

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
June 5, 2014

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, **August 7th, 2014**
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
Three Students”**
prepared by
Rachel Alkallay

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, June 5th, 2014 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Patrick Campbell, David Dowse, Chris Herten-Greaven, Anne Millar, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner, Arlene Scher, Bruno Paul Stenson, Ronnie Zilman

Guests: Kristin Franseen

Regrets: Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Wilfrid deFreitas, Tash St. Just

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:40 by Sovereign Chris Herten-Greaven.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Ointment and Poultice, Balm and Gilead, Poison and Ivy)

1. Skeletons in (and out of) the Closet

We joined in a hearty thank-you to Bruno Paul Stenson regarding his hosting of our recent trip to the Redpath Museum. We also apologized for the confusion of dates in the planning of the excursion. The crowd from our society totaled 12 intrepid individuals, the bravest of which were Raf Janz’s three kids. Chris Herten-Greaven announced that he had enjoyed the visit so much that he will bring his grandchildren to tour it when they visit in the summer. In commenting about the absence of some amenities at the museum (they do have flush toilets), Bruno pointed

to the absence of any elevator, indicating that the building had been erected around the time elevators were being invented. He also kindly brought a few books and pamphlets on fossils for us to peruse and consider buying. No members of the society were added to the natural history collection, and no sinister professorial figures were spied lurking in the last 19th century auditorium in Canada.

2. Further Amusement

Having completed her first book on Montreal Museums, Rachel Alkallay asked our assistance in ferreting out names of little-known museums in the Montreal area which most people would not know about. She is presently at work on volumes two and three as part of her series on the subject. If you are successful in having your suggestion accepted, you might see your name in print which would elevate you to godly status and a position of privilege in our society.

3. Apropos

If you have never met Chris Herten-Greaven, you are in for a treat. How many people do you know of spend their lives peering into people's open mouths, defying them to speak, knowing full well that nothing comprehensible will come out? With two people and a dental assistant in the room, it falls upon the dentist to provide the verbal asides, levity, dramatic highs and lows, a touch of the comedic, exposition on various levels, word paintings, character insights, historical asides, as well as local and world news in a sort of non-stop flow which would dazzle the most blasé patient whose mind at the moment is ninety-eight percent nitrous oxide. At our meeting, Chris's palette of informational color ranged across the Atlantic from Germany and Great Britain to South America as we recounted first, a narrative involving his father's decision to take the family to Argentina early in the War, on an American ship. The Herten-Greaven senior was a British surgeon who felt he could help the British war effort by working at the British hospital in Buenos Aires, where the country was at peace at that time. Forget the fact that Chris began the anecdote with "My mother at the time ..." which was an interesting enough way to begin a personal story. It was not broken with commas or dashes, such as "My mother, at the time, ..." which would have referred to something his mum might have been occupied with at that time. No, "My mother at the time ..." without break, signified that in addition to being able to whip up a heck of a story at a moment's notice, Chris had one mother then, and another and possible more, later on, and even previously. This would cause anyone to sit up, listen, and pay attention. We soon learned that this story had nothing to do with Chris's mother at the time or before or since, but once we were led to visualize dad in scrubs at the hospital, we were told that Chris's great-grandfather sailed from Germany to Uruguay years before, to grow grapes and make wine. Following this information, Chris told us that "The First World War which led to the Second World War, was started because certain interests were invested in using war to make money" because Germany was nearly bankrupt in 1915. Chris then invited us to find out more by Googling Emile Franke, a Belgian, and one of the ten richest people in Europe. Your Lowly Scribe attempted to do so, but came up empty. Perhaps at a future meeting, Chris would agree to expound on the subject and continue to impress us. He's probably read – and memorized – a book on this man.

4. First Toast – To the Master by Chris Herten-Greaven

Mysteriously (uh-oh) missing. Curse you, Moriarty!

5. Sherlock Holmes in La-La Land

On a recent trip to Los Angeles (which we have been told on National Public Radio by a seismologist, is waiting for the “Big One,”) Chris Herten-Greaven visited some members of the local Sherlockian Society, The Curious Collectors of Baker Street. Chris spoke with them for hours and received a society pin (a fitting collectible considering the society’s name). The wife of one of his contacts works for the Los Angeles Police Department, adding a professional link. The society is in its twenty-fifth year, having been founded in 1991—no earthquakes or cliffhanger endings yet.

6. For Bloodhounds Only

Rachel Alkallay has been doing some research into bloodlines. One of her tidbits involves the descendants of William the Conqueror (William of Normandy) who visited Hastings in 1066 and liked it so much (this was before WalMart) that he bought the whole country. According to Rachel’s profound and prodigious research, Grandpa Bill is the progenitor of some 200 million descendants AND from the great beyond, claims to be the ancestor of every U.S. president. Even Obama? Oy vay! Chris Herten-Greaven wanted to know about six degrees of separation, and Bruno Paul Stenson quoted, “In war you should get to know your enemy before being allowed to shoot them.” However, noting the many games of “happy families” in the Holmesian canon, perhaps this is advice prompted by the undertakers unions.

7. If You Blinked, It Was Gone

Patrick Campbell gave away surplus Sherlockiana from the last meeting. Another excellent reason to attend *all* of our meetings.

8. More Marketing Opportunities

Jack Anderson offered several quality publications at non-street legal prices. How about *Movers and Shakers of Victorian England* for \$1.00, or *Lost Victorian Britain*, similarly priced? See last sentence in #7 above. Get your ornithopters out of the shop; run, don’t walk.

9. Flat with no Perks

We do not know how much Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson paid in rent at 221B Baker Street. We do assume that they got a package deal, since Mrs. Hudson apparently did the cleaning (although – please enlighten us, folks – can we see her in a maid’s uniform with a duster?), and prepared a better-than-passable breakfast, not to mention other meals as well. Was she indeed the proprietress? Did she own the entire building? What about the rest of the block, and the building across the street which would eventually become the Sherlock Holmes Museum? ACD makes no mention of her finances, or her clandestine monetary arrangement with Professor Moriarty in her bid to snap up all manner of commercial and residential properties in central London in advance of Olympia and York. We assume that something of this nature was afoot since a recent internet article regarding the estimated cost of the Holmes/Watson flat today, according to Jack Anderson, pegged the 1756-square-foot living space at an impressive £1,691,028, exclusive of meals, maid service, window-washing, and bullet-hole plugging.

10. Victorian Gripewater Sessions

If you are reading our society’s minutes for the first time, you need to know that we spend some of our days reminiscing and “regretting” (a Conradian term meaning quite the opposite) the past.

We regret the vanishing of the past, the disappearance of geographical and metropolitan icons that have fallen to the bulldozer and the wrecking ball in the name of expediency, progress, and the optimization of urban space. Since our *raison d'être* is the study and discussion of Sherlock Holmes, his real life and the spurious stories written by one Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which cannot match the genius, erudition, dry wit, and unheralded achievements of the world's longest-living consulting detective who at present has concealed himself – ingeniously, with Irene Adler – in a spy satellite which circles the earth every fifty-three minutes, from which he is selectively feeding data as he deems fit to various nations, thus deferring yet another war. Such is their distaste for publicity that they have resorted to this deflection of the world's harsh gaze. The satin curtains were her idea. Slow “whoa” and back to Victoriana. Holmes, Watson, and their co-stars, antagonists, extras, and hack drivers lived in a cobblestone era of a certain ilk that created its own sense of posterity, not unmingled with the increasing portly shadow of Queen Victoria, Buckingham Palace, the Boer War, international intrigue, national security, class differentiation, and a looming Great War which gave a sense of urgency (if in hindsight) to the goings-on at Whitehall and 221B Baker Street. Jack the Ripper came and went, and left an unresolved series of deep stains as to his (?) identity, motives, connections, and more. Victorian morality leaves us scratching our heads, as our morality will have our descendants scratching theirs. London and the world of Sherlock Holmes was a universe steeped in atmosphere, every nerve of every building and performer laid bare by the esses and straights and twists and turns of a Doyleian plot. It is impossible to think of Sherlock Holmes without the unique Victorian age and its atmosphere, and vice-versa. This brings us to today, in Montreal, a century later, but perhaps a millennium later, an ocean away, but perhaps a cosmos removed, where vestiges of what we would like to think of as our literary and cultural heritage, are being flayed from us, as layers from the yearning heart and questing soul.

