pleased to welcome Tatiana Hollerich and Naima Hassert, introduced by Tash Akkerman. Paul Billet underscored the need to have new and younger people join us to share their passion or interest in Sherlock Holmes, and to provide us with fresh insight that would add vibrancy to the Society.

4. Previous and Future Annual Dinner

Paul Billette is to look into booking next year's dinner. He said that the problem with having the affair at *le Vieux Port* is that we had to guarantee a minimum of 60 people. With a lot of hard work in the final weeks, we squeaked in with that number. Had we not done so, our society would have been in the hole to make up the difference in cost. Regarding going back to The Atwater Club, Ron Zilman was wondering if it was appropriate to share the refreshments bar with people just finishing a squash game, on the way to their shower. Such people, of course, should more suitably be headed towards a bar of soap, as we understand it. Paul pointed out that social and sports clubs are closing all over the city, and choices are limited. Several ideas that our members came up with at this meeting revealed that these clubs had already shut down, or were in the "top one percent" of clubs in Montreal, meaning that they cater to a rarefied stratum of society and are very expensive. Karl Raudsepp indicated that Thompson House at McGill University would be a nice venue. They have their own kitchen. He will look into it as a possibility for next year.

Regarding the entertainment at our annual meeting, Paul Billett said that the personality roast was excellent. The scope and quality of this event indicated that "we're moving along" as a group. He placed credit for a large part of its success on our new, younger members because of their fresh ideas and enthusiasm. Chris Herten-Greaven repeated the call for new, younger people.

5. Receiving the Minutes

David Dowse brought up the question of how members preferred to receive their own copy of the minutes. A few individuals have already voiced the preference simply to have them emailed, thereby saving our forests and continuing the availability of trees for Greyhounds to sprinkle. Some other members still opt for the old-fashioned way. Members will be asked directly as to which method they prefer. Those who still want to get their minutes through the mail will continue to do so.

6. Sharing and Protecting Your Confidential Information

In addition to sending out the minutes, Tash Akkerman will be in charge of maintaining a list of members and their contact information. This list will continue to be important in terms of our being able to get in touch with each other for last-minute information as well as mailing. We will be asking you for your mailing and e-mail addresses, as well as telephone numbers. This list will be available to all paid-up members, and, for security reasons, will not be available on our web site. Note: Anyone preferring *not* to share their contact information will be able to "opt out" of the shared list.

7. Entering Your Toasts in the Minutes

It will be most helpful if, after delivering your toast at a meeting, you would send it via e-mail to our Lowly Scribe. Even though it will be edited for grammar, syntax, and spelling, this will nonetheless save your L.S. valuable time. Much appreciated. [See e-mail on member list!]

8. First Toast – To the Master

by Susan Fitch

Susan read Geoff Dowd's toast remembering *The Friendly Giant*, first delivered 23 years ago.

When we talk about a vintage wine or a vintage automobile we're identifying something as being from a particular period in the past. Further, a vintage wine is quite likely to be a prized wine, and a vintage automobile may well be representative of the best ever built. Tonight I'd like to pop the cork on a very fine vintage toast written by our member Geoffrey Dowd, and read by him at the 1990 Bimetallic Question master's Birthday Dinner. Let's take a spin around the block in this vintage toast to Sherlock Holmes entitled *Toast to a Giant* that recalls Bob Homme's much-loved Canadian children's TV program *The Friendly Giant*, which aired from September 1958 to March 1985. Here then is Geoff Dowd's 1990 *Toast to a Giant*:

When I was younger, the CBC's *Friendly Giant* each morning invited me – and probably some of you – to sit by his fire for a time and enjoy a visit with him and his friends. Of the three offered places around the hearth, I favoured the rocking chair, for those who like to rock. Too soon we had to pass back through the doors of his castle and watch the cow jump over the crescent moon, which signaled the end of the show. Happily, I knew that I'd spot his giant boot next morning and be invited back.

