



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

May 9, 2003

Come One, Come All

Welcome

Walk up the path.
Confront the door.
Pass through the glass
where others have passed before.

Enter the great hall
where Henty and Master Will
move silently aside
for a master of another ilk.

Such magic is wrought
in this hall of commoners and kings
where all are equal
in the realm of our imaginings.

Pull up your chair
to the table of golden oak.
Share in the mystery of fascination
as The Master envelopes us in his chimerical cloak.

Pause for an instant
to embrace your friends.
Sense the gentle passion of spirits watching,
the lure of the tale, time without end.

Pass again through time
whose cost is so dear.
Suspend your cares:
something wonderful happens here.

Date of next meeting

Moriarty still at work! Our next meeting will be on the 2nd Thursday of June. This is a temporary adjustment in our schedule. PLEASE note this exception.

Thursday, June 12, 2003

at the usual time of 6:30 p.m.

The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec

Know ye then that all those who gather there will pay homage, crack wise, wax poetic, sip port, sherry, or Coca Cola, and inexplicably honour the memory of one who never lived, yet lives forever, to wit: The World's Greatest Consulting Detective (WGCD)—smoker of pre-psychedelic, pre-Austin Powers *shag*, the original exponent of "Great Britain: Beee-have", Johnson to Watson's Boswell, and recent discoverer of the beauties of nature (We're not talking Sports Illustrated Swimwear Issue; read Story #40). Come and see what we mean!

Remember to pay close attention to parking signs while parking.

Feed the meters. Westmount loves you.

If you are arriving by bus, be careful how you descend. Spring is in high gear in beautiful, naturally-fertilized Westmount. If in doubt about where to tread, please see our last newsletter. Forewarned is four-footed!

The Next Quiz: "The Naval Treaty" prepared by Stanley Baker

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, April 10, 2003 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec:

Present: Stanley Baker, Mac Belfer, Paul Billette, Shigeko Betts, Patrick Campbell, David Kellett, Leigh Lerner, Elliott Newman, Laurence Reich, Carole Rocklin

Regrets: Our Sovereign David Dowse, called to family business.

CALL TO ORDER: Ex-Sovereign Patrick Campbell opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed those present. An approximate summary of proceedings follows:

1. Under "Show and Tell", Stanley Baker announced that he had put an announcement of the meeting in the *Westmount Examiner*, inviting anyone wishing to improve their skills of deduction. Since all 10 people around the table were known to each other and to this writer, we deduce that the announcement did not actually bring in any guests. However, the writer of these minutes has just provided an elementary example of simple deduction by counting breathing

bodies around the table (10), matching them to names (also 10), and subtracting bodies/names not known around the table (0), thereby deducing that no new individuals responded to the announcement. In and of itself, this exercise fulfilled Stanley's stated objective completely of inviting people wishing to improve their skills of deduction. I feel so much better now. Stanley, thank you! And please keep putting in that announcement. We're working on additional inducements to have more people join us.

2. More "Show and Tell." Patrick Campbell brought in his "Great Book of the Bimetallic Question," a personal scrapbook of memorabilia charting the history and personages of our society from its founding more than a score of years ago. Nostalgia reigns on those pages, where in halcyon days the gentlemen of the society had more hair, and our gentler members exhibited complexions that obviously improved in time.
Patrick's sequence of London photos, with Bimetallic emissaries posing as Bobbies, was a scream. Not to be missed: our Montreal delegation in a television dressing room with Jeremy Brett in between takes. We shall endeavour to bring you this priceless collection on our new web site. (I think the word is "post." With the correctness of cyberspatiality, we shall *post* it on our web site.)
3. David Kellett's "Show and Tell" was presented in typical fashion: "Guess what this is," he challenged, adding as usual, "I'm not going to tell you." It was a knife with an iron blade, primitively made, in a sheath of stiffened, probably steamed or smoked leather. Other media included cartridge brass, iron in the sheath, and a wooden handle similar to oak, but not oak. When we all guessed wrong, David informed us that this was a Tibetan knife, hand-made by Tibetans in India after approximately 100,000 of them walked across the Himalayas with their yaks and belongings, fleeing the Chinese invasion of the 1950s. These knives were made only for personal use, and were sometimes traded or sold. Keep them coming, David.
4. Another "Show and Tell" from Patrick involved a reference to the Toronto Bootmakers, the Sherlockian society boasting about 400 members, with around 100 attending each meeting. The "show" part involved their publication, *Canadian Holmes*, a rich compendium of memorabilia and scholarship concerning the master, his canon, and similar esoterica. You too can become a Bootmaker for a paltry \$25 per annum. This will entitle you to your very own subscription to *Canadian Holmes*. One wonders why, following Story #40 and the WGCD's discovery of the beauties of nature, the Bootmakers didn't go all the way with *Canadian Holmes and Gardens*! If you would like to join, come to our meeting. Pay your dues to the Bimetallic Question first (we're a better deal, actually), and then we'll give you the particulars on the Toronto society. Fair?
5. Back to David Kellett for another charming "Show and Tell." This time, an exquisite brown celluloid Waterman's fountain pen-and-pencil set, given to his father and inscribed "G. Kellett, 6 30 45" on the occasion of his wedding.
6. WE ARE PLANNING TO DISTRIBUTE OUR MEMBERS' LIST INCLUDING YOUR NAME, PHONE NUMBER, AND E-MAIL NUMBER TO MEMBERS ONLY.

