



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

P.O. Box 232, Westmount Station
Westmount, QC, Canada H3Z 2T2

Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question December 7th, 2017

Date of our next meeting: Thursday, February 1st, 2018 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 Musgrave Ritual*, from *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, prepared and presented by Kristin Franseen.

Next meeting's toast presenters: The Master: Anne Millar; Dr. Watson: Carol Abramson; *The Woman*, Irene Adler: Elliott Newman; Mrs. Hudson: Ronnie Zilman; The Society: Kristin Franseen.
Dear toasters, Please send your February 1st toasts to our new Scribe, Kristin Franseen. Thanks!

Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question held on Thursday, December 7th, 2017, exceptionally on this occasion in the Club Room at Victoria Hall.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Mark Altosaar, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Louise Corda, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Kristin Franseen, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Vivianne Lewis, Anne Millar, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner, Kathryn Radford, Karl J. Raudsepp, Bruno Paul Stenson, Ronnie Zilman; and our guest James Turner.

Regrets: Wilfrid de Freitas, Carole Rocklin, and Melodie Tardieu.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by our Sovereign Raf Jans at 6:40 pm.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

1. An Unexpected Change of Scene

Normally the Bimetallic Question meets in the Westmount Room of the library but on this night a library conference was planned for that location and we were relocated to the Club Room of nearby Victoria Hall. A surprise, but not a problem, and we got along splendidly in our temporary new venue.

2. Gratitude and Warm Wishes for David, and Welcome Kristin!

Raf announced that David was stepping down as Scribe, Recorder of the Minutes. There was no particular reason given, but David felt that he could now more actively join in on the meeting "banter" and he will continue to make contributions on various topics of interest. All assembled gave David a rousing hand of applause for his service.

We are very happy that Kristin has consented to be our new Recording Secretary and she will start her duties with our February meeting. Welcome and thank you, Kristin!

3. A Grand Idea for a Change of Name

Ron proposed that the Bimetallic Question Quiz Master Award trophy, given at our annual Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner to the accumulator of the most points for our 6 Canonical quizzes, be renamed in honour of Patrick. All present enthusiastically agreed.

4. Our Hudson and Hudson Team

Paul will help Chris, our Hudson, still recovering after his serious accident, at upcoming meetings with regards to the provision and dispensation of refreshments. Thanks to you both, gentlemen!

5. Fond Remembrances of Patrick Campbell

Raf gave us the opportunity to take a break from our usual meeting routine to share our memories of Patrick Campbell, who passed from our midst on November 5th, 2017. Leading off, Raf showed us his own signed copy of Patrick's book, *Tides of the Wight*, which he is very proud to own.

A fine booklet from Patrick's *Celebration of Life* evening held in Dorval was passed around and those Society members who had attended it expressed their wonder at how eclectic and jam-packed the accomplishments and activities in Patrick's life were. Aeroplanes, their design, construction, and restoration; volunteering for decades as a driver for the Low-vision Group of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; philately and becoming an expert on Russian stamps, publishing his Sherlockian writing and research, even installing a commemorative plaque at the Reichenbach Falls, were but a few of Patrick's passions. Whatever he put his mind to, he went at it in a whole-hog way and made outstanding contributions. The early photos, models and mementos drew a picture of a real do-er. Some said that early pictures of Patrick reminded them of Elvis.

Louise recalled how as a new member of our Society she attended our 2012 production of Patrick's play, *Tides of the Wight* at the Greene Centre, and was given a big warm and welcoming hug by him. She had just joined us, and he made her feel from then on really part of our group.

Rachel remembers that Patrick would drive her home after Society meetings and they would talk over together the highlights and lowlights of those meetings en-route.

Bruno noted that in Patrick's book he purchased about Canadair, *The End of the Final Line*, there was a picture of Patrick's house they looked at together and near it was the house that Bruno grew up in.

Maureen recalled happy times making wine and port with Patrick in his basement. Patrick encouraged Maureen to help strip bolts from the engine of a Napier Sabre and got a picture of her covered in black grease and another where she was painting the wings of the Blériot white at the Montreal Aviation Museum, which Patrick as a retired aviation and marine engineer helped found.

