

MINUTES of the meeting of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION April 3, 2014

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
June 5th at 6:30 p.m. at:
The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Westmount, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

“The Final Problem”

Prepared by
Rebecca Stacey

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, April 3th, 2014 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: David Dowse, Karl J. Raudsepp, Nathalie Ellis, Maureen Anderson, Jack Anderson, Wilfrid de Freitas, Raf Jans, Kayla Piecaitis, Tash Akkerman, Paul Billette, Carol Abramson, Louise Corda, Patrick Campbell, Rachel Alkallay, Rebecca Stacey

Guests: Bruno Paul Stenson

Regrets: Carole Rocklin, Arlene Scher, Elliot Newman, Anne Millar.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order promptly at 6:30 by Sovereign Chris Herten-Greaven.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Show and Tell, Ice and Snow, Falsespring and Elusive dreams)

1. A Multitude of Scribes

This meeting's minutes were a collaborative effort, based on the note-taking of David Dowse & Rebecca Stacey, alongside the transcription and flair of the illustrious Anne Millar. As with most games of telephone, some details and shenanigans might have been lost in translation along the way, and any glaring errors will be corrected accordingly. While it may not be clear whether it was to the leg or the shoulder, we will try to tell the story of the wound.

2. Missing Minutes

With a recent change-up to how the minutes are produced, there were some difficulties in having the last set arrive promptly. Those involved are diligently attempting to correct these issues to have them sent out – both hard copy and digitally – at least a week and some before the next meeting; hopefully, by the next set, near the beginning of the intermediate month. We apologise for any confusion or inconvenience and will aim to do our best to add a bit more speed and accuracy to the process. Otherwise, calm down, and get your paws off the dispatch box. All will be revealed in good time, or at least before it's too late.

3. This Strange and Modern Era of Consistent Spelling

Ever since Holmes rolled onto the page shouting out a “Halloa!” that turned out to be an early version of “Hello!”, it can be safely said that Sherlockians are as plagued as the rest of humanity with the variability of English spelling. Region, history, and usage all conspire against the lowliest to the mightiest scribes, and while our forerunner Watson has the insulation of canonical *autoritas* we who still scribble have to contend with critics. Names, admittedly, are an important battleground for spelling consistency, and so we offer abject apologies to Paul Billette for misspelling his name. At least we didn’t just change it to James.

Patrick Campbell, in his secret career as a judge at steak shows, has become a keen and savvy hunter of the spelling mistake, and was able to stalk several wily examples through the last meeting’s minutes. It is no sign of premature “second childhood” to insert an additional letter into ‘infantile’, just hasty typing and exasperated transcription. A certain amount of debate arose over the honourable question of British vs American spelling usage, but nobody had to resort to championing the aesthetic ‘u’ with a straight left.

4. How To Resolve Your Plot Through Time Travel

Even Dr Watson had difficulty keeping his chronologies straight, but it is with an at least externally regretful heart that your loyal correspondent must confess to reconstructing these minutes from archaeological findings and notes deriving from several different timelines. Time travel is entirely excusable when it is a question of the best rock concert ever. How else to explain such inconsistencies as falsely represented regrets and minutes only arriving the morning of the meeting they were meant to precede? Any similar exaggerations and bizarre phenomena in this edition are to be entirely blamed on residual emotional drainage from The Rumble at Reichenbach and alternative timelines influencing a mere mortal brain.

5. My Middle Name Is Isadora And I Opened The Matchbox

The Society has received a gracious and very welcome gift in the form of the collection of Robert St. Martin, for which we express our gratitude and sincere thanks.

We do not know what this collection is. Do not open the matchbox. There are no persons now missing from the attendees list. There is nothing in the box we do not know. This gift is entirely welcome and to be distributed among us all. There is nothing at the door. There is no-one at the window. Nothing is coming after you. The worm will not devour us all.

