



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
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VENATIO ADEST

Minutes of the meeting of The Bimetallic Question June 6th, 2013

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, **August 1, 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
Shoshcombe Old Place"**
prepared by Rachel Alkallay

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, June 6, 2013 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Albert Aikman, Tash Akkerman, Rachel Alkallay, Mark Altosaar, David Dowse, Chris Herten-Greaven, Elliott Newman, Kayla Piecaitis, Karl J. Raudsepp, Arlene, Scher, Rebecca Stacey

Guests: Carole Gossiaux, Anne Millar, Luke Miller, Tessa Miller

Regrets: Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Susan Fitch, Wilfrid de Freitas, Raf Jans, Joan O'Malley

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:40 by Sovereign Chris Herten-Greaven. The delay was due to the initial paucity, dearth, and lack of attendees.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Show and Tell, Bric and Brac, Sharps and Flats, and Feast and Famine)

1. Review of Minutes

In keeping with our new policy to scrutinize the minutes prior to their perpetual enshrinement on our web site, the fine tooth combs were pulled and the minutes accepted by Elliott Newman and seconded by Rachel Alkallay. This process was adopted for several reasons: (a) to ensure that accuracy of information be maintained; (b) to avoid pitfalls which might misrepresent individuals under discussion; (c) to clean up on typos and other minutiae, in order to present our organization in the best possible light.

2. Reminder of the Annual Dinner

Sovereign Chris Herten-Greaven reminded us of the annual dinner in January, at the Atwater Club. He invited all members, as well as guests in attendance at the meeting, to the dinner.

3. Square and True

Rachel Alkallay commented on the square configuration of the tables at this meeting. This was the first time, she said, that she could recall this arrangement of the furniture at one of our meetings.

4. First Toast – To the Master

Karl Raudsepp was kind enough to present to us a toast to the Master, proffered by Ron Zilman, taken in pristine form by Ron from www.sherlockholmesonline.org:

Rivers of ink have flowed since 1887, when Sherlock Holmes was first introduced to the world, in an adventure entitled [A Study in Scarlet](#).

Most of the great detective's fans know him so well, that they feel they have actually met him. It would therefore be presumptuous to try and define him here, as his many friends and admirers may each have very different views about this legendary personage.

For those who have not made up their minds, it might be useful if they read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Autobiography, [Memories and Adventures](#). They will undoubtedly come away with the notion that Sherlock Holmes resembles in many ways Dr. Joseph Bell, one of the teachers at the medical school of Edinburgh University. Arthur Doyle was seventeen years old when he first met Dr. Joseph Bell, who was then thirty-nine. The doctor left an indelible impression upon the young student.

This is how Conan Doyle described him much later: A "thin wiry, dark" man, "with a high-nosed acute face, penetrating gray eyes, angular shoulders." Dr. Bell "would sit in his receiving room with a face like a Red Indian, and diagnose the people as they came in,

before they even opened their mouths. He would tell them details of their past life; and hardly would he ever make a mistake."

We owe the improved looks of the great detective to Sydney Paget who took his "strikingly handsome" brother Walter as model, when he illustrated a great number of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Conan Doyle dedicated [The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes](#) to Dr. Bell, who gave credit to the author for Sherlock Holmes's genius. "You are yourself Sherlock Holmes and well you know it," he wrote him.

Conan Doyle dedicated *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* to Dr. Bell, who gave credit to the author for Sherlock Holmes's genius. "You are yourself Sherlock Holmes and well you know it", he wrote him...

To the Master!

5. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by David Dowse

What makes Watson different from/the same as Holmes?

OPPOSITES

Watson

neat
married
soldier
structured
law-abiding
polite to all, to the point of
being judgmental
accommodating and flexible
man of the people
opposed to recreational drugs
humourless
follower
always respectful of
opposite sex

Holmes

messy
single
civilian
Bohemian
sometimes a law unto himself
condescending to some, and very
judgmental
very demanding
man above the people
an occasional proponent of hard drugs
dry sense of humour (likes practical jokes)
leader
doesn't altogether trust women

SIMILARITIES

athletic
chivalrous
curious
determined
men of action
men of letters
methodical
patriotic (devoted to service of Queen and Empire)
ready to take up lost or obscure causes
trustworthy

I give you Dr. Watson, the perfect friend that Holmes could never do without.

