



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

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

## Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question February 1, 2018

**Date of our next meeting:** Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 6:30pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC H3Z 1G1.

**The quiz at the next meeting:** *The Engineer's Thumb*, from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, prepared and presented by Raf Jans.

**Next meeting's toast presenters:** The Master: David Dowse; Dr Watson: Chris Herten-Greaven; *The Woman*, Irene Adler: Kristin Franseen; Mrs Hudson: Rachel Alkallay; The Society: Anne Millar.  
*Dear toasters, please send your April 5th toasts to our Scribe, Kristin Franseen. Thanks!*

**Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question** held on Thursday, February 1, 2018.

**Present:** Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Mark Altosaar, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Kristin Franseen, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Anne Millar, Elliott Newman, Karl J. Raudsepp, Bruno Paul Stenson, James Turner, Ronnie Zilman

**Regrets:** Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Louise Corda, Wilfrid de Freitas, Vivianne Lewis, and Arlene Scher

**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

Rachel would like the record to show that she was present at our December meeting.

Susan begs our forgiveness for the typo of “Rick” instead of “rich” in David’s response to ILLU, but notes that it makes for a nice shoutout to *Casablanca*, one of her favorite films.

### 2. Finances

Paul presented the Society’s financial statement as of December (see Appendix I). On a related note, all members (and those who wish to become members) are gently reminded to pay their dues for 2018. Checks (payable to “The Bimetallic Question” should be sent/given to Paul Billette. Dues for 2018 remain \$25 for individuals and \$35 for families.

As a means of fundraising, Bruno (and Rachel) also suggested that we consider adding a “split the pot” raffle to future meetings.

### 3. Quizzical Suggestions

Chris proposed that future quiz writers consider two possible additional sections where perceptive readers could score additional points:

1. Noticing anachronisms/inaccuracies in the story. (For instance, would the coins found in MUSG really have been made from a metal that would rust? Could they have been contaminated in

some way?)

2. Coincidences between details in the story and items from other media before or since the publication of the Canon. A lively discussion followed as to whether or not the weapon in *The Day of the Jackal* could have been an intentional reference to the “aluminum crutch” Holmes mentions in MUSG.

#### **4. Event Brainstorming**

Several members pondered the possibility of returning to the recently re-opened Willow Inn. Chris offered to put his lamb barbecuing skills to use, while Karl wondered if we could find someone to write a murder mystery dinner for the occasion.

#### **5. Thank you!**

Rachel wishes to thank Miyako, who made and circulated a beautiful pressed-flower get-well-soon card for her at the dinner. Thanks also to all members and guests who signed, and best wishes to Rachel for a speedy recovery!

#### **6. Potential Amendment?**

Susan noted that our current by-laws forbid the introduction of toasts to other figures, such as the Hound, Moriarty, any of the Inspectors, or Arthur Conan Doyle. While this was originally instituted to prevent the Society from becoming known as a drinking club, we may wish to revisit this in the future if members feel inspired to add or substitute in new toasts in the future.

#### **7. Reflections on the Dinner**

Responses to the dinner were overwhelmingly positive. Thank you to all members and guests who attended, and also to Paul (for organizing), Heather (for securing the speaker), Susan (for her contrafacta), Anne (for writing the skit), and all those who participated in the toasts and entertainment. Many noted that the food (especially the vegetarian option) was better this year, and the microphone vastly improved everyone’s enjoyment of the entertainment and speakers. Some observed that there is a lot going on in the evening, and suggested we may wish to consider limiting toasters and speakers more carefully in the future. There was also a slight issue with the Atwater Club’s projector, which gave the streets of early twentieth-century Montréal a slightly pinkish hue. Overall, however, everyone agreed that the dinner was a great success, the speaker a lovely and fascinating scholar, and the evening absolutely delightful.

For next year: Paul has strongly encouraged us to remain at the Atwater Club, especially as they do not charge us extra for room rental. Possible guest speakers proposed for next year include photographer Brian Merrett (whose work can be seen in the recent book, *Belles demeures historiques de l’île de Montréal*) and historian/crime novelist Judith Flanders (who has spoken at McGill a few times in the last year on the histories of Victorian domestic service and “traditional” Christmas celebrations).

