



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

P.O. Box 232, Westmount Station  
Westmount, QC, Canada H3Z 2T2

## Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question April 5, 2018

**Date of our next meeting:** Thursday, June 7, 2018 at 6:30pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC H3Z 1G1. Please join us for a special guest presentation on the history of fingerprinting by Sheryl Mercer of Toronto!

**The quiz at the next meeting:** *The Noble Bachelor*, from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, prepared and presented by Kristin Franseen.

**Next meeting's toast presenters:** The Master: Carol Abramson; Dr Watson: Paul Billette; *The Woman*, Irene Adler: David Dowse; Mrs Hudson: Bruno Paul Stenson; The Society: Vivianne Lewis. *Dear toasters, please send your June 7 toasts to our Scribe, Kristin Franseen. Thanks!*

**Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question** held on Thursday, April 5, 2018.

**Present:** Carol Abramson, Mark Altosaar, Paul Billette, Louise Corda, David Dowse, Francis Fister-Stoga, Kristin Franseen, Wilfrid de Freitas, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Thomas Jans, Vivianne Lewis, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Anne Millar, Arlene Scher, Bruno Paul Stenson, James Turner, Ronnie Zilman

**Regrets:** Rachel Alkallay, Susan Fitch, Karl J. Raudsepp, Mélodie Tardieu

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by our Sovereign Raf Jans at 6:30pm.

# ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

## 1. Errata

Raf expressed regret that your humble scribe expressed some sympathy for the fate of Professor Moriarty in the last meeting's minutes. She will try to moderate this in the future, although she notes that seven years of graduate school somewhat make one understand why an academic might conceivably turn to a life of crime.

## 2. Welcome to New Friends!

Welcome to our newest member, Frances Fister-Stoga!

At this month's meeting, we were also joined by Deryn Collier, a mystery writer currently working on a novel set in Westmount and Montréal during the 1940s.

## 3. Thanks!

Thank you to Carol for providing some Passover treats!

## 4. Summary of Prior Business

- Raf noted that there is nothing in the by-laws forbidding members from proposing additional toasts if they so choose. He also notes that he hopes to have a scanned version of the most recent version of the by-laws (including our stated mission of advising the federal government on matters pertaining to the bimetallic question) on the website soon.
- Speaking of the website, those with photos from our dinner that they would like to share should send them to Susan Fitch for inclusion on the website.
- Due to the increasing cost, we have discontinued advertising in the *Montreal Gazette*. (Anne and Louise both shared stories about learning of the group due to these ads.)
- Thank you again to Wilfrid for managing the sale of Patrick's book collection.

## 5. Future Event Updates

- We are still exploring the idea of a dinner at the Willow Inn and/or a small group excursion to the Holmes-themed escape room.
- Carol and Jacob will be hosting another Victorian tea at their home at 4pm on August 11.
- May 2019 will be the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our society's first meeting. It was proposed by several members that we hold some kind of special dinner or event to mark the occasion.

## 6. "I listened on that April evening"

Several public lectures and events of interest to our members occurred in April:

- The annual Friends of the Westmount Public Library Book Sale took place on April 7-8.
- April 16 – André Ristic gave a talk at McGill University's Wirth Music Building on his new opera, *Hockey Noir*, which blends hockey, contemporary classical music, and 1950s film noir.
- April 18– our own Bruno Paul Stenson gave a presentation on Expo '67 with the film society at Victoria Hall in Westmount
- April 19– mystery author Louise Penny gave a talk on her Inspector Gamache series in the New Residence Hall ballroom at McGill.

## 7. Toast to the Master, by David Dowse

David tells us the exciting story of how he first encountered Holmes, the Canon, and the Writings about the Writings:

*How I came to the Master?*

*The last meeting's toast to Sherlock Holmes given by Anne Millar touched me and got me thinking how I came to like Sherlock Holmes.*

*This is really testing my memory and they say at my age I am losing quite a few of those precious cells. To be honest, at first it wasn't the books but the Basil Rathbone films that grabbed me. Those cheesy propaganda tales with whispers of the sacred writings mixed in. Black and white films of the master detective, his bumbling but loyal sidekick, and the magical solution to baffling crimes solved in foggy London.*

Then, on a business trip to Atlanta, Georgia, I popped into a bookstore and ran into a copy of *Naked is the Best Disguise*. It was the first *Writing on the Writing* that I had ever experienced. It challenged my analytical mind and I devoured it. I never knew anything like this existed and I wanted more. My eyes were opened and suddenly I saw a plethora of Sherlock Holmes story critiques out there. I went on a buying spree. I think I was at a stage in my life where I wanted to make a serious commitment to something, and Sherlock Holmes became my obsession.

