



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

VENATIO ADEST

MINUTES of the meeting of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION December 4, 2014

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, February 5th, 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
Dying Detective”
prepared by
Erica Penner

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday,
December 4th, 2014 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke
Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

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

Guests: Kristin Franseen

Regrets: Tash Akkerman, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Patrick Campbell

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order *promptly* at 6:37 by Sovereign
Chris Herten-Greaven.

In Memoriam

*We were saddened to learn of the sudden passing
of one of our own.*

Mac Belfer

on Saturday, January 3, 2014

at the age of 92.

*Mac was charming and erudite, an amateur poet and
story writer, a successful businessman, and passionate
about Sherlock Holmes, as he was about all things.*

We were also saddened to learn of the passing of

Pierrette Campbell,

wife of Patrick,

our Sovereign Emeritus.

*We hope that their families will be spared
further sorrow.*

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Hail and Farewell, Darkness and Dawn, Syntax and Grammar)

1. The Last Post

In what he would describe as his last official function as Sovereign of our society which we know to be the only living, breathing Bimetallic Question in the World, Dr. Chris Herten-Greaven tapped the gavel down to open our last meeting of 2014. As the dying echoes of Chris's distinctive gavel-rap whispered under the door and down the hall, we realized that the past two years had been fun, unique, and even joyous with Chris at the helm. During that time, our ship did not take on water, and although we crossed several oceans with him many times, we are still afloat, and charged with our usual enthusiasm for unusual Victorian-inspired tidbits. Thank you, Chris.

2. More Déjà-vu

In the dozen years or more that your Lowly Scribe has enjoyed the honor and thrill of stretching his pen (not what you think, DD) on your behalf, certain anomalies, contradictions, ironies, and *je-ne-sais-quois* have crossed the desk sometimes in tight military formation, and at other times like co-eds hauling back empty beer cans along a Fort Lauderdale beach during Spring Break. One of these unavoidable challenges would rear its ugly head during the preparation of the Minutes of our December meeting, of which this document is yet another exemplar. At issue is the fact that dutiful to a fault, your ever-so-humble L.S. has been finding himself reporting on preparations for the annual dinner, with such preparations, from our membership-at-large's point-of-view, culminating in the *December* meeting of the BmQ. Ah, well and good. We will see the fruits of those preparations culminating in the grand blowout on the third Saturday of January, a full three weeks minus two days *before* our next

meeting. Even less time will have elapsed until you will have received these minutes. This means, certainly, that as much as your L.S. has been hopelessly in love with reporting on the intricacies of the workings of our leaders' minds regarding planning and other things, two great questions appear much closer than the horizon:

- a) Why present the details of a logistical process swimming through the heart of a plan *after* the event prompting the plan has passed into history? And
- b) Where is Lumosity when you need it most?

The answer to (a) is clear, and not quite so embarrassing to Yours Truly as you might think. The appeal and democracy of our society requires participation on all levels. That is one of the truly great things about our group. True, some people provide more input than others, but then, all contributions are always appreciated.. So, your L.S. has been trying to provide a fair record of who has been doing what as a way of acknowledging and thanking all of us for making the BmQ something to be proud of, and a true joy to participate in.

As for Question (b), we believe that a steady dose of the Canon and this Society will continue to be more efficacious than an electronic fad cloaking itself in the feathers of "neuroscience." BTW, "Lumosity" announces that it has 2.1 million followers on Google. Guess how many listings there are for "Sherlock Holmes?" 44 million. The number increases dramatically when we expand the field to include related headings, characters, events, synonyms, etc. All of this demonstrates that followers of Sherlock Holmes must be more mentally nimble and receptive to new knowledge due to the massive data input which is natural in our area of interest. Seriously, who, after listening to one of Chris Herten-Greaven's reminiscences about people and places, has not walked away absolutely reeling? More kudos to the BmQ.

3. Funny. Or not.

In the quest for a speaker for our annual dinner, David Dowse was going to talk to the owner of a comic book boutique in Les Galleries de la Cathedrale. As it turned out, he didn't. Chris Herten-Greaven was hoping to rope in a geneticist. However, the individual refused. Karl J. Raudsepp proposed his brother, the former chair of Journalism at Concordia University. Failing that, we might have been able to acquire Mrs. Raudsepp, herself a PhD in Irish studies. This would have been interesting for us, since there is an indirect Irish connection through *The Valley of Fear*. In addition, SACD had Irish roots through his mother. Apparently, we would have none of these individuals as our speaker. The bombshell about our speaker would come later in the meeting, and so, dear reader, do your thing and keep reading ...

4. Hot News Flash: L.S. Stands Corrected. Again.

- Louise Corda pointed out that the wrong story was listed for the quiz, in the minutes. Anne Millar corrected the error in the final version. (Whew!)
- Chris elaborated on Richard Pearse in #13 of the minutes. This was less in the order of a correction than it was in providing more insight.
- Similarly, your L.S. apparently had attempted to hasten the demise of John Rallston Saul, husband of our former Governor-General, Adrienne Clarkson. Ms Clarkson will be delighted to learn that her spouse is alive and well, although your L.S. is in hiding to escape prosecution for attempted assassination.

