

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
February 6, 2014

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, **April 3rd, 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
Red Headed League”**
prepared by
Bruno Paul Stenson
(Guest Presenter)

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, February 6th, 2014 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Tash Akkerman, Rachel Alkallay, Paul Billette, David Dowse, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Janz, Anne Millar, Elliott Newman, Kayla Piecaitis, Ronnie Zilman,

Guests: Andy Osuri, Bruno Paul Stenson

Regrets: Jack and Maureen Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Wilfrid de Freitas, Joan O'Malley, Arlene Scher, Rebecca Stacey

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

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Cumberbatch and Freeman, Rathbone and Bruce, Caine and Kingsley)

1. Passage of Minutes

Due to circumstances of extenuation, the minutes of the previous meeting were not passed; this will be done at the next meeting.

2. First Toast – To the Master

by Carol Abramson

Tonight it is my honor to propose a toast to the most recognizable Englishman in the world today, a man noted for his brilliant deductive reasoning and keen observational skills. The name Sherlock Holmes conjures up gas lamps and London fog, hansom cabs, mysterious moors, and glowing hounds. Just speaking of him, we are instantly swept away to a world of monographs, secret codes, chemistry experiments, disguises, and even opium dens. Sherlock Holmes provides us with a taste of mystery and a touch of lethargy, and allows us to observe his sardonic wit and inspiring intellect. We are privileged to study and enjoy his Canon, and share it with our fellow Society members. And thus, my friends, I propose this toast – to the Master.

3. Digesting the Annual Dinner

Paul Billett offered a special thank-you to the people who organized our annual dinner at the Atwater Club. He observed that Mark Abley of the *Gazette* was our best speaker yet. The Dowd sisters entertained us with a lovely operatic duet, and the flow of business and pleasure went non-stop through a memorable social event. We appreciated having our own gathering room to warm up before the night's festivities, where we could enjoy a non-stop round of tasty hors-d'oeuvres. Paul mentioned that there were luminaries in abundance, including six or seven published authors including Dr. Joe Schwarcz, Rebecca Stacey, Anne Millar, Mark Abley, Patrick Campbell, and Cathy Reichs, forensics consultant and well-known author of mystery fiction. The television series *Bones*, for which she is creative consultant, is based on her writings. (Please see APPENDIX "C")

4. New Faces Around the Long Table

We were pleased to welcome two guests to the meeting.

Bruno Paul Stenson, alias “Dynamman,” resides most workdays at the Redpath Museum. He is interested in Sherlock Holmes, and invited us on a tour any Sunday from 1-5 p.m. We will take him up on it in the Spring.

Andy Osuri is a second-time visitor to our Society. We were delighted to see him again, and hope he will join us permanently.

5. The Society’s New Logo

David Dowse works with a company which sells recognition products. These are items which companies and organizations give to their employees in recognition for outstanding effort and achievement. Because a number of these products are personalized in various ways (company logos, citations, people’s names, art work, etc.) there is a department of skilled professionals who create beautiful and imaginative images on a par with the best, with a view to adorning these instant mementos. David has set this department the task of redesigning our Bimetallic logo with a specific objective in mind. By way of thanking the Westmount Library for its years of generosity in letting us use the reading room every week for our meetings, we will present them with a wall plaque honoring the library and its support of Sherlock Holmes and our humble gathering. We do not know when the art work will be available for us to see and comment on, but it might be as soon as our next meeting. Stay tuned.

6. More on Faeries

Chris Herten-Greaven told us how Daniel Stashower’s book on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle describes how the Holmes creator was sucked into the world of the occult and fairies through girls who dressed up their dolls as fairies. This was achieved through a series of photographs set up to create an illusion of fantasy. We doubt that SACD made the distinction between the fantasy effect of these now-famous photos, and the belief in the supernatural to which some people subscribe(d). In reality, the “fairies” were held up with hatpins which were visible in the photos, although some people truly believed these thin glistening lines marring the pictures *had* to be something else. One of the girls in the photos was the subject of a movie, entitled *Fairy Tale*. In later life, she would see fairies, although there would be no tangible presence of them. The likeliest explanation is that of auto-suggestion, and a deep-rooted need to communicate with dead relatives. SACD was fascinated with the prospect of such activity, and it led him in the direction of metaphysics.