6. What a Tin Dispatch Box Is, and Why We Need One

In "The Problem of Thor Bridge," Watson recounts that "Somewhere in the vaults of the bank at Cox and Co., at Charing Cross, there is a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch-box, with my name, John H. Watson, M.D., Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid."

In a society given to perpetuities, it is only right that we immortalize Watson's little battered box in a fitting way. Fortunately, among us, there is one who stepped forward to commit to the supreme sacrifice of donning the onerous mantle of "The Tin Dispatch Box of the Bimetallic Question." A founding member of our society, David Dowse has moved mountains to ensure its well-being and longevity. Recognizing that a box is for storing things, and "things" may be considered artifacts linking us with a past redolent of a richness and purpose well beyond the mundane, David recognized that the right kind of Tin Dispatch Box may well carry the beating heart of our society. (If you have seen *Pirates of the Caribbean*, you will appreciate this without further explanation!) The treasure-trove of which David speaks is contained in four bankers' boxes, crammed with minutes of our society, going back to 1979. There are other bits and pieces of memorabilia, which while small, comprise a net effect too great for the human mind to comprehend, although perhaps just within the scope of our abilities to grasp. These riches have lain in shadows for lo! many years, and David apologizes to the Society for not having brought them to light sooner. Now, he wishes to expose these artifacts to our consciousness and perusal. First, he will donate these four boxes to the Society. Next, David is hoping that from among our ranks, an archivist will step forward who will, by rummaging through the treasure-trove, adapt historical material for a regular feature in our new newsletter. Since David plans to bring these boxes to our October meeting, he urges us to find an archivist before then.

7. Commercial Opportunities Abound at BmQ

Consistent with a general housecleaning program, David Douse is getting together a quarter-century of Sherlockiana-gathering, and offering it for sale to our society members. While David is greatly attached to these artifacts (some of them valuable, all unique!), he feels it is unfair to keep them hidden away. They need to breathe, possibly grow and thrive. The sale will take place prior to the beginning of October's meeting.

8. How Great Minds in Our Society Think Alike

Rachel Alkallay said that David Dowse's offer to sell his collection of Sherlockiana, reminds her of a two-part project she is contemplating. Rachel is thinking about writing a book on collections and, at present, she is looking for unusual collections. (One need look no further than those seated around the tables at our bi-monthly meetings!) The second part of her project is: Can we set up a small museum of Sherlockiana in Montreal?

Karl Raudsepp contributed that he has been involved with organizations dealing with archival material, such as the Royal Canadian College of Organists.

David added that his (and others') material is valuable enough that we shouldn't lose it and therefore suggested we put out the word that these artifacts should be taken over. Karl stated that this should be further dealt with at our October meeting.

9. Sherlockian Poster Hounds

David Dowse has discovered an interesting shop in Old Montreal specializing in vintage posters. It is L’Affichiste, 471 rue St. François Xavier.

10. Stand and Reveal

Karl Raudsepp showed us a keychain from the long-defunct Sherlock’s restaurant in the Dominion Square building. This enormous eatery was apparently too big to survive in that location. For more information, its web site is still alive.

11. Giving Homes and Waston a Kick!

Rebecca Stacey informed us of an interesting web site, kickstarter.com, where one can list an idea for a project idea. Anyone who is compelled to donate funds for the project can then do so. She brought this up because she recently invested in seeing the comic **“Holmes and Watson”** – a re-imagining of Holmes and Watson as African Americans living in New York’s Harlem District. For her efforts, she received incentives which she shall be bringing to a future meeting.

12. Almost

Rachel Alkallay invited Montreal/international actor and star performer of the recent Sherlockian play at the Segal Center, Jay Baruchel to our meeting. This Holmesian aficionado accepted, but at the last moment, he had to leave the city. Isn’t it the Japanese who never say “no?”