This attitude of wonder, perhaps, prepared me for the similar enchantments and comfortable silences of 221B, to which we transport ourselves when we choose once again to meet Sherlock Holmes. There, at the centre of London's swirling fogs, we can rediscover the security of a warm fire and the certain knowledge that Holmes will shed his lassitude to solve any problem, however trivial, however *outré*, that may come our way. We share with Holmes the wild rides in the hansom, the treks across the moor at night, or whatever else for a while takes us away from the over-stuffed chairs of Baker Street and out into a new adventure. Always, though, we return safe, gratified that God is in his heaven, the tobacco is in the slipper, and the Master is on call once again.

Tonight in Montreal... we celebrate Sherlock Holmes's 136th birthday in fitting style, though far removed from the Criterion Bar, or Simpson's in the Strand. His spirit continues to linger within us, despite his premature retirement to Sussex. At any time we can remove ourselves from temporal cares by re-opening our worn copies of the Sacred Writings to a favorite place in time. There we rejoin the faithful Watson in marveling at the powers of the Master, who like the *Friendly Giant* of my childhood has the knack of making it all right again, no matter what.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you **the Master!**

9. Days of the Iron Horse

David Dowse showed us two mounted posters issued by Canada's CPR announcing service offerings. Reproduced from advertisements over a century old, we see excursion prices from Toronto which seem staggeringly high. One poster was pulled from circulation since it was socially incorrect. A caricature of a black person is used to advertise a price. Since this portrayal showed a racial stereotype in a pejorative way, we in our enlightened position in the twenty-first century have been conditioned to find it offensive whereas our ancestors may have considered it funny, appropriate, or thought nothing of it at all. Your Lowly Scribe remembers when some or many porters on trains, and especially waiters in dining cars, were black, even in Canada. We do not know how or why this practice began, unless it had to do with communities of blacks settling in the Maritime Provinces, which constituted the Eastern terminus of our transcontinental railway. Rather than a thorny issue, this might become the subject of a worthwhile study tracing the emergence of minority groups into positions of increasing responsibility in Canadian business and society. By extension, does anyone want to do a breakdown of the identification, portrayal, and treatment of identifiable minorities in the Canon? Does anyone know to what degree visible minorities are represented in the various Sherlockian societies around the world? We would expect that the Tokyo chapter might have one or two visible minorities – namely caucasian – but would we have access to sociological information that would enable us to gauge the feasibility of attracting a wider audience to our group?

10. Silhouette by the Sea

When vacationing in Maine last summer, Karl Raudsepp chanced upon a convenience store with a large poster stuck to the side of the building, announcing "*Cigaret Shopper*" and imprinted with a silhouette of Sherlock Holmes.

11. Pitfalls of the Gentle Arts

Karl Raudsepp pointed to a book printed in the 1850's which discussed a malaise among women who read novels. The practice of reading could lead to mental health problems identified as "nervous derangement". Similarly, practicing musical instruments could also be injurious to one's health, notably "brain fever" among women. Were men impervious to such setbacks? We were not told of one case where men were subject to emotional or mental setbacks resulting from such stimuli. The subject was taken up again over a century later when in a movie starring John Mills and his daughter Hayley, the father, a rough Welsh miner having no sympathy with people who read, disapprovingly tells his bookish and unambitious son-in-law, "I knew a man who read too much. His mind seized up!"

12. Taking Back the Moment

Chris Herten-Greaven told us about a situation in which a young German army corporal named Adolf Hitler was being triaged for shell-shock and was sent to a Doctor Edmund Forster for treatment. Instead of putting the young soldier into an asylum, the good doctor cajoled him back into action. Due to this fluke of fate Hitler remained in the army for the duration of the war, and changed the course of history. This story is captured in the book, *The Man Who Invented Adolph Hitler*.

