



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
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Minutes of the meeting of The Bimetallic Question

February 5th, 2015

Date of our next meeting: Thursday, April 2nd, 2015 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 Gloria Scott*", prepared by Rebecca Stacey

Next Meeting's Toast Presenters:

The Master: David Dowse; Dr. Watson: Rachel Alkallay; The Woman: Anne Millar;
Mrs. Hudson: Ron Zilman; The Society: Paul Billette

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, February 5, 2015 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Mark Altosaar, Paul Billette, David Dowse, Kristin Franseen, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, Anne Miller, Karl J. Raudsepp, Arlene Scher, Rebecca Stacey, Bruno Paul Stenson, Ronnie Zilman

Regrets: Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Kevin Chappell, Derek Chappell, Wilfrid de Freitas, Raf Jans, Nancy Walkling

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by our new Sovereign Carol Abramson.

***Congratulations from the Bimetallic Question
To Ron and Ronalee Zilman
On the birth of their grandson
Benjamin Maxwell Zilman
On January 16th, 2015***

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

1: A Review of our 161st Annual Sherlock Holmes Birthday Celebration.

We discuss our recent Sherlock Holmes birthday dinner held Saturday, January 17th, 2015 at the Atwater Club. Paul leads off by extending the Society's thanks to key contributors to the evening's success: to Karl Raudsepp for securing our special guest speaker Terry Mosher, Gazette editorial cartoonist Aislin; to Rebecca Stacey, Anne Miller, and Kristin Franseen for their original skit written especially for the dinner in which they played Queen Victoria, Sherlock Holmes, and Dr. Watson respectively; to our very own Sherlockian sopranos Sarah and Rebecca Dowd and their accompanist on violin Peter Lekx for their entrancing musical interlude; and to Dan Fuchs our official unofficial photographer for his amazing photos and videos. Paul also offers a general thanks to all other contributors and attendees.

Karl: Found some of the speeches were too long. Ron responds we usually ask things be 3 minutes. David: We might try timing the scheduling of toasts and speeches better, perhaps grouped in some way, so as not to interrupt the main course which gets cold if you stop eating to be polite and listen. Paul: The dinner committee will consider this suggestion for next year. Ron asks did we used to give our special guest speakers a gift, and Paul replies no, but we always pick up the tab for their dinner and authors get a chance to sell us their books. Neither do we pay our speakers. David and others comment that the food was excellent. Carol points out that the appetizers were quite few and served too late and others agree. We'll try to correct this for next year. Rachel, who was not able to attend asks how did we like Aislin? Many respond that he was, "Wonderful! Terrific!" Chris thanks Paul, on behalf of all of us, for his work behind the scenes coordinating the dinner. Paul: We are already booked at the Atwater Club for next year's dinner on January 16th, 2016.

2. Toast to the Master by Ron Zilman Source: Prepared with excerpts from Wikipedia.

Sherlock Holmes is a character created by Scottish author and physician Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh Medical School. A London-based "consulting detective" whose abilities border on the fantastic, Holmes is known for his astute logical reasoning, his ability to adopt almost any disguise and his use of forensic science to solve difficult cases.

Doyle said that Holmes was inspired by Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh for whom he had worked as a clerk. Like Holmes, Bell was noted for drawing broad conclusions from minute observations. However, he later wrote to Conan Doyle: "You are yourself Sherlock Holmes and well you know it". Sir Henry Littlejohn, Chair of Medical Jurisprudence at the University of Edinburgh Medical School, is also cited as an inspiration for Holmes. Littlejohn, who was also Police Surgeon and Medical Officer of Health in Edinburgh, provided Doyle with a link between medical investigation and the detection of crime. Another inspiration is thought to be Francis "Tanky" Smith, a policeman and master of disguise who went on to become Leicester's first private detective.

Holmes's primary intellectual detection method is adductive reasoning. "From a drop of water", he writes, "a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other". Holmesian deduction consists primarily of observation-based inferences, such as his study of cigar ashes. The detective's guiding principle, as he says in chapter six ("Sherlock Holmes Gives a Demonstration") of *The Sign of the Four* and elsewhere in the stories, is: "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth". In "A Scandal in Bohemia", Holmes deduces that Watson had gotten wet lately and had "a most clumsy and careless servant girl". When Watson asks how Holmes knows this, the detective answers:

It is simplicity itself My eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey.