- In referring to #17 of October's minutes, Chris elaborated that it was the unwitting attempt to meet the jet stream head-on which slowed down an airliner in the 1940s, causing it to crash into the side of a mountain in the Andes.

5. The Dinner

Paul Billette told us that the cost of the annual dinner would be the same as last year, at \$50 per person. This included: appetizers, soup, entrée (some discussion over this term: for our purposes, it means the main course), dessert, and tea or coffee. Appetizers were scheduled to begin floating in at 6:00, with seating at 7:00. Cash bar.

6. Speaker for the Dinner

Still no word. We said things like:

- Maybe we can each speak a little bit.
- It doesn't really matter who speaks.
- We'll come through; we always have in the past.
- Sure, but do you remember the guy who ...?
- We can let them choose their own topic, and maybe they can add a little bit about Sherlock Holmes.
- It's Aislin.

7. Annual Gilbert and Sullivan Smorgasbord

Once again Montreal's three G&S Operatic societies will present a combined program of offerings. The societies are:

The Montreal West-End Operatic Society

The McGill Savoy Society

Lakeshore Light Opera

The concert has become an annual tradition, begun in 2008.

It will continue at St-George's Church (Avenue des Canadiens and Peel Street).

It will be/was held Friday, January 31, 2014 at 8:00 p.m.

We hope you will/did attend and enjoy it.

8. He Stands on Guard for Thee, and Thee, and Me

"Sometime in 1885 or 1886, Arthur Conan Doyle was doodling on a sheet of paper. He had the idea – inspired by Auguste Dupin, the sleuth who had solved Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" – for a "consulting detective," who would use "the Rules of Evidence" to catch his man. But what would he be called? "Ormond Sacker?" "Sherrinford Holmes?"

Thus begins an article by Sam Leith in *The Guardian* newspaper about "Sherlock Holmes as Myth and Reality," announcing an exhibition of Sherlock Holmes at the Museum of London. Many artifacts, never before seen, are on display. The book of the exhibition, *Sherlock Holmes: The Man Who Never Lived and Will Never Die* is edited by Alex Werner and published by Ebury Press.

Many thanks to Chris Herten-Greaven for this information.

9. Free. Free. Are We Ever Truly Free?

Louise Corda gave away an illustrated version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Once upon a time there was a dog ...

10. BPS and KKK

Bruno Paul Stenson noted an article in the *Business Times* to the effect that, in an effort to expand membership, the Ku Klux Klan was opening its membership to Jews, blacks, Hispanics, and gays in the Pacific Northwest. The cost of admission required each new hopeful to bring his own sturdy rope.

11. Beeton It Back to the Kitchen

Carol Abramson showed us *Mrs. Beeton's All About Cookery* in paperback.

12. More About Russell

Wilfrid de Freitas pointed to the coincidence of the evening: in tonight's story there was a reference to William Clark Russell. Wilfrid has a book of Russell's short stories, *What Cheer*.

13. Upper and Lower

Wilfrid clarified that there are two Reischenbach Falls: the Upper, and the Lower. This is reminiscent of the *Li'l Abner* comic strip series which referred to Upper and Lower Slobovia. Dentists might relate to this too, as in uppers and lowers. People who have been to summer camp would also be familiar with uppers and lowers. What goes around, comes around.

14. Sherlock and Torah

Arlene Scher told us she had been looking at a book written by two Jewish authors attached to the Toronto Bootmakers who were trying to attach a Jewish perspective to the Canon. Arlene was not so sure if they had succeeded. The real verdict, as always, is in the hands of G-d.

15. Avoiding the Catastrophes of Ooops

During another of our non-sequitural discussions, this time, having to do with the numbers of accidental shootings of two-legged animals during hunting season in the wilds of Quebec (anyplace more than 5 meters away from a rural building), Chris Herten-Greaven suggested that anyone applying for a license to hunt big game (deer, foxes, rabbits, etc.) in our province should be compelled to take an eyesight test. We have had many cases of hunters in Quebec killing people thinking they were large, non-domestic animals. In the early 1970s, a cousin of Sigmund Freud, one Walter Freud, was dispatched in this manner. Your Lowly Scribe once created a week-long hunting special on CJAD radio, with the support of the late George Balcan who as an amateur artist met with much opposition during hunting season when he would knock on the doors of rural dwellers in our province, seeking permission to set up his easel and paint. At first, people took him for a hunter, and would refuse to open the door to

him. Clear heads prevailed, and George was allowed to paint among the whizzing bullets and singing arrows.

16. Call to Alms

Rebecca Stacey asked if we would like to donate to the Jonah's Just Begun Foundation in aid of researching a cure for neural degenerative disease known as Sanfilippo Syndrome. The celebrity magnet for this cause is the British actor Johnny Lee Miller who came to prominence in the film *Trainspotting*. He has been running in a series of marathons and longer-distance events to publicize the cause.