Two groups of Bimetallic Question members went on tours of the M.A.M. together, and Raf was touched how Patrick gave his children the opportunity to climb aboard a plane and sit in its cockpit.



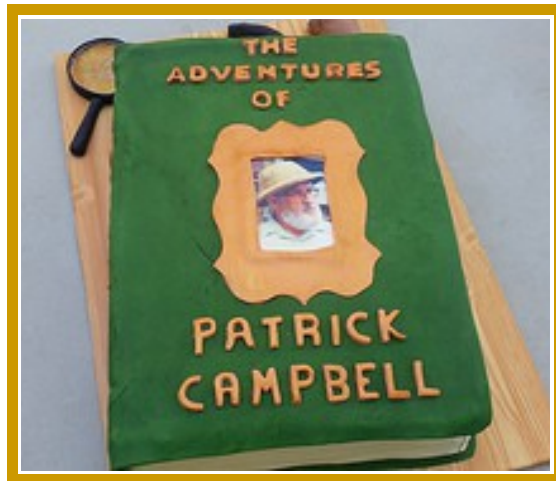
Members of our Bimetallic Question family with Patrick Campbell in October 2012 outside the library named in his honour at the Montreal Aviation Museum

David recalled a wintry visit of Patrick to his house in Mirabel when David was selling off his Sherlockian and mystery book collection. Patrick was generous when he paid 50 cents on the dollar purchase price of books in David's collection to help him during some rough financial times.

Patrick loved animals, with a special fondness and regard for cats, and he and his wife Pierette rescued many stray cats, including his two most recent cherished pets, Rocket and Wilfred. He invented a cardboard "*Katscrratcher*" that cats enjoy sharpening their nails on, and made them as gifts for friends with cats.

Patrick was the driving force behind the two Bimetallic Question Sherlock Holmes Colloquia held at McGill University. Raf was blown away by Patrick's depth of knowledge of the Canon, his depth of research on the time lines of the adventures, the exact locations of the houses, villages, and train schedules mentioned in the Canon etc. Patrick and Susan had been working together on Sherlockian projects such as cataloguing and scanning his large collection of *Canadian Holmes* journals, for both the publication's archive and Bimetallic Question member articles for our archive.

Carol lovingly honoured Patrick by preparing a wonderfully elaborate 90th Birthday Book cake for him in August 2013. Too bad he could not enjoy it on the day of the party held by the Society at the Greene Centre, but soon after his recovery from a brief illness he got his cake and ate it too.



Pat's 2013 birthday cake created by Carol

Dear members,

I have done my best to write down many of your touching memories of our beloved Patrick. I hope that I have done justice to your thoughts. Please forgive me if in any way I have made an error in recounting or have neglected to get yours down.

Hold in your hearts that grizzled white-bearded one. We loved Patrick so much. - David

6. See You at Our Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner

As initially discussed in our October minutes, plans for our January 20th, 2018 Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner are proceeding well. Main course menu offerings will be a choice of fresh caught poached salmon, grilled chicken with mushroom sauce, or vegetarian lasagna, with the cost per person for appetizers and the full meal remaining at \$50.00. When the conversation drifted to further financial matters, Karl requested that the Society issue a financial statement to be presented at a future meeting.

7. Toast to The Master by Patrick Campbell (August 2nd, 2007), read by Paul Billette

I will sing a song of Sherlock,
I will praise him once again.
I will tell you of his triumph,
I will tell you of his pain
You will shudder at the dangers,
You will learn of all his woes
You will study all his habits,
You'll have hatred for his foes.

We will study all the Canon,
We will read it once again.
We will marvel at his wisdom,
We will follow in his train.

They will know the way he did it,
They will see him work it out.
They will read the famous stories,
They will never have a doubt.

He will always be our hero,
He will never let us down.
He will surely live forever,
He has earned his great renown.

Holmes's spirit's always with us,
Watson's tales will ever shine.
So we'll drink this toast together,
For the sake of auld lang syne.

8. Sincere Condolences to Wilfrid

Raf expressed our sincere condolences to Wilfrid on the loss of his brother. A card has been sent to Wilfrid on behalf of all members offering our sympathies.