Deductive reasoning allows Holmes to learn a stranger's occupation, such as the retired Marine sergeant in *A Study in Scarlet*; the ship's-carpenter-turned-pawnbroker in "The Red-Headed League", and the billiard-marker and retired artillery non-commissioned officer in "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter". By studying inanimate objects, he makes deductions about their owners (Watson's pocket watch in *The Sign of the Four* and a hat, pipe and walking stick in other stories).

However, Conan Doyle does not paint Holmes as infallible (a central theme of "The Adventure of the Yellow Face"). At the end of the story, a chastened Holmes tells his chronicler: "If it should ever strike you that I am getting a little over-confident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper 'Norbury' in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you".

The Sherlock Holmes stories helped marry forensic science, particularly Holmes' acute observation of small clues, and literature. He uses trace evidence (such as shoe and tire

impressions), fingerprints, ballistics and handwriting analysis to evaluate his theories and those of the police. Some of the detective's investigative techniques, such as fingerprint and handwriting analysis, were in their infancy when the stories were written; Holmes frequently laments the contamination of a crime scene, and crime-scene integrity has become standard investigative procedure.

Because of the small scale of much of his evidence (tobacco ash, hair or fingerprints), the detective often uses a magnifying glass at the scene and an optical microscope at his Baker Street lodgings. He uses analytical chemistry for blood residue analysis and toxicology to detect poisons; Holmes's home chemistry laboratory is mentioned in "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty". Ballistics feature in "The Adventure of the Empty House" when spent bullets are recovered and matched with a suspected murder weapon.

Holmes observes the dress and attitude of his clients and suspects, noting style and state of wear of their clothes, skin marks (such as tattoos), contamination (clay on boots), their state of mind and physical condition in order to deduce their origins and recent history.

He also applies this method to walking sticks (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*) and hats ("The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle"), with details such as medallions, wear and contamination yielding information about their owners. In 2002 the Royal Society of Chemistry bestowed an honorary fellowship on Holmes for his use of forensic science and analytical chemistry in popular literature, making him (as of 2010) the only fictional character thus honoured.

3. A Reminder from Our Florin Concerning Membership Dues

Members thank Paul for his reminder that the annual Society membership fee is now due. Paul soon declares, "We are all paid up!"

4. Toast to Dr. Watson by Elliott Newman, read by David Dowse

He is at his constant companion's beck and call
Summer, Winter, Spring, and even Fall.
When in the name of everything sacred and right
Does he ever have time to write?
His ego must be in there, deep under the skin.
Unquestionably brave, he has never backed down from a fight.
Yet have we seen a hint of Watson's chagrin?
A gentleman romancer, never a necromancer,
To display panache, to detract from Holmes would be a sin.
With his bum leg he is not much of a dancer.
So how, beside Holmes' talents and intense, brilliant flame

Has he stood as the rock to his friend's driven passions, Sir?
The stalwart friend, chronicler, devotee, when afoot is the game:
To Dr. Watson.

5. The Mist that Conceals All Clues

David praised the marketing genius of the entrepreneur who brings us a product called, (David reads direct from the label of a small brown bottle) “No Shit Sherlock Lavatory Mist: For crime scenes of all types and sizes”, with its “light lemon and cedar scent”, it promises to eliminate those telltale odiferous wafts that may occur following elimination...”Whodunnit? WhodunWHAT? Two quick mists erase evidence of any offense – no matter how foul.” David’s presentation captured our full attention. We all wanted to buy this product. Manufactured in the U.S.A by *Blue Q* of Pittsfield, MA www.BlueQ.com .

6. David Presents a Puzzling Case

Another Christmas gift David received is the Sherlock Holmes Puzzle Case: A challenging card game inspired by the world’s greatest detective – solve the cases before time runs out! Includes a detective’s notebook, a rules and solutions book, 120 case cards representing mysteries to be solved at different levels of difficulty: Elementary, Straightforward, Cunning, Fiendish, and each level gets a little harder. Each player has a max of 3 minutes to solve their puzzle and earn points. Timer included. David will test us on one of the easier puzzles at a future meeting.

7. The New Film We All Want to See This Summer

Karl brought us news that celebrated 75 year-old British actor Sir Ian McKellen is playing the Master at 93 in *Mr. Holmes*, a new film expected to be released this summer. The screenplay is based on the 2005 book by American writer Mitch Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind* and features Laura Linney as Holmes’s housekeeper Mrs. Munro. Set in 1947, the adventure finds Holmes revisiting an unsolved case dating back 50 years.

8. A Special Toast to Rachel’s Mother

Rachel’s mom, Tova Besprosvanni Oiri Alkallay passed away last fall, and today’s meeting date would have been her 95th birthday. Rachel tells us, “She didn’t look her

age, she looked 70. People had bet she would make it to 95 or 100. I brought the sweets to the meeting so that we would have something sweet to remember her by. Tova had met some of us at a few of our meetings and a dinner, and always asked after us, saying "Tell me about the meeting!" Led by Rachel, we drink a fond toast to her mom.

9. We Consult the Cottage Physician

Pulled from his bookcase at home, and relevant to the dying detective, Bruno suggested this might have been one of the reference works that Holmes would have had in his reference library. It is the *Cottage Physician: A Complete Hand Book of Medical Knowledge for the Home*, with an introduction by George W. Post A.M., M.D., published in 1896 by King-Richardson Publishing Co. Springfield, Mass., enhanced with nearly 200 illustrations. Bruno noted it covers a wide variety of topics such as care and preservation of the teeth, diseases of children, poisons and their antidotes, patent medicine recipes, and a whole section on diseases of women, including pregnancy. Amazement is expressed that pregnancy was classified as a disease, and someone inquires does it give advice on how to remove one's own appendix? It previously belonged to Bruno's great-grandfather who was not a doctor, but an MP in Ottawa from 1896-1900. The quip is heard that in that case he might have specialized in psychiatry.

10. Concerning Mystery Writers, Pinafore, Penzance, and La Chauve-Souris

Chris heartily recommends the following events to us:

February 25 at Victoria Hall, the Westmount Library invites us to come and meet Canadian mystery authors Robert Pobi, Andrew Pyper, and Nick Cutter (aka Craig Davidson). Free tickets are (were) available at the main circulation desk.

Gilbert and Sullivan starts in the Montreal area February 13-21 with the Savoy Society of McGill's production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, then comes the Lakeshore Light Opera's *Pirates of Penzance*, which is from March 6-14, and on various complicated dates in April - May we have the Montreal West-end Operatic Society bringing us *Die Fledermause*. Chris notes that tickets range from about \$10-25. Do try their individual websites for further details: <http://mcgillsavoy.ca/upcoming/> <http://mwos.org/about/our-productions/current/> <http://www.llo.org/>

11. A Brilliantly Practical Little Book on Baritsu

Anne tells how a friend visited London and brought her back a really lovely little pocket-size hardcover book, the *Sherlock Holmes School of Self-Defense: The Manly Art of Baritsu as used against Professor Moriarty* by E.W. Barton-Wright. Current edition published in 2011 by the Ivy Press, Lewes, East Sussex, U.K. is full of original illustrations (actual photographs from 1903) and advice. It includes chapters on what to

do if a foe positions himself in the path of your bicycle, how to escape when attacked from the rear, how to escape when seized by an item of apparel, defense against an unarmed opponent, use of the stout stick, use of the short stick or umbrella, how to throw and hold a man upon the ground, and all-round self-defense from a bicycle. We probably shouldn't leave home without it.

12. The London Sherlock Holmes Exhibition

David asks have we heard about the big Sherlock Holmes exhibition taking place in London? Kristin had a friend who went to it in December, and David's daughter will be going to London and may have a chance to see it. The exhibition is taking place at the Museum of London from October 17, 2014 – April 12, 2015.

