



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question December 3rd, 2015

Date of our next meeting: Thursday, February 4th, 2016 at 6:30pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

The quiz at the next meeting: *The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge* prepared by Susan Fitch.

Next meeting's toast presenters: The Master: Rachel Alkallay; Dr. Watson: David Dowse; Irene Adler: Kristin Franseen; Mrs. Hudson: Mark Altosaar; The Society: Bruno Paul Stenson.

Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question held on Thursday, December 3rd, 2015 at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

Present: David Dowse, Carol Abramson, Kathryn Radford, Chris Herten-Greaven, Susan Fitch, Ron Zilman, Paul Billette, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Rachel Alkallay, Raf Jans, Bruno Paul Stenson, Wilfrid de Freitas, Kristin Franseen, Mark Altosaar, Karl J. Raudsepp, Erica Penner.

Regrets: Elliott Newman, Patrick Campbell, Maureen "The Mink" Anderson, Jack Anderson, Nancy Walkling, Rebecca Stacey, Kevin Chappell, Derek Chappell, and our recent guest Nathalie Ellis.

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Sovereign Carol Abramson at 6:30pm.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

Our Heartfelt Thanks to Lars !

On behalf of all present at our December 3rd, 2015 Bimetallic Question meeting, we would like to thank Lars Lökvist for graciously donating his extensive Holmes and detective fiction collection to the Society. Thank you also to Wilfrid for making it happen. I hope you all came away with a "Blue Carbuncle" of a book or magazine for the holidays.

1. Toast to the Master by Our Co-founder, David Dowse

Sherlock Holmes, the Master, strode down Baker Street as if he commanded it. He knew the chars, the cabbies, the street urchins, the organ grinder and his monkey, the pie sellers, and the toffs. He could see the pick pockets, grifters, ladies of the evening, the charlatans, the gangsters, thugs and gamblers. He was a people person and he perceived good and evil on the sidewalks, alley ways and stately town houses as he walked by. Sherlock Holmes was the last refuge to many who had given up hope for justice. He did not disappoint. He picked and chose his cases not on the size of the purse offered but on the merits of the wronged and on the intellectual challenge that was presented to him. For it was not the law that guided him to find the solution to an adventure but his desire to see justice done.

He could not be bought, bullied or beaten. His moral code was unshakable. He stood for what was good and right in his world where so often money and power and title held sway over honest just treatment of one's fellow man.

Would that we had such a man as he in our world today.

I give you the Master,
Sherlock Holmes.

2. Review of the October 1st Minutes: Additions and Corrections

In Wilfrid de Freitas's review of the gold business, with reference to the sovereign, the exchange rate is $\$1100.00 \div 4 = \275.00 in today's money.

Both Paul Billette and Carol Abramson have tried the fish and chips at the restaurant, Brit and Chips and they thoroughly enjoyed their meals.

We all gave a big thanks to Susan Fitch for her Letter to the Editor where Martha Hudson informed us of Holmes's and Watson's interest in fish and chips. I am still licking my chops thinking about it.

3. Speaking of Food...

At this point in preparing these minutes all the final details for our celebration of the Master's 162nd Birthday to be held on Saturday, January 16th, 2016 at 6:00pm at the Atwater Club have been sent out to members in the post and on the electronic airwave. Priced again at \$50.00 we have choices of mains, lamb, chicken or manicotti with drinks at very reasonable prices. It was agreed that we try to get the group pictures taken early, before the dinner, to ensure that we get everyone. Carol Abramson will prepare the menu to be placed on each plate and Rachel Alkallay will arrange for suitable party favours.

Bill Brownstein has agreed to be our guest speaker for the Birthday Dinner but one of our greatest losses this year will be no Dowd singers as travel and family commitments (a new baby) have priority.

Looking forward to seeing all of you there to have a joyous celebration of Sherlock Holmes's 162nd birthday.

Show and Tell

4. Terry and the Master

From Karl J. Raudsepp we have news that Aislin is very near to fulfilling his promise to put the Master into one of his cartoons. He is just waiting for the appropriate social or political issue or event, to feature Holmes.

5. Literary Houses: What's Your Mystery Dream Home?

Karl also brought to our attention a book entitled, *Ten Famous Houses in Fiction* by Rosalind Ashe (1982). The book is published in two volumes and in volume one Baskerville Hall was highlighted. Also included here are houses from *Rebecca*, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, *The House at Seven Gables*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Dracula*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Jane Eyre*, *Howard's End*, and of special interest to our Dickens Society colleagues, *Great Expectations*. It goes into floor plans of the potential house and artist's conceptions of what it would look like, so you can compare your vision with theirs.