13. Three Little Societies...

Chris Herten-Greaven informed us that there are three active Gilbert and Sullivan operatic societies in Montreal. Beginning in February, through May, they will be offering a musical palate of G&S:

The McGill Savoy Society – will perform *Iolanthe* in February

The Lakeshore Light Opera – will perform in March

The Montreal West Operatic Society – will perform in May

14. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by Rebecca Stacey, read by Paul Billette

When young Stamford, Dr. Watson's dresser at Bart's, was informed that his client was looking for lodgings to share, he introduced him to Holmes who was similarly looking for a "coloc". The two young men were attracted to each other apparently from the first. In an exchange of candour, John gave his worst points as being lazy, getting up all hours of the day or night, disliking raucous noises, and keeping a bull pup. Oddly enough, both this pup and young Stamford are never to be heard of again. However, over the course of the stories, it was discovered that the good doctor had not been entirely forthcoming at the beginning. In Addition to the stated points, he was found to be possessed of an immense appetite, to be a serial womanizer, and to be partial to partaking of brandy as a remedy. Maybe living with Holmes gave him an excuse. However, all these peccadillos pale in the face of his boundless aptitude for loyalty and friendship which he displayed throughout their years of cohabitation.

To Dr. Watson!

15. Cultural Context and Literary Criticism

Ars eternam, vita brevis est.

Art is eternal, life is short.

We've all heard it, and within our individual domains of perception, we all have a pretty good idea of what it means.

When Chris Herten-Greaven told us that in Victorian Days, a young man who was good with the ladies was considered a "gay blade", we may assume "gay" in the context of that society meant "happy", "forward", "attractive", "sexually" or "socially active", and other descriptions generally of a positive nature assignable to a young man of decent breeding, or at least, decent enough manners. Apart from "blade" which would be of interest in an average violence-based rap song, the word "gay" today has another popular connotation. It's part of a new vernacular condensed into "GLBT", and very prominent indeed in both real life and in contemporary literature. For those of you left puzzling over these initials, they are not an acronym, but four distinct letters. They do not represent the ingredients of a breakfast sandwich; rather, they stand for four equally distinct categories of sexual identity: gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. (Note to future Canonical researchers: Go for it! You'll find what you look for.)

Today, we look at the Canon with twenty-first century tools. We have the advantage of Freud, Jung, film, electronic communication, Wikipedia, more widespread availability of advanced

education, access to esoterica, evolution in the arts, the articulation of spirituality, offshoots of schools of philosophical thought, and advances in medicine, forensics, and the ways of looking at crime and criminality. We use contemporary techniques to evaluate halcyon works of literature, in this case, the Canon. We pull up short today when we hear the word “gay” since we know it refers to something outside our comfort zone, that relatively “safe” area still prescribed by religion and society when our parents were young, and carried down to us in mother’s milk. Part of our new enlightened experience is that we are beginning to understand that we all handled the process of imbibing and reflecting upon mother’s milk differently. Perhaps the present-day “gayness” or lack thereof in some people, was decided a long time ago. Perhaps, if we have it, it is something we acquired due to some set of circumstances that reprogrammed how we look at life, urges, self-expression, and unavoidable entanglements. In any case the “gayness” of Victorian times, and the implications of that word today, have little or nothing to do with each other.

When we read the Canon and find words and concepts that are alien to us, we must remind ourselves that we are looking at a 100+ year-old body of literature with the tools of twenty-first century language and understanding, and must *add* to our current context in order to comprehend the cognitive and higher levels of meaning implicit in the text. While art might go on forever, our ability to understand and relate to it proceeds by fits and starts as we accumulate knowledge and tools, and re-evaluate our lives in relation to the past.

16. Third Toast – To the Woman

by Elliott Newman

Four years ago I delivered a toast in this room to The Woman, and tonight I fulfill a promise I made to David Kellett at that time. In that toast in 2009, I suggested that Irene Adler’s real-life model was one Eliza Rosanna Gilbert, born in County Limerick OR in Grange, County Sligo, on February 17, 1821, and died January 17, 1861, just shy of her fortieth birthday in New York City. I promised David I would find a copy of a portrait of Irene Adler’s inspiration. It has taken me this long to get hold of it. The real-life Irene Adler, Ms. Eliza Gilbert, would certainly grow up to know her way around the concert halls. At the age of two, her parents took her to India where her father died shortly after of cholera. Her mother remarried a Lieutenant Patrick Craigie who became concerned over the child’s wild behavior, so he sent her back to his native Scotland to be cared for by his parents and educated there. They were unable to deal with her, so Eliza was sent down to England to her stepfather’s older sister who was setting up a boarding school. She was regarded as a beautiful girl, or young woman by then, and while considered graceful and elegant, she still seemed to have a behavior streak that would take six regiments to control.