I found out about the Bootmakers of Toronto and I desperately wanted to share my Sherlock Holmes passion with others. So I joined. I drove the long snowy highway to TO to attend several of their meetings, but it did not completely satisfy me. Somehow it was too remote, too temporal; I wanted something and someone closer.

It has been said of me that I am not shy. I wrote a letter to the Bootmakers asking if there were any members of the society who also lived in Montreal. The name I got was of a Wilfrid de Freitas. What an interesting name!

I rang him up and asked if we could meet at my parents' house in Dorval. He arrived and we instantly connected. Sherlock Holmes was the force behind one of my most lasting friendships in my life. Thank you, Sherlock. I give you Sherlock Holmes! To the Master!

## Show and Tell

### 8. "A dapper little man..."

Thomas and his brother Alexander will go see *Sherlock Gnomes* soon. It is hoped that they will report back at our next meeting. Louise also mentioned her interest in comics and cartoons.



*Sherlock Gnomes and Gnome Watson*

### 9. "...and the singular affair of the aluminium crutch"

Chris brought his copy of Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*, in which a high-powered rifle disguised as an aluminium crutch is used in an assassination attempt on Charles de Gaulle. He very kindly refused to spoil the suspenseful ending for those who have yet to see it. He also shared a book on politics in old New York, when it was still New Amsterdam.

### 10. "...to carry about a portable...Calendar"

Wilfrid brought a tiny calendar of the year 1900 ("with compliments from Sherlock Holmes"), given to him by Andy Fusco, BSI, who makes one every year to distribute at the annual BSI Weekend each January. A lively discussion followed about whether or not the year 1900 was a leap year. Chris noted that 2000 was the first "century year" to be a leap year. Several other members noted that other calendar systems follow different ways of making up for lost time, reminding Paul of the phrase "la semaine de trois jeudis."

### 11. Toast to Dr Watson, by Chris Herten-Greaven

Chris reminded us of Watson's personable nature, and the horrifying possibility of what may have happened had Holmes cohabitated with a different doctor:

*A man amongst men, a man's man, when, because of the meanings at the time, there was no need to explain what this meant. By a fluke of fate, an off-chance, resulted in Sherlock and Dr Watson sharing lodgings. The fact that Dr Watson was married, on occasion, and would move in and out of 221B Baker Street, is not dwelt upon by either of them, nor was there any question that Sherlock and one of the Mrs Watsons had any obscure friendship (or more) with any of them, much less was there even a hint of any relationship between Sherlock and Dr Watson (or anyone else). Each story was squeaky clean; no innuendo.*

*It should be remembered that gay relationships, especially between men, were regarded as a crime in Britain till at least the 1950s, attracting very harsh penalties. Conan Doyle would no doubt have been aware of this, though it was non-contributory in his many tales and adventures.*

*It is quite clear that this was a working partnership; each partner cared for the welfare and safety of the other, although Watson always deferred to the occasional patronizing remarks by Sherlock without a hint of resentment. One can only wonder what would have happened if Sherlock had partnered with another medical practitioner, e.g.:*

*"Sorry, not tonight, Sherlock, my waiting room is full of patients; I won't be through till at least ten!" Or  
"Sorry, Sherlock, but I start at six a.m. tomorrow, and I'm operating till at least noon!"*

*It was almost too good to be true, Watson's infallible, usually seamless integration into Sherlock's hectic and unforeseeable life adventures. He was the quintessential dependable, learned companion; he was almost his alter-ego.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, please raise your glasses to toast Dr Watson!*

[Your scribe has some further historical research and book recommendations in Appendix I connected to Chris's toast.]