6. A Tale of a Play in Two Cities

Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier showed us and talked about an article in the October 15th, 2015 edition of the Gazette where Victoria Ahearn of the Canadian Press reviewed a Toronto presentation of the play *Sherlock Holmes* featuring David Arquette in the feature role. The reviewer sees a Holmes who is an "oddball" and "probably a little lighter than a lot of people play...He is not the smartest man in the room, necessarily, but in the play he's the smartest of all the dumb guys, is what I like to say."

Many of us saw this play at the Segal Centre in Montreal back in 2013 when it had Jay Baruchel playing Holmes and we formed our own opinions on the merits of the story and Mr. Baruchel's performance. In my view, anytime Holmes can be put in public view with dedicated, serious actors can only strengthen his appeal. As an added bonus, Karl J. Raudsepp's son's room mate, Kyle Gatehouse, did a magnificent job as Moriarty in the original production of the play.

7. Thoughts on Sherlock Holmes Adventures in Modern Japanese Translation

Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier gave us a review of a Japanese Holmes collection. Here is a resume of Miyako's piece:

I would like to show you a book published in July 2000 of the Japanese translated version of a collection of four Sherlock Holmes stories.

As you know Sherlock Holmes in novels, movies and TV shows is very popular in Japan. The Japan Sherlock Holmes Club is very large. In this book the illustrators, Mr. and Mrs. Hitoshi Wakana, have paid great respect to Sidney Paget's works in the Strand magazine, although they have portrayed

Holmes and Watson quite differently from what we have come to expect. With Manga style images, Holmes is a handsome, slender young man.

Likewise, the translator, Mr. Masamichi Higurashi, has taken the 19th century British English of the Canon with its great charm and feel for the era, and foregoing a 19th century Japanese translation which most readers would not connect with, he uses 21st century Japanese language to try to attract new young readers, giving an up-to-date free translation to the stories. However I myself, although Japanese is my first language, much prefer the original English version of the Canon but this is not the case with your young Japanese reader.

Mr. Higurashi's book contains four adventures: *The Cardboard Box*, *The Resident Patient*, *The Greek Interpreter*, and *The Final Problem*.

In addition to the stories, Mr. Higurashi wrote a special essay explaining to his young readers many aspects of the adventures. He included a photo of himself visiting the Swiss town of Meiringen. He recounted how he and his wife had to hike up the trail in the mountain to visit the Reichenbach Falls and how steep it was to climb. When they finally arrived at the waterfall they were chilled and exhausted. They were reminded of the scene of the struggle between Professor Moriarty and Holmes on the precipice. He thought, "What really happened? Can humans truly survive such a fall?" Japanese Sherlock Holmes fans flock to the Reichenbach Falls and also to the hotel in Meiringen where Holmes and Watson stayed, to see the plaque on its wall commemorating their 1891 visit."

Note from David: Doubtless the legion of Japanese Sherlock Holmes lovers have also seen the plaque set in the rock beside the falls placed there in May 1992 by The Bimetallic Question with The Reichenbach Irregulars. The plaque reads: "At this fearful place, Sherlock Holmes vanquished Professor Moriarty on 4 May 1891." (in three languages) with the names of both Societies included below.

8. Remembrance and Tribute

Remembrance Day being just three weeks past, Ron Zilman brought a family heirloom, the Hebrew Prayer Book of the Canadian Army that Ron's dad, Sam Zilman carried into battle in 1940. Issued by His Majesty's stationery office with the authority of the Chief Rabbi in the year 1940 or 5700 the fly sheet has Sam's name, rank, and serial number which each soldier was required to remember.

When his dad was 80 years old Ron asked him if he could still remember his serial number and he could still rattle it off, had never forgotten it. Ron noted the interesting thing is the very first prayer in the book is the prayer before a battle and you don't see that in many prayer books.

9. The Renaming of a Fascinating Victorian Text

Bruno Paul Stenson showed us a book describing the *Principals of Victorian Crime Scene Investigation* by William A. Guy, David Ferrier and William R. Smith. In it there is a chapter on "Death by Fire" which has significance to our quiz of the evening, *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder*. Despite its modernized title, it is a reprint of the 1844 original volume.

10. A Scandal in Baker Street

Wilfrid de Freitas brought us news of a new scandal involving Holmes. This one centers on the Sherlock Holmes Museum at 221B Baker Street, London NW1. It seems that the mother and son founders are caught up in a battle over financial control of this money pot.

