



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question June 1st, 2017

Date of our next meeting: Thursday, August 3rd, 2017 at 6:30 pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC H3Z 1G1.

The quiz at the next meeting: *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane*, from *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*, prepared and presented by Kristin Franseen.

Next meeting's toast presenters: The Master: David Dowse; Dr. Watson: [open]; *The Woman*: Rachel Alkallay; Mrs. Hudson: Paul Billette; The Society: Chris Herten-Greaven.

Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question held on Thursday, June 1st, 2017 at the Westmount Public Library.

Present: Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Louise Corda, David Dowse, Philip Ehrensaft, Kristin Franseen, Chris Herten-Greaven, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Melodie Tardieu, Karl J. Raudsepp, Bruno Paul Stenson. and our guests Vivianne Lewis and James Turner.

Regrets: Mark P. Altosaar, Maureen Anderson, Susan Fitch, Erica Penner, Wilfrid de Freitas, Raf Jans, Anne Millar, Elliott Newman, and Nancy Walkling, who is toasting the Master and company with us, while traveling in Scotland.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by our acting Sovereign Paul Billette at 6:30 pm.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

1. Welcome to Our First Time Guests !

Two guests joined us this evening for the first time, Vivianne Lewis and James Turner. Both found us on the Internet and decided to come to a Bimetallic Question meeting and check us out. We hope you liked what you discovered here and that we will see you both at our Sherlockian table again real soon!

2. Special Note from David

In writing down the minutes of our meetings as our Recording Secretary it can get pretty hairy for me as I listen to the presenters and try to dash down all the details of their contributions. Sometimes I get things right, sometimes I miss things and sometimes I get things completely wrong. But I have come up with an idea that should make my job a lot easier and improve accuracy, more of the time. Here it is: If you have something for Show and Tell, be it a book, magazine article, a treasure found on a recent trip, an encounter with a Sherlockian from a distant planet or anything else that strikes your fancy, I would ask you to write the particulars down on a piece of paper which you can pass on to me after your presentation at the meeting, to help me keep track of all vital details. Louise, Jack, Kristin, Patrick and James have tried this method out at this evening's meeting and now you will see the fruits.

Show and Tell

3. Freeman Tackling Rask

Louise read us a report from the September 12, 2016 issue of the weekly entertainment magazine *Closer*, which tells us of *Sherlock's* Watson, Martin Freeman's very different new role as corrupt FBI agent Phil Rask in *StartUp*. The American show is soon to be entering a successful second season.

4. Find Your Tams, Ceremonials, Berets, Fascinators and More !

The next time you are walking along the rue Derech Azza in Rechavia, Jerusalem be sure to visit Sherlock's Hat Shop where you will find fashionable chapeaux of every description. Ahh, for those elegant days gone by when a lady could be described as looking charming in her fascinator. What's more, they also have slippers for all the family on sale. The store's web posting boasts, "exceptional value at reasonable prices". Thanks to Carol for bringing this Sherlockian shopping tip to our meeting, and also to Carole Rocklin who sent us news about the store via email.



Street banner of Sherlock's hat shop, Jerusalem

5. Echoes of Sherlock Holmes, Echoes of Sherlock Holmes...

Jack brought for us a new book, *Echoes of Sherlock Holmes: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon*, a collection edited by Laurie King and Leslie Klinger, and published by Pegasus Crime. It includes stories by Anne Perry, Denise Mina, John Connally, and Deborah Crombie. He found it a very good read, and notes that there is a previously published collection, *In the Company of Sherlock Holmes*. While the book was a little pricey Jack disclosed that he justified his purchase by using some gift cards that he had accumulated. He suggested that waiting a little while will enable you to get the book remaindered at a steep discount. The stories cover an infinite variety of Sherlockian possibilities, as the editors asked their talented contributors to, "be inspired by Conan Doyle" but go wherever imagination took them. What would you write?



Curtiss-Reid Rambler on the day of its first flight, 29 September 1929, Cartierville, Quebec
Photo courtesy: Montreal Aviation Museum

6. When Ideas Take Flight: Welcome to the Montreal Aviation Museum !

Patrick recounted that he and two fellow volunteer colleagues were filmed recently by Montreal community cable station MATV about their volunteer work at the Montreal Aviation Museum (formerly the Canadian Aviation Heritage Centre) on the Macdonald College Campus of McGill University in Ste. Anne de Bellevue. The report is set to go on air sometime around September/October, and featured in it are the efforts to build a full-scale replica of a 1929 Curtiss-Reid Rambler Trainer, which will be displayed in Montréal's City Hall later this year to help celebrate the 375th anniversary of the founding of the city. Patrick added that he had flown in a Rambler at Cartierville airport in 1938, and showed us the ticket for the flight which cost \$2.00 cash.