Show and Tell

9. *The Persian Carpet: The Vision of a Whole People*

James showed us an intriguing, elegant and scholarly book on Persian carpets, his passion, that he co-wrote with Irag Nouria. He offered it as a gift to the Society suggesting we perhaps might wish to use it as a thank you gift to present to our guest speaker, Robert Wilkins, at the Birthday Dinner.

10. Toast to Dr. Watson by Patrick Campbell (Dec 4, 2008), read by Chris Herten-Greaven

This is a brief toast to a most remarkable man that we all know as the colleague and biographer of an even more remarkable man, renowned to one and all as Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street.

Without the diligence of the former, we would, believe me, know little of the latter. But here we have a problem because, as none of us have met the real-life Dr. Watson, we know him most intimately through his writings, and also by a series of skilled, or perhaps less skilled actors who, over the years, have portrayed our hero on stage or on the silver screen. Three of the best-known actors who have played the part within my memory, are Nigel Bruce (with Basil Rathbone as Holmes) and either David Burke or Edward Hardwicke who have played the part more recently in the Granada television series with Peter Jeremy William Huggins as Holmes. (Stage name: Jeremy Brett. Can you imagine Huggins as Holmes? The alliteration alone would trip up the most adroit Sherlockian. - L.S.) Now in this series we find that David Burke played the good doctor in the first 13 of the 41 episodes, which covered 42 of the sixty stories, and Edward Hardwicke took the part for 27 that followed. You may have observed that 13 and 27 do not total 41, and that is because Dr. Watson was not present during the story we are featuring this evening (GOLD).

To be honest, I have enjoyed all three of these fine actors, so I leave you to choose among them, but we must never forget the original himself. So I ask you to raise your glasses to the estimable Doctor John Watson. Late of the Army Medical Department.

11. Erica Encounters Hound at Shaw Festival

Erica returned from enjoying several plays at the Shaw Festival, to bring us news that this coming summer/fall they will present *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, from August 1 to October 27, 2018.

<https://www.shawfest.com/2018season/>

12. The Great Sherlockian Escape

Jack circulated a notice from a company, The Ministry of Cricket and Other Homeless Sports, of a Sherlock Holmes Escape Room in Montreal. There was great interest from members in going there in a group together sometime. The room is advertised as a replica of Holmes's Baker Street study.

<http://www.ministryofcricket.ca/room-escape-montreal-sherlock-holmes-mystery/>

13. Meaningful Medallions

Paul showed us the Bimetallic Question Holmes and Watson medallions that David has had crafted, one of a gold Holmes and the other of a silver Watson. It has yet to be determined how they will be displayed and used to promote our Society. Susan suggested they be incorporated into the design of a new award/trophy that could be given out each year at the Birthday Dinner. But what would this new Society award be for, she asked....for members who had served as Sovereigns? Chris suggested it be for scholarly toasts/speeches on the Canon given at our meetings. Maureen suggested the medallions would be more visible if inlaid into a serving tray for the drinks at our meetings.

14. Toast to Irene Adler by Patrick Campbell (June 5th, 2008), read by Elliott Newman

I have been asked, at short notice, to prepare a toast to "The Woman." There was not time to prepare a properly researched toast, so I made a fast study of the Canon with the following results.

Irene Adler appeared in only one of the adventures, and was mentioned briefly in three others. In total she spoke only five words so one would think she was only a minor character. Yet, in spite of this, Irene Adler has become one of the best-known of all the characters in the Canon.

My brief count found that she is the only character named Irene of a total of 430 different Christian names. As to the surname Adler, it is unique among 819 different surnames in the Canon, according to my brief count. It is interesting to note that there are also 115 additional names of real people, as well as 37 members of the peerage mentioned. So, while we cannot say that *la belle* Irene is one in a million, she is demonstrable one in 971!

So I give you the toast...to "The Woman"...almost one in a thousand!

