



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

December 2003

Welcome

to the most amazing assemblage
of aficionados ever clustered by unlit hearth
and oaken table.

Yes, folks, step right up to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Bimetallic Question and hints of tidbits to come in the future. We are amazing because our individual uniqueness and our collective interest in things Sherlockian. As you may have noticed by now, we are an eclectic bunch - our interests rove from a good mystery read or flick, to cooking, to bucolic days in the Laurentians and Vermont and Switzerland, to computers, to building airplanes that actually fly with people in them, to collecting pens, to studying Victorian England, to travel, to looking forward to our atmosphere-saturated annual banquets, to field trips to hidden corners of the city that rival the fog-enshrouded midnight byways of Victorian London in intrigue, fascination, and surprises.

This welcome is a two-parter. The first is to invite you and your friends to the next or any meeting of the BQ, generally on the first Thursday of every other month. These open meetings therefore take place six times yearly, with the first one in 2004 being on February 5th. They are your opportunity to tell us how you let Sherlock into your life, what Sherlock means to you, and how your loved ones are coping with your crisis. Next, we move on to showing and telling about events in your life, and memorabilia and related articles you have accumulated which may or may not have anything to do with Him. If you are a closet Sherlockian and aren't ready to come out yet, this too is okay. Come in disguise and take a look around. If you've got ideas about how to spice up the meetings, add events that will enrich the camaraderie, if you can bring someone who will deign to visit us and share with us their experiences related to Himself, His Minions, or anything remotely connected with His Legacy, please get in touch with us via the e-mail address below, or just show up!

Since this introduction is turning into something longer than our meeting, let me close with a few suggestions based on the premise that we all get out of something what we put into it:

- A) Have you or your friends ever written a poem, paragraph, story, novel, or article that had an element of mystery? Bring it to our meeting or e-mail short segments to us. If we can, we'll put it in our newsletter. And if this is your interest, we do want to talk to you!
- B) Are you or your friends involved in amateur theatre?

- C) Are you or your friends an architect? an engineer? a naval architect? a chef? a teacher? a soldier? a baker? a candlestick maker? Wow! can we ever use your talents!
- D) Have you written critiques on the WGCD, Victoriana, or mystery stories? Would you like to try your hand at it? Do you have friends who fall in this category?
- E) Do you have access to materials that can be used in presentations on the WGCD, Victorian England, the world at the time of the WGCD, or related data? These could be in form of books, stamps, coins, posters, videos, film loops, magazines, travel brochures, etc., etc.
- F) Do you have an anecdote related to the WGCD - either existing, or something you've made up?
- G) Have you read a mystery book or story, or seen a mystery movie that you think we'd be interested in? Share it with us! Popcorn is optional.
- H) Do you have a favorite mystery author or actor? Do tell! Maybe you'd like to make a presentation on the subject? We love this stuff!
- I) Can you show this newsletter and these requests to at least three friends and invite them to join us?
- J) What suggestions do you have that will enable us to appeal to more people and elicit greater participation at our meetings and supplementary programs?
- K) We would like to expand our menu of activities and we need people with at least one good dialing finger to assist. How many hours a month can you contribute?
- L) Planning a trip? Please let us know about it at the next meeting. Our worldly members might be able to steer you to places of Sherlockian interest. Yes, even in Japan and Iceland!

Got an idea? Want information?

Here's how you and your friends can get in touch with us:

Elliott Newman
(Half-sovereign/secretary of the Bimetallic Question)
Home Telephone: (514) 685-6135
E-mail: enewman@selectagendas.com

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, February 5th, at 6:30 p.m. at:

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

There is limited parking in the lot between the library building and Sherbrooke Street. There are spaces for cabriolets, small drays, regulation-sized dog carts and hansoms, convertible pumpkins, and occasionally, a phaeton or two. In that lot, the parking meters accept coin up to a maximum of two hours, and you must pay. There is free parking on Sherbrooke beside the park. There are diagonal parking spaces (no cost) on the side-street to the east of the park. Come early, bring a survival pack, and enjoy the hike from your car. The Sherbrooke St. bus stops in front of the library. While space is ample in the park and the wading pond doesn't seem to be used on -40° C winter nights, we do not suggest you use it as a helipad.

The Next Quiz: The Musgrave Ritual by David Kellett.