## **12. "I was on the lookout for a chance of escape."**

Anne shared her and Mélodie's experiences at the Ministry of Cricket (and Other Homeless Sports), located at 1301 Mazurette. They very nearly escaped from a Sherlock Holmes-themed escape room (see ad/backstory for the room on the next page). It was recommended that members form some small groups to attempt the escape room for themselves. A description of the Ministry and guidelines for booking the escape room are available at their website: <https://www.ministryofcricket.ca/room-escape-montreal-sherlock-holmes-mystery/>

# THE OLD POST

LONDON'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

Page 3 EXCLUSIVE!  
Ministry of Cricket & Other  
Homeless Sports opens  
NEW ESCAPE ROOM!

Est. 1869

Monday 4 May, 1891

Price 6d

## Sherlock Holmes Missing!

- Detective & sidekick missing for 9 days!

- Scotland Yard in race to stop murder!

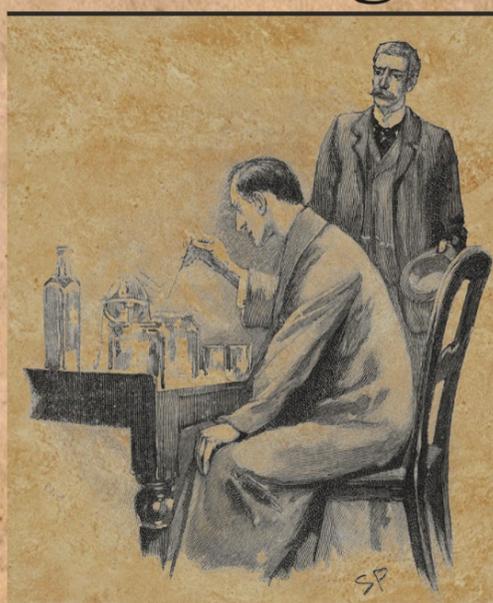
Scotland Yard have launched an immediate investigation into the disappearance of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson after Britain's most famous detective and his assistant were reported missing this morning. In a mystery worthy of one of Holmes' most peculiar cases, police

were called to 221b Baker Street, Westminster, where they received an anonymous telegram stating they have just hours to prevent a murder. Inspector G. Lestrade of Scotland Yard, leading the case, said, "I can confirm a missing persons report has been filed for Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson. Conditions at their flat at this time, the length of time since their disappearance, and the threatening nature of this telegram mean we are treating this case as gravely serious."

Baker Street has been sealed off while police search area. The Prime Minister has been notified. "We have our best officers on the case and will work around the clock to solve it," added Lestrade. "I would urge any members of the public who may have seen something suspicious to come forward as soon as possible."

- Montreal Sherlock Holmes Museum pays tribute. Public pouring in, page 3.

- Professor Moriarty resigns as Durham Chair, page 7.



*Advertisement for the Sherlock Holmes-themed escape room at the Ministry of Cricket*

### 13. "Let me recommend this.."

Anne also shared her copy of Éric Desmarais's novel *A Study in Aether*, purchased at the Ottawa Comiccon. She also recommended the cello heavy metal band *Apocalyptica*.

### 14. Toast to the Woman, by Kristin Franseen

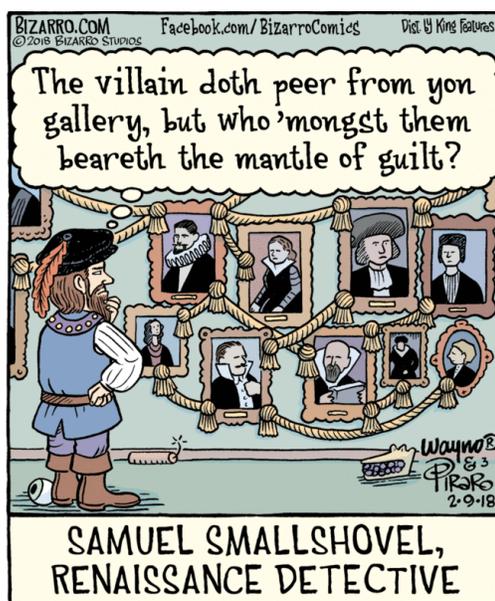
Kristin talked about Irene Adler (Norton) represented an important lesson to Holmes early on in his career about the difference between theory and practice.

*I want to talk about the importance of Irene Adler to Holmes as a reminder. In the opening pages of The Valley of Fear, Holmes told Watson that Fred Porlock's importance was not in and of himself, but what he represented as a link to more concrete proof of Holmes's suspicions. As the antagonist (if decidedly not the villain) of the first of Watson's short stories about Holmes, Irene presumably encountered Holmes fairly early in his career, when he was still developing his system for detection and organization. He thinks he knows how to predict what women will do in a supposed emergency, but nearly all of his conclusions about Irene ultimately fall short. There are other stories where he either fails to catch the perpetrator or, due to new information about their character, decides to sympathize with them. There are other stories where he underestimates others (or overestimates his original assumptions without evidence). But there are only a few times in his self-invented career where he consciously holds on to some aspect of a case as a reminder for the future. While he is never one to dwell on past clients or antagonists once their problem is solved, he does clearly value what they continued to represent years (and, one presumes, decades) later. Just as we do not necessarily need to hear Watson whisper "Norbury" or reread Moriarty's "Dear me, Mr Holmes" note in*

subsequent cases, Irene's message that people do not always act in ways one would expect reverberates across the Canon. Irene Norton hopefully had a long and happy life outside of the pages of Watson's stories, but *The Woman* remained to serve as a reminder of the gap between theory and practice. To the Woman!

**15. "A certain unexpected vein of pawky humour."**

Louise shared a recent *Bizarro* comic strip that appeared in the *Gazette* on February 9. It features Samuel Smallshovel, Renaissance Detective, looking at a gallery of paintings and attempting to determine which of his suspects "beareth the mantle of guilt."



**16. Toast to Mrs Hudson, by Rachel Alkallay (and performed by Paul Billette)**

Rachel wrote (and Paul performed) a stirring toast to Mrs Hudson, which began with what is surely an accurate dramatic interpretation of Mrs Hudson attempting to cheer up Holmes.

*"Oh, I'm sure something will turn up. A nice murder. That'll cheer you up."*

*This was the attitude that endeared Mrs. Hudson to the world's most famous consulting detective. Accepting, placid, calm - and with a cooking flair that would rival Mrs. Beeton - Mrs. Hudson stoically bore the - shall we say little quirks? - of Sherlock Holmes: the bullet holes in the wall, the street urchins dusting up her hallway with snippets of information, the callers - famous, infamous, veiled, unveiled, excitable, violent - dropping in at decent and indecent hours of the day and night.*

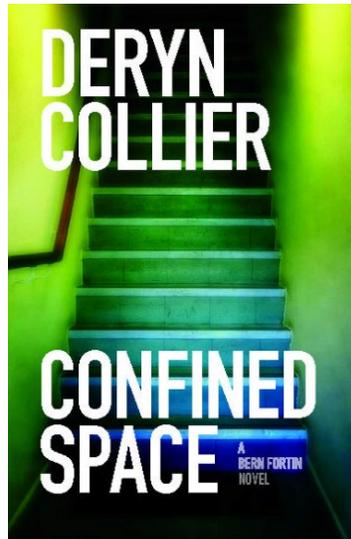
*Not to mention the violin-playing. Oh, the violin-playing! And the comings and goings of Dr. Watson. In, out. In, out. What is a proper English landlady to do but keep her exasperating tenant well-fed and well-fluffed (we presume she did his laundry and his pillows) to ensure that his reputation remain intact for Victorian times and beyond?*

*I give you the exemplary English landlady, Mrs. Hudson.  
To Mrs. Hudson!*

**17. "I had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories."**

Our guest, Deryn Collier, shared a copy of her first novel, *Confined Space*, as well as some thoughts on her inspirations, love of Golden Age detective fiction, and plans for a future podcast and book. Inspired by her past job in a brewery (and her childhood love of Nancy Drew), *Confined Space* follows an ex-CF commander and a brewery safety official as they uncover the truth behind a supposed "workplace accident" in a small town in British Columbia.

