



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
December 7, 2006

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, February 1st, 2007 at 6:30 p.m.at:
The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

“The Adventure of the Dying
Detective”
prepared by David Kellett

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, December 7th, 2006 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Stanley Baker, Mac Belfer, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Bruce Holmes, Tom Holmes, David Kellett, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner, Kathryn Radford, Cheryl Surkes, Marilyn Vandenstaay (guest).

Regrets: Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson.

CALL TO ORDER:

In calling the meeting to order, outgoing Sovereign Paul Billette pointed out that we were graced with not one Holmes, but two: Tom and Bruce. In fact, there were three Holmeses, since Sherlock was every bit as much with us as ever, although on this particular evening, he was a trifle quiet, no doubt somewhat immersed in and suffused by his solution and ruing the absence of a stimulating case.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Show & Tell, Smith & Wesson, Stiller & Meara, etc.):

- 1) **The king sittes in Dumferling town
drinking his blud-red wyne,
saying: "Where, o where will I finde a venue guid
to have this banquet of myne?"**

Paul Billette broached (not poached) the subject of where to hold our annual banquet. The back-and-forth debate on this issue was nowhere near the heart-stopping cliff-hangers of previous years, and a vote of 7-5 in favor of the Montefiore Club vastly outdistanced those preferring *Le Vieux Port*. Thus, we will now celebrate TWGCD's 153rd birthday in that bastion of Victorian (or thereabouts) elegance on mid-to-lower Guy Street. It's wonderful to see democracy in action as the free vote swung the Bimetallic appetites in the direction of the Montefiore Club for only the second time in the Question's history. Our special guest speaker will be CJAD radio's Dan Laxer, a multi-talented personality, who will speak on – um – uh – you know, ah – an important, vital, and stimulating topic which we are certain you won't want to miss.

Date: Saturday, January 20, 2007

Place: The Montefiore Club

1195 Guy Street (below Ste. Catherine)

Time: Drinks at 6:00 p.m. (cash bar)

Dinner at 7 p.m.

Menu: Amazing, Choices Galore

Cost: \$43.00 per person, includes taxes & gratuities

Invitations were sent to our general membership over the Christmas-New Year holiday season. If you have not received yours, please note:

- 1. Kindly reserve and pay before January 17th.
- 2. Call to reserve
- 3. Send cheques to:

Mr. Wilfrid de Freitas, 369 Kitchener Avenue, Westmount, QC H3Z 2G1

Tel: (514) 935-9581

- 2) **First Toast – To the Master**
By Wilfrid de Freitas
It was brief yet memorable.
- 3) **What sole is this that hath floundered
from its perch
to skate on promontories high
and send eely shivers
through the booming bass
of the briny choir?**

Patrick Campbell shared flyers from the Bootmakers Club in Toronto. Patrick noted that they are the biggest Sherlockian group in Canada and will soon be hosting a public viewing of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce.

Patrick also passed around his latest book, on the history of Canadian Vickers.

- 4) **He was a man, take him for all in all.
We shall not look upon his like again.**

Cheryl Surkes reported on the attendance on Sunday, October 27, of a number of Bimetallic members at the unveiling of the gravestone of our late, beloved friend, Colin Semel. Cheryl mentioned that she had had a mystical experience on leaving the cemetery. She was listening to CBC-1 on her car radio. The program was featuring a discussion with Peggy Pardue, curator of the Holmes collection at the downtown Toronto library. This was a program involving Christopher Thomas and the Sherlock Holmes symposium in Toronto. On hearing the program, Cheryl felt that Colin was saying thank you for coming to his unveiling.

You see, folks? This is what we're talking about. This isn't just coincidence. It's synchronicity at the very least. The Bimetallic Question not only brings you important events from his world. If you attend regularly, we can help open you up to – you know – the other stuff. Heavy, yet light. Who says we don't have friends in high places? I don't know about you, but this lowly scribe would be afraid not to attend future meetings of the BmQ. So book now and avoid eternal – you know!

Cheryl, thank you for sharing. This was amazing!

For more on the radio program you missed, log on to:
www.cbc.ca/thesundayedition/audio/html

- 5) **The sun goes down and over all
these barren reaches by the tide
such unelusive glories fall.
I almost dream they yet will bide
until the coming of the tide.**

This tidbit from "Low tide on Grand Pré" by Bliss Carman, and written late-19th century, is the only quote that comes to mind from the Maritime provinces, and will re-introduce a former Bimetallican, Bruce Holmes, who now lives and thrives in Halifax, NS. Forget that Grand Pré is somewhere in the vicinity of the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick, and that the quote is à propos nothing. Consider it our attempt to extend a cultural hand between "the land God gave to Cain" and the fecund cultural context and imagination of the Victorian England which directed Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to create TWGCD.

Bruce Holmes's visits to Montreal are all too rare, and so we were delighted to have him join us at this BmQ meeting. Bruce regaled us with a gift of 10 cards he had bought at a dollar store, all showing the same baby sporting the same deerstalker hat and holding the same magnifying glass in an identical pose.