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, December 4, 2003 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec.

Present: A suitably hair-raising number attended (13), including:
Rachel Alkallay, Stanley Baker, Mac Belfer, Shigeko Betts, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Hugh Darwood, David Dowse, William Ellis, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Kellett, Anita Miller, Lawrence Reich, and Susan who took photographs for the website.

Regrets:

Maureen and Jack Anderson, Elliott Newman

CALL TO ORDER: David Dowse, our Sovereign, opened the meeting at approximately 6:30 p.m. and welcomed those present.

1) David Dowse, recently recovered from a hip operation, thanked the group for the card, and assured us that the operation was a success, but there is another operation to follow, on the other hip (the Adventure of the Second Stain). After the meeting it was learned that the hospital has scheduled David for early January. Our best wishes go out to David for an easy convalescence and a speedy recovery.

2) The first toast, to the Master, was given by Anita Miller (herewith):

When I was asked to make the opening remarks at this meeting I knew it was time for us to reveal to the world and restore to the Master his true identity and reputation as the top criminologist the world has ever known.

Among his detractors was the notorious Conan Doyle, who has again and again stated that Holmes was a fictional character, which he created. How can we prove this to be a falsehood? Of course by the testimony of those who worked with him, came to him for solutions when they were in crisis.

The evidence we have lies with the persons, well known in their time, such as Dr. Watson, Mrs. Hudson, the Baskervilles, and even THE WOMAN Irene Adler who have testified to the miraculous work done by Holmes when all others failed.

Shame on you Conan Doyle for trying to ride on the coattails of one of the greatest minds in his field, by raising doubts and casting aspersions on the brilliance of Sherlock Holmes.

Friends, I ask you, would the renowned British Postal Service, which in true British integrity would not hesitate to reveal an imposter, to this very day deliver to 221B Baker Street mail from all over the world if they didn't know that Sherlock Holmes had resided at 221B.

Santa Claus, whose identity none would dispute, still has his mail delivered.

By a show of hands are we all in agreement that this grievous wrong must at last be put right.

I propose a toast to the Master, who at this point is saying, "it's about time."

3) The first puzzle set before us was a curious glove-like object with long straps, which remained a mystery until David explained that it was used to pull your socks up (literally) after a hip operation.

4) The next event was a round of Kim's game with 32 common objects exposed for two minutes.

Paul got 22, Rachel 21 and Lawrence 19.

The prize was a book "Murder of a Stranger" by Anne Perry.

Rachel reported that the author of the book had, truly, committed a murder!

5) The second toast, to Dr. Watson, was given by Mac Belfer (herewith):

Over the years the perception of Dr. Watson has changed, in the early films he was portrayed almost as a bumbling dilettante whom Sherlock Holmes treated with amused condescending affection. Subsequently this changed to a Watson trying to emulate Holmes' outstanding ability of observation that misses nothing and the remarkable deductions from it.

Holmes uses the Socratic method so as to make it easier for Watson to use deductive reasoning in solving crimes, not always getting the result he hoped for. However, there emerges a Watson who is a loyal, courageous chronicler and friend whom Sherlock Holmes could always depend on. So, our toast to Dr. Watson.

6) Susan then visited us briefly, and then took several photographs of the group for the web site.

7) For Show & Tell, Paul had researched the etymology of the word "toast", which he traced back to an Indo-European language and that the word was used in several languages. The word also passed through Latin and Old French. (All this was accompanied by a distribution of some very nice apple & spice muffins, which were not toasted). Toast, in the sense of "toasted bread" goes back to Shakespearean times (Complete text can be found at the end of the minutes or you can visit <http://courses.lib.odu.edu/engl/jbing/444-joshua.html>)

Paul will check and see how many times the word "toast" occurs in the Canon.

8) Stanley then gave his toast to "The Woman" - which he extemporized so we have no copy for the record. - But essentially Stanley talked of the power of the woman in society, and how it is growing.

9) Next topic was the annual dinner. Last year was at the Montefiore Club - which is still available. Rachel offered to make the arrangements. Rachel read out the menu, which sounded wonderful, with a wide choice of items. Total cost will probably be about \$48 including taxes and "add-ons". Wine & Liquor is \$7.00, a shot, wine \$30.00 per bottle. Our dinner will be on a Saturday, January 17th. Separate invitation to follow under separate mail.