Stop Press...This news just in: On Saturday, June 10th Patrick headed a team of MAM volunteers welcoming visitors from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, for specially designed guided tours based on the tactile rather than visual senses. Among the many highlights for participants on this day was a chance to familiarize themselves with a full-scale replica of a Blériot XI, the first aircraft to fly across the English Channel in 1909, when H.G. Wells said, "England is no longer an island". A Blériot was also the first plane ever to fly over Montreal, in 1910. Altogether, five groups of visually impaired visitors and their sighted partners enjoyed a full two hours of thoughtful exploration and discussion never to be forgotten. Congratulations, Patrick, on this super success, and all your efforts! !



Patrick Campbell (centre) with M.A.M. colleagues discussing Rambler construction
Photo: Susan and Esmeralda (2016)

7. On Holmes's Imperative Not to Theorize with Incomplete Data

James brought with him to his first meeting with us a most fascinating book entitled, *The Remedy: Robert Koch, Arthur Conan Doyle and the Quest to Cure Tuberculosis*, by Thomas Goetz, Gotham Books 2014. It tells how Conan Doyle, whose first wife suffered from this terrible disease, attended as a corresponding journalist a medical conference in Berlin in 1890 and was, in that era of Europe's chaotic "race for the cure", very skeptical concerning Koch's own proposed treatment for tuberculosis. Indeed, Koch's early Berlin demonstration of a "cure" for consumption is discussed as a failure, and Goetz characterizes him as having been too "impatient for success". But the scientist was to go on to become recognized as the founder of modern bacteriology, and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1905.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/24/science/the-remedy-a-19th-century-bid-to-cure-tb.html>

8. Who Can You Turn To?

If the worst thing happens, and Sherlock Holmes decides not to investigate your case, who can you turn to? Why, Mrs. Hudson and Mary Watson, nee Morstan, of course! Kristin, while in Liverpool, England for a conference, found the book, *The House at Baker Street: The Women of Baker Street* by Michelle Birkby, the first of a series of Mrs. Hudson and Mary Watson mysteries.

Also found but related to Kristin's musical studies was *Critical Lives: Pyotr Tckaskovsky* by Philip Ross Bullock, a scholarly study based largely on the musical genius's letters and diaries.

Finally, Kristin intrigued us with *1895: Drama, Disaster and Disgrace in Late Victorian Britain* by Nicholas Freeman. While Oscar Wilde's libel suit against the Marquess of Queensberry dominated British news coverage in the spring of that year, this book reveals for us a context of many more social scandals of the Victorian elite that were all exposed on the front pages of the Times of London classifieds. *Goodreads*, in their discussion of the book note how 1895 was also a news year of, "Freak weather, a flu epidemic, a General Election, industrial unrest, 'sex novels' and New Women, trials of murderers and fraudsters, accidents, anarchists, bombers, balloonists and bicyclists [that] were all topics of interest and alarm."

9. Singing Out Our Congratulations to Kristin 🎵 🎵 🎵

When the Société québécoise de recherche en musique / Quebec Society of Musical Research in May held its final competition for 2016-2017 students, our own Kristin was a winner! In her conference presentation exploring the links between the musical themes and the sexual morals of the musical period 1880-1930, she took home 3rd place honours. Her discourse was entitled: Nostalgic Music and Sexuality in the Repertoire of Edward Price-Stevenson. Well done Kristin and we are all soooo!!! proud of you. Novelist, scholar, journalist, and music, literature and drama critic Price-Stevenson is credited as being the first American to deal openly with the issue of homosexuality, in both his fiction and non-fiction works. www.sqrm.qc.ca



Taya (centre) as The Knave of Hearts in The Study's spring production of *Alice in Wonderland*
Photo: Nigel Penney

10. Our Heartfelt Congratulations to Taya ♥ ♥ ♥

We were delighted to hear Taya's news that she has been accepted as a student at Canada's renowned National Theatre School. We know this follows her fine theatre performances in her junior year at The Study school. She notably played Professor Moriarty in *Whose Crime Is It Anyway?* last winter, and this spring, The Knave of Hearts in the senior student's production of *Alice in Wonderland*.

11. Bruno's Reflections on Scatological Method in Teaching

Bruno commented that he received so much positive feedback on his talk at our Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner this past January. In relation to this, he recounted the story of the not-so-great chemistry teacher who had tremendous difficulty conveying the basics of the science to his charges. As a last resort this teacher would read Sherlock Holmes stories to the pupils in class. Naturally, everyone failed horribly on the final exam but they all fondly remember the stories of the exploits of the Master many years later. It goes to show you that you can throw all kinds of crap at the wall, but only the best shit will stick. Thank you Bruno for some of the best at our Birthday Dinner.

12. Toast to the Master by Karl

Arriving just a little late, Chris now provided the toasting materials to allow Karl to propose the first toast of the evening, to the Master.

A Somewhat Elementary Riddle

By way of introduction, in your best Sherlockian demeanour, pay careful attention to the words that I am about to speak.

We have all read about or heard, and possibly even used the terms FLOTSAM and JETSAM ourselves. In maritime law, *flotsam*, *jetsam*, and two other words ... *lagan*, and *derelict* are terms used to describe very specific kinds of shipwreck. These words have clearly defined nautical meanings, with legal consequences in the law of admiralty and marine salvage. A shipwreck is defined as the remains of a ship that has been wrecked, i.e. a destroyed ship at sea, whether it be sunken or floating on the surface of the water.

So now consider the term RETSAM. Most of us have never heard this term and are oblivious to its use or origin, but are quite familiar with its retrograde meaning. In order to decipher RETSAM, one would need to apply Sherlock Holmes's unparalleled and considerable powers of observation and deduction. But like everything to do with Holmes the man, this is a term that in and of itself is an enigma.

RETSAM is, however, an entirely appropriate Sherlockian word, and is singularly associated with our master. Thus it provides a written clue, albeit as an elementary riddle, that bears the verbal hallmark of why we gather here on these Thursday evenings: that is, to celebrate the MASTER.

To the Master !

By the way, if you have not yet figured it out, RETSAM is MASTER spelled backwards.

13. Quiz on *The Adventure of the Three Gables* prepared and presented by Paul

Results:

1 st Kristin	38/80
2 nd Bruno	29/80
3 rd Miyako	27/80

Discussion on the quiz story:

Although this story is very short, it has an assembly of some 17 characters, several of them very striking, Isadora Klein, Douglas Maberley, Susan Stockdale (a servant, and, perhaps the only woman in the Canon to be treated slightly roughly by Holmes ?) and Steve Dixie to name a few.

Many of us would agree with Patrick, who was of the opinion that this story was one of the "worst in the Canon", as there was little mystery and Holmes exerts very little energy in solving the case.

Here's a special emailed musical note from Kristin for us to ponder: 🎵

One of the relatively minor music critics and novelists who came up in my dissertation research could well be a model for Langdale Pike, as well as possibly for the sort of scandalous novel(s) Douglas Maberley wrote about his relationship with Isadora Klein. Robert Smythe Hichens (1864-1950) was a satirist and critic best known for his 1894 novel *The Green Carnation*, based on Oscar Wilde and Alfred Douglas. Many of his other novels were thinly-veiled depictions of real people (one of the protagonists in his last book, *That Which is Hidden*, is based on Li Shiu Tong, lover and student of the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld). He also was well-known during his lifetime for his supernatural and horror stories, as well as melodramatic stories about exotic (to his London readers) locations. Like Pike, Hichens seems to have had the ability to write about shocking things in other people's lives while maintaining his own privacy. His best friend, composer Maude Valérie White, wrote of him in her memoirs that she would like to "decorate dear Robert Hichens with the badge of Silence - the decoration I know he would prefer."

The Wikipedia article on him is actually pretty good and gives you an idea about the sort of fiction he wrote. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Smythe_Hichens

The musicologist Sophie Fuller talks about him and the disconnect between his public journalism/fiction and private life a bit in her research on White and other Edwardian women composers. Her reference to the quote from White's memoirs first made me think of Pike observing scandals from a distance at his club.

David has penned the discrepancies between Granada's TV dramatization and Watson's original text:

The film begins with a dramatic episode in the life of Douglas Maberley as he dances for his love, Isadora Klein dressed in the costume of a matador, mimicking killing "the bull" who is in fact the young Duke of Lomond. Le "belle" Isadora throws Douglas over for the younger and richer Duke, having him brutally beaten and dumped in the street outside her home. None of this is in the text except for the beating. It is said that he died of a ruptured spleen while in the book he succumbs to pneumonia. In the book Holmes goes to visit the mother of Douglas while in the film it is his grandmother. Holmes discovers Susan Stockdale and drags her into the room but Holmes is shown threatening her with his cane only in the film. Holmes asks the lawyer, Mr. Sutro, to stay the night at The Three Gables to offer Mrs. Maberley some protection. In the film it is Watson who is asked and who stays. In the film, Holmes is shown a gold locket with the initial D on the outside. Inside is a lock of brown hair and a picture of a Beautiful woman with her two eyes gouged out. No such locket was mentioned in the actual story.

The character and influence of Langdale Pike was significantly played up in the film with Holmes having a lengthy interview twice with him; although this was not mentioned in the text, it certainly was implied that it could have happened. Holmes has a meeting with the Duke of Lomond's mother who is dead set against the marriage of her son to Isadora Klein and wants Holmes to find a cause for a scandal to destroy this union. Watson is keeping watch over Mrs. Maberley, going over with her some mementos of her son's that were sent to her from Rome in a trunk. Steve Dixie and two others break into the house, chloroform Mrs. Maberley, steal the manuscript of the book that Douglas had written except for the last page, and when Watson gives chase, Dixie gives him a beating. In the written story

Watson is not on the scene and there is no thrashing. The film has Douglas giving his grandmother the second copy of his "revenge" book. She reads it and knows who the lady was. Not so in the Watson text.

In the film on TV in the final encounter between Holmes and Isadora Klein, Holmes demands that Isadora break off the marriage by Thursday morning and give a cheque for £500 to him for Mrs. Maberley. In the book he just asks for the money. Finally, it is my impression that Jeremy Brett had put on significant weight for his role as Holmes in this production of *The Adventure of the Three Gables*. He did not look well at all. Those are some of my observations on the differences between the Granada TV story of *The Adventure of the Three Gables* and the Watson recounted tale as detailed in the Strand.

Also please find a thoughtful three-page commentary on *The Adventure of the Three Gables*, elegantly penned for us by Miyako, in an attachment accompanying the email edition of these minutes.

14. Toast to Dr. Watson by Elliott

While Elliott could not be with us at the meeting to deliver his toast, we are very pleased to be able to present it herewith:

In the approximately 38 years of the existence of the Bimetallic Question, we have seen the custom of raising a glass to the key characters and to our not inestimable company of very excellent people, at the rate of once per meeting. Now, *if* the practice of toasting had been adopted from the get-go, and *if* the practice of toasting has been carried out non-stop, and *if* meetings have been held every alternate month, that is to say, six times per year, THEN, we calculate a total of 38 times 6, or 228 meetings during which a toast has been presented. Divide this by 5 for the number of toastees (not a *canapé* base), and we arrive at a frequency of 55 times that we have feted each of the illustrious characters in our midst, exclusive of annual dinners, drunken revelry, and countless descents into slobbering nostalgia and unrequited love, and other private displays we don't like to talk about.

55 TIMES TO EXTOL DOCTOR JOHN H. WATSON?

ONLY?

Inconceivable.

We have referred to him as Holmes's Boswell, a flawless biographer, the individual without whose sterling efforts Holmes would to all intents and purposes not exist although none among us would dare dispute the fact of his birth.

Yet we have not properly covered the field of Watson's possibly greatest contribution to this planet: he was an ASSISTANT in a very special sense of the word. More than a helper, deputy, second-in-command, number two, aid, attendant, or any other such sobriquet, he brought art, aesthetics, soul, humaneness, and a palpable consciousness and sensitivity to the bleak, miserable, aimless, handicapped, and self-pitying life of Sherlock Holmes. His sense of devotion is unequalled throughout the canon, whether to his friend Holmes or to his fiancée and wife, Mary Morstan. He exemplifies a human constancy which often redeems Holmes and raises the telling of their exploits to art.

Dear Friends of the Society, be not misled by naysayers and frustrated showmen who would have us jeer at the foibles and shortcomings of our very gifted Watson. It is he who excels in the art of being human, who extirpates his friend Holmes from his psychic Slough of Despond, and indeed, restores Holmes's will to live and actualize on the level of genius on a daily basis.

55 TIMES IN 38 YEARS?

ONLY?

Fie!

I give you the man behind the image, the omnipotent, the divine, Dr. John H. Watson.

15. On a Whole New Level

Chris announced that the Bimetallic Question Quiz Trophy will before long have its much anticipated additional levels installed so that it can accommodate the plaques which will identify all future annual quiz masters. It will be ready well in time for its January 2018 presentation date.

16. Toast to *The Woman*, Irene Adler by Melodie

She first appears in *A Scandal in Bohemia*. "*The Woman*" as Holmes calls her, is an honourable title acknowledging Irene Adler as the only woman to have bested him. Born in New Jersey in 1858, she was a contralto who performed at La Scala in Milan, and a prima donna at the Imperial Opera of Warsaw, according to Holmes's indexed biography of her. She was also "a well-known adventuress" according to the King of Bohemia, as Watson records in the only story in which she appears. Adler had retired from her career and, Holmes later discovered, was engaged to be married. She is considered to this day as iron-willed, resourceful, intelligent and beautiful, and is admired by many.

Yet little is known in the Canon about her, as she appears in only one adventure. In her farewell letter, with regards to the photograph of her and the King of Bohemia, she writes that: "I keep it only to safeguard myself, and to preserve a weapon which will always secure me from any steps which he might take in the future." Irene in the original Canon is seen to have integrity and high morals, as she promises that she will not share the photograph, which relieves the fears of the same man that she had supposedly threatened to use the photograph against. This is interesting and worthy of serious consideration since a lot of other interpretations, movies and pastiches bring Adler far from her original character and intended role. If we take a closer look she is much more than she seems.

A toast to *The Woman*!

17. Miyako's British Culture and Entertainment Report

Miyako gleaned for us from the May 2017 issue of *Totally British* magazine, news about the dramatic series *Harlots*, which tells the story of an 18th century English brothel run by the desperately domineering businesswoman and mother Margaret Wells. Despite the fancy costumes, it's a frank revelation about the cruel reality of life for many, many unfortunate women who had to do whatever it took to survive in a male dominated world. Please see the special attachment accompanying the email edition of these minutes for Miyako's full report on this series inspired by *The Covent Garden Ladies*, by Hallie Rubenhold.

18. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Kristin

As landlady of 221b Baker Street, Mrs. Hudson must have had a number of questions concerning her most famous tenant. Given the lack of information about her in the Canon, we also necessarily have many questions about her. Did she, as did Watson, wonder about his mysterious visitors at all hours shortly after he moved in? What did Holmes tell her (or not tell her) about his profession? What did she think of the violin playing, the indoor chemistry experiments and target practice, the visits from various criminals in an attempt to intimidate her tenants? What did she think of Watson making her address famous? How did she respond to Holmes's various ploys--the Hiatus, the faked illness, the treaty on the breakfast dish, the bust in the sitting room window? Watson talks of Holmes not taking him into his confidence, but what did Mrs. Hudson know of her role in some of his stranger cases?

What was her retirement like? I could picture her selling 221 Baker Street (perhaps to someone looking to turn it into a museum) and traveling the world on her own adventures, like Mrs. Maberley in tonight's story. Or perhaps, after years with Holmes, she decided that she had encountered enough adventure in her own home, and went to the country. In any case, while we may never have answers to these, I give you the person who did much to make Holmes's eccentric life possible.

To Mrs. Hudson!

19. Toast to the Society by Chris

Chris's toast was not available at press time, but we hope to have the opportunity to print it in a future edition of the minutes.

20. A Reminder from David

I hope everyone is okay with my idea to have all who have something to bring to *Show and Tell* write the details down beforehand, and after presenting their item at the meeting, pass along their notes on their offerings to me. It will make my job as minute-taker so much easier. Thank you for your help!

21. Close of the Meeting

Paul adjourned our meeting at 9:00 pm.

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, August 3rd, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.

Our distinguished Sovereign/President Raf Jans can be contacted at: raf.jans@hec.ca

Have you detected any errors or omissions in these minutes? If so, please do not hesitate to report same to our Co-Founder and Scribe/Recording Secretary David Dowse at: daviddowse@hotmail.com

New Bimetallic Question members are always welcome. Why not consider bringing a friend to our next meeting to share a grand evening with us! Membership information details can be obtained from our Florin/Treasurer Paul Billette at: pabillette@hotmail.fr or at www.bimetallicquestion.org

A tip of the deerstalker hat to our Half-Crown/Sergeant-at-Arms Hudson, Chris Herten-Greaven, for making members and guests feel most welcome at all our meetings. cwhertengreaven@videotron.ca

Our Half-Sovereign/Secretary-Webmaster and Tin Box/Archivist duties are in the delicate but capable hands/paws of Susan Fitch and Esmeralda Fitch. Reach them both at: susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca

Thanks to Mycroft from Susan and Esmeralda: As an expression of the congenial quality of Society meetings, members and guests are identified using their full names on the introductory page of these minutes, and thereafter (with rare exception) by first names only. But our toasters can rest assured that the full copyright of their original writing is secure in the event of requests for reprinting by any other entities.

Our sincere thanks to Mycroft for this editorial suggestion.

Bimetallic Question minutes are typeset in Baskerville Old Face and Arial.

