

Memories of the Bimetallic Question Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner January 19th, 2013

Holiday lights, overhead, shimmered a warm welcome to us as we made our way in the gently falling snow through the cobbled streets of Old Montreal to the *Vieux Port* Steakhouse.

Our ever genial outgoing Sovereign Ron Zilman read the opening Sherlockian Prayer by Christopher Morley, and acted as our principal host for the evening, celebrating the 159th birthday of Sherlock Holmes.

In kinship with Sherlockian societies around the world, the Society's traditional Sherlockian toasts were delivered with fine creative style and aplomb by the following presenters:

The Master	Geoff Dowd
Dr. Watson	Erica Penner
The Woman	David Dowse
Mrs. Hudson	Carol Abramson
The Society	Chris Herten-Greaven

It must be noted that Ron Zilman was able to realize the main goal of his two-year term as Sovereign: To welcome new blood, new members to our Society. We can also note that it was one of these new members who had been heard to quip some months back that yes, we in the Bimetallic Question regularly *toast* Sherlock Holmes, but why don't we take a crack at *roasting* Sherlock Holmes? Society Florin Paul Billette enthusiastically and gallantly took up this challenge and, in a departure from usual Birthday Dinner entertainment fare, hosted our first ever (first anywhere?!?!) *Sherlock Holmes Roast*. Playing the Great Game with passion, wit, and Canonical insight, Society members and friends were able to recruit the following distinguished personages (in order of appearance) to participate in the roast:

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	Chris Herten-Greaven
Herr Otto von Hesseldorf (Holmes's Orchestra Leader during the Great Hiatus)	Karl Raudsepp
Inspector Lestrade	Raf Jans
Mary Morstan	Rebecca Stacey
Professor James Moriarty	Kyle Ritchie
Sherlock Holmes	Jacob Abramson

Arlene Scher led us in the always moving recitation of the *Musgrave Ritual*, another time-honoured annual tradition of the Master's Birthday Dinner in our Society.

Sovereign Emeritus and Society Quiz Master extraordinaire Patrick Campbell awarded the Bimetallic Question Quiz Trophy to Carol Abramson, her 5th win in total. Since each quiz winner authors the next quiz, thanks go out to Carol for the many excellent and challenging quizzes she has written for the Society these past years.

Whether one's menu selection was in the way of: Surf, turf, or vegetarian; crème brûlée, chocolate mousse cake, or "darn it! I'm sticking to my diet!" comments heard all around the tables were that the *Vieux Port* food was satisfyingly delicious.

Rachel Alkallay, one of our founding members, brought colorful party favours for all the tables. Absent friends were not forgotten, when all present signed a card of thanks to Roger and Marie Burrows, in fond appreciation of their past 4 years dedicated service in their shared position as Secretary.

An elegantly-kilted Patrick Campbell and golden-gowned Rebecca Stacey returned to centre stage once again to gratefully accept their men's and women's, Best Costume of the Evening prizes, respectively.

As the evening mellowed, Geoff Dowd took the microphone to tell us a family anecdote proving that a sensitive affinity for all things Sherlockian resides in the genes. Geoff's older daughter Rebecca, a graduate student in voice at McGill, one day mentioned how much she enjoyed singing "polyphonic motets of Lassus". Her Sherlockian dad immediately recognized the Canonical connection: Holmes himself has related to us how he appreciates the Lassus motets. Thus it came about that Rebecca joined forces with her younger sister Sarah, also a highly experienced and talented singer, to perform for us a Lassus motet for two voices, the *No.6 Qui sequitur me*, absolutely captivating the audience in the room.

We knew another very special highlight of the evening was at hand when Society co-founder (with David Dowse) Wilfrid de Freitas ascended the podium to introduce our featured speaker, award-winning film-maker, writer and journalist Josh Freed. Josh's writing awards include The Leacock Prize for Humour and two National Newspaper Awards as Canada's Best Columnist for his weekly column in the Montreal Gazette. He is also the author of several popular books, including *The Anglo Guide to Survival in Quebec*. Josh more than measured up to our expectations, regaling us with observations and insights from his latest book, *He Who Laughs, Lasts* and leaving us, quite pleasantly, in the proverbial stitches of laughter.

Finally, the poignant moment arrived for outgoing Bimetallic Question Sovereign Ron Zilman to graciously hand over the reins and Society meeting bell to incoming Sovereign Chris Herten-Greaven. Chris, in turn, thoughtfully saluted Ron for his stalwart and very successful two years of Society leadership, and welcomed his fellow slate members: Paul Billette returning as Treasurer (Florin), Elliott Newman returning as the Lowly Scribe, Tash Akkerman signing on as Secretary (Half-Sovereign), Raf Jans stepping up as (perhaps another Society first) *Mr. Hudson*, or just "Hudson", to his friends (Half-Crown), and yours truly, Susan Fitch newly gathering up the skeins as Society Webmaster (Penny).

The snow was still falling outside the stone walls and tall windows of our historic venue, *Le Vieux Port*, as Paul Billette, closing the festivities, read for us Vincent Starrett's timeless prose, *221B*.

A heart-felt Sherlockian thank you to Paul Billette, Wilfrid de Freitas, Tash Akkerman, and Geoff Dowd for all their hard work and expertise behind the scenes in organizing this year's very successful Birthday Dinner festivities. And we hope to see *you*, dear gentle reader, at *next* year's Bimetallic Question Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner!

Susan Ruth Fitch