15. A Sunny Sherlockian Cruise Connection

Carol recounted a recent cruise to sunny climes with her husband Jacob, on which they one day found their ship moored directly next to another named, The Victoria. What's more, upon discussing her Montreal Sherlockian Society membership with another passenger, the lady revealed to Carol that she herself is a member of a Florida Sherlock Holmes society. They exchanged email addresses and will keep in touch. Sherlock is everywhere !

16. Retro Treasures: Ron Howard Holmes and Expo '67

Bruno wanted to share the pleasures of a Sherlock Holmes DVD he had won at a meeting. It featured episodes from the TV series starring Ron Howard as Holmes. Bruno also announced a presentation on Expo '67 to be given December 13th in NDG and on April 18th and 29th, 2018 in Westmount.

<https://westmount.org/en/event/expo-67-mission-impossible/>

17. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Patrick Campbell (April 6th, 2002) , read by David Dowse

In Baker Street were rooms to rent,
and to these rooms our heroes went.

For many a year they plied their trade
but never thought to hire a maid.

There was no need for such a one
for all the chores were always done.

Poor Mrs. Hudson, so we are told,
did all the work as good as gold.

She washed, and cooked, and scrubbed the floor
and brought the clients to the door.

A Paragon, you will agree.

But liberated, NO SIR-EE!

To Mrs. Hudson!

18. *Miel de la Bee* Bibliotheque and a *Canadian Holmes Anthology*

Susan showed us a jar of honey produced by the bees living on the roof of the Westmount Public Library. Its label reads, "Encouraging urban bees not only helps protect an endangered species, but also reminds us of the wonders of nature and the importance of eating local." Sherlock Holmes would approve! Also brought by Susan was the book *Canadian Holmes: The First 25 Years*, an anthology of scholarly Sherlockian writings featured in that excellent journal. It was edited by Chris Redmond, a guest at our August meeting and featured works by our own Patrick as well as other Bimetallic Question members such as Bruce Holmes and Graeme Decarie. Both items ideal Christmas gifts!

19. Miyako's British Culture Report

Gleaned from *Totally British* magazine, October 2017:

First off is an article about season eight of *Doc Martin* starring Martin Clunes who played Arthur Conan Doyle in *Arthur and George*. In *Doc Martin*, Clunes plays a bad-tempered, grumpy big city surgeon with adjustment problems when he is transplanted to small town life as a family doctor in the idyllic Cornwall hamlet of Portwenn. The piece goes on to touch on Clunes's own love of dogs, in contrast to that of his character the Doc, who, in a running gag in the series repeatedly displays his animosity for a local stray. But in real life Clunes is a big animal lover who owns a large farm in Dorset and organizes the Buckham Fair for charity. It offers a fun fair, pony show and a dog show which brings in more than 1,000 dogs, to the actor's joy. The actor's fans are affectionately known as "Clunatics".

Second, Miyako notes how the mother of the Illustrious Client, Queen Victoria, is highlighted in a piece on the second season of *Victoria*. We see here how Victoria and Prince Albert were deeply in love, and her impulsive character is ideal for interesting and never boring television. Victoria's chef, Charles Francatelli is a regular character in the series, in this behind the scenes look at the Royal household. Diana Rigg of *The Avengers* and *Masterpiece Theatre* fame plays the part of the Duchess of Buccleuch. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Elm%C3%A9_Francatelli

Gleaned from *Totally British* magazine, November 2017:

Here we are introduced to *The Mitford Murders*, a new book by Jessica Fellowes, niece of *Downton Abbey* creator Sir Julian Fellowes. This is a mystery based on a real life unsolved crime, the murder of nurse Florence Nightingale Shore, goddaughter of her namesake. Ms. Fellowes also earlier authored the book version of *Downton*.

Sherlock star Benedict Cumberbatch who received an Academy Award nomination for *The Imitation Game*, playing Alan Turing, has started up his own production company. Called Sunny March TV, it brings us the hugely successful actor's latest film, *The Child in Time*. We can see it via BBC One.