In 1837, at the age of 16, Eliza eloped with Lieutenant Thomas James, and split up five years later in Calcutta. One year later, in 1843, she debuted successfully as “Lola Montez, the Spanish Dancer” in London. In 1844, in Paris, as Lola, she made an unsuccessful debut as a dancer in Fromental Halevy’s opera, *Le lazzarone*. She met and had an affair with Franz Liszt who introduced her to an important literary circle there. She may also have had an affair with Alexandre Dumas, père. She made her way to Munich where she became the mistress of Mad King Ludwig who made her, and made her Countess of Landsfeld, which included an annuity. With revolutions being fashionable in Europe in 1848, King Ludwig abdicated, and Lola fled the country. It is suggested that his infatuation with her contributed in no small part to his failing popularity. Lola waited for Ludwig to join her in Switzerland. Since he never showed up, she

was quite disappointed, and she then travelled to London, where she dashed her disappointment in marriage to the young heir to a fortune. They had to escape to France when a bigamy suit was brought against him in England. They carried on a tempestuous union for several years.

Their relationship finally disintegrated and Lola moved to the United States where she performed as a dancer and actress on the East Coast, and starred somewhat successfully in a stage play entitled *Lola Montez in Bavaria*. She moved to San Francisco where she married. She moved, with or without her husband, to Grass Valley near Sacramento, and divorced soon after, remaining in the little house for a couple of years. Because of her notoriety, the house is now officially California Historical Landmark Number 292.

In 1855, Lola journeyed to Australia to embark on a tour in which she entertained miners at the gold diggings during the gold rush of the 1850s. There, her purportedly salacious and actual physical and verbal violent behavior alienated whatever fans she might have had. In Ballarat, after reading a bad review in the *Ballarat Times*, she attacked the editor, Henry Seekamp with a whip.

Back in America, she did some acting and lectured on gallantry. She finally moved to New York, where she lived until her death. She spent her last days in rescue work among women. In November 1859, the *Philadelphia Press* reported that Lola Montez was “living very quietly up town, and doesn’t have much to do with the world’s people. Some of her old friends, the Bohemians, now and then drop in to have a little chat with her, and though she talks beautifully of her present feelings and way of life, she generally, by way of parenthesis, takes out her little tobacco pouch and makes a cigarette or two for self and friend, and then falls back upon old times with decided gusto and effect. But she doesn’t tell anybody what she’s going to do.” On 30 June, 1860, she suffered a stroke and was partially paralyzed for some time. In mid-December she had recovered enough to walk with a slight limp and went out for a stroll in the cold weather. She contracted pneumonia, lingering for nearly a month before dying one month short of her fortieth birthday. She is buried in Green-Wood Cemetery, in Brooklyn, New York where her tombstone states: “Mrs. Eliza Gilbert / Died Jan. 17, 1861.” It also incorrectly reads that she was 42 at time of death.

In this idealized painting, the well-known German portrait painter, Franz Xaver Winterhalter (20 April 1805 – 8 July 1873) depicts his vision of Lola Montez. This colorful rendition, focuses on her arguably main claim to fame during her relationship with Ludwig. The canvas was not discovered until after Winterhalter’s death. Small wonder he kept it secret. Winterhalter’s fame rested upon his fashionable court portraiture. Among his best known works are “Empress Eugénie Surrounded by Her Ladies in Waiting (1855) and the portraits he made of Empress Elisabeth of Austria (1865, wife of Emperor Franz Josef).