Deryn's new project is largely inspired by the life and works of her great-aunt, June Mary Lucy Grant, who wrote a newspaper column and several audio essays for the CBC (and who will appear as a detective in Deryn's current work-in-progress). The podcast explores questions around what mystery stories do and why people continue to love them. She will explore the tropes and conventions of the mystery genre, as well as Montreal history. She hopes to incorporate soundscapes from her research, including excerpts from June's audio essays and a short recording from one of our meetings.



*Cover of Deryn Collier's debut novel, Confined Space*

**18. "The Russian embassy would pay an immense sum"**

Miyako shared her thoughts on BBC1's new drama *McMafia* (showing on AMC in Canada). The series, created by James Watkins and Hoss Amini and based on Misha Glenny's book *McMafia: A Journey through the Global Criminal Underworld*, follows a legitimate investment fund manager named Alexander Godman (played by James Norton) dragged into the world of the Russian mafia (and its connection to several international politicians) after the death of his less-than-law-abiding Uncle Boris. She asked us to consider how Holmes might view today's social media and the rise of "fake news." We pondered several instances of fake news in the Canon, including Col. Moriarty's letters in EMPT, as well as the many times Holmes uses a false notice in the papers to capture a suspect (LAST, BRUC, and 6NAP). Wilfrid mentioned that the Canon had been brought up recently at the UN, in connection with how the British and Russian governments responded to the poisoning of an ex-Russian double agent and his daughter in an English pizzeria. [Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia compared the British government to the "hapless" Inspector Lestrade, while British Ambassador Karen Pierce responded that bringing Russian scientists "into an investigation where they are the most likely perpetrators of the crime... would be like Scotland Yard inviting in Professor Moriarty."

[Your scribe wonders what Inspector Alec MacDonald, who, it should be recalled, once had a pleasant chat with Moriarty about eclipses and borrowed a book from him, would make of such a comparison.]

For the rest of Miyako's report on new British media, please see Appendix II.

## Quiz and Story Discussion

### 19. Quiz on “The Engineer’s Thumb” prepared and presented by Raf Jans

Results:	1 <sup>st</sup> Kristin	51	Deryn's <i>Confined Spaces</i> (and pressed flowers from Miyako)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Carol	43.5	Anthology of espionage stories (and flowers)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Chris*	36.5	Anthology of detective stories (and flowers)

[\*Note: As per last meeting's agreement, the tie between Wilfrid and Chris was broken with the new rule that an observation of some controversy or inaccuracy in Watson's account (or a connection to some other historical event or piece of media) may result in the awarding of one bonus point at the discretion of that meeting's quizmaster.]

### 20. Discussion of the Story

Several members noted that this story was slightly more violent than many others in the Canon. Miyako submitted some musings on the story, including some research on the value, use, and colonial origins of the monetary unit “guinea,” which you can find in Appendix III.

Thomas commented that this was the first Holmes story he has read, and that he liked it.

Wilfrid shared an actual agony column from a nineteenth-century issue of the *Times*. No engineers—hydraulic or otherwise—were reported missing on that day.

### 21. Toast to the Society, by Anne Millar

Anne muses on what the society asks of us all:

*After several irregular years' attendance, I have finally felt moved to give a tribute to the Society itself. The Bimetallic Question asks so very little of me that I cannot help but enjoy it. Of all the volunteer organizations that I seem to fall in with, it's easily the easiest to deal with. You don't ask that I start working on your projects at 7am, on days off, and run til dark-- if anything, I try and cut and run early from work to be on time. I don't have to run a box office, cajole strangers with surveys, build props for photoshoots, lift and carry tables and chairs and dining accoutrements for 60--- a few scribbled words now and then is nothing at all. We gather, to talk, to listen, to socialize-- and so I am very pleased to be among you, to offer tribute to--- the Society.*

[Anne also asked your scribe to note that she was incredibly flattered by how many of the night's toasters cited her February toast to the Master as inspiration: “My Holmes toast being mentioned repeatedly was a (good) going-to-spontaneously-combust-from-blushing moment.”]

### 22. Close of the Meeting

Raf adjourned the meeting at 9pm.

### Appendix I: Holmes and Questions of Victorian and Edwardian Sexuality, by Kristin

The mention of sexuality and innuendo in Chris's toast reminded me of some resources I've come across over the course of my dissertation research, which might be of interest to members of this society. First, Montreal has an incredible trove of knowledge on modern British history (and the history of sexuality) in Prof. Brian Lewis, who co-chairs the Montreal British History Seminar, a group of historians, students, and history fans from Montreal universities, CEGEPs, and the wider community. Lewis also teaches courses at McGill on modern British history (including a survey “from the Glorious Revolution to Brexit”) and seminars on British LGBT history. Lewis is an expert on the life and writings of poet, sex reform activist\*, and prison reformer George Cecil Ives (1867-1950). Ives kept meticulous journals and scrapbooks for most of his life. He was also friends with E.W. Hornung (Doyle's brother-in-law and creator of Raffles), and some have suspected his interest in crime and secrecy may have inspired Hornung to create Raffles. (In a recent conversation I had with Lewis, he remarked that he was unable to find evidence of this in Ives's papers, although he is still corresponding with some Raffles and Holmes scholars.)

One of the things that *is* in Ives's papers is an intriguing quote, which I suspect is the earliest surviving comments about Holmes and homosexuality. In a moment of self-analysis, Ives notes that his awareness of public opinion about homosexuality (and the actions of clubmen, police officers, and others in public and private all made him "The Sherlock Ho[l]mes of a 1000 little peculiarities." (This quote is cited in the conclusion to Matt Cook's book *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*.)

Society members (like me) who read the line about it always being 1895 in Vincent Starrett's poem "221b" might also be interested in Nicholas Freeman's *1895: Drama, Disaster, and Disgrace in Late Victorian Britain*. Although much of the book focuses on press coverage of Oscar Wilde's indecency trials, its aim is to provide context for how newspaper readers learned of all sorts of news, including the weather, sports scores, racing results, and political scandals. Freeman also gives a lot of information about the political biases and motivations of specific papers, editors, and reporters (which might also be relevant to our discussions of "fake news" in today's media).

[\*Note: "Sex reform" was a catchall term for a wide range of issues revolving around progressive social attitudes towards sexuality and gender in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These could include greater social acceptance of homosexuality, access to reproductive healthcare, more equitable divorce law, promotion of general health education, "free love," and universal suffrage.]

## **Appendix II: *Totally British* Report, by Miyako**

Given the uncertainty in today's world—including Brexit, the expansion of Vladimir Putin's power, and the chaos in the USA—I really feel that people are looking for an image of defiance and strength. *Darkest Hour*, stars Gary Oldman as Winston Churchill. CNN has been promoting this film a lot on TV, and I can't believe my eyes! Gary Oldman looks so much like Churchill, due to a face mould and makeup, and his acting to portray Churchill is top-notch (especially his speech!). As we all know, Conan Doyle wrote "His Last Bow" in 1917 during World War I. In this film, it is the early 1940s. This film is about Churchill's desire to fight against Hitler, while facing great pressure from his own political party to pursue peace at any cost. The film also focuses on two ladies, Mrs Clementine Churchill (played by Kristin Scott Thomas) and Churchill's secretary Elizabeth Layton (played by Lily James, better known as the happy-go-lucky rule-breaker Rose MacClare on *Downton Abbey*). History was written by men most of the time, but as this film shows, there were countless ladies who were real heroes during the war, dedicating their entire lives for war efforts and not being able to tell their families what they were doing (like the ladies who worked at Bletchley). Let us hope that more films about these women will be created in the future.

Speaking of *Downton Abbey* actors and actresses, do you remember Phyllis Logan, who played Mrs Elsie Hughes (later Mrs Carson)? Her latest role is Linda in *Girlfriends* on ITV. This six-part miniseries focuses on the lives of ladies over 50. As baby-boomers are aging, more and more shows are created to show older characters and show real people tackling today's problems. In this story, Linda's husband disappears, and she needs help. She's basically a stay-at-home mother, and her children have left the house to become independent. Everything seemed okay until her hubby vanishes from a cruise ship, and she discovers the reality that he had been badly managing their finances. Her girlfriends themselves have problems, including age discrimination and caring for grandchildren and aging parents. 61-year-old Logan plays a character so close to home in today's society, with such depth. What do these caregiver ladies need the most? *Girlfriends* and their social network and support!