17. First Toast – To the Master

by David Dowse

Sherlock Holmes: 19th century

Hercule Poirot: 20th century

Adam Dalgliesh 21st century

The power of observation coupled with deductive reason to produce logical elementary solutions.

The study of personal characteristics using the little grey cells that explain that “why” will always lead to “whom.”

Clues of a crime filed in the brain and on the computer and aided by state-of-the-art forensic technology and a team of dogged researchers giving a criminal no hope of escape.

All three of these professionals are devoted to finding the truth.

The battle between justice and the law is in each of their approaches to a case.

The eras in which these three masters lived and practiced their art made the reading of their exploits a real treat for a detective aficionado.

I give you the first of these three masters.

Let us toast Sherlock Holmes.

To *the* Master.

18. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

By Rebecca Stacey

So, we've had a lot of Watson toasts, and they all sort of talk about what Watson does for Holmes. Great companion, sidekick, soldier, doctor, marksman, you know. The list goes on.

But I want to talk about what Watson does for someone else, who he is, and how important he is to an entirely different group of people.

Us.

And to do that, I'm going to start by tell you a couple of jokes:

Q: How does Good King Wenceslas like his pizza?

A: Deep pan, crisp, and even.

Q: How many crime writers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one, but it has to have a really good twist at the end.

Q: What did Big Ben say to the Leaning Tower of Pisa?

A: I've got the time if you've got the inclination.

These jokes work because there's a set-up and there's a punchline. Timing, delivery, catching the attention of the audience, holding back relevant information to magnify impact – I think you're starting to see where I'm headed with this.

You see, Watson knows how the stories end when he starts them. But he writes deliberately to take us through the paces of the mystery, to share his own experience and to give us an opportunity to see things as they unfold. It's his writing that captivates us. It's he who we stand alongside. I mean, except for when things get weird, like the second part of *A Study in Scarlet* when I literally thought somehow I'd picked up and started reading the wrong book.

We're here, and I think it's important to remember that we're here, because Watson introduced us to someone fascinating, but it's his narrative and his crucial delivery that makes the stories what they are. Holmes couldn't do, and wouldn't have done, it himself. So let's thank him for that introduction, and the opportunity he gives all of us to live vicariously through him, so we too might get to know the great, Sherlock Holmes.

To Watson – *His Boswell!*

19. Hudson's Willow Inn: The Original Home of the Twilight Zone

Wilfrid de Freitas remembers one of the first annual dinners of the Society at the Willow Inn, at which someone received an envelope within an envelope, containing five orange pips wrapped in paper, and the word "Rache" written on the outer envelope.

20. Quiz: "The Five Orange Pips"

Prepared by: Carol Abramson

Possible total: 80

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prizes
1.	Erica Penner	54	Not noted
2.	Wilfrid de Freitas	52	" "
3.	Chris Herten-Greaven	47	" "

Next Meeting's story: "The Adventure of the Dying Detective"

Prepared by: Erica Penner

21. Third Toast – To the Woman

By Paul Billette

Whoever thought that Irene Adler, subject of only one Holmesian short story, would cause such a stir among fans?

Born in New Jersey in 1858, contralto opera singer at La Scala in Milan, Italy, prima donna at the Imperial Opera House of Warsaw, Poland's capital city. Actress, often dressed in men's clothes.

Says Sherlock Holmes, "What a woman – oh, what a woman!"

Says Sherlock Holmes, "The voice of an angel, a lovely thing, the face a man might die for, the only woman ever to outwit me at my game."
Accorded the honorable title of "The Woman."
To Irene Adler!

22. Passing the Gavel

Outgoing Sovereign of the Bimetallic Question, Chris Herten-Greaven, announced that he will pass the gavel to our incoming leader Carol Abramson at our annual dinner on January 17, 2015 at the Atwater Club.

23. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

(Not available)

24. Welcome Back, Susan

David Dowse welcomed back Susan Fitch whom he mentioned had been on CBC Radio's *Daybreak* program a week before, supporting the case for lower bus fares for low-income people. Susan will be assuming the portfolio of BmQ Minutes in the New Year. We wish her loads of luck in her new endeavor.

25. Fifth Toast – To the Society

By Chris Herten-Greaven

In the final moments of Chris's role as Sovereign, he delivered an impassioned farewell toast to the Society.

26. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

- To the Master - Ronnie Zilman
- To Dr. Watson - Elliott Newman
- To the Woman - Rebecca Stacey
- To Mrs. Hudson - Kristin Franseen
- To the Society - Mark Altosaar

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 5th, 2015, at 6:30 p.m. Meet like-minded Sherlockians and express opinions you would never dare to utter anywhere else. Pre-meeting snow baths on the lawn behind the solarium. Deerstalkers optional. Fig leaves provided. For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org Popsicles will be redundant in February.

E-mail Contacts:

Send toasts and amendments to minutes to: Susan Fitch, e-mail: susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca