

Minutes of the meeting of The Bimetallic Question August 2nd, 2012

Date of next meeting

Thursday, October 4th, at 6:30 p.m. at:
The Westmount Public Library (Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Westmount, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

“The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans”, prepared by
Wilfrid de Freitas

Minutes of the meeting of THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, August 2nd, 2012 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Patrick Campbell, Louise Corda, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Lars Lovkvist, Arlene Scher, plus the following guests: Tash Akkerman, Kayla Piecaitis, and Xiao Wang

Regrets: Elliott Newman, Joan O’Malley, Erica Penner, Nancy Walkling, Ron Zilman

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order promptly at 6:30 by Acting Sovereign David Dowse.

Dear Gentle Readers,

Our dedicated and hard-working creative wizard, Lowly Scribe Elliott Newman, is taking some rare time off this month, and it will also be noted that David Dowse our Sub Scribe chaired the August meeting. This means that these minutes are being brought to you by lower than lower than low, Replacement Sub Scribe Susan Fitch, who sends out humble apologies for any errors or omissions.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Jellyfish and Cliffhanger, Blackbirds and *Barcarole*, Greyhounds and Sonnets.)

1. When the Name Does Not Fit the Man

The evening began with David Dowse posing these questions to all seated around the table: “Sherlockians – When I link the name of James and the word evil together what personage comes immediately to mind? James Holmes. Shall we start the world wide petition to demand that the courts force this monster to change his last name?” Deeply moved, we all sat for a few moments in silence, paying tribute to the victims of this summer’s horrific mass-shooting in an American movie theatre, perpetrated by the above accused.

2. Returning Friends and a Brand New Face

We were delighted to see two of our new friends from the McGill Sherlockians club, Tash Akkerman and Kayla Piecaitis, joining us once again.

In addition, we welcomed enthusiastically a brand new first-time guest, Xiao Wang, who told us how he first became acquainted with Sherlock Holmes reading the Canon in his native China. This led Wilfrid to recall how David had once presented him with a gift of a Chinese translation of the Canon, which Wilfrid promises to bring to the next meeting to show us. In turn, David offered Xiao a friendly challenge, to research any and all references to China in the Canon, and found a Montreal Chinese Sherlock Holmes society named after said reference.

3. First Toast - To The Master

by Elliott Newman, read in absentia by Roger Burrows

It was not until the launching of Robert Downey Jr. as Sherlock Holmes that we might have become aware that our Jeremy Brett’s avatar was a super hero. Not that Sherlock Holmes hadn’t been before, of course, but making it to the giant screen where he could leap from buildings, and perform improbably arduous feats now made it official.

Super Herodom brings with it certain privileges, most notably that your face may appear on plastic soda cups in theatres, at least until you are relegated to a DVD for rental, and then the sale bin. On posters, your romantically storm-tossed hair, furrowed brow, and dark, troubled eyes are set against a sky of menace where evil lurks in the thunderclouds – evil that you will obviously tame and bring to heel.

Sherlock, the Master, has been commoditized in a genteel, non-excessive way. Certainly, we have seen isolated evidence of this at our meetings in the form of images on postage stamps, and the occasional chalk or porcelain head, commemorative smoking pipes, and such. However, no one has yet come out with a deerstalker hat emblazoned with a Sherlockian logo, or an Inverness cloak emblazoned with a signature that cannot be mistaken for Polo, Tommy Hilfiger, or Yves St. Laurent. Although commoditized largely

through literary and communications media – books, illustrated literature, pastiche offerings, CD's, DVD's, and movie-related paraphernalia, Sherlock has not leapt to the heights of a Spiderman, with children's toys, Halloween costumes, and dozens, if not hundreds of other items at the forefront of licensing agreements and mass commercialization on every continent.

Why not? Because he is the Master. And no one messes with the Master!

To the Master!

4. Patrick Campbell's *Tides of the Wight* in Production

Replacement Sub Scribe yours truly, Susan Fitch, handed out *Tides of the Wight* play scripts to three cast members who weren't at our June meeting when the cast list was first announced: Wilfrid de Freitas playing Inspector Pragnell (like Lestrade but a better detective); Raf Jans playing smuggler Robert Beauchamp (a small but powerful role); and Paul Billette as the Reverend Ernest Keed (a meaty role confronting the supernatural).

Carol Abramson, Tash Akkerman, Rachel Alkallay, Patrick Campbell, Wilfrid de Freitas, Chris Herten-Greaven, and Kayla Piecaitis generously volunteered to bring a variety of mouth-watering delicacies for our refreshments table at the play reading.

I made a special request that due to the Victorians' championing of pioneering legislation protecting animals, and their founding of the first successful animal humane societies, that we "pass the hat", collect a voluntary donation at our play reading, in support of The League of Extraordinary Greyhounds, or "T-Legs", for short: An NDG-based group dedicated to finding loving homes in the Montreal area for retired racing greyhounds. *Tides of the Wight* author Patrick Campbell proposed a motion to adopt this suggestion, which was seconded by Chris Herten-Greaven. All votes were in favour, and none opposed.

Due to time constraints, we will be reading a slightly abridged version of the play. Most importantly, *A PLAY NEEDS AN AUDIENCE!!!* Please join us for:

Tides of the Wight

by Patrick Campbell M.Bt.

Thursday, September 20th. Performance starts promptly at 6:30pm.

Starring: Elliott Newman as *Sherlock Holmes* and David Dowse as *Dr. Watson*; with Carol Abramson, Tash Akkerman, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Wilfrid de Freitas, Ann Elbourne, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Kayla Piecaitis, and Karl Raudsepp.

Le Centre Greene/The Greene Centre
1090 Greene Avenue (below Dorchester)
Westmount, QC

Come early for the best seats!
Admission free; voluntary donation requested.

5. Kind Hearts and Computer Coronets

David Dowse reported that two important posts on our society's board will be opening up at the end of this year when Ron Zilman completes his two-year term as Sovereign, and Roger and Marie Burrows step down after what will be four years in their shared position.

Marie read for us a document she created detailing a wide range of "Bimetallic Question General Secretarial Duties", under the headings of: "Webmaster; Meeting Minutes; Annual Dinner; and Other Duties as Required". Everyone present thanked Roger and Marie for all their hard work, computer hours, and exemplary service, with a warm extended round of applause.

Following discussion, David asked our McGill Sherlock Holmes club friends if one of them might consider stepping into Roger and Marie's shoes at the end of the year, noting this would not only help us but be a way to learn "at the centre of the action" how a long-established Sherlock Holmes society functions. Tash Akkerman most graciously and kindly agreed to consider volunteering, much to the clear gratitude of all members present.

6. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by Roger Burrows

Dr. Watson has many excellent qualities that are frequently noted: tenacity, discretion, common sense, loyalty, integrity, courage, unselfishness. But one other quality stands out from the stories: his modesty. He constantly compares himself to Holmes, to his own disadvantage. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he faithfully reports his bewilderment when Holmes deduces some fact about him. In *The Bruce-Partington Plans*, he says "I had none of [Holmes's] power of detachment"...Again in *The Hound*, he says "I am reckoned fleet of foot, but [Holmes] outpaced me". And when he quotes his own words, they are frequently those of puzzlement, or amazement at Holmes's reasoning: "Oh, what an ass I have been!" (*The Reigate Squires*); "I must confess that I am out of my depths." (*The Stockbroker's Clerk*)

But his behaviour belies this air of incompetence. In *The Reigate Squires*, Holmes upsets a bowl of oranges and blames Watson. He plays along with this ruse with no prior notice, resulting in the apprehension of the murderers. In *The Hound*, Holmes remarks that Watson's interview with Laura Lyons "has cleared the situation very much." And in *The Retired Colourman*, Holmes says, with respect to Watson's investigations, that "No one else would have done better."

Please raise your glasses to the modest and unassuming Dr. Watson!