Paul Billett informed us that in 19th century England there was a society of 50,000 members investigating the paranormal. He prepared a research paper on the subject. (May we see it, Paul?) He said that the paranormal works by shaking your beliefs. Rachel Alkallay then cited the work of the Rhine foundation which today seeks to unearth activity which is difficult to explain.

7. Who and What is Rhine?

Not quite a river, this Rhine derives its name from Joseph B. Rhine who headed the Department of Parapsychology at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, since its inception in 1935, until his retirement in 1965. The society continues today. The mission is to explore “the frontiers of consciousness and exceptional human experiences in the context of unusual and unexplained phenomena.” If this is unclear, its slogan tells us that Rhine is “Bridging the Gap Between Science and

Spirituality.” To make its focus of concern crystal clear, its web site features a blog entitled “Experience of the Month.”

Currently, someone named Barbara has written, “At least twice in my life without any warning spirits have walked right through my body.” There you have it. Barbara, it seems, has had a number of episodes, at least one of them landing her in the hospital where she was told she had had a panic attack. While the Rhine Research Center is located on Campus Walk Avenue, Building 500, in Durham, NC, there is nothing on its web site connecting it with Duke University today. The fine folks at Rhine will be pleased, however, to accept your donation, and you may further support their efforts by buying their merchandise or books online.

8. Bridging the Generation Gap

Not too many weeks before our scheduled meeting, a few members of the BmQ met in a brainstorming session to discuss options and directions for the society (more about that in “APPENDIX A” of these minutes). At that time, Ann Millar and Rebecca Stacey mentioned that the younger enclave of our Society would have occasional parties in which, if we old fogeys were getting it right, the juniors were expending a lot of energy and having a lot of fun doing stuff we couldn’t remember ever having gone through. Wow! (Are we permitted, at our age, to say “Wow!?”) There we were, in all innocence, staring down the maw of youth itself, feeling cut off, and receding a million miles into space. Dimly, those of us who could, remembered there was actually life before age. On the eve of the French Revolution, we did minuets. Handel’s “Water Music” was all the rage, for gosh sakes. The biggest danger on the streets of our young adulthood were the mounds left by horses. In the winter, they froze, and we had disposable hockey pucks, shedding a few more oats every time they were slapped around with one-dollar hockey sticks. Ice skates were tricky things, characterized by blade posts that dug into the soles of one’s feet. A computer was ... well, it wasn’t. At this meeting, David Dowse asked Tash and Anne to explain a bit more about their “parties” for the elucidation of the rest of us who had never been to one or couldn’t remember. Anne explained that these social gatherings are attended by people aged 18-27, some of whom are students, others being young professionals. Their common interest is Sherlock Holmes, but they will do things unrelated to him or his canon. Each party has a theme, usually identified by costumes worn by the attendees. There may or may not be party games. Sometimes there is a pragmatic flavor to the party. For example, if Anne needs to have a room painted, she will offer mulled wine so that people will be that much more agreeable about pitching in. The wine floweth not that freely, else how straight would the paint lines be, wot? It may have been in this spirit that Anne climbed to the roof of her apartment building at 2:00 in the morning wearing a tuxedo, holding a glass of wine. We do not know what kind of poetry she was spouting at the time, but it must have been huge! The soirées begin at 6-7:00 p.m., with most people coming by public transportation. The last die-hard might leave at 5:30 a.m.

9. Sherlock in Metamorphosis

We have concluded that it is far easier for different actors to play one Sherlock than it is for one actor to play many Sherlocks. With that sagely bit of observation under our

belt, we entered into a bit of a discussion about current directions in the Sherlock brand. For example, it would appear (without anyone's making the explicit commitment) that Benedict Cumberbatch's series *Sherlock* is *de rigueur*. David Dowse asked, "What is the solution to Sherlock Holmes' death at Reichenbach Falls" in the Cumberbatch production? Several people agreed that SH hypnotized Watson so he wouldn't remember the facts. Others said there was a body switch. Several agreed that the events around Watson's marriage were boring, too talky. Paul Billette likes the *Elementary* series with Lucy Liu. No one mentioned J----- B---- as SH, for one does not bandy about lightly the name of G-d without serious consequences. But we know who still is king of the castle.

10. Second Toast - To Dr. Watson

by Anne Millar
(impromptu)

To Doctor Watson, the cheetah, and the baboon.