#### **8. Toast to the Master, by Anne Millar**

Anne steps away from playing the game for a moment to remind us of the meaning of Holmes-as-fictional character to her upon first encountering the Canon:

*Tonight, I will not play the game.*

*I will not act as though Sherlock Holmes, our reason for assembling, is anything other than fiction.*

*Believe me, I love playing at the reality of the unreal, but tonight I will forgo the pleasure.*

*Sherlock Holmes, as a fiction, has meant a lot to me. His eccentricities, his learned fascination with the macabre and the bizarre--when I first devoured the stories and novels in high school, Holmes was a talisman against loneliness.*

*Here was a character completely out of step with his society, wrapped up in obscure and strange facts-- and he has the respect of his associates, a driving purpose, and a friend, who, though not at all the same in character, gets along fine with this weird egg.*

*And over 100 years later, this character, unlike so many predecessors and followers, is still read and studied and liked.*

*So the dangerously honest confession is this: Sherlock Holmes was a great hope-- if he could be liked, and conceivably have friends, so would I.*

*To Sherlock Holmes.*

## **Show and Tell**

### **9. Sherlock Holmes: My Life and Crimes**

Karl strongly recommended the pastiche *Sherlock Holmes: My Life and Crimes*, by Michael Hardwick. Purporting to be Holmes's secret memoirs, the book follows what "really" happened during the Hiatus, when Holmes and Moriarty apparently faked their deaths in order to engage in some espionage for Mycroft. He observed some similarities between the depiction of German scientific experiments and the recent PBS series on Albert Einstein. (Your humble scribe will also add that this is one of the first pastiches she read, along with *The Seven Per-Cent Solution*, that made her feel slightly sorry for Moriarty.) Karl also noted the vast number of contributions Michael and Mollie Hardwick have made to Sherlockian pastiche, adaptation, and scholarship, noting that he next plans to read *The Private Life of Dr Watson*.

### **10. Moriarty Brings Down the House**

Kristin mentioned that the third book in historical romance/mystery author Anna Castle's "Professor and Mrs Moriarty" series (her Moriarty marries a con artist and retired music hall singer) was released as an eBook and in paperback in January. Castle's books follow the Moriartys as they foil (and occasionally commit) various types of financial crimes, usually solving a murder or two in the process, much to the consternation of Sherlock Holmes. The first book, *Moriarty Meets his Match*, focuses on investment fraud; the second, *Moriarty Takes his Medicine*, focuses on medical quackery; and the third, *Moriarty Brings Down the House*, is about the money that goes into putting on a Christmas panto. Castle recently mentioned in her email newsletter that she is considering writing some short stories that focus more on Holmes's interactions with Moriarty in the backdrop to various Canonical stories.

### **11. The Man Who Killed Kennedy and JFK**

Chris recommended Roger Stone's and Mike Colapietro's *The Man Who Killed Kennedy*, which proposes that LBJ was involved in the infamous assassination. In a similar vein, Anne also recommended the new opera *JFK*, which she described as "a dream, a love story, and the Russians take over the moon with glitter vodka."

### **12. Toast to Dr Watson**

Carol reminded us of Dr Watson's great storytelling ability and echoed Mycroft's sentiments of "hearing of Sherlock everywhere since [Watson] became his chronicler":

*Please raise your glasses to the esteemed Dr. John Watson. To Sherlock Holmes he was many things:*

*Companion, Confidant, Comrade, and Chronicler.*

*In "The Greek Interpreter," Mycroft remarked to Watson, "I hear of Sherlock everywhere since you became his chronicler!" We too would mourn the loss of Sherlock Holmes adventures were it not for Watson's gift of storytelling.*

*Watson serves as a foil to Holmes: the ordinary man against the brilliant emotionally-detached analytical mind that Holmes is, but Watson was still more, the one person Holmes could depend on—one who would come when Holmes needed him, the one soul Holmes could call friend.*

*Watson was indeed Holmes's friend—I would consider myself lucky to have such a true and loyal friend. Holmes said it best: Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age. It doesn't even begin to scratch the surface. To Dr. Watson...*

### **13. The Map that Changed the World**

Chris also recommended Simon Winchester's *The Map That Changed the World*, a history of geological maps through the life and work of English geologist William Smith (who created the first geological map of England and Wales).