It was generally agreed that we should have a speaker. Maureen has a contact with a phone number that may provide a speaker from the police.

Wilfid also had a menu from the Le Vieux Porte - at \$30 plus extras.

HOT NEWS FLASH THE BANQUET WILL BE AT LE VIEUX PORT on St. Paul Street in Old Montreal. The great cost saving was the main reason for this decision. Additional factors were that there will be a more interesting and satisfying assortment of hors d'oeuvres and a broader choice of entrees (usually, beef, fish, or fowl). We are assured that our private dining hall at Le Vieux Port will be in a more private room upstairs, less likely to hear noise rising from the public dining area on the main floor. More information will be mailed to you. PLEASE TELL YOUR FRIENDS!!!)

10) Rachel had been to a book fair and she had found a book "Quotable Sherlock" in the basement of Alexis Nihon Plaza, which she and Wilfrid recommend.

11) Toast to Mrs. Hudson was delivered by Shigeko, saying what a fine influence Mrs. Hudson was in the household at 221B. (We had hoped to share the text of this fine toast with you in this newsletter. Unfortunately, we've misplaced it.)

12) The quiz followed, administered by David Kellett, based on "The Six Napoleons," and consisting of 20 multiple choice questions, with a possible score of 40 points. Any tie to be settled by the toss of a coin.

Winners: Paul - 28
 Rachel - 25
 Patrick, David, and Lawrence 23

Third toss of a coin was necessary to pick a winner for third place! Three sets of Christmas decorations were the prizes.

13) Paul, as winner, chose "The Musgrave Ritual" as the subject of the February quiz (February 5th, 2004).

14) Final event was a reading of Act 2, Scene 3 of *Tides of the Wight* with David Keller, Mac Belfer and Lawrence Reich reading the parts. Patrick also showed actual examples of the various stages of getting a book into publication.

- . The manuscript
- . The typescript
- . The corrected typescript
- . The galley proofs
- . The printed first edition
- . The play scripts

15) To the Society presented by David Dowse (herewith):

For close to 25 years men, women and children have come to warm up in big leather sofas and comfortable library arm chairs in anticipation of the opening bell to a Bimetallic Question meeting.

They have come with their treasures of books, pictures and games to share with all. They have debated and argued the most trivial facts of the Canon for the privilege of creating their own Sherlock Holmes quiz. Some have gone on picnics to Vermont, a visit to a train museum, an

RCMP crime lab, a murder mystery play, a pilgrimage to Reischenbach Falls in Switzerland and even a bookstore in Iceland as well as many other events and sites.

What memories, what friends, what good times to fill to the brim any old tin dispatch box.

A toast to our society, to the Bimetallic Question.

The meeting adjourned AT 9:00 P.M.

MRS. HUDSON'S CORNER:

In honour of the holiday season: **Chocolate Spoons**

These spoons will add a special touch to any dinner.

What You Need

Heavy plastic spoons
Milk chocolate
Dark Chocolate (Optional)
White chocolate
Chocolate sprinkles
Colored sugar
Wax paper
Cello wrap
Ribbon

How To Make It

In microwave, melt half of the white chocolate in one bowl. Melt half the milk chocolate in another bowl (of course you may melt the chocolate in a sauce pot on your stove top). Dip half of the spoons in the white chocolate and dip the other half in the milk chocolate. Dip them as far as the top of the spoon's bowl. Place on waxed paper and let set completely. When chocolate is set dip the white spoons in milk chocolate, dip milk chocolate spoons in white. Dip only half way up the bowl of the spoon to create a layered effect. Place back on waxed paper to begin setting. Let chocolate set only partially (about 5 min.) Then gently dip spoons in chocolate sprinkles or colored sugar. Wrap spoon in cello wrap and tie with ribbon. You can add a little tag (i.e. "stir me into your coffee").

New Officers for 2004

In an unprecedented rush to fill positions of stewardship in the BQ for 2004, we are delighted to offer you our list of officers for 2004:

Sovereign (President): Paul Billette (Super leader, very committed.)

Shilling (Vice-President): Stanley Baker (Amazingly adroit at introducing new members.)

Half-Sovereign (Secretary): Elliott Newman (Knows how to type.)

Florin (Treasurer): Wilfrid de Freitas (One of founders of BQ.)