We all love Winnie the Pooh, right? *Goodbye Christopher Robin* is a new film exploring the relationship between Alan Milne and his son Christopher (whose real life nickname was Billy Moon), and also family life for the Milnes. A successful playwright, Alan served in World War I and was one of many casualties at the Somme. Fortunately he had the financial means on his return to buy a rural retreat at Cotchford Farm in Ashdown Forest, East Sussex, 40 miles from London. To recover from his psychological suffering, he and his wife and son spent weekends and holidays there, inspiring the Pooh books that became so loved around the world for generations to come. But Christopher's fame as the young hero of the books led to his being bullied terribly cruelly in school. He grew up to serve in the Second World War and later became a successful author himself and a staunch protector of his beloved forest when it was threatened by housing developers. He died in 1996.

20. Quiz on *The Illustrious Client* prepared and presented by Raf Jans

Results:	1 st Kristin	41.5
	2 nd Carol	38.5
	3 rd Chris	36

Discussion on the quiz story:

In the passage of the adventure where it is mentioned that a "technical legal point" cleared the Baron

of any wrongdoing in the death of his wife in Austria, Chris explained a real life "technical point" dealing with "fudged" x-rays of dental records which affected the results of a crime investigation in Switzerland.

I Just Cannot Believe It: A passionate treatise on *The Illustrious Client* by David

Part 1: Sherlock Holmes and Bruno Gruner

At the beginning of the adventure the two men had never met. Holmes was aware of the Baron through it being "his business to follow the details of continental crime" and of his reading of a report from Prague on the so-called accident in the Splugen Hass where the Baron's wife died.

Was it a newspaper account, a police report, a coroner's inquest report or a report from the British embassy?

Was the report of the accident in German, Czech, or an English translation? Could Holmes read and understand these foreign languages? How old was the report? Politically, at the time of the accident, what were the relations between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and England and could political biases have influenced the writing of the account?

Colonel Sir James Damery paints for Holmes a rather damning picture of the Baron. "There is no more dangerous man in Europe." Possibly could Sir James have eyes for Violet de Merville and her wealth, and when the Baron arrived on the scene and snatched her up, Sir James would have felt cheated and wanted to get revenge.

Possibly even the Illustrious Client himself had desires for Violet and wanted to get the Baron out of the way.

At this time in the adventure, how can Holmes claim to have "no doubt as to the man's guilt" after only having read an account of an incident and listening to the opinion of Sir James Damery on the Baron? How does he know that the Baron is the Austrian murderer without actually going to Austria, examining the evidence, talking to witnesses, talking to the police and medical examiner who saw the crime scene? He has no proof. What was the technical legal point on which the Baron was cleared?

This behaviour is so unprofessional and so un-Holmes that one might suspect that Holmes has been politically manipulated.

Why take the case? He is swayed by Sir James Darney's damning description of Baron Gruner, by Damery's pitiful description of General de Merville, by the supposed innocent gullible state of Violet de Merville, and perhaps paramount, by the potential glory and prestige of giving aide to the Illustrious Client. He is not doing it for Violet, but doing it for himself. Also, since Scotland Yard can do nothing, Holmes views this as another challenge to get the better of established law enforcement.

Part 2: Baron Gruner and Violet de Merville

The Baron was part of the European Jet Set, or rather the Yacht Set. Rich, sophisticated, horse fancier and high class polo player, collector of rare books and pictures and an authority on Chinese pottery

Violet de Meriville, young, rich, beautiful, accomplished, a wonder woman in every way.. Also a member of the Yacht Set.

They met on the Mediterranean Tour, fell in love and were to be married. Some said that Violet was utterly obsessed by him. She would not hear one word against him.

Violet de Merville was of age so she could make up her own mind. She heard and read of all the negative adventures of the Baron and chose to believe none of them.

She was young, rich and beautiful but could she also have been smart? She could have set up financial safeguards to protect her wealth that even a loving husband could not fully overcome.

She has broken no law in loving a man who some would portray as a rascal and a very dangerous man. She may find great pleasure as the Baroness. It is her choice and why should powerful men like her father, Sir James Damery, Sherlock Holmes and the Illustrious Client feel that only they know what is right for her and they alone can direct her destiny.

Part 3: Baron Gruner and Kitty Winter???