Oh, such groaning on the mat of self-pity! Did no one make us recite “there will be no moaning at the bar”? So much for poetry.

Things are gone. Chris Herten-Greaven observed that we had a genuine Victorian operating theatre, which is now perhaps the only surviving heritage operating theatre in Canada. We would not want to have surgery in it, however.

Bruno Paul Stenson informed us that the majority of the “Golden Square Mile” mansions still survive, but belong to McGill University. This might be reassuring, and a good thing, if not for the fact, as Jack Anderson pointed out, McGill tore down the Prince-of-Wales Terrace and replaced it with “the awful Bronfman building.”

It is a pity that some imagination could not have been applied to new projects that would acknowledge our connection with a significant, influential, and awesome past.

9b. So You Want to Be A Victorian? An Interlude

There was some demand for an authentic Victorian recipe, and since an era-appropriate copy of Mrs Beeton's Household Management is to hand, I am able to oblige you. Remember to add arsenic to, well, not taste.

Toad-in-the-Hole

Ingredients: 1lb of beefsteak (cut up small), 4oz of flour, ½ pint of milk, 1 egg, salt, dripping.

Method: Mix the flour, milk, egg and a little salt into a smooth batter. Put into a Yorkshire pudding tin sufficient dripping to form a thin layer when melted, pour in about ¼ of the batter, and bake until set. Then add the meat, season it with salt and pepper, pour in the remainder of the batter, bake quickly until it has risen and set, and then cook more slowly until sufficiently cooked. Serve in squares arranged neatly overlapping each other on a hot dish.

Time: To bake, about 1 hour.

Average Cost [*circa* 1915] 1s 3d to 1s 5d

Sufficient for 3 or 4 persons

Seasonable at any time

[The joke is that arsenic is tasteless. Strychnine, however, is very, very bitter. Only to be used in chocolates or when dinner is badly burnt. Yes, your consulting minute-minder does know everything.]

10. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

By David Dowse

Marriage, anniversaries, birthdays, holiday celebrations, important events: these are the times when having family and friends close at hand makes our lives special. Watson was married at least once. He and Mary would have marked their anniversary by dining at the Ritz, with Mary wearing a gorgeous string of pearls that reminded them of the adventure that first brought them together. How many happy years did they have with each other? Watson had set up his practice and was living away from Baker Street. Unfortunately, no mention is made of children; perhaps it was the rigors of the Afghan war, Watson's age, or just back luck that did not bless this loving couple with offspring.

Just as John and Mary celebrated their wedding anniversary, so too do Guylaine and I mark thirty-two years together tonight, the 5th of June, just after our society has rung the bells on 35 years in existence, this past May.

I give you John and Mary, Guylaine and David, and our Society.
May we celebrate many more joyous anniversaries.

11. He Definitely Did *Not* Take a Licking

Patrick Campbell always has super interesting things to show, share, and tell.

First, he went to New York, did not get mugged, sold his stamp collection for \$35,000, and *still* avoided being mugged. Next, he showed us a Sherlock Holmes anthology bearing the signature of Boris Yeltsin. Patrick met Yeltsin when the former Russian leader was visiting Montreal, and Patrick asked him to autograph the book. Finally, also along a Russian theme, Patrick read part of the narrative elegiac poem "Babi Yar," a lament on the *Einsatzgruppen* slaughter of Jews in the Ukraine in the early 1940s, and the burial of the tens of thousands of those bodies in ravines and pits.

12. The New Bimetallica

David Dowse brought us up-to-date on our society's new coin – it's now being plated and polished. It is made of gold and rhodium. He outlined the forthcoming steps to the completion of this project, so that we can donate it to the library. Thus far, it is a work in progress. Soon, it will be an instant collectable. Yes, there will be a magnifying glass. Here are the colors:

The (*black*) Bimetallic (*gold*) Question (*silver*)

Venatio Adest (*black*)

(The game is afoot)

13. E-mail Us

Wilfrid deFreitas asked that we all try to send emails through the web site, to see if we have made our connections properly. Wilfrid was in England at the time this request was made, and we were sufficiently in synch to intuit his message telepathically and to nod our heads in agreement.

14. The Tiny Problem

Anne Millar showed us a tiny (we mean tiny) book of "The Final Problem," purchased at the Miniature Enthusiasts of Montreal's annual show and sale. Gilt letters less than a quarter centimeter high declare it to be the work of Dr. John Watson. She also shared reprint of the infamous *The Coming of the Fairies* by the same author's literary editor, Arthur Conan Doyle. This last was not found at the bottom of the garden, but rather at Encore Books, located at Sherbrooke and Harvard.

15. More Marketing Opportunities

Rachel Alkallay pointed the way to two more second-hand book stores, one at 4621 Notre Dame Street West; the other being Renaissance Books on Decarie at NDG Avenue. There are many possibilities in the quest for a reasonably-priced edition of *Dynamics of an Asteroid*.

16. Third Toast – To the Woman

By Patrick Campbell

The following toast appears on a page with five other toasts (to all the usual suspects, plus one entitled simply, "The Loyal Toast"). They are all as deliciously charming and witty as this one:

Please raise your glass to Irene Adler,
and to her horse, and to her saddler.
And a further glass to that fine exemple
Mister Godfrey Norton of the Inner Temple;
But half a glass of your cheapest wass'l ...
For Von Ormstein, the Duke of Cassel.
From this toast on, rewards diminish,
All Sherlock got was a photo finish!

17. Greeting a Guest

We were delighted to meet Kristin Franseen, a doctoral student in music at McGill University. Kristin is affiliated with the Sherlockians in Madison, WI. We omitted to note the name of her society, but we did some checking and found a few possibilities in Wisconsin: C.A.L.A.B.A.S.H.,

The Friendless Drifters, Friends of the Great Grimpen Mire, One of One-Forty, The Last Dog Hung Post-Prandial Club, The Merripit House Guests, The Notorious Canary-Trainers, The Original Tree Worshippers of Rock County, The People of the Drama: the Valley Dwellers, The Thor Bridge Fishers, The Walleye Irregulars of Wisconsin, The Watsonians.

Since we have now determined that there are more Sherlockian societies than there are people in Wisconsin, we believe we have discovered the new Eden.

Your Lowly Scribe gleaned the foregoing information from a web site entitled “Sherlockian Who’s Who,” www.sh-whoswho.com . This is based in L.A., listed as 221b Baker Street/Los Angeles.

18. The Quiz

“Rumble at Reichenbach,” based on “The Final Problem”
prepared by Anne Millar and Rebecca Stacey

Possible total: 56

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prizes
1.	Rachel Alkallay	43½	Cupcake and T(ea)
2.	Patrick Campbell	41	Cupcake and ^{Mini T(ea)}
3.	Bruno Paul Stenson	37	Tin of Chocolate T(ea)

Next Meeting’s story: “The Adventure of the Three Students ”
Prepared by: Rachel Alkallay

19. Twinings Teasters Tasting Terrific

Jack Anderson talked about the Twinings shop in London with a tasting bar at the back. It is near Fleet Street and St. Paul’s Cathedral. They offer five kinds of Darjeeling tea. This was the Anderson family’s tea of choice, since Jack’s father grew up in Darjeeling.

20. This Week’s “T” Mystery Solved

Rebecca Stacey explained that she awarded tea prizes this time because of Moriar-T. Ohhhhh. (clap on forehead) They who would pun would pick pockets, although that’s rather low fare for the Napoleon of Crime.

21. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

By Rachel Alkallay

Totally extemporaneous.

Your Lowly Scribe was so enthralled, that he forgot to take notes.

22. Cat Got Your Tongue? Liver? Sofa? Drapes?

Chris Herten-Greaven knows of people who when they redecorate their homes, they get a cat to match. If they redecorate again, they get a new cat and throw out the old one. Can you imagine? Anyone transitioning to a jungle-like setting would have to make room for a lion or an

ocelot. Except that people bringing a lion into the home would never make it to the next remodeling, and this would be a case of the cat throwing the people out, unless it was going with a bones décor.

One calls to mind one of our editorial friend Doyle's other efforts, where a pet jaguar is kept about the house. No problems with the hair there—its sole purpose is, rather, to get rid of inconvenient intervening heirs.

Put your thinking caps on, everyone: what kind of cat would fit into a Ben and Jerry motif?

23. Baedeker's Guide to the Holmes-Inclined

When Patrick Campbell and an intrepid group of Sherlockians made the pilgrimage to Reichenbach Falls to plant our society's plaque in the rock, he filled tiny bottles with water from the falls, much as one would collect water from the Holy Land. Alas, following necessary celebrations, these reliquaries met with a more practical than venerable fate, and so these bottles today only hold droplets.

As part of the day's exertions, our pioneers drilled holes in the rock, filled them with wet cement, and forced the bolts in. Patrick showed us a shard of genuine Swiss shale from that fearful place. He presented us with another from Baskerville Hall, collected by Peter Calamai of Ottawa, who hopefully did not make a science of instability whilst purloining a piece of wall. The trip was extremely productive because it proved, once and for all, that Sherlock Holmes truly lived. Patrick showed us his three books of plays and stories, and noted that this collected stories of Sherlock Holmes are in the *non-fiction* section of the Westmount Library, proof positive that Sherlock Holmes is not made up. Finally, the 1928 edition (27th edition) of Baedeker's Switzerland notes, on page 225, notes that Sherlock Holmes disappeared at Reichenbach Falls. And we all know that travel literature never ever lies, especially any accounts signed 'Sigerson.'

24. Fifth Toast – To the Society

By Paul Billette, read by Anne Millar

ODE TO THE SOCIETY

I feel like waxing nostalgic tonight in my toast to the Society.
In that vein I want to offer tribute to some outstanding individuals from whom I benefited during their time with us.

Stanley Baker, our tireless Sergeant-Recruiter who never missed an opportunity to convince someone to attend our meetings and to join the Society. Also remembered fondly are his original answers to some of the questions on our quizzes. He was never at a loss for a remark when in the dark. I owe him my membership which I have thoroughly enjoyed throughout the years.

David Kellett who never missed a meeting during his many years as a member. He was a fount of knowledge on things Sherlockian and was never short of a forceful argument to defend his point. In addition he was a very interesting individual with stories about Haight Ashbury or Katmandu and other such places as he had been as a full-fledged member of the Age of Aquarius. He is sorely missed at our meetings.

Then there was Tom Holmes who early on was always willing to organize special meetings to go for a beer.

Others came and went such as Cheryl Surkes, Bernard Robaire, Roger and Mary Burrows who traveled from Ottawa to attend our meetings, Francis Lalumière and Katherine Radford, each and every one of them contributing to the progress of our Society.

I thank the Society for its ability to attract original individuals who, in addition to being scholars of the Canon, bring with a breadth of lifetime experiences to the table.

Fellow Members, Long Live the Society!

25. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

To the Master	-	David Dowse
To Dr. Watson-	-	Ronnie Zilman
To the Woman	-	Rebecca Stacey
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Anne Millar
To the Society	-	Carol Abramson

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, August 7th, 2014, at 6:30 p.m. Meet like-minded Sherlockians and express opinions you would never dare to utter anywhere else. Electric scooter parking in the ditch. For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org

E-mail Contacts:

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[the secret's in the sauce]