6. Truth Is A Mirror, Of Memory, In Need of Windex

Our Ineffable Leader Chris was pleased to revisit the matter of the fictionalisation of history through perceived accurate memory, as derived through “grandmother time” memory and family history, recollection, and retelling. In that a matter is presented as true and remembered as true in a certain story format, insofar as narrative and memory serve. So, for instance, I can recall the story of my grandfather’s recollection of the First War, but it will be my tale of tale told by someone who was young at the time-- years and storytelling style will all have left their mark upon that which may be true but not entirely fact. Truth is at the service of narrative, and we still don’t know which politician did what with a trained cormorant. The unreasonably angry historian will now sulkily sip tea.

7. One Of Us, One Of Us

The Society is pleased to accept Mr Paul Billette as a full member of the Society, with all its rights, rites and privileges. Prepare to have your name repeatedly misspelled, and remember to never speak of that super secret initiation ceremony thing. First rule of Sherlock Club.

8. Sherlock Holmes And The Sign Cyrillic

Inquiries were made as to when the next showing of a Russian Sherlock Holmes adaptation would take place, with much hopeful wistfulness. With equipment provided by the library and *the Sign of Four* hunted by steam launch down the river by Tash Akkerman, the screening is proposed for either the 8th or 15th of May, from 6:30 until 9pm. An adventure of betrayal, secrets and extremely dangerous darts awaits those who dare.

9. Coin of the Realm

David Dowse reports that all is progressing well with his Holmesian coin display tribute, albeit with some possible interference from numismatic dragons and or fairies looking for royalties on their photographic appearances.

10. To The Master - Kayla Piecaitis

Sherlock Holmes' main strength stems from the fact that as a hero he could also be a fantastic villain.

He himself remarks upon that, while bored with his lack of cases declaring "it is fortunate for this community that I am not a criminal," and with good reason; Holmes would make a formidable criminal. And he's not too far off the work already; the detective has proven on a number of occasions that he's not above bending a few laws -- breaking into a suspect's house, hiding stolen goods, lobbing smoke-bombs into people's sittings rooms - when it suits his needs. The balance between consulting detective and criminal is so precarious at times that "if he were any weaker, he would either be assimilated into society and become a more intelligent Lestrade, or be consumed by the darkness and become a more malevolently brilliant Stapleton or Moriarty."

Though he chooses to work for the side of law and justice, Holmes interest lies primarily in solving the puzzle presented by the more-than-ordinary crime. He is not a Victorian Robin Hood, has no interest in radical social reform, nor in his own financial gain, and so demonstrates remarkable integrity.

To the man who is more than black or white
To the man for whom the puzzle is everything
To Sherlock Holmes; the master

11. Thank You For The Honour of Our Company

As a tribute to the kindness of the Westmount Library in allowing us the use of such a setting, especially with such conviviality (and illicit crackers), Wilfrid de Freitas proposed that as a Society we donate a portrait of the man who eternally regretted having created our Master. A reproduction of a portrait of Arthur Conan Doyle from the National Picture Gallery in London, with a plaque underneath emphasising our deep gratitude, would befit not only the library as an institution promoting literary arts, but also our Society as a group with a subtle sense of humour. This picture could be placed in the room in which we meet, complementing David Dowse's coin display, and inquiries as to framing with special glass came up with estimates around \$150. Barring the vague possibility of copyright holders, we have a plan.

As to which of two possible images to use, the Society voted 9 to 5 for the younger picture. It must be the irresistible appeal of that moustache. *Vanitas, vanitas, omnia vanitas.*

12. Plaques Or It Didn't Happen

Fittingly, considering the subject matter of next meeting's quiz, Karl Raudsepp has a copy of the Society's memorial plaque from the Reichenbach Falls, and offers it to a good home for the nominal fee of \$20. Whilst we are all aware that The Master did not perish at that fearful place, it is occasionally befitting to our spiritual health to contemplate mortality and sacrifice. But perhaps it would be best to consult with the Watsons of our lives before we install this sort of thing over the mantelpiece.

13. On Sending Post Via Slow Boat To China Canada

With the recurrent theme of postage, problems and pricing, Our Glorious Sovereign contributed an anecdote of sweetness and light from days of yore. Having a great care for reading letters, he showed a piece of correspondence from his mother, sent from England to Canada. In 1941, such international shipping cost the now envious sum of 2 pence ha'penny, and was left as at a *poste restante* at Dupuis Freavés department store. So, while mail may have travelled further and potentially faster for less, home delivery was still an issue in the bad old days.