Half-Crown (Mrs. Hudson): Rachel Alkallay (Hospitality personified.)

Tin Box (Archivist): David Dowse (Outgoing Sovereign, co-founder of BQ.)

Great news!
Vintner's position still open!

Due to the overwhelming and frantic response from members to fill these positions, we had a violent expression of interest by two members to fill the Sixpence (Vintner's) role. When the vacancy was announced, one member ran full-out from the east; the other tore out at breakneck speed from the west. They collided somewhere near Forrest Gump Plaza in Toledo, with the result that to this day neither can tell the difference between port and sherry. The good news for you is that applications are now being considered for the position of Sixpence (Vintner). Former occupiers of this position have been highly regarded. It's an excellent career track for opportunities to numerous to mention in and out of the BQ. If you're interested, call Wilfrid at (514) 935-9581.

MAUREEN'S MERRIMENT:

Winter Song

I only write of spring
When spring has sprung
The dreary time of winter
That flays the city
With heavy gusts of wind
Which whips the slush
Across the graying streets
Is not the place
To make a poet sing
Then I must go
To nearby hills
Where snow is white and soft
And trees with festive airs
Their winter jewelry display
There amidst
Snow's silvery spray
I write my winter song

M. Belfer

SANITY REGAINED: Answers to the crossword puzzle: 1. Garcia, 2. Surrey, 3. Dingle, 4. Ffolliott, 5. Henderson, 6. Forton, 7. Edmonton, 8. Purdey, 9. Hudson, 10. Charing, 11. Oxshott, 12. Joshua, 13. Murille, 14. Curzon, 15. Albemerle and 16. Walsling.

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 5th, 2004, at 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERSHIP

As a method of gauging diversity within the Sherlockian community, there is really nothing better than a completed membership form.

Members receive the Sherlock Holmes minutes, which are published every two months and contain a wide range of topics from reviews, criticism and news of the Society's activities.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Cheques for 2004 Membership (January-December) are now due; please forward your payment of \$18.00 to Wilfrid de Freitas at the address on the letterhead above

Joshua Podesta
Dr. Bing
English 444U
20 November 2000

Etymology Project: Toast

The most common usages of the word toast in American English today are as a noun meaning "bread browned by fire or electric heat" or as a verb which describes the act of browning bread (Oxford English Dictionary 173, hereafter referred to as OED). A toast can also describe the act of drinking to one's health, particularly admired (sic) lady (Funk 178) or, more loosely, to ascribe any meaning to the act of drinking, to drink to a person or thing or sentiment (OED 174). The English word toast can be traced back to the Indo-European word *ters, which meant dry. (Shipley 408). It is unclear whether *ters was used as an adjective, a verb, or both in the Indo-European language. From this root are also derived the words torrent, terrace, the British usage torsk, the Spanish tostada, the Norse cusk, and the Latin terra, which has found its way into English in a number of permutations (Shipley 408, 9).

The Latin word terra means "dry earth". This word is the basis for a large number of words that have come into the English language either directly from the Latin or through a variety of other languages. Terrestrial, territory, and terrain, as well as many others, are words that were borrowed from Latin. Mediterranean literally means "in the middle of the land". From the same source by way of the French language we have words like terrace (mounded earth) and tureen (originally an earthenware dish). (Shipley 409). Tostada is a Spanish word meaning "cooked tortilla", or "toasted corn flatbread."

The Indo-European word *ters seems to have come down to English by way of Latin and Old French. The first evidence of its progeny is in the Latin torrere, which meant "to dry up, roast, scorch" and "by metonymy (describing streams) boiling, rushing, roaring" (Shipley 408). It is interesting that a word that meant dry could come to represent a state of being for water, but the connection is through the inference of heat. A rushing stream does appear to boil. One of the forms of the past participle of the Latin torrere is tostum, and so the word begins to take its familiar form. Toast was borrowed from Latin into Old French, in which language it took the form of the verb toster which meant "to parch," and then into English (Funk 178).