David Kellett, how can we tell where legend ends and inspiration begins? With a model such as Lola Montez to draw from in “A Scandal in Bohemia”, is it small wonder that Irene Adler continues to draw us?

David, The Society: I give you, The Woman.

17. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Raf Jans

About twenty years ago, I made a bike trip through Scotland with two of my friends. We were students then, so we were on a tight budget and we stayed at youth hostels all the time. One time, however, we decided to splurge and we stayed in a bed and breakfast that was run by a very nice Scottish lady. What I remember most was not the bed, but the breakfast. It was a great Scottish breakfast with fried eggs, beans, toast and black pudding. It was delicious. I guess that Sherlock Holmes was referring to such a feast when he commented on Mrs. Hudson's cooking capabilities in *The Naval Treaty*. "Her cuisine is a little limited, but she has as good an idea of breakfast as any Scotchwoman."

Here is to Mrs. Hudson.

18. The Quiz

The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist

Prepared by Roger Burrows, administered by Paul Billette

Possible total: 56

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	Raf Jans	54	<i>Sonnets</i> , by Walton
2.	Kayla Piecaitis	44 ½	<i>The Sherlockian</i> by Graham Moore
3.	Carol Abramson	41	Bound diary

The next quiz, based on *The Adventure of Silver Blaze*, will be prepared by Raf Jans.

19. Comments on this Meeting's Story

In response to a query by Paul Billette, Carol opined that "It's a stupid story." Raf Jans said, "It's not one of my favorites." David Dowse: "I liked the atmosphere." Karl Raudsepp: "Conan Doyle was writing about cycling, which was very popular then." Raf revived and said, "It was nice to see Sherlock Holmes getting into a fight." One of our guests read the first few pages and liked it.

20. Incriminating Proof and Forensic Dentistry

Chris Herten-Greaven noted that in Canada, Stephen Truscott, a 14-year-old school boy, came within two weeks of being hanged for the murder of a young girl in his class. He was finally exonerated through DNA, generations later. On the other hand, Sherlock Holmes solves cases largely through observation and evaluation. Chris volunteered to give a reprise of his slide presentation on forensic dentistry at our next meeting, a suggestion greeted with interest and enthusiasm.

21. Wisdom vs. Knowledge

David Dowse had a dilemma. He had got into a discussion (friendly) with a co-worker over the differences between knowledge and wisdom, and asked for our opinions in the matter. We followed a trail of ideological clues to the general conclusion that wisdom most commonly comes from the *successful* integration of knowledge and experience. Ronnie Zilman observed that the expression “older and wiser” unfortunately does not apply universally, and recalled this adage (nugget of wisdom) from Newfoundland: “He didn’t grow up; he just got hairy.” How true, wisdom also being, at least in part, truth.

22. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by David Dowse

The meeting concluded with a genial impromptu toast “To the Society!” offered by David. He also promised to bring a longer, more elaborate, (and, we are certain, both knowledgeable and wise!) society toast to our next meeting in April.

23. Next Meeting’s Toast Presenters

To the Master	Raf Jans
To Dr. Watson	Rebecca Stacey
To the Woman	Susan Fitch
To Mrs. Hudson	Tash Akkerman
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, April 4th, 2013, at 6:30p.m. Bring a friend. Bring two. Bus parking in the rear. For the latest Society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org

The Pleasure of Your Company Is Requested

At *Sherlock*, Monday, May 20th, 7:00p.m.

The Segal Centre for Performing Arts, Montreal

Twenty *excellent* seats are reserved for us! Evening includes post play discussion with the cast and other artists, and cast members will be delighted to pose for a group photo with members of our Bimetallic Question Sherlock Holmes Society of Montreal group.

Group ticket prices (taxes included):

Regular Adult	\$41.00	Adult Under 30	\$34.00
Senior 65 and up	\$37.00	Student with ID	\$24.00

Theatre requires payment in advance and we need a minimum of 10 people who are interested in going to qualify for the group rate. Please RSVP no later than March 29th

To: Susan Fitch at info@bimetallicquestion.org Thank you!