13. Move Over, David Denby

On the numerous occasions that Your Lowly Scribe crawls out from under one of his several rocks, it is to: (a) forage for food; (b) perform ablutions and related rituals; (c) attend scheduled meetings of the BmQ; and (d) observe and ruminate over the aesthetics that set us above the lower primates. All else are niceties and dross. Watching the antics of chimpanzees or puppies, we find a refreshing lack of structure underscored by a purposefulness we observe in infantile human play. Something is there; we project our own hopes, dreams, frustrations, and emotional lives, but experience tells us that such episodes begin with a provocation, and end with food or sleep. Not the stuff of art, certainly. What, then, do we expect when we attend the theatre? Surely, a plot, setting, and characterization: the Aristotelian unities, more mundanely referred to as “time, place, and action,” where “time” and “place” may be subsumed into “setting.” “Action,” according to Henry James, is the plot which cannot move forward without the movement of characters and their conflicts. So, it was to the recent Sherlockian production at the Segal Center that a number of our members hied en troupe. Viewing the play with the unmistakable title of *Sherlock Holmes* netted a variety of responses from our critical viewers. David Dowse was expecting something “original.” He found the acting good; but he was looking for new material and dialogue. He was not completely satisfied. Karl Raudsepp found the play too long in places. He mentioned that they were going to do a rewrite, but the author died.

Elliott Newman, who is constantly distracted by the colors, shapes, and tones of the human pageant wafting past his view, loved every minute, doted on the play-like antics of Jay Baruchel, found the plot to be carrying along (predictably, after the first few minutes), and noted that a couple of actors were sufficiently talented to be worthy of joining Baruchel in the high quality of dramas for which he will one day be famous. All was good when one considers that if you take a play, a poem, or a story on its own merits, and it hangs together and works, and can entertain at the same time, this is an achievement. We may redefine “bad art” in a future fusillade.

14. Open wide, Roger Sarcophagus

Chris Herten-Greaven, a dentist, and sometime forensic dentist, has textbooks on the latter science. Areas of focus include blood analysis, bite mark analysis, and similar specific tools for climbing into a cadaver’s mouth and finding out whodunit. Chris will bring in a slide show demonstrating how to analyze a crime scene.

15. The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!

David asked Tash Akkerman if she were going to arrange a Russian Sherlockian film night.

16. Third Toast – To the Woman by Anne Millar

(This toast was delivered by Anne, with the handwritten notes’ being handed over following the delivery. Your Lowly Scribe apologizes for any errors in transcription. Anne had some well-informed and provocative things to say about the character. We hope she elaborates in the future. – L.S.)

Irene Adler, defeater of Sherlock Holmes, The Woman.

We meet her many times, in many adaptations of the story. She comes as a criminal mastermind, a jewel thief with a penchant for diamonds, an espionage agent-for-hire, the femme fatale, the lover – ever more exotic and foreign than her New Jersey origins.

To which one can only say (sung)

Ah, je ris de me voir si belle en ce miroir—not.

Because Irene Adler, though a marvellous character in all these incarnations, is more interesting than that.

Because Irene Adler defeats someone even more important than Holmes: Doctor Doyle. She fits a character type Arthur Conan Doyle loved to despise, living as an opera singer, and therefore a morally suspect adventuress. In the canon, there are all these other women who use their sensual power to control and destroy – see Isadora Klein

la belle dame sans merci ni gêne
in "The Three Gables" – Irene doesn't go along with the trend.

Irene Adler, as she is in her original story, wins both the moral point and the battle of wits.

And so I say, To Irene Adler, the woman who not only defeats Sherlock Holmes, but defies authorial intention, to become the heroine of her own story.

17. Condolences

On behalf of the Society, Chris Herten-Greaven extended condolences to Carol Abramson on the death of her mother-in-law.

18. The Quiz

"The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire"
prepared by Carol Abramson
Possible total: 55

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prizes
1.	Rachel Alkallay*	52	Lyle's Black Treacle**
2.	Karl J. Raudsepp	49	Steamed Puddings
3.	Tash Akkerman	44	Marmalade

Next Meeting's story: "The Adventure of Shoscomb Old Place"
Prepared by: Rachel Alkallay

*Rachel's first win in 15 years. Congratulations!