11. And the Winner Is ...

Chris Herten-Greaven informed us that the quiz trophy is running out of space to affix the winners' names. He asked whether he should have an extended base made to accommodate future winners' plates, as well as have another box made.

12. A Healthy Rivalry

Anne Millar pointed out there is a series on BBC television entitled *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*. The episode under discussion involved "Professor Augustus S.F.X. Van Dusen, Ph.D., LL.D., F.R.S., M.D., M.D.S., (according to *Wikipedia*) a fictional character in a series of detective short stories and two novels by Jacques Futrelle. Some of the short stories were originally published in *The Saturday Evening Post* and the *Boston American*. In the stories Professor Van Dusen solves a variety of different mysteries together with his friend Hutchinson Hatch, reporter of a fictional newspaper called *The Daily New Yorker*. The professor is known as the "Thinking Machine," solving problems by the remorseless application of logic. His catchphrases include, "Two and two always equal four," "Nothing is impossible," and "All things that start must go somewhere." Futrelle, then age 37, died on April 15, 1912 when, as a passenger on the *RMS Titanic*, he refused to board a lifeboat, insisting his wife board instead."

Mrs. Futrelle spent the rest of her life promoting her husband's writings. In the BBC program, the role of Van Dusen is played by Douglas Wilmer, who was the BBC's first Sherlock Holmes. One of the stories, "The Problem of Cell 13," is a brilliant closed-room mystery and has been cited as one of the 100 best and 50 best mysteries of all time.

Some see Van Dusen as a link between Sherlock Holmes and Nero Wolfe.

13. A Sacred Tablet for Our Times

The origin of the tablet goes back thousands of years, predating Moses' sojourn atop Mount Sinai. However, it is with his descent and presentation of the Laws that the tablet received its biggest press. It is said that bound up in the ten dos and don'ts on those tablets, is the ethos for the world, and the condensation of the laws of mankind. So, as reasonable, thinking beings, we are accepting of tablets which contain many lifetimes of knowledge and information. Fast forward to 2002 when Microsoft came out with the world's first tablet computer. It was a flop, but take a few breaths until 2005 when Nokia refined the beast. Add a few more years until Apple introduced its pods and pads, and the prophesy of the mountain has just about come true. David Dowse's question, "Who prefers to read from a tablet versus a book?" brought a lot of speculation, some uncertainty ("What am I supposed to answer in this day and age?"), and discussion. Most among us prefer to read a physical book, citing the "aesthetic experience" of holding, feeling, and smelling a book. The versatility of a tablet was appreciated, since without moving more than a finger, one can search for the meaning of a word, or any manner of elaboration, since the book being read, and the world of information via the internet are part of the same small, flat device. Our guest Bruno Stenson does half his research in books, and the balance online. He likes to take notes with a pen.

14. Third Toast – To the Woman

by Raf Jans

Irene Adler. What a woman! Unfortunately, she appears in only one story. That is a pity. Imagine, if in some alternative history, she would have come back. What would she have done? We can only speculate and consider the possibilities. Would she have joined the dark side, joined Moriarty and become the most dangerous woman in Europe? Or would she have returned to call upon Sherlock Holmes to solve a mystery, let's say the case of the missing husband, and joined Sherlock as his sidekick? Maybe she would have taken the place of Mrs. Hudson. Or just maybe Watson would have stepped up, being the ladies' man he is, and married her. We can only wonder.

To Irene Adler, the one that got away and never came back.

15. *Good As Gold* and the Tarnished Family

The novel *Good As Gold* has been mentioned more than once around our table. It deals with a fictionalized interpretation of the sinking of the *Titanic*. In the story, a granddaughter of an alleged family scapegrace who slid off the side of the sinking *Titanic* with a fortune seeks to find out the truth about her relative. The accepted story of the ship's sinking is debunked therein, based on a misinterpretation between "starboard" and "port" causing the liner to be steered one way rather than the other, and out of harm's way.