It is interesting to note that the borough of Westminster gave special permission when the museum was created for it to bear the number 221B, even though technically it is situated between 237 and 241 Baker Street.

Here's the link to more details on this case:

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3270857/A-case-Sherlock-Holmes-Founder-Baker-Street-museum-accused-embezzling-mother-s-money-bitter-court-battle-half-sisters-brother-lucrative-tourist-trap.html

11. True Life Stories from Australia: Justice for a Mother and the Sinking of the Blythe Star

Chris Herten-Greaven treated us to a new development in the decades old story of the baby stolen from its cot by a wild dingo in Australia. According to the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation), remains of the baby's coat have been found near Ayers Rock, an area frequented by dingos.

As we will remember, the mother's story of a dingo attack and abduction of her baby were initially not believed and she was charged with the child's murder. Well now, it seems that all Australian judicial levels have finally agreed her story was true.

We can read more about this case at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/12/dingo-baby-azaria-lindy-chamberlain>

Another story which Chris regaled us with from the ABC was of the survivors of the cargo ship, Blythe Star. Upon its sinking all those on board manned the life boats. After drifting for quite some time they eventually washed up on an island. The dilemma that they faced then was to endeavour to scale the very high rocky cliffs at the water's edge or once again put out to sea to try and find a more "suitable" landing place. The captain would have nothing to do with going to sea again so he sabotaged the boats. Three of the fittest then managed to scale the cliffs, found inhabitants of the island and all were saved.

The results of this sea misadventure was that from then on better tracking procedures and devices were required for all ships rather than just relying on a vague sailing plan.



The Blythe Star, pictured before it foundered off the coast of Tasmania.
(John Craike Collection/Maritime Museum of Tasmania)

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/sinking-of-the-blythe-star/6959120>

12. Toast to Dr. Watson by Paul Billette

Paul found this toast while web-surfing, and written by Steven Moffat, executive producer of Sherlock, it is Sherlock Holmes's own toast to his best friend, delivered at Watson's wedding.

All emotions — in particular, love — stand opposed to the pure, cold reason I hold above all things. A wedding is, in my considered opinion, nothing short of a celebration of all that is false and specious and irrational and sentimental in this ailing morally compromised world.

If I burden myself a little with a help mate during my adventures, this is not out of sentiment or caprice. It is that he has many fine qualities of his own that he has overlooked in his obsession with me. Indeed, any reputation I have for mental acuity and sharpness comes, in truth, from the extraordinary contrast John so selflessly provides.

The point I'm trying to make is that I am the most unpleasant, rude, ignorant, and all-around obnoxious arsehole that anyone could possibly have the misfortune to meet. I am dismissive of the virtuous, unaware of the beautiful, and uncomprehending in the face of the happy. So if I didn't understand I was being asked to be the best man, it is because I never expected to be anybody's best friend, and certainly not the best friend of the bravest and kindest and wisest human being I have ever had the good fortune of knowing. John, I am a ridiculous man, redeemed only by the warmth and constancy of your friendship. But as I am apparently your best friend, I cannot congratulate you on your choice of companion.

Actually, now I can. Mary, when I say you deserve this man, it is the highest compliment of which I am capable. John, you have endured war, and injury, and tragic loss — so sorry again about that last one. So know this: Today, you sit between the woman you have made your wife and the man you have saved. In short, the two people who love you most in all this world. And I know I speak for Mary as well when I say we will never let you down, and we have a lifetime ahead to prove that.

To Dr. Watson !



13. Tea for Two

In response to Paul's toast, David noted it begs the question, what would Sherlock be like if someone other than Watson had recorded the adventures? What kind of different slant would we see Sherlock in?

Kristin then told us about an interview she had heard with Lyndsay Faye, author of the pastiche called *Dust and Shadow* and contributor to the graphic novel series *Watson and Holmes*. The interviewer asked her who in the Canon would you most like to have tea with? She replied, Dr. Watson. Kristin recalled how Watson is said to be an everyman, but he's not. Because most of us would not have such a horrible room mate as Holmes and put up with him!

Lyndsay Faye's description of Holmes as "a bad roommate from Craigslist" was in her podcast interview with the Baker Street Babes: <http://bakerstreetbabes.com/podcast/episode-6-lyndsay-faye-the-pastiche/>

14. We'll Welcome Clifford Goldfarb and Dickens Colleagues April 7th

For our April 7th, 2016 meeting of the Bimetallic Question we have invited Toronto Doylian expert Clifford Goldfarb to come to address our members and those of the Montreal Dickens Fellowship. Mr. Goldfarb is an expert on Doyle's Brigadier Gerard and Professor Challenger. This will be an excellent opportunity to be treated to a very learned dissertation from a renowned Doylian and also connect to the Dickens society who also use the Westmount Public Library as their venue.