If you do not want this information given out, please inform us at the next meeting.

7. Our new web site address is: bimetallicquestion.org
We're open to suggestions on what to put on it.
8. In response to our request for ideas to attract more people to our meetings, Leigh Lerner suggested that an acquaintance of his, Michael Prupas, who had been a producer of Sherlock Holmes programs, would be pleased to supply a film director to our meeting. In addition, Leigh mentioned that he might be able to engage a professor to speak about women in the 1880s and 1890s. However, she would probably require an honorarium. We will take these opportunities into consideration.
9. David Kellett added another "Show and Tell." This time, it was in the form of a quotation from Romantic novelist Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, from his novel, *Paul Clifford* (1830). Now we know for sure from where Snoopy derives his inspiration:

It was a dark and stormy night. The rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.

You just *know* this isn't a comedy. Incidentally, it's an example of pathetic fallacy. According to some sources, it's pretty pathetic literature. We can see, however, the kind of influence this must have had on Conan Doyle in creating atmosphere in the Sherlock stories.

10. We had a discussion on smoking after someone asked what a shag was. David Kellett told us that it was not a kind of tobacco, it was a kind of *cut* of tobacco. We then lapsed into a mass reverie about why the WGCD needed to smoke three pipes for especially difficult problems. Various opinions were expressed. Among them were the beliefs that pipe tobacco:
 - a) affects the brain in terms of one's ability to focus and concentrate. We were unable to come to a consensus whether smoking to excess causes one to concentrate or to come apart.
 - b) tastes perfectly okay until you get down into the bowl and start smoking dottle (This is disgusting stuff. We who shrink not from describing springtime in Westmount positively quail at references to dottle.)
 - c) comes in various compositions, some more hallucinogenic than others.

We are intense.

We are sincere.

We are lacking in scholarship on this subject.

Perhaps we can invite a pharmacologist to speak on the subject, or perhaps commission one of our number to research the Holmesian implications of smoking pipe tobacco?

11. Patrick's last "Show and Tell" of the evening involved our taking turns reading from his excellent Sherlockian play, *Tides of the Wight*, copyright by Tobypress, and published by The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box of Shelburne, ON, and Sauk City, WI, 1999.
Here's what the dust jacket has to say about the play:

When Dr. Watson meets an old friend, a chaplain from his regiment in India, he hears a strange tale; the children of his friend, living in the beautiful Isle of Wight, have been hearing strange, disembodied voices. Holmes, seeking diversion, accompanies Watson and his friend to meet the children, and encounters a gruesome murder, and a conspiracy that involves a good deal of the population of the island. To solve the mystery, Holmes is forced to study areas of natural science that he had previously ridiculed.

Patrick, has this play been staged?

TOASTS

We believe that everyone who should have been toasted, got toasted.
We might have been informal, but never indecorous.

QUIZNUNCS: Elliott Newman prepared the quiz for "The Man with the Twisted Lip." During the writing of the quiz, there was silence generally. In the past, we could often look forward to the occasional kibbutzing by Stanley when he knew he didn't know an answer. Elliott observed that at this quiz, (Why is this night different from all the others?) Stanley must have been doing quite well not to punctuate the cognitive lacunae with humour. Indeed, Elliott's sleuthing proved accurate: Stanley won the quiz by a hefty margin. Congratulations, Stanley!

The top winners of the quiz were: Stanley Baker, David Kellett, and Patrick Campbell.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting closed promptly at 8:37 p.m. when a custodian switched off the lights in the library. We could have forged stubbornly on, but, you know ... in the dark?

THE MYSTERIOUS BOOKSHELF - A taste of fiction obviously inspired by the WGCD.

The Asphalt Jungle by W.R. Burnett
(from the back jacket of the Quill Mysterious Classic edition)

Since its publication in 1949, *The Asphalt Jungle* has been regarded as one of the supreme achievements of American crime fiction. Against the unforgettable panorama of the metropolitan night world, it unfolds a relentless big-scale manhunt, a story packed with suspense that never lets up. The characters are larger than life: Hardy, the police commissioner, nervous, irascible, a martinet determined to clean up the

city; Emmerich, the top criminal lawyer, now on the verge of bankruptcy and ready to take the big gamble—with death; Gus, the hunchback, a criminal since childhood, but prepared to stand by a guy to the grave if he's "a hundred percent"; Dix, the strong-arm, heat-packer, ruthless, brutal, but sentimental inside; and Doll Pelky, the once-pretty, now aging dive hostess, who has fought an unending battle to rise above the sordid fatalism of her associates. *The Asphalt Jungle* is a classic American crime caper, as tough and hard-boiled as any you'll ever read.