16. The Quiz

"The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle"
prepared by Raf Jans

Possible total: 73

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prizes
1.	Carol Abramson	51	Sherlock Holmes book
2.	Anne Millar	50½	Sherlock Holmes book
3.	Kayla Pieceitis	43	Mystery Book

Next Meeting's story: "The Adventure of the Red Headed League "
Prepared by: Bruno Paul Stenson
(Guest presenter)

17. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by David Dowse

(Text supplied by Carol Abramson)

In the Canon, we are faced with many mysteries, yet Holmes and Watson manage to solve them all. The stories include various women of mystery. But why do Holmes and Watson **never** address the mystery sitting at their very doorstep – **who is Mrs. Hudson?** In the course of researching her on our new encyclopedia, the Internet, I came across a variety of Mrs. Hudsons, all claiming to be Sherlock Holmes' landlady.

First we must deal with her vary name. Mrs. Hudson is listed in various sources as Mary, Martha, and Flora, as well as once being called Mrs. Turner. Who is she really – or are these all aliases to hide her true identity?

Next – her marital status. One source states she is a widow, another that she is merely separated from her husband, while a third claims he was a criminal, hanged for his crimes in Florida. Another feels her husband is alive, and lives with her, but was not mentioned in the Canon, while a final opinion is that she was never married, and that "Mrs." would be the title used by someone of her status, even if unmarried. Some claim she is of Scottish origin, while others say she cannot possibly be. She is reputed to be both plump and thin. Her age is again indeterminate. While the stories of the Canon span a period of years, and Mrs. Hudson is generally thought of as a middle aged woman, there is one internet source which gives her the age of nineteen when Holmes became her tenant.

We are told Mrs. Hudson has a Bassett Hound named Zeke, and three cats, yet in *A Study in Scarlet* we know she had a terrier (the one Holmes put out of its misery). Her hobbies seem to include embroidery, knitting, and playing Patience.

Mrs. Hudson's dealings with her infamous tenant are also portrayed in varying ways. She is mostly listed as long-suffering and patient in dealing with Sherlock's habits, yet one source lists her as feisty, bordering on rude in her comments to him. And another voice speaks of her affection for and acceptance of "her boys" to her tenants, who "were clearly besotted with each other." While her pride in and loyalty to Holmes is never questioned, she is seen by some as gossipy and avaricious, yet Watson refers to her as "our worthy landlady."

Who is the real Mrs. Hudson? A secret indeed!

So I now ask you to raise your glasses to “the woman of mystery” who resides at 221B Baker Street.

To Mrs. Hudson!

18. Paradigm Shifts

Paul Billette informed us that Rebecca Stacey is working on our visibility on social media. At the same time, Tash Akkerman will no longer be our secretary, since she has accepted a time-consuming job in game testing. Her role will be take over by Rebecca and Anne Millar. We wish Tash all good fortune and satisfaction in her new job. We hope to see her at our meetings.

19. It Was GStime

Chris Herten-Greaven informed us that three Montreal-area Gilbert and Sullivan societies would be offering samples of their forthcoming operettas at St. George’s Church, January 13. Complete performances of two operettas were staged before the release of these minutes. However, The Montreal West Operatic Society will be presenting the complete *Patience*, as follows;

May 7, 10, 11: Victoria Hall, Westmount

May 15, 16, 17: Hudson Village Theatre

T.B.A. at Piggery Theatre, North Hatley

20. Re: The Blue Carbuncle

Anne Millar informed us that there is no chemical difference between rubies and sapphires – the only difference is color.

Bruno Stenson queried Sherlock Holmes’s point about carrying a candle and a hat in the house. Various responses included that Henry Baker must have had no candle holder, so that while carrying the lit candle up the stairs in the dark, the tallow would have dripped onto the hat.

Chris said SACD had a tendency to pontificate, and make declarations outside logic. In some instances, explanations regarding plot or character stretch the reader’s credulity. Chris’s quote of the day was: “An expert knows more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing.”

21. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by Rachel Alkallay

Rachel delivered an extemporaneous toast, recalling she was young when she first came to the Society nearly 35 years ago. Now, it feels like home. She reminded us, “Never regret when you come here. You will always feel welcome and informed” in the company of civil, intelligent friends.

22. Next Meeting’s Toast Presenters

To the Master - Klayla Piecaitis

To Dr. Watson- - Rebecca Stacey
To the Woman - David Dowse
To Mrs. Hudson - Raf Jans
To the Society - Tash Akkerman

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, April 3rd, 2014, at 6:30 p.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

APPENDIX "A"
IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOR THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION:
MEETING AT THE WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY
JANUARY 7, 2014

Background

The Bimetallic Question (BmQ) is Montreal's only official Sherlockian society, and has been in existence for more than 30 years. It is a non-profit organization which meets every second month and in addition hosts an annual dinner as well as occasional activities of a social/Sherlockian nature.