An unlikely couple to be sure. They were from two different worlds. The Baron was a European aristocrat while Kitty was a London girl, pal of "Porky" Shinwell. Kitty was not in his league, in his society. She had no money, prestige or title so the Baron would not even have seen her. There was really nothing to gain for the Baron in an association with her.

If such an unlikely liaison were to ever have taken place, it was Kitty's luck and good fortune that the Baron would have had a dalliance with her. For a brief interlude, the Baron would have given Kitty the chance to live in the luxury world of the rich and powerful.

But when the good times were over and the Baron wanted to move on, Kitty could not let go of this taste of the good life. She felt jilted rather than grateful. She wanted revenge, not for allowing the Baron to bring her down,

but for not being able to revel and hob nob with the fashion set any longer.

Part 4: The Baron's Security??

He keeps his "brown leather book" in the pigeon hole of an old bureau in the inner study.

There is a burglar alarm at night (only at night). There is the butler and footman. What, no dogs?? In the small inner room there was a window leading out into the garden. It was wide open at the time of the attack. (Easy to get in and out!) Sherlock Holmes entered and exited by this window and he completely escaped the grounds. No alarm sounded. Did Holmes shut off the alarm? From the inside of the house or from the outside? Did Holmes have prior knowledge of how the alarm system worked and where to cut it out? Who provided Holmes with this information?

Holmes brought Kitty Winter with him to the Baron's house. He claims to not have known what she was so carefully carrying under her cloak. He claims not to have known that Kitty was there to seek revenge on the Baron. He helped Kitty to escape but both he and Kitty were seen by the Baron and others. Holmes was guilty of breaking and entry into the Baron's house, of aiding and abetting the vicious attack on the Baron by Kitty Winter, and of theft of the Baron's personal property.

His reputation should have been ruined and he should have gone to jail.

The Baron was a foreign national who lived in London and who had no criminal proceedings pending against him. He was completely innocent under the law.

The Illustrious Client interfered with the police investigation and criminal case against Kitty Winter and she got off relatively lightly. The Illustrious Client influenced the criminal justice system in favour of Holmes and no burglary charges were laid. Watson should also have been charged as an accessory to the charges of burglary and personal assault.

Of the security system in the Baron's house, Shinwell Johnson said that it was of no value to protect the precious Chinese pottery as "No fence wants stuff of that sort that you can neither melt or sell." *Really*. Have they not heard of private theft for a special client who has no intention of reselling but will keep it for his private collection.

Reflections on *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client* by Miyako

This story takes place in September 1902, so obviously Sherlock Holmes's loyal friend and chivalrous gentleman-client is King Edward VII. the son of Queen Victoria and Albert. He was crowned on the 9th of August, 1902, therefore he finally became King after waiting for 59 years. In his public presence, however, Edward personified Britain, as if Britain was ruling the entire world, looking as if he was like the Sun King, Louis XIV of France. Before the French Revolution aristocrats had to obtain the King's approval to marry, and in many cases, Kings (from the 14th to 16th) ordered some marriages. In this British case, I suppose, The King sees himself as equivalent to his society and he wanted to meddle in his subjects' (aristocrats') marriages to benefit himself and Britain. So, why did he want to be anonymous in this story? (Even to Holmes who'd really keep his mouth shut, even if he had known.) The illustrious client sent Sir James Damery to do the job of asking Holmes to take care of this serious matter. Is this because Baron Gruner is a foreign aristocrat and it might cause a diplomatic problem for Britain? (Between Britain and Austria?)

Incidentally, we know that British aristocracy in the Edwardian era was in general totally broke and money-strapped, so who saved them from collapsing into bankruptcy? American super-rich ladies, daughters of ultra-rich industrial millionaires. I heard that over 200 American women married British aristocrats! Even Prince William and his son George have American blood (Princess Diana Spencer's family member married an American heiress), Winston (Leonard Spencer) Churchill's mother was another American who charmed King Edward as well, and the list goes on and on...and thanks to those American ladies, I think the world was changed for the better, especially women's rights! (Even though the King himself showed very little or no interest in reforms, or even science and industry.)