W.G. Burnett is the author of *Little Caesar* and *High Sierra*.

Why we chose to bring you this book:

Unlike the style of Conan Doyle, that of W.G. Burnett is telegraphic. He rushes the reader into an explicit, detailed description and analysis of the motivation of each character as it is introduced. Despite the absence of surprises in character, there are many surprises in plot. This provides the energy that moves the story forward at breakneck speed. Burnett's style, like Doyle's, is dated. People don't talk like that any more. The language is stilted, formal, elaborate, unless we're listening to Dix who would rather kill, maim, or dismember, than speak at all. The action builds in a way that Doyle's doesn't. Here, the event hasn't happened yet; in Doyle, the WGCD is always recreating a crime or catastrophic event by deducing how the pieces have fallen into place. Consequences have already happened. Here, the hair rises on the back of our neck as we see things about to happen, but we are unsure what. Is there a connection between these two writers and their work? You bet! There are suspense, method, palpable characters, the atmosphere of a bygone era, albeit on different continents, and the peripatetic influence of one Otto Penzler, the energetic owner of The Mysterious Bookshop on New York's West 56th Street, who as editor of the Quill Series of mysterious classics, included *The Asphalt Jungle* in the collection, and whose store has perhaps one of the finest and most complete collections of new and previously driven Sherlockiana on this continent.

Cited as one of the 10 greatest films of all time, *The Asphalt Jungle* introduced the young starlet Marilyn Monroe to the screen. Need we say more?

NEW MEETING NIGHT SURVEY

We are considering the possibility of moving our regular meeting night from Thursday to Tuesday. If you have a preference for Tuesdays please call: Stanley Baker at: 514-931-8690. Please note that our next meeting will take place on June 12th.

MRS. HUDSON'S CORNER:

The Dreaded Haggis (from Delia Smith's *Complete Cookery Course*)

1 sheep's stomach	1 ts salt
1 sheep heart	1/2 ts pepper
1 sheep liver	1/4 ts cayenne
1/2 lb suet	1/2 ts nutmeg
3/4 c oatmeal	3/4 c stock

Wash stomach well; rub with salt and rinse. Remove membranes and excess fat. Soak in cold salted water for several hours. Turn stomach inside out for stuffing. Cover heart and liver with cold water, bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Chop heart and coarsely grate liver. Toast oatmeal in a skillet on top of the stove, stirring frequently, until golden. Combine all ingredients and mix well. Loosely pack mixture into stomach, about two-thirds full. ***Remember that oatmeal expands in cooking.***

Press any air out of stomach and truss securely. Put into boiling water to cover. Simmer for 3 hours, uncovered, adding more water as needed to maintain water level. Prick stomach several times with a sharp needle when it begins to swell; this keeps the bag from bursting. Place on a hot platter, removing trussing strings. Serve with a spoon.

Or

The Hooded Haggis (Dark corners of Maureen's Kitchen)

1 sheep heart (or Beef)	1/4 ts cayenne
1 sheep liver (of Beef)	1/2 ts nutmeg
1/2 lb vegetable suet	3/4 cup stock
3/4 cup oatmeal	1 tbs. and a bit of whisky
1 teaspoon salt	6 Large Onions
1/2 teaspoon pepper	

Cut a slither from the bottom of each of the onions, so that they can stand upright. Cut a cross design in the top about three quarters of the way down. Place in a large pan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Simmer for 15 minutes, drain and refresh under cold water.

Cover heart and liver with cold water, bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Chop heart and coarsely grate liver. Toast oatmeal in a skillet on top of the stove, stirring frequently, until golden. Combine all ingredients, and mix well. Snip out the center of the onions with kitchen scissors, leaving the skin and 3 to 4 outer layers intact. Loosely pack mixture into onions, about two-thirds full and bake for 30 minutes in a preheated oven to 375F.

Once again, remember, oatmeal expands in cooking.

A delightful tomato stuffing alternative as well.

MAUREEN'S MERRIMENT: Non-stop groaners from, about, or near the WGCD's inexhaustible supply of puns, pranks, jokes, and puzzles.

Complete the following puns:

- Bakers trade bread recipes on a _____-_____. (5-2-4,5)
- If you don't pay your exorcist, you get _____. (11)
He had a photographic memory that was never _____. (9)
- Those who jump off a Paris bridge are in _____. (5)

Answers to last Puzzler: 1) Wife 2) Wrath 3) Pavlov
 4) Well-red 5) Manor 6) Giveaway