14. Don't Put The Finger On Me, Argentina

Many matter literary and otherwise of the printed word brought themselves to the attention of the society this meeting. Having staked the research kid to the tree, the factoid tiger was secured in that Chris Herten-Greaven was able to source the source for the original of Sherlock Holmes to a Jerome Amanda from Argentina.

15. It Was A Night Of Tropical Splendour. Also Murder.

Baronets found murdered in their mansions, covered with mysterious feathers and more than one team working to oppose the mystery's resolution may seem a plot more suited to a painfully bad Holmesian pastiche, but instead this is the unresolved true tale of Sir Harry Oakes, found beaten to death in 1943 in the Bahamas. This excursion into "true crime" was dredged up from the past by Our Glorious Leader, who recently read one of the many books published throughout the years on the subject.

The facts, such as they are, have all the makings of artificial drama and suspense, with the additional *frisson* of reality. A major philanthropist and investor in the Bahamas, Oakes was the single wealthiest man in the colony, and often entertained the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The bizarre circumstances of his death - battered, burned and bestrewn with feathers - pair dramatically with these worldly connections. Unlike a novel, however, there was no resolution to this mystery. Interference through ducal instructions, alibis disregarded in favour of arresting a 'playboy' aristocratic son-in-law, multiple investigations contradicting each other, fastidious silence and omission on the part of friends-- there is no wonder that speculation over this unresolved crime has ranged from espionage to organised crime to scandal in high places.

With the honourable tradition of crime writers turning their eye to real-life cases, these circumstances have attracted plenty of speculation, but alas! as yet no Sherlockian touch. Universal had Holmes hunting Nazis, so why has no one decided to give an arthritic beekeeper a tropical vacation? Agatha Christie was as kind to her Victorian relic, and Holmes has the public domain advantage.

16. A Splashing Of Scarlet Helps The Overdraft Go Down

It is often best to not see the creative process behind beloved authors and artists, since in periods of strain and stress we are none of us at our best. However, Wilfrid de Freitas brings an account of a letter of Arthur Conan Doyle to his inspiration for Sherlock Holmes, Dr Joseph Bell. This letter, residing in the Toronto Public Library for those of you considering felonies, speculates on the name "Sherlock Holmesey", which sounds somewhat more adorable than the fierce light of reason and justice we have come to respect. Additionally, a connection between the number of murders and increasing public interest puts a different spin on "more money, more problems".

18. A Toast To Dr Watson - Rebecca Stacey

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Empire 1902".



*They said that it had feet of clay,
That its fall was sure and quick.
In the flames of yesterday
All the clay was burned to brick.*

*When they carved our epitaph
And marked us doomed beyond recall,
"We are," we answered, with a laugh,
"The Empire that declines to fall."*

19. Oh! What A Lovely War! and Other Earworms

Speaking of Watson's history is to speak of the Empire, and the Society did not disappoint. In a freewheeling discussion that charged from the Boer War to the conflagration of the First World War, much was said of motivations, machinations and manipulations.

The Boer War sees both the furthest spread of imperialistic ambition at the British Empire's territorial zenith in 1902, a force deeply involved with Watson's origins as a character, and of Doyle's own experience in real life reportage. Naomi Kline is quoted that "War is a financial undertaking," and the demolishing of economies is the making of profit.

Narratives of the First War here came into play, with the execution of Edith Cavell for treason in 1915, following her assisting over 200 Allied soldiers to escape, but also remembered for helping any wounded, regardless of side. William Wiseman, head of British Intelligence in America during that war, was also mentioned.

Symbol over substance came into play even at the highest levels, as anti-German sentiment prompted a legal change of name from the royal family, from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor, prompting a Shakespeare joke from their cousin the Kaiser, who "looked forward to a production of *The Merry Wives of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*."