The March 2018 issue of *Totally British* offers information on many new shows. In our Sherlock Holmes society we have some train enthusiasts, and the British television host Michael Portillo's new travel show might interest you: *Great American Railroad Journeys*! There are 20 episodes to show how people can travel by train all over North America, including here in Canada! And guess what Michael carries with him? A nineteenth-century travel guide: Appleton's *Guidebook to the United States and Canada*! You can see Michael standing on top of CN Tower in Toronto as well. He talks

about the history of the areas he visits (like Salem in Massachusetts, for example), but he was really impressed by North American railway trains and realized how old-fashioned trains are here compared to Europe. He thinks trains here are more comfortable, the food is better, and railway travel is really very attractive. Michael, a one-time Conservative cabinet minister in the House of Commons, doesn't really have much time to talk politics with local Americans and Canadians due to the tight timetable for shooting (and the show's focus on travel). A must for railway fans! I'm wondering if Conan Doyle used Appleton's guidebook when he came to North America on speaking tours.

As for Victorian and Edwardian period shows, Dame Helen Mirren's latest film, *Winchester: The House that Ghosts Built*, offers a story of Sarah Winchester's ghosts in San Jose, California. Her fortune came from the Winchester rifle's sales, and Sarah decides to build what turns out to be a prison/asylum for countless vengeful ghosts!! Personally, I've lived in California for many years, but never visited this Winchester House. (Maybe I should have!) But I heard about this mansion and the mythology around Sarah Winchester, who was very private and obsessed with the idea of ghosts. I suppose she had a guilty conscience to have all that money which came from the sales of weapons! Sarah kept building and building hundreds of rooms, believing that she could contain ghosts in them!

For fans of detective shows, I'd highly recommend the 5th season of *Endeavor* on ITV (in the UK) and PBS (in the US)! The original writer, Colin Dexter, passed away last year. Shaun Evans plays young Inspector Morse, one of Britain's great TV detectives, and the excellent and solid writing captivates viewers! Enjoy the setting of Oxford in 1968!

### **Appendix III: Reflections on "The Engineer's Thumb," by Miyako**

This story, I think, is a rather rare case for Holmes (in fact, a failure??) because when Holmes, Watson, Mr Hatherley, and the police went back to the country house, they discover it is ablaze and the criminals were already gone! Mr Hatherley says ruefully, "...I have lost my thumb, and I have lost a 50 guinea fee, and what have I gained?" When I read the Canon, I was wondering, "50 guineas??" Normally, people in Britain used shillings and pounds in the Victorian era, so I checked. Basically "guinea" was a British gold coin, but it was taken out of circulation in 1813. One guinea was worth 21 shillings (£1.05). But during the Victorian era, "guineas" were still used in quoting professional fees (as in this story). So, 50 guineas means £50. 25, or 1050 shillings. I wondered how much that could be in today's money. On PBS, a scholar in England and a Canadian Sherlockian said that £1000 in the Victorian era is worth about \$85,000 in today's money. So, Mr Hatherley's expected fee would be worth over \$4200 today. Indeed, it's a lot of money for a young man of "not more than five-and-twenty," and, as Holmes says, he got "more experience" from this fiasco!

So, why did the British call the gold coin a "guinea"? Because the gold coin was originally made of gold from Guinea, the coastal region of West Africa, where the British had colonized what are now Cameroon and Angola. Even the name of money shows a bit of history!

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, June 7, 2018, at 6:30 pm. Due to our guest presentation on the history of fingerprinting by Toronto G&S aficionado Sheryl Mercer, we will have a slightly shortened quiz and abbreviated show-and-tell-period.

Contributions? Corrections? Blatant Americanisms? Contact your humble scribe at: [kristin.franseen@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:kristin.franseen@mail.mcgill.ca). Those who plan on contributing toasts, original fiction, and/or lengthier reports are especially encouraged to email their texts as soon as possible to be included in the minutes. I welcome creativity and contributions from old and new members alike! Longer reports may be edited and/or condensed slightly for space, as space is limited to 10 pages (5 sheets of paper).