7. Elegance Upon Elegance

Carol Abramson showed us beautiful photos of the June 10th Victorian Tea she and her husband Jacob hosted for members in their Dollard home. Victorian dress was much in evidence, including that of a maid attired in black and white who greeted guests at the door. Best costume? Who was that gentleman in kilt, tam-o'-shanter, and red wig worthy of the *Red-headed League* candidates? Jack Anderson! This occasion was the second time that Carol has treated us to a tea comprised of her elegant-to-the-eye, and delectable-to-the-taste home-baked cookies, cakes, and squares.

8. Don't Be Concerned About Shelf Space

Wilfrid de Freitas showed us *The Sherlockian Triviality Index* by Sheldon Wesson, published by The Press of Ward Schori, Evanston, Illinois, 1988. This book in miniature

measures approximately 6 by 5.5cms, and was originally a paper delivered to a meeting of The Red Circle, a scion of The Baker Street Irregulars.

9. “Who shot J.R.?” Has Become “What saved Sherlock?”

Arlene Scher alerted us to an intriguing Maclean’s Magazine article on BBC *Sherlock’s* second season, “cliff-hanger from hell” final episode. Read it at:

<http://www2.macleans.ca/2012/05/28/sherlocks-cliffhanger-has-viewers-stumped/>

10. Don’t Skip the Comics

David Dowse noted an aquatic Sherlockian reference in Jan Eliot’s comic strip, *Stone Soup*: “A Lion’s Mane jellyfish is 8 feet across with tentacles 150 feet long”, daughter delightedly informs a parent. “Elementary! I read about it in a Sherlock Holmes murder mystery”, her Dad cheerfully replies. “A jellyfish murdered someone?!” daughter asks, aghast, and decides not to order one on eBay for the family aquarium after all.

11. We Love Lewis and CBS Loves Lucy

We discussed a recent Gazette TV column shown to us by David Dowse, lauding *Inspector Lewis* as representing the best of TV drama, but dismissing the concept of CBS’s upcoming fall series *Elementary* as simply using the Sherlock Holmes Canon for commercial purposes (it will be set in present-day New York and star Lucy Liu as Dr. Watson). Tash Akkerman disagreed. She is looking forward to viewing *Elementary* and reports Johnny Lee Miller will play Holmes. Tash also knows an excellent Russian TV Holmes series: a possible film night for us!

12. All About Downton Abbey

David Dowse brought in for our perusal *The World of Downton Abbey* by Jessica Fellowes. Published by St. Martin’s Press, New York, 2011. Everything about this comprehensive, behind the scenes “secrets and history” of the *Masterpiece* TV series is exquisite, and it belongs on the must-have book list for all enthusiasts.

13. Blackbird, black bird

Tash Akkerman handed around the table a beautiful pendant necklace she had designed and crafted herself, showing the image of a black bird perched on a crown. Replacement Sub Scribe contacted Tash after the meeting to check if the bird was a raven? No, a magpie, she replied. It was inspired by the BBC *Sherlock* series, specifically the *Reichenbach Fall* episode, in which Holmes receives letters with a wax seal of a magpie. Aha! The amateur ornithologist detective in me is delighted!

14. Best of Britain Includes P.D. James’s Pemberley

P.D. James’s newest mystery novel, *Death Comes to Pemberley* was reviewed by David Dowse as “excellently done...very well written”, with the mystery being satisfyingly “well-solved”. Being both a mystery and a sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*, this sounds fascinating.

15. Get a Head Start On Your Own Pastiche!

As *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger* opens (you will remember that this was the quiz story for the June meeting), Watson makes tantalizing reference to one of Holmes's unpublished cases involving, "the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant". Patrick Campbell launched a competition at the June meeting, which is still open, inviting us to submit our own original story ideas in which we envision Sherlock Holmes solving the above case from beginning to end.

To enter the competition for best story idea, simply write up your plot summary in 300 words or less (about half a page) and email it to Maureen Anderson at: maureenanderson@videotron.ca. Maureen will in turn forward it anonymously to contest judge Roger Burrows, ensuring complete impartiality in deciding a winner. The result of the contest will be announced at our December meeting, and Patrick is donating a (mysteriously unnamed) prize of a splendid "book by a Canadian author", which he will present to the winner. Best of luck to all entrants!