Bruce also showed us a sheet with postage stamps and Sherlockian stories describing each stamp. He had assembled these and has demonstrated, through their presentation, a deep understanding and abiding love of the canon. Really, they are quite enriching to see!

Bruce talked about the Sherlockian group in Halifax. He has introduced quizzes at their meetings. They meet at members' homes on Sundays, but they do not have toasts. He is pleased to say that the members are quite keen about things Sherlockian. May we infer that this is the most easterly Sherlockian group in the New World?

- 6) **I'm late, I'm late
for a very important date.
No time to say Hello, Good-bye.
I'm late. I'm late. I'm late.**

Erica Penner began a report on her recent visit to the Sherlockian symposium in Toronto.

Kathryn Radford complemented the information by discussing interesting presentations and describing the Sherlockian exhibits and a trip that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made to North America, including Toronto. Queen Victoria attended the symposium, although apparently without Albert. Rumor has it he has gone underground. Erica took a tour that visited the places SACD had been to in Toronto. The film attraction at the symposium was the movie *Murder by Decree*, starring Christopher Plummer. He did not attempt to sing.

- 7) **I's the bi bye boy**

David Kellett pointed out the law of Newfoundland which reads:

"If it's free, you want it."

Your lowly scribe had been napping as usual before this important citation was imparted and therefore is unable to relate the context in which it was delivered. Furthermore, items of interest and import were flying so thick and fast across our segmented oak table that said scribe had to speed to catch up to the next salient points.

One more reason not to miss any meetings of the BmQ. You never know.

- 8) **Second Toast – To Doctor Watson**

By Mac Belfer

Incredibly succinct.

- 9) **I fell into a burning ring of fire.
I went down, down, down
and the flames went higher.
And it burns, burns, burns,
the ring of fire,
the ring of fire.**

Paul Billette had us play a Kim's Game with matchbooks from Montreal and around the world. The model of the Kim's game had been introduced to our society by David Dowse. It owes its name to Kim, the young protagonist from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. We suspect that in the transmission of guidance and action through literature and child development, Lord Baden Powell and his minions may have had a hand in bringing this game to the world. Imagine if you will, hordes of wolf cub masters of all nationalities wondering what in the world to do with their little charges during those weekly pack meetings. *Ergo*, the birth of Kim's Game whose objective is to remember as many objects as possible that have been spread out on a table, cave floor, Persian carpet, sheepskin, or cabinet maker's bench, by studying them for a specified period of time. The articles are then covered over. The person who remembers the most items wins.

Kathryn Radford remembered 14 different matchbook covers and therefore won the game.

Your scribe cannot leave this before offering a name change to Kim's Game. Really, it should have been called "Kipling" all along. You will notice we have doubled the "p" in "Kipling," not to suggest anything disrespectful; rather, we would have liked to perpetuate our respect for the author himself and universalize his significance by turning him into a verb, and everyday part of speech as in, "I kippled yesterday."

Easily conjugated, (I kipple, you kipple, he/she/it kipples, etc.) the verb easily lends itself to compound tenses such as "I should have kippled (when I überdørfed instead)."

Such sleights of tongue are easier than they seem, particularly when we remember that flesh is the word made real.

At the same time, linguists would readily agree that "to kipple" smoothly translates into a number of languages, as in:

Je kipple

I-ay ipple-kay

א נ י כ י פ ע י ל

(transliterated from the Hebrew as: *ahnee keepehlee*)

What act of linguistic cruelty and *gaucherie* would it be to relegate the great author to gerundial status alone (as in "kippling"), when through an act of painless generosity and syntactic fluidity on our part, he could become the whole verb?

10) **Quiz – Results**

“The Adventure of the Three Students” prepared by Carol Abramson in an inventive crossword format.

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	David Kellett	49	a deerstalker
2.	Wilfrid de Freitas	46	a book: <i>The Spy's Guide</i> (to office espionage)
3.	Bruce Holmes	42	hearty congratulations and not a little glory

The next quiz will be based on “The Adventure of the Dying Detective,” Prepared by David Kellett.

11) **Third Toast – To Mrs. Hudson**

By Bruce Holmes

A model of conciseness:

What oft was thought

But ne'er so well expressed.

12) **Homonyms like Holmes rarely drop in on our homes.**

The BmQ comes out to meet

and share the feast of convivial meat.

Patrick Campbell related that the most recent (Michaelmas) issue of *Canadian Holmes* hosted a contest in which people were invited to send in an outline of a crime that was not in the canon. We stabbed (“stabbed” – get it?) at it and found it quite homicidally challenging. Even in this day and age of computers, high finance, and fancy corporate accounting malpractice, it was difficult to identify a category of crime that has not been covered in the canon. After all, a fraud is a fraud. You do believe me, don't you? I need you to believe me. Look. Lend me five bucks today. I'll give it back to you tomorrow and show you how to turn into a hundred with futures in Norne Industries. Are we good, or what?

13) **Fourth Toast – To the Society**

By Marilyn Vandenstaay

Every word to the point.