20. A Toast To The Woman - David Dowse

In late Victorian and early Edwardian England there were dramatic changes taking place in the role of women in society. Women were asserting their skills, voice and courage in the fields of literature, politics and on the stage. The suffragette movement called women out from the sitting rooms and onto the streets to demand equal opportunities with men.

The bicycle craze and a dramatic style change in women's clothing gave them the freedom to tour the country without the body-guard male. Lady stage stars were internationally wowing audiences and making liaisons with wealthy, influential world leaders.

Of course, all this notoriety also brought with it certain risks and dangers. Women on the street, in rail cars, on ships, in shops, schools and even at home were encountering threats of physical violence. What was this emerging modern woman to do?

We see them taking charge. There were courses offered for women in Bartitsu and Jujitsu. The walking stick, the sword cane, the weighted purse, the rolled umbrella, the hat pin as

well as the fan dagger and the derringer pistol gave women the confidence to walk the busy byways and say "Watch Out!"

Irene Adler was a world renowned opera singer. She knew her way around New York, London, Paris, Rome and Vienna. She had the acting skills, make-up and costumes to play any role -- even that of a man. And at Irene's side we see no muscle; she needed no man to sweep away her inconveniences: I think Irene did it all on her own.

Any jilted lover who thought that they could walk right in and with a good slap, a threat of acid to the face or perhaps a thug encounter in a stage door alley had another thing coming! Irene was no pushover. I believe both intellectually and physically Irene could defend herself against all. She was a lean, keen, mean machine who could kick ass when the occasion called for it. Not only was she The Woman; she was **Wonder Woman**.

Ladies and gentleman, I give you -- Irene Adler!

21. The Glorious Expedition of 2014: First We Take The Redpath, Then We Take Berlin

It has been proposed that, as a society, we ought to partake of the veritable cornucopia of fun and excitement available to persons of taste and refinement fortunate enough to be in Montreal during the summer months. Or we could go gawk at horrifying examples of taxidermy in a 19th-century-style museum. The Koala of Doom awaits us, as well as the mortal remains of the Glorious McGill Expedition of 1933, during which a select few students and staff shot their way across Africa, and managed to take six bullets to kill that one gorilla on the staircase. Count the holes in the skin. See the Ancient Egyptian Mummy, 28% guaranteed not cursed! Be as Dr Mortimer and gaze enviously at the skull cabinet. Sit in the green-baized lecture hall where many a terrible horror film cast and crew has trod before.

The plan of attack is as follows: On the 2nd of June at 1400 hours we move as a trampling horde through the Redpath Museum located within the bounded citadel of McGill University campus. Percherons, tanks, longships and other means of transportation and invasion to be left in the charge of the Parking Guard of Milton Gate. Details, Trojan Horse plans and Odysseus' Big Book of Bad Battle Puns available by summoning the email spirit of Bruno Stenson by means of stenson@colba.net.

22. These Are The Champions, My Friends

Following the usual duel to the death, the formal winners of the quiz concerning the grotesque affair of the Red-Headed League were as follows

First Prize: Raf Jans
Second Prize: Carol Abramson
Third Prize : Tash Akkerman

Since the repetitive cycle of winning-and-writing the quizzes has led some members to threaten to fake their deaths and spend 3 years lounging in Tibet rather than write another, it has recently behooved the Society to ask if anyone wished to volunteer a quiz. Laughing with the sinister laugh of a true student of Vincent Price, Rebecca Stacey took up the torch, and will present a harrowing quiz on *The Final Problem* at the next meeting.

23. The Ladies and Gentlemen of the Lamplight

On a concluding note, should any of our members be contemplating a life of crime and cracksmanship, Patrick Campbell has made two astounding replicas of a dark lantern housed in Scotland Yard's infamous Black Museum. I'm not saying we all lead a double life, but my nights out on the tiles certainly have much more to do with rooftops than dancefloors.

24. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

To the Master	-	Chris Herten-Greaven
To Dr. Watson -	-	David Dowse
To the Woman	-	Patrick Campbell
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Rachel Alkallay
To the Society	-	Paul Billette

25. So Lift To Me The Parting Glass

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, June 5th, 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

Minutes Mucked About By: Anne Millar, thesportingrabbit@gmail.com