It is unclear from its recorded usage if the modern connection with bread in the substantive form of the word was implicit in its meaning at this point, or exactly how and why the specification of bread came to pass. The OED lists the first recorded usage in English as a cookbook published around 1430, in which a dish is recommended to be "serue[d] forth alle hote as tostes" (173). Shakespeare made use of the word in 1598 in his play The Merry Wives of Windsor with the line "Go, fetch me a quart of Sacke, put a tost in't" (OED 174). Samuel Johnson's 1755 dictionary lists the noun toast as meaning "bread dried before the fire" while the verb form is listed as meaning "to dry or heat before the fire" (Vol. 2). So the first semantic shift of the word toast may have actually occurred in English with the specification of the material to be toasted.

The word toast in English has also come to represent the act taking a drink in the name of, and thereby honoring, a person, thing, sentiment, or endeavor (OED 174), or, as a noun, the object of such an act. It is generally agreed that the origin of this usage comes from the time of Shakespeare, when it became a custom to **"put a piece of spiced or toasted bread in certain drinks, notably wine or ale"** (Funk 178). An interesting story regarding a common toast was related to me by my friend Gary Parsons. When the glass was tipped up the sodden piece of toast would often fall and hit the drinker in the face; ergo "here's mud in your eye". The first recorded usage of toast in the context of drinking to one's health is listed in the OED as Congreve's play Way of the World in which the character Mirabell has this line; "That on no Account you encroach on the Mens prerogative, and presume to drink Healths, or toast Fellows" (174). While this excerpt seems to refer to drinking to the health of men, Johnson says that "[t]o toast is used commonly when women are named" (Vol.2). The origin of this specification is not clear, but Richard Steele gave one possibility in his recounting of a "gilded and doubtful anecdote" for the British Tatler (June 4, 1709). The story goes that a gentleman drank a measure to a beautiful woman's health in a drought he

obtained from her bath water. A friend observed that "he didn't like the liquor but would have the toast, that is, the beauty floating in it" (quoted in Funk 178). This clever comment obviously references one of the permutations of meaning for the word, which is described most succinctly by Johnson as "bread dried and put into liquor" (Vol. 2). This particular meaning for the substantive form of the word toast has faded into obscurity.

The word toast has experienced remarkably little semantic change in its journey from Indo-European to modern day. In contemporary Modern English toast can mean, as a verb, "to brown the surface of" with some external source of radiant heat, "to warm thoroughly" (as in "to toast one's feet by the fire") or to drink to the health or success of a person, institution, or endeavor. As a noun toast can mean a piece of bread which has been browned, or a person (sic) whose health or success has been drunk to (Webster's 1916).

Toast has also recently come to represent a convention in reggae music wherein the toaster speaks or shouts in accompaniment to the music, i.e.; "N. Kimberly in J. Collis Rock Primer 249; Much of the strength of 'Your Ace From Space, 'Versions Galore', etc. lies in the original rhythm which Roy toasts" (quoted in OED 175). The adjective toasty has come into use in the last 150 years and denotes a state of being "like toast" or, by implication, warm. Its first recorded usage is by Barrere and Leland in 1890 in their Dictionary of Slang II 375/I, which reads "[t]oasty is said of a picture painted in very warm tints" (OED 175). (The preceding is an interesting, and somewhat whimsical example of synesthesia.) In addition, I have encountered a colloquial usage wherein toasted refers to a state of being intoxicated with alcohol, marijuana, etc. This is presumably a reference to the warm, fuzzy feeling that such substances engender, or perhaps a euphemism for drunk or stoned. An interesting side note; a salamander is 1) a mythical lizard that is supposed to be able to live in fire, 2) an archaic device used for the toasting of bread, essentially an iron hearth spit, or 3) a toast peculiar to German students, the full expression of which is "einem einen salamander reiben". The *Daily News* on 12 Aug. 1868 reported on a ceremony "called 'rubbing a salamander.' Every student fills his glass. . .to the brim, and at the command of the toastmaster rubs it on the table, while the latter counts three" (OED).

In general it would appear that the meaning of the word toast has not really deviated from its original meaning of "dry" so much as it has been expanded into areas of semantically similar significance. The toast we drink is something of a stretch, but metaphors aside, the toast was dry before it ever went into the wine, and the glass is generally dry when we are done with the wine. It is interesting to see what we humans have done to and with words. I think these observations must lead to an understanding of languages, and the words which constitute them, as an expression of humanity which is intrinsically part of our nature, rather than mere tools we employ. Or perhaps I am short-changing tools?

Works Cited

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