### **14. Season's Greetings!**

Paul thanked Miyako for the lovely handmade holiday card she sent to the Society with her dues.

### **15. Toast to the Woman**

Elliott gave the thrilling conclusion to the toast he began at our dinner, provocatively suggesting that Watson is using the idea of Irene as "the woman" to intrigue readers into being interested in Holmes, conveniently neglecting Holmes's various lapses in judgment over the course of SCAN. He also noted Patrick's contributions to Irene Adler scholarship in identifying the church at which Adler and Norton were really married.

*For the uninitiated, The Woman is Irene Adler, a character in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story, "A Scandal in Bohemia," first published in Strand Magazine in July 1891. The premise of the plot is simple: Sherlock Holmes is hired by the Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, the hereditary King of Bohemia to get back a photograph of his former mistress Irene Adler and himself which would offend his fiancée and place a pall on their forthcoming marriage. The pall is due to Adler's coming from a lower class. Having just reconnected with the now-married Dr. John Watson, Holmes is outfoxed at every turn by Adler and it is she herself who averts the anticipated scandal in Bohemia by fixing her attentions on Mr. Godfrey Norton, her very new husband. Irene's beauty and brilliance combine to win Holmes's admiration.*

*But none of the above explains satisfactorily why we obsess over The Woman. How is she more than just another character in a canon richly overflowing with characters?*

*According to Watson, "In (Holmes's) eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex."*

*Really? Are you kidding me? What does this childish hyperbole mean anyway? Can you see it? Can you paint a picture with these words? If you do, it would have to be X-rated out of sheer desperation. The net effect of this emptiest of innuendos is to captivate us, to ensnare us in the myth of what is to become the very real Sherlock Holmes. It is both empty and brilliant. Certainly, the statement is unsupported by the story. And since Irene Adler appears in no other stories in the canon, we will never know quite what Watson means, other than we are to give our complete admiration and perhaps awe to her.*

*Completely a propos Irene Adler, Holmes avers, "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data." But when it comes to Irene Adler, hasn't he done just that? Obviously, he has not gathered sufficient data on Irene Adler to appreciate fully her pure genius, although he has a few notations about her in his office Rolodex. I kid you not. A filing system of personalities on cards. You see, I have gathered data. It's in the story.*

*A further blooper on Holmes's part is his conviction that he has heard Norton, upon dashing from Irene's flat, commanding the hack driver to head for St. Monica's, an entirely fictional church.*

*Since St. Monica's never existed, may we infer that Irene never married Norton, and Holmes's presence as witness to their wedding was a complete fabrication? Obviously, he has been so overwhelmed by her beauty, described by the king as "the face of the most beautiful of women" and confused in the same sentence when she is said to have "the mind of the most resolute of men." Poor, misguided Holmes. This mixture of opposites which are not opposites because they are in different categories, and once again, quite unverifiable, obviously puts him off his game. According to Klinger, it was a century later that the mystery of the location of the nonexistent church was set right when one Patrick J. Campbell identified the place as the real-life Marylebone Presbyterian Chapel near Baker Street. By then, of course, Holmes was very old, was keeping bees, was given to covering himself in layers of blankets on hot days, and was convinced he was Ian McKellan playing a role to excess.*

*More on Irene Adler leaps out at us when in the same story, Holmes chastises Watson with "You see, but you do not observe." Well, ha! Right! Does not Holmes himself commit this folly when going through the charade of the smoke bomb in her flat, a transparent ruse intended for her to reveal where she has hidden the photograph? Well? While being such a smarty-pants, Holmes fails to observe Irene observing him, confirming her suspicion as to his identity and purpose. Holmes even fails to realize that with Irene's incognito greeting, "Good night, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," the game has lost its feet and has begun its death rattle and we can, thanks to her, make no more excuses for the World's First Consulting Detective, Mr. Sherlock Holmes.*

*So, (1) if Irene Adler can so easily make chopped liver (we're at a banquet tonight, after all) of the brilliant Sherlock Holmes, and (2) if the plot is as simple and transparent as Holmes's disguise as the Simple-Minded Clergyman, where are the substance, artistry, and mystery that I believe we attribute to the canon?*

*They begin at the beginning, in the art of the writing, and the complexity of ideas that have created the canon, and particularly, Irene Adler. Before meeting her, Watson tells us that Holmes "loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul." According to Klinger's report from Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (1894), Bohemians are those "of loose and irregular habits, living by what they can pick up by their brains." This applies to both Holmes and to Adler whose somewhat sketchy reputation may qualify her as "loose," and whose movements, when we can follow them, are highly irregular. And so, embedded in the story three years before the appearance of Brewer's dictionary definition, is the mystique of Irene Adler and her link with Sherlock Holmes. With such imagery in total synch, with their spheres in obvious ratiocination, how could two such bohemians have failed to meet in a story pertaining to Bohemia? There is more here than meets the eye. We need to observe. Always.*

*Dear Friends,  
I give you ... the Woman*

## **16. Gunpowder**

Miyako brought our attention to the new historical drama *Gunpowder*, starring *Game of Thrones's* Kit Harrington. In it, Harrington depicts his possible ancestor Robert Catesby, one of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot. We discussed the connections to tonight's story in terms of the lingering shadow cast by the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, as well as the judicial means used to justify later executions of monarchs and other political figures in the time of the divine right of kings. A summary of Miyako's bimonthly on British media (especially period and crime dramas) can be found in Appendix II.

## **17. Toast to Mrs Hudson**

Ron gave Mrs Hudson some much-needed recognition for putting up with the "worst tenant in London" (especially when one considers the mess that opens MUSG):

*Mrs. Hudson is the landlady of the house 221B Baker Street, in which Holmes lives.*

*Mrs. Hudson is a woman who wants the home to be clean and tidy, and often fights with Holmes for this. Watson describes her as a very good cook; in "The Naval Treaty," Holmes says "Her cuisine is a little limited, but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotchwoman, which some readers have taken to mean that she is Scottish, and others that she cannot possibly be. Other than one mention of her "stately tread", she is given no physical description or first name, although she has been identified with the "Martha" in "His Last Bow." Watson described the relationship between Holmes and Hudson in the opening of "The Adventure of the Dying Detective":*

*Mrs. Hudson, the landlady of Sherlock Holmes, was a long-suffering woman. Not only was her first-floor flat invaded at all hours by throngs of singular and often undesirable characters but her remarkable lodger showed an eccentricity and irregularity in his life which must have sorely tried her patience. His incredible untidiness, his addiction to music at strange hours, his occasional revolver practice within doors, his weird and often malodorous scientific experiments, and the atmosphere of violence and danger which hung around him made him the very worst tenant in London. On the other hand, his payments were princely. I have no doubt that the house might have been purchased at the price which Holmes paid for his rooms during the years that I was with him. The landlady stood in the deepest awe of him and never dared to interfere with him, however outrageous his proceedings might seem. She was fond of him, too, for he had a remarkable gentleness and courtesy in his dealings with women.*

*In film and television adaptations of the stories, Mrs. Hudson is usually portrayed as an older woman; on rare occasions she is presented as a young woman. To Mrs Hudson!*

#### **18. Sherlock Holmes at Oxford(?), ACD in Montréal, and Mrs Hudson in Toronto(????)**

Raf shared his copy of Nicholas Utechin's *Sherlock Holmes at Oxford*, which purports to settle the university debate once and for all. On a more serious note, he also read an excerpt from the *Montreal Star's* account of Arthur Conan Doyle's speech at the Canadian Club in 1914 on the subject of "Literature and Literary Careers," and gave an impromptu toast to Doyle. Following the toast to Mrs Hudson, Ron also shared an advertisement for a "Mrs Hudson to the Rescue" offering cleaning, packing, and decluttering services in the Toronto area.