**All prizes edible, bought at Bramble House, corner Sources and Donegani

19. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

To the Master - Rebecca Stacey
To Dr. Watson - Rachel Alkallay
To the Woman - Elliott Newman
To Mrs. Hudson - Tessa Miller
To the Society - Carol Abramson

20. Fourth Toast - To Mrs. Hudson

by Rebecca Stacey

*With her fires well-kept and her damasked wallpaper,
Air thick with tobacco -- and chemical vapour*

*A snoozing bullpup and his dear loyal master
A flat made a home by much more than her plaster*

*Fresh scones and tea set out when I'm weary
From working through the night on my latest case theory*

*It's astonishing, the way she manages to establish order
when dealing with me, the most unruly of borders*

*With the wit of a sinner, and the patience of a saint
She manages to keep my brand of chaos... quaint*

*And so to her I offer my gratitude, in this simple rhyme
Hoping she'll forgive that the rent is never on time.*

~ To Mrs. Hudson!

21. The Mugging

No, this is not an episode from Harry Potter.

Several months ago, Rachel Alkallay was mugged. A man yanked her purse out of her hands in the lobby of her mother's apartment building. She lost money, a bus pass, and her late father's Swiss Army knife (which proved useless against muggers, but possibly useful by them).

Rachel got a good look at her assailant. He was 5'10", with green eyes, a forelock, clean-cut, and "definitely Russian", wearing a Kanuk jacket. (Rachel's explanation of how she could deduce the perp's nationality is entirely beyond the ability of your Lowly Scribe to reproduce.) The cleaned-out purse was found in a parking lot on Ontario at St. Denis Street. Rachel posed this question to us: "How do we track him down?" (Notice the "we?") There were no surveillance cameras in the vicinity of the crime. Perhaps if Rachel were to disguise herself as a midget Lascar and frequent Russian bars and tea rooms in winter time when patrons are more likely to wear their Kanuk jackets ...

22. Dejà Vu

Rachel Alkallay's story reminded Chris Herten-Greaven of a similar situation that happened to him years ago, when he was living in a self-contained house. He had come back from an early-morning run, showered, and was coming out of the bathroom when he encountered an intruder in the act of ransacking his home. The nonplussed miscreant uttered a meaningful threat, and fled.

Chris encouraged our evening's guests not to be cowed by our bizarre and fearsome stories. We Bimetallicans are a sturdy lot. Ongoing exposure to the Canon and each other has toughened us. We hardly ever pass out when listening to *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

23. Fifth Toast – To the Society

By Karl J. Raudsepp

It has been a year-and-a-half now since I joined this society, and I have enthusiastically participated in the unique goings-on of the Bimetallic Question (I only missed one meeting ... last August). As an active member, I think I am beginning to get a feel for this unusual group of like-minded people who make up the coterie of this remarkable society. Thank you for allowing me to join the conviviality.

The word *society* originated in the mid 16th century. It is best defined in the sense that it refers to companionship and the friendly association with others. It comes from the French “*société*,” which in turn has its roots in the Latin “*societas*,” and also “*socius*,” which means “companion.”

For me, our society is only partially about the individuals who bring to our gatherings their singular, and at times quite astonishing expertise and talents. For this I salute each and every one of you. But individuals only make up one component of a society, albeit a very important part. The reason for the existence of the Bimetallic Question, and indeed for any successful society, is what actually brings members together in the first place. In our case, or should I say “adventure,” it is Sherlock Holmes *et al*, as penned by the inimitable Arthur Conan Doyle.

Alone we exist as solitary creatures who enjoy things Sherlockian. However, in league, we comprise the Bimetallic Question, an aggregate of people coming together in a more- or-less ordered community: defined by one dictionary, by way of example ... *as drugs, crime, and other dangers to society*. How fitting it is, for the word “society” (in our case, a Sherlock Holmes Society) to be defined in conjunction with these terms - *drugs, crime, and other dangers*.

We are also a community of people, a larger society, living in a particular country and region, having shared customs, laws, and organizations. But we have chosen to belong to another very special and unique sub-society. Therefore, let us celebrate and acknowledge our idiosyncratic society and our quirky ways ... and all that he, Sherlock Holmes, invigorates in us, and most importantly, our *raison d'être* for being together as a society.

To our Society, and to each other, as members of the Bimetallic Question.

Appeal from Your Lowly Scribe

1. I will be away from the very important August 1 meeting. Could a number of people, independent of each other, scribble notes on the evening's proceedings? It would be a treat for me to see what you process. Please give your notes to David Dowse.
2. EVERYONE, please send your toasts within a week, to the e-mail address of my agent, Elliott Newman. The address is listed below.

Thank you

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, August 1, 2013, 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:

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