16. From Out of the Depths

In reference to his role of contest judge, Roger has unearthed from the depths of his Sherlockian home library a published example of a "politician, lighthouse, and trained cormorant" pastiche by June Thomson entitled, *The Case of the Abandoned Lighthouse*, contained in her 1990 short story collection, *The Secret Files of Sherlock Holmes*.

17. Third Toast – To the Woman

by Marie Burrows

Mention the name Irene Adler and Watson's famous words "to Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman" cross the mind with breathtaking speed. At the same time, the title of the adventure in which Adler appears captures our imagination. A Scandal, you say? In Bohemia? – perhaps a place where one can behave unconventionally in a community of free spirits outside the confines of respectable society.

Mention the name Irene Adler and you may not remember that *A Scandal in Bohemia* is set in 1888. The late 1880's were the early years of "the New Woman", the proto-feminist who challenged men in exclusively masculine domains.

When Holmes encounters Adler at her home, we are not immediately aware of her proto-feminist leanings. Thinking that her house may be on fire, she loses her cool, reveals the location of the photograph and rushes from the scene.

But possessing a "soul of steel" and "the mind of the most resolute of men", Irene Adler quickly displays the proto-feminist qualities we remember her for. She dresses in clothing considered strictly masculine for the times and then she walks past the home of Sherlock Holmes alone and late at night, pausing to address him as he fumbles for his house keys.

Later on that night, Adler pens that famous letter to Sherlock Holmes. She details how she has come to beat the Master at his own game. The detective world of the late 19th century may have been the exclusive domain of men but Adler clearly demonstrated that she could compete with the best of them.

Please raise your glasses to toast Irene Adler, an early proto-feminist, but more famously known as "*the* woman".

18. First You, Then Me, Then You: A Sharing of Silk

Carol Abramson brought in her copy of *The House of Silk* by Anthony Horowitz that she had won at last January's annual dinner, to loan out to any of us who would also like to read it. David Dowse is borrowing it first, then Chris Herten-Greaven will be next...then, how about you?

19. Quiz - Results

Story: *The Mazarin Stone*, prepared by Carol Abramson.

Possible total: 80 points

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	
1.	Wilfrid de Freitas	71	DVD: Arthur Wontner as Holmes
2.	Raf Jans	65	DVD: <i>The Many Faces of Sherlock Holmes</i>
3.	Tash Akkerman	52	DVD: Ron Howard as Holmes

The next quiz, based on *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, will be prepared by Wilfrid de Freitas.

20. Notes on the Quiz

Following the quiz we were treated to a brief sampling of *Hoffman's Barcarole* (played on Wilfrid's tablet computer), the music Holmes pretended to be playing on his violin in *The Mazarin Stone*. To quote Holmes, "...these modern gramophones are a remarkable invention." Wilfrid claimed that in the over thirty years of his participation in the quizzes that this was only the second or third time he had actually won. Co-founder and close friend David Dowse remarked that it was just a coincidence that he had marked Wilfrid's paper on each of these occasions ...

21. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Chris Herten-Greaven

[Editorial note: At our June meeting Chris Herten-Greaven filled in and volunteered an impromptu toast to Mrs. Hudson, promising to formally write it up for us for our August meeting, along with a second brand new toast to our favourite landlady on the subject of the often overlooked *Mr. Hudson*. Here then is a Hudsonian *Double-Double* of toasts from Chris.]

Where would Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson have been without the versatile and ever-adaptable Mrs. Hudson? How would they have fared without her inexhaustible and ever-available supplies from her kitchen and the larder to their table, at any time of the day or night? Who among Sherlockians world-wide has ever given a thought to her origins, her relations, her husband(s)? (cf. Dr. Watson and his wife/wives) Yet she played a quintessential part in the functioning of 221B Baker Street, and therefore must have been a presence, although perhaps a lesser one during those eventful years. Without offense to modesty, and having done a bit of sleuthing recently on my own, I will give a report of my findings at our August meeting. In the meanwhile I ask you to raise your glasses to the elusive and ephemeral Mrs. Hudson.