Also, I'm wondering why the King felt uneasy to meddle? During his reign, he had approved the *Entente Cordiale* Alliance (the Cordial Harmony) with France, against the alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy. Is this why the King felt uneasy as well? German political and commercial challenge is becoming a big issue for Britain, as they were also persuading Russian and French governments to undermine British supremacy. Is this why Conan Doyle created this Austrian Baron Lothario (no good S.O.B. character) due to the political atmosphere in those days?

Baron Gruner says something strange to Watson, "I would ask you what do you know of the Emperor Shomu and how do you associate him with the Shōsō-in near Nara? I'm from Japan and when I read that in the Canon, I wondered, "Why is Baron Gruner talking of a Japanese Emperor and a Japanese Ancient Capitol of the city of Nara, instead of Chinese Emperors or Chinese cities???" Is his purpose to confuse Watson? I bet that Watson couldn't know the difference the Japanese Emperor and the Chinese dynasties! Emperor Shomu (we actually don't know the exact date or year...it's too ancient) was Japan's 45th emperor (A.D. birth 699, reign 724-749

death) who was an enthusiastic and devout Buddhist Emperor, and built many Buddhist temples in Nara. When I went to college in Osaka, I used to take a train ride and visit those temples in Nara on the weekends to go sightseeing. Emperor Shomu was proclaiming himself to be a servant of "the 3 Treasures", the Buddha, the Buddhist Law, and the monastic community. As Britain has thousands of churches, Japan has thousands of temples all over the country, and I only visited Shōsō-in once, in Nara. What is Shōsō-in, you may ask? It's an ancient Japanese royal warehouse! I bet Watson had absolutely no idea what Baron Gruner was talking about! Why did the Japanese Emperor Shomu build this warehouse? At first, it was built for storing rice for the Royal household but as the years went by, the Emperor's collection became bigger and the Royal household needed to store many objects, actually over 3000 objects! So what kind of objects, you may wonder? As I recall, they are musical instruments, paintings, calligraphy, ornaments, arms, armour, costumes, sculpture, perfumes, medicinal plants, decorative ceramics, flower vases, an much, much more. I was surprised to see so many objects from foreign countries! I mean, it's 8th century Japan, and yet the Japanese Emperor received so many gifts from foreign ambassadors who came to Japan and lived there in those days! I remember that the Japanese government was so proud of Shōsō-in when I was young, because they claimed that it is one of the most ancient museums in the world. (whether it's true or not??) And yes, many objects I saw came from China and Korea, and even from Central Asian territories. One object really impressed me and I can't forget it to this day. It is the musical instrument called a *biwa*, which is a Japanese lute, and yet, the lute had the drawings of camels! We know that ancient Rome was trading with the Chinese Empire already, so I suppose it's no surprise, and yet no Japanese person could ever see camels. Why are those camel drawings there? Certainly the big connection of the Silk Road indeed!

In this story, a real example of the eggshell pottery of the Ming Dynasty of China was used to lure the Baron. The great Ming imperial dynasty of China (from 1386-1644), and Chinese pottery (thin like porcelain etc.) reached its peak in Ming, China, with refined shapes and materials, and formal or floral motifs. Watson brought Gruner this Ming saucer - which was later safely carried away by Sir James...back to probably the King himself?? The Baron became suspicious, saying he only knows of one in England to match this.

21. Toast to the Society by Patrick Campbell (June 4, 2009), read by Susan Fitch

At this time where nearly everyone sits before a small screen, oblivious to the world around them, I would like to refer you back to an earlier day before computers were installed in a majority of households.

A recent copy of a local newspaper quoted Pablo Picasso as saying, "I have no use for computers; they only give you answers."

Although amusing, that is a profound statement. What we all need is more than a simple answer, we want to have the reasoning that led to the answer, to know who did the reasoning, and what facts were available to the reasoner at the time he postulated his or her answer.

In a way this is what our Society is all about. We have, set before us, a series of situations which require answers. We are given the facts, and we have an intimate knowledge of, and a sincere respect for the reasoner. With this knowledge we can judge the worth of his, The Master's, answer and act accordingly.

To the Society!

22. Close of the Meeting

Raf adjourned our lively and productive 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, February 1st, 2018, at 6:30 p.m.