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/whats-on/exhibitions-displays/sherlock-holmes/?qclid=CMzuxIrfIsQCFYNDaQodzLsAgg>

13. A Surprise Case-solving Challenge from Our Sovereign

Carol challenged everyone to a fascinatingly difficult short quiz from a vintage detective card game. Given 12 clues in succession, we were asked to solve *The Adventure of the Unholy Man*, concerning the murder of a preacher who has stolen the original manuscript of Hamlet. Winners: Anne Miller and Karl Raudsepp. Prizes: Mouth-watering Mars bars.

14. Toast to Irene Adler by Rebecca Stacey

In the hearts and minds of the casual Sherlock Holmes™ consumer, (obviously, not us. They see; we observe) and indeed in plenty of modern retellings -- Irene Adler has been reduced to and defined by things that are not - in the slightest bit - who she is presented as in the original text. Like, for example her role as the “**love interest**”

~To Sherlock Holmes, she was always The Woman~

Irene's fixation and fascination with Holmes (and the reverse) has been played off as romantic interest. The character has been stripped of many of the other details about her that are present in the canon -- like, for ex. the fact that she was actually romantically unavailable and getting married to a lawyer, Godfrey Norton, that in my mind is probably some suave Victorian George Clooney. People will also go so far as to attach negative readings to her canon attributes

(“Adventuress” = code for sexually adventurous) to further reduce her from Holmes

“equal” to his “attraction”. And it hardly stops here: Her wit and cunning is often retold behind the lens of **smoldering criminality** -- she’s become, over time, a lot more Raymond-Chandler-Dame-In-Red than the original story seems to ever intend. In both Ritchie’s Holmes and BBC Sherlock - Irene is working for Moriarty. In Elementary.... well, she just *is* Moriarty. She’s a smooth, deceptive criminal that catches Holmes with her **sultry feminine wiles**.

But none of this has any base in who the character was in the story, or who she’s ever presented as being.

I suppose it shouldn’t be too surprising that Irene Adler often - unfortunately - goes misremembered. In the original story, the King himself paints Irene **as a dangerous scorned woman and a gold-digger**, though she never seems to seek vengeance or revenge at all -- it’s the King that harasses her, remember. Not the other way around. He suspects blackmail, but there *never was any*. When you think about it really, it’s the **King** who is the deceptive one, **the King** who goes after a woman because he’s afraid of what she could do, not what she will or has, and it’s the **King** who deserves to be cast as a criminal: **breaking into women’s homes or hiring detectives to do it for you -- is a crime. I watch Law & Order. I know these things.**

So let’s think about it -- Irene Adler’s actions in the story, are to calmly and effectively thwart the efforts of criminals who mean to seize and damage her property. She’s keeping the photos, she’s claimed, as protection: which makes a whole lot of sense considering she’s dealing with a King who has already torn up her apartments and set some figurative bloodhounds on her. So in **besting** Sherlock Holmes, not only does she perhaps school him in underestimating women -- but she also teaches him a valuable lesson about taking information at face value. **So maybe next time he won’t trust the word of a man in a mask just because of his station.**

To: A lesson in Good Judgement Gifted Upon Sherlock Holmes by the Notorious Irene Adler.

15. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Kristin Franseen

Much has been made of Mrs Hudson as the long suffering landlady at 221 Baker Street, and of the many things she had to put up with while having Holmes as a tenant. The toxic chemistry experiments, violin playing at all hours of the night, indoor revolver practice, and (let’s not forget) the time Moriarty set fire to Holmes’s rooms.

However, trying as those experiences must have been, I am more interested in her more active moments in the Canon. Although, as is true of many of the characters who populate Dr Watson’s writings (including, it must be noted, Holmes and Watson themselves), we know little enough about her personal life and background, there are a few tantalising moments.

It is Mrs Hudson who moves the wax bust that deceives Col. Moran. Mrs Hudson who

accepts Mycroft Holmes's bizarre plan to keep his brother's rooms exactly the same after he disappears in Switzerland. Mrs Hudson whose concern for her tenant allows Holmes and Watson to trap Culverton Smith in the story we read for tonight. And it is (possibly) Mrs Hudson who is Holmes's co-conspirator in the capture of Van Bork.