15. Toast to the Woman - Irene Adler by Ron Zilman

Ron brings us this toast from a recent visit to Wikipedia.

Irene Adler is a fictional character in the Sherlock Holmes stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. She was featured in the short story *A Scandal in Bohemia*, published in July 1891. She is one of the most notable female characters in the Sherlock Holmes series, despite appearing in only one story, and is frequently used as a romantic interest for Holmes in derivative works.

Adler's career as a theatrical performer who becomes the lover of a powerful aristocrat had several precedents. The most obvious is Lola Montez, a dancer who became the lover of Ludwig I of Bavaria and influenced national politics. Montez is identified as a model for Adler by several writers.

Closer to home is the singer Lillie Langtry, the lover of Edward, the Prince of Wales. As Julian Wolff points out, it was well known that Langtry was born in Jersey (she was called the "Jersey Lily") and Adler is born in New Jersey. Langtry had later had several other aristocratic lovers, and her relationships had been speculated upon in the public press in the years before Doyle's story was published.

Along with the singer Ludmilla Stubel, alleged lover and later wife of Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria, these were suggested as Doyle's inspiration for Adler in his lifetime.

Irene appears only in *A Scandal in Bohemia*. Her name is briefly mentioned in *A Case of Identity*, *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*, and *His Last Bow*. Additionally, in *The Five Orange Pips*, Holmes says that he has been outwitted four times, thrice by a man and once by a woman, although the story of *The Five Orange Pips* is set in September 1887, before *A Scandal in Bohemia*, which is set in March 1888.

Adler earns Holmes's unbounded admiration. When the King of Bohemia says, "Would she not have made an admirable queen? Is it not a pity she was not on my level?" Holmes replies scathingly that Adler is indeed on a much different level from the King (by which he means higher — an implication lost on the King).

The beginning of *A Scandal in Bohemia* describes the high regard in which Holmes held Adler:

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind....And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.

This "memory" is kept alive by a photograph of Irene Adler, which had been deliberately left behind when she and her new husband took flight with the embarrassing photograph of her with the King. Holmes had then asked for and received this photo from the King, as payment for his work on the case.

To Irene Adler, *the* woman.

16. Home Sweet Victorian Home Revisited

After many months of discussion with the Westmount Public Library Sovereign Carol Abramson was able to announce that agreement has been reached between the library and the Bimetallic Question to ensure our continued use of the Westmount Room for our meetings for the next year. Two have now joined the library, Heather Stephens and Carol Abramson, and their dues of \$55.00 / year will be paid by the Society.

A great show of thanks must go out to Paul Billette, Wilfrid de Freitas and Carol Abramson for their tireless work in arranging our continued association with the Westmount Library

17. Quiz on *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder* prepared by Wilfrid de Freitas.

The results:	Scores	Book Prizes
1 st Raf Jans	27 ½	<i>Crime and Detection Quiz Book</i> by Julian Symons
2 nd Kathryn Radford	19	<i>Snobbery with Violence</i> by Colin Watson
3 rd Karl J. Raudsepp	14 ½	<i>Mystery and Crime: The New York Public Library Book of Answers</i> by Jay Pearsall

18. Our Thoughts on the Adventure:

Wilfrid de Freitas felt it was a great challenge to come up with a quiz based on such a dull and boring story.

A puzzle was how anyone could confuse the fire consumed remains of rabbits with those of a human.

Kristin Franseen was amazed at how quickly the newspapers got hold of the story. She also was amused at how John Hector McFarlane's mother was referred to as "Fluffy"

Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier noted differences between the Jeremy Brett TV *Norwood Builder* and the text. The Brett Holmes asks Watson to check the money issues while the "real" Holmes does not. In the TV series McFarlane has a beautiful mother but no father while in print he has both mother and father, with the father frantically searching for his son.

Bruno Paul Stenson also felt it was a very poor story, but in it was struck by how much Holmes has declared how very bored he is since Moriarty is out of the picture. Bruno noted the way this is wonderfully expressed here when finally McFarlane tells him he is about to be arrested and Holmes says, "This is really most interesting." Despite the understatement you can just feel the quite delighted excitement about the new case coming through from the Master.

Regarding the issue of the thumbprint in blood, many of us are curious about the extent of Victorian knowledge of fingerprints.

19. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Elliott Newman, read by Kathryn Radford

We are grateful for assistance provided by the City of London, Metropolitan Archives for information on lodging houses in London:

What was it like to lodge in London in the Victorian and Edwardian period? The streets of Victorian and Edwardian London were crowded with lodgings and lodging houses. From well-to-do bachelors residing in the smarter parts of town to less well-off spinsters and poor families making do in London's shabbier districts, a range of lodgings catered to the many classes of nightly and longer-term lodgers in the city.

As the 19th century wore on, the problems of poor lodgers became particularly acute. The demolition of housing for the railways and street clearance pushed the poor into more squalid areas. Rising rents meant that even relatively well-to-do artisans' families were crammed into single rooms. The poorest often lived in 'furnished rooms' and Common Lodging Houses, in dirty and cramped conditions, inspiring both sympathy and disapproval in middle-class commentators, as we have noted in the writings of Charles Dickens – his journalism, his fiction, and the testimony of his own childhood.

From the mid-19th century the Common Lodging-House was subject to increasing statutory control as social reformers raised concerns for its moral and sanitary conditions. At the same time, 'model' common lodging houses were established by charitable organizations. In the 1890s the London County Council and Lord Rowton founded large-scale lodging houses each one of which was able to house up to hundreds of men. By the Edwardian period they were providing lodging in reasonable conditions to thousands.

Fairly attractive houses of this type with sleeping quarters divided into cubicles outdid their less attractive competitors in quality, but at the same price of 6d a night. Many of them were considered closer in atmosphere to gentlemen's clubs than to the common lodging houses from which they derived.

It was not uncommon for a doctor to be rubbing shoulders with a laborer, or a "broken-down gentleman" at the dining table, although we could find no record of any consulting detective.

A short jaunt to 221B Baker Street and the cluttered quarters of Watson and Holmes, superintended by Mrs. Hudson, and we can appreciate the great lengths to which this immortal landlady goes canon in, canon out, to preserve a bedrock of domesticity for her famous tenants.

Let us raise our glasses to Mrs. Hudson.

20. Toast to the Society by Kristin Franseen

In preparation for this toast, I've been doing a lot of thinking about societies inside and outside of the Canon. Societies — public, private, and secret — abound, with a variety of purposes. There is the Diogenes Club, of course, with its strange rules and founder who "sometimes is the British government." There is also Watson's club, where he plays billiards with the unseen Thurston. On the less savory side of things, we have the Red-Headed League, Moriarty's criminal organization, and fictionalized (with varying degrees of accuracy and violence) versions of the Mafia, KKK, Scrowlers, and Mormons.

This trend continues in pastiches, adaptations, and scholarship. Numerous Sherlockians and novelists have suggested an expanded political role for the Diogenes Club or created entire histories of clubs mentioned in passing, such as the Amateur Mendicant Society and the Tankerville Club. The worlds of Laurie R. King, Kim Newman, and Michael Kurland (to name but a few) abound with various secret

clubs and networks, some on the side of good, others on the side of evil, and still others whose purposes and motives are shrouded in mystery. Michael Dirda, combining the history of the BSI with the tradition of the Game, has suggested a link between the three Moriarty brothers and the three Morleys (a connection made a bit stronger when one considers the fact that the Morleys shared Moriarty's interest in mathematics and art).

The most recent adaptations in film and TV have given us a host of familiar and new societies, from various criminal organizations in *Sherlock* to Mycroft Holmes's Diogenes restaurant in *Elementary* to a murderous network of Moriarty's former students in the new Russian series to Lord Blackwood's quasi-supernatural conspiracy in the first Ritchie film. Mycroft Holmes may not be particularly clubbable, but clubs and societies seem to pervade the imaginations of us all. Whatever our feelings about the state of society in general, one might say that, to Sherlockians, there is always the Society.

To the Society!

21. Close of the Meeting

The meeting came to a close at 9:00pm.



Published in the Montreal Gazette, December 1, 2015.

Special Message from Chris:

Would the member who borrowed this book from Chris Herten-Greaven please remember to bring it to the next meeting: *The Triumph of Unarmed Forces* by Rear-Admiral M.W.W.P. Consett.



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, February 4th, 2016, at 6:30p.m.

If you detect any errors or omissions in these minutes please do not hesitate to contact our recording secretary David Dowse at daviddowse@hotmail.com .

Please be encouraged to forward the electronic version of your toast for inclusion in the minutes to our webmaster and secretary Susan Fitch at susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca .

A tip of the deerstalker hat to our sergeant-at-arms and sommelier Hudson, Raf Jans, for printing and mailing Society minutes to all members requesting the paper version.