Recent new members and participants of the BmQ have brought to the table an exciting array of talents and interests. They are passionate about Sherlock Holmes, and represent an interesting new demographic for us: YOUTH!

Objective of this Meeting

- (1) To brainstorm ways to inject more excitement, depth, and variety into our activities.
- (2) To utilize more creatively the talents, interests, and abilities of our newer members.
- (3) To discuss the feasibility of expanding our activities and membership base, and if this flies,
- (4) To begin to propose a rejuvenated format and identity
- (5) To develop a list of priorities
- (6) To identify the kind of work it will take to make some of them happen

The Broad Strokes (Organizational)

- (1) Meeting programming and structure
- (2) Special events
- (3) Membership (growth and maintenance)
- (4) Publicity
- (5) Newsletter

APPENDIX “B”
Follow-up to Appendix “A”

- We should look at strengthening, re-energizing the meetings
- Discuss changing the meeting format and content
- At the end of the quiz, someone should present a short paper on the story
- Have additional get-togethers to look at plays, films, etc., with Sherlockian and related content, of interest to our members
- Every meeting should have a 10-15 minute electronic presentation
- Create a Programming Committee
- Establish information vehicle to learn about scion societies worldwide
- Establish links with them where feasible
- Rebecca would like to use social media – give us some kind of impact on social media
- Send the minutes as a blog
- Use the web site as a center, not an archive
- Canvas our members for ideas
- We like meeting at the Westmount library: how many more members can we absorb without outgrowing our meeting place?

APPENDIX “C”
Coming of Age of the Society:
A Review and a Call to Arms

Nearly 35 years old, Montreal’s only visible Sherlockian society, is about to come of age. We have had about 600-700 regularly scheduled meetings, additional special events where we, in costume, marched into movie theatres; sipped libations in summer garden;, fired guns in the pursuit of stationery targets; waxed rhapsodic over Jeremy Brett; scratched our heads over Robert Downey, Jr. (but forgave him, more or less); and welcomed and mourned individuals who have come into, illuminated, and passed out of our lives through the Society. Some of our members also belong to other Sherlockian societies and in this way strengthen our connection with a broader universe. We have our very own Bimetallic plaque at Reischenbach Falls in Switzerland, a very big deal.

We have rubbed shoulders with passionate and successful people, and have also been amused and enriched by those who lit on our branches for a time, and just as quickly, flapped off into the sunset. Through it all, we have learned, and through this process, we have thrilled to much more than the simple acquisition of knowledge. Thanks to the Society, further agendas have built and strengthened within us like stones on a pyramid: despite the weight, we have, from time to time, soared. We have had ample and repeated opportunity to marvel at the prodigious achievers among us, nonetheless modest in their accomplishments.

We are about to come of age because of our most recent annual dinner where we celebrated The Master’s date of birth of 6 January 1954, a scant 160 years ago. Perhaps by the next celebration, we will have composed a suitable “Happy Birthday” song with lyrics, orchestrate it, and send it out on our Bimetallic network-to-be. Does anyone doubt we have the talent? When one looks to the luminaries attending the BSI annual dinner in New York, we see a Who’s Who of celebrity: writers, actors, Sherlockian authorities, geniuses, acolytes, culture mavens, and the like. The scale is huge because the arena is enormous. Well, friends, here in Montreal, we ain’t chopped liver.

We contain a quality far exceeding our numbers. Our last dinner attracted six or seven writers. We were all entertained from start to finish. Next year we will move forward with

greater wealth of satisfaction, and more intense spotlights on who we are and how our passion burns with ardor not just for The Master, but for his world and ours. We have, collectively, the expertise, the talent, and the commitment to put ourselves on the map.

Our talent is raw. We're putting it together. After all, Patrick is only 90. We're young, and getting younger. We can leverage what we have already, by using a greater power, one of which is the many hundreds of scion societies around the world, getting to know them, creating of ourselves a magnetic, generating, indefatigable hub of activity.

This will happen when we work together.