The Elusive Mr. Hudson

My reading and investigation, some of which is long-standing, has turned up the name of William Henry Hudson (1841-1922), in Spanish: Guillermo Enrique, who was the youngest of 6 children of Daniel and Caroline Hudson, missionaries from England who emigrated to

Maine, and thence to Buenos Aires, where they settled during the 1830's in a place south of the city nowadays called Bernal. They bought, or were granted land, which they worked for some years; it was called 25 ombues, because there were 25 such trees in a line on their property. As a youngster William was rather frail in health, but well enough to travel extensively, on foot or horseback in and around the River Plate area, making extensive notes, sketches, and other records. In 1874, moved by a desire (a whim?) to visit the land of his father's father, he boarded the Ebro to Southampton, a journey of some 6 weeks, never to return.

After arriving he lived, apparently, in obscure poverty till he befriended one Emily Wingrave, a former concert singer, whom he married in 1876. She managed or catered to two failing boarding houses, and was, unfortunately, 15 to 20 years his senior and rather inept in her duties, because Hudson's life of poverty continued for some time, living in the Bayswater area of London. Eventually she became owner of yet another boarding house, where they both lived. He, being some 6' tall lived in a rather garret-like room in the attic. However, he seems to have found solace with one Margaret Brooke, the Ranee of Sarawak, who was quite well-to-do, and also one Linda Gardiner, and seems to have resided for a time in Burbage, though unclear quite when.

So, we know there was a Mr. Hudson, a well-established figure both among 20th century English authors (cf. Back-to-nature movement), and among the authors of L.O.L.A. The dates coincide quite closely with the period before, during and after the creation of Sherlock Holmes. Did A.C.D. seek to memorialize this woman, whose path he may have crossed, or who may have come to his attention because of her common sense, and her ability to keep house. He may have decided to erase any reference to a Mr. Hudson, being in his mind a somewhat suspect foreigner, or even a parvenu. Hudson did, nevertheless become a British citizen in 1900, and was awarded a small pension on the recommendation of Sir Edward Grey.

In closing, we can prove that there was a Mr. Hudson who fits the picture quite well. I leave it to you, to join the dots and accept (or not), the connection to the Mrs. Hudson created by A.C.D.

In the meantime, I ask you to raise your glasses to the formidable Mrs. Hudson.

[Editorial note: Roger Burrows and others expressed the hope that Chris's research will be published in the appropriate venues, where it can gain the attention of Sherlockian scholars worldwide. A 1918 photo of William Henry Hudson can be viewed at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hudson_William_Henry.jpg]

22. To Boldly Go Where We Haven't Gone Before

Tash Akkerman volunteered to toast Professor James Moriarty at our next meeting. Don't miss this unique (for our Society) event!

23. There Are Sonnets, and Then There Are Sonnets

Patrick Campbell told us that when he decided to write a toast to the Society in sonnet form, he first researched this poetic form as it was practiced in different countries, such as in Italy from the 1200's to 1600's. There are intricacies to explore here, as different countries used different rhyme schemes and different numbers of lines. Patrick finally settled on England and Shakespeare's favoured model for the sonnet, with the following impressive result.

24. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by Patrick Campbell

A Sonnet to the Society

Let me only to our Society be true,
admit impediments, hoping all the while
to lay before our oh so motley crew
a glimpse of truth, or failing that a smile.

Oh no. it is an ever fix'ed rule,
That to the Canon all of us be true.
It is our single aim, how 'ere so cruel,
To plumb its depths and see it all anew.

'Tis thus we spend an evening with our friends,
eliciting the truth from every tale,
assessing clues on which the plot depends,
solving the case that sends the thief to jail.

The game's afoot for all who wish to play,
so welcome all who come to join the fray.

To the Society!

25. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

To the Master	-	Raf Jans
To Dr. Watson	-	Carol Abramson
To the Woman	-	Tash Akkerman or Kayla Piecaitis
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Maureen Anderson
To the Society	-	Rachel Alkallay

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, October 4th, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. Bring a friend.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to:

<http://www.bimetallicquestion.org>