- 14) **There was a green branch hung with many a bell
When her own people ruled this tragic Eire;
And from its murmuring greenness; calm of Faery,
A Druid kindness on all hearers fell.**
*From "The Dedication to a book of Stories selected
from the Irish Novelists"
by William Butler Yeats*
Wilfrid de Freitas announced that our society's commemorative volume is now sold out. Does this mean that we are immortal? Wow.
Wilfrid read an excerpt from *The Secret House*.

- 15) **th? Toast – To Irene Adler**
By ??
So succinct, your lowly scribe missed it.

- 16) **Litotes**
Without warning, David Kellett introduced this word at the meeting. It was quite likely the very first time we were exposed to it as a group and we were all unprepared. This lowly scribe felt defensive, for one. **A litotes? Several litotes?** Truly, we needed time to prepare. Our initial impulse was to define "litotes" as illuminated umbrellas or things that don't weigh much and are easily carried about. The web definition, however, argues this point somewhat sententiously, we feel, and certainly a little too smugly, redeeming itself only partially with the reference to Monty Python:

Litotes

"The inverse of hyperbole*, this is a calculated understatement. For example, when the Black Knight in Monty Python's *Search for the Holy Grail* has a limb lobbed off, he remarks, 'It's just a minor flesh wound.'"

* hyperbole = literary exaggeration, often evocative of imagery (this reference is from your lowly scribe trying to be helpful).

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, 2007, at 6:30 p.m.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org

Sherlock Holmes, CSI: Miami, and the current state of Forensic Medicine

Is there one red-blooded male who would not lie down in line to be carved up by the curvaceous Khandi Alexander (the knockout crime pathologist Dr. Alexx Woods) of CSI: Miami? This forensics-based TV detective show may have evolved into an art form the various foot-plantings, modeling poses, 7/8ths profiles, shoulder slumps, whispered one-liners that would never survive on the street, and strictly-business hard-*derrière*d men and women with curves and muscles who make some or most viewers want to grovel happily. Oh, the glamour of the cadaver! The sensuousness of the cool, shiny, juice-diverting stainless-steel cutting table! The suggestiveness of those jars in which our inner things float! Love that neat computer vector program that shows how a car traveling an eastbound thirty m.p.h. (we're in the U.S.) when struck by on the driver's door by a Hummer going three kazillion m.p.h. (same planet) from the north (yes, the compass points match!) will crush, rend, mutilate, throw, and bruise the occupants in a predictable spatter pattern over a finite number of X and Y axes and grids with predictable damage.

We love how what's-his-name with the red hair and really narrow shoulders, but resonant voice has thrown his team together, is in perfect control, occasionally allows emotion through, and truly wants to make us safe, has become a household word. While forensic medicine provides an ever-sharper view of the hindsight leading up to death under questionable circumstances, it also helps to expand the smorgasbord of the murder-mystery thriller. Even better, its television brainchild popularizes – at the cost of trivializing – the genre reflected in the intense and excellent plot and character constructions of Jeffrey Deaver and his brilliant Lincoln Rhyme novels.

The origin of the science is in itself a whodunit of sorts. In *The Science of Sherlock Holmes: From Baskerville Hall to the Valley of Fear, The Real Forensics Behind the Great Detective's Greatest Cases* (E.J. Wagner, ISBN: 978-0-471-64879-6, \$31.99 in Canada), a case can be made for popularizing the notion of forensics. Here's what various mystery buffs have to say about how Ms Wagner handles Holmes and his influence, taken from the book's official web site:

"Holmes is, first, a great detective, but he has also proven to be a great scientist, whether dabbling with poisons, tobacco ash, or tire marks. Wagner explores this fascinating aspect of his career by showing how his investigations were grounded in the cutting-edge science of his day, especially the emerging field of forensics.... Utterly compelling."
—Otto Penzler, member of the Baker Street Irregulars, proprietor of The Mysterious Bookshop (and publisher of the Mysterious Press – added by Lowly Scribe)

"E. J. Wagner demonstrates that without the work of Sherlock Holmes and his contemporaries, the CSI teams would be twiddling their collective thumbs. Her accounts of Victorian crimes make Watson's tales pale! Highly recommended for students of the Master Detective."
—Leslie S. Klinger, Editor, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*

"In this thrilling book, E. J. Wagner has combined her considerable strengths in three disciplines to produce a work as compelling and blood-curdling as the best commercial fiction. This is CSI in foggy old London Town. Chilling, grim fun."
—John Westermann, author of *Exit Wounds and Sweet Deal*

"I am recommending this delightful work to all of my fellow forensic scientists.... Bravo, Ms. Wagner!"
—John Houde, author of *Crime Lab: A Guide for Nonscientists*

"A fabulously interesting read. The book traces the birth of the forensic sciences to the ingenuity of Sherlock Holmes. A wonderful blend of history, mystery, and whodunit."
—Andre Moenssens, Douglas Stripp Professor of Law Emeritus, University of Missouri at Kansas City, and coauthor of *Scientific Evidence in Civil and Criminal Cases*