One might ask why Mrs Hudson, who, after all, was just looking for someone to rent some rooms in her house, would get involved with these strange and dangerous adventures. We should remember that Dr Watson, after all, was just looking for someone to share rooms with in 1882. Perhaps she, like Watson, discovered (or rekindled) a love of mystery through her acquaintance with Holmes. It makes one wonder if, on those nights when perhaps Watson's neighbours were not so accommodating, Mrs Hudson may have assisted Holmes with an additional case or two. I imagine that somewhere, perhaps next to a few signed copies of the Strand and a well-worn edition of Mrs Beeton's, with some annotations on how best to properly receive disguised Bohemian royals in one's sitting room and clean up the relics of past cases hidden in the butter dish, there might be a battered notebook relating the memoirs and adventures of Mrs Hudson. To Mrs Hudson!

16. The Quiz: The Dying Detective prepared by Karl Raudsepp

Thoughts on the marking: Insistence that "A jack-knife is not the same as a penknife!" leads Paul to say, "You guys are ruthless up there!" But Rachel had liked ruthless, and later detects slacking in Karl's marking. Carol: We're wearing him down! (All said in fun!) We enjoyed Karl's quiz and his first time writing one for us it meets with our approval.

Quiz winners were: Carol 43 points, Kristin 36 points, and Rachel with 30 points.

Prizes were provided by our last meeting's quiz winner Erica Penner, and were 3 whimsical animated bookmarks (tilt the image and the animals run!). Shopping tip: You can find them at Renaud-Bray.

Our thoughts on the story: We probably learn more about Mrs. Hudson's appearance in this story than any other. The story is also remarkable for Watson referring to Holmes as "The Master", and we believe this is the only place in the Canon where he does so.

17. Toast to the Society by Mark Altosaar

I really wasn't sure how to approach this toast when I was first asked, I mean, when I volunteered to give it. In my second full year as a member of the Bimetallic Question, I felt that it was something I wanted to do but I didn't know where to begin.

So I started my investigation by searching for the meaning of the word society. Following that, I looked for clues as to why I so enjoyed being part of this distinct Sherlockian society. Was it the stories from Arthur Conan Doyle? Was it the interesting topics touched on during the meetings? Could it be the quizzes, or exactly how well Raf and our other quiz stars would do every time? Or was it simply the snacks and port that went

along with our informative discussions at each gathering?

All these clues finally led me to deduce that I am in fact a distinct individual who is part of a special society of like-minded logical thinkers dedicated to preserve and promote all things Sherlockian. So as a member of this distinct society within our larger distinct society, I raise my glass.

To the Society.

18. Varia:

Carol will not be able to be with us at our next meeting due to the Passover holidays. Paul volunteers to Sovereign at the next meeting in her stead. Who will prepare the next quiz, as Carol would like to do it but can't be here? Karl enjoyed giving this meeting's quiz and would love to write another quiz for us anytime. Rebecca volunteers to write the next quiz and chooses the story, *The Gloria Scott*.

Chris: Brings these fun items left over from the dinner: "Since we are in an election year, and also in the 200th anniversary year of Sir John A. MacDonald, arguably one of the most outstanding of our previous Prime Ministers: Sir John A. was occasionally known to have the odd tipple or two. Comes a time when he is on the election campaign trail, the hustings, and his opponent, or his adversary is holding forth at the front of the platform ...And somewhere towards the back where John A. was sitting, he suddenly throws up. Shortly thereafter I guess he recovered himself somewhat and ascended to the platform, where he said, "Please forgive me. I don't know what came over me. But whenever I hear my opponent speak, I lose my stomach."

Chris: One other snippet from my grandchildren: Be careful when you read books on anti-gravity. You may not be able to put them down.

19. Close of the Meeting:

Carol adjourns the meeting. Ron congratulates her: Good Job! Many others join in!

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favor upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, April 2nd, 2015, at 6:30 p.m.

If you detect any errors or omissions in these minutes please contact Susan Fitch our Intrepid Web Person and Recording Secretary at susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca .

A tip of the deerstalker hat to our Sergeant-at-arms Hudson, Raf Jans, for printing and mailing Society minutes to all members requesting the paper version.