#### **19. Little Thinker**

Susan brought to the meeting a Sherlock Holmes doll made by a company called The Unemployed Philosophers Guild as part of their *Little Thinkers* collection, which also includes Gandhi and Virginia Woolf dolls, but unfortunately as yet no Dr. Watson or Irene Adler dolls.

#### **Quiz and Story Discussion**

##### **19. Quiz on "The Musgrave Ritual" prepared and presented by Anne Millar and Kristin Franseen**

|          |                       |      |   |
|----------|-----------------------|------|---|
| Results: | 1 <sup>st</sup> Raf   | 60   | Irish Breakfast tea (and pressed flowers from Miyako) |
|          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bruno | 43.5 | English Breakfast tea                                 |
|          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Carol | 41.5 | David's Organic Breakfast tea                         |

## 20. Discussion of the Story

Several members noticed various problems or inconsistencies with the idea of the Musgrave estate being so unchanged over several hundred years (and/or the Musgraves just being that unobservant). Karl wondered why no one noticed the ring in the cellar (either a century earlier or just when searching for Brunton). David and Ron were surprised that none of the Musgraves figured out what the instructions could possibly mean at any point earlier, with David suggesting that perhaps a hereditary strain of the most illogical sort ran in the family. Chris observed the Canonical detail of one of the Musgrave ancestors inconveniently dying before he could pass on the meaning of the ritual to his heir. Miyako also pondered the fate of the crown following the execution of Charles I and Charles II's time in exile. She notes that the Granada adaptation provides a slightly different take, showing Holmes and Watson both going to Sussex to meet Musgrave, with the incident taking place over their weekend visit.

Puzzles involving wood and trees played an important role in both the story and our discussion. Carol wondered why the firewood stored in the cellar wasn't ever actually used. Chris brought up the historical meaning of "by hook or by crook," wherein peasants were allowed only to collect dead wood from their master's estate, as well as the story of Charles I hiding in a tree. Carol and Bruno also discussed whether or not it would be feasible for the oak tree to be the same size in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In writing the quiz, Anne and Kristin wondered whether or not the mention of Brunton "having wronged [Rachel], perhaps worse than we knew" and Rachel fleeing the country "with the memory of her crime" might be a reference to pregnancy. Bruno, suggesting a real medical diagnosis for the debunked "brain fever," brought up the possibility of PTSD, while Ron noted it could be something like syphilis. Miyako adds that the Granada adaptation dramatically depicts Rachel's suicide, while things are far more ambiguous in the Canon.

Finally, Raf reminded us of the perennial university debate. Where exactly did Holmes spend his college years?

## 21. Toast to the Society

While there is no evidence that Holmes ever engaged with the Sherlockian societies that formed in his later years, Kristin suggests that he may have sought to promote his "trifling monographs" on motets among the nascent International Musicological Society and American Musicological Society:

*In past months, we have looked at various societies in the Canon, ranging from the respectable Diogenes Club to the less reputable Amateur Mendicants' Society and the outright criminal Red-Headed League. Today, however, I would like to consider Holmes as a possible member of societies. It is unclear whether he ever became a member of Mycroft's Diogenes Club or the club(s) where Watson played billiards, or if he corresponded with the Sherlock Holmes Society of London or the Baker Street Irregulars in his later years. He may, however, have sought out academic societies as an outlet for his various "trifling monographs." In early November, I was fortunate enough to attend and present at the 83rd annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in Rochester, New York. The International Musicological Society and the American Musicological Society were founded in the 1920s and 1930s. British musicologists and music critics were active in both organizations' early conferences, and, as we all know, Holmes's monograph on Lassus's motets was supposedly "the last word on the subject." Les Klinger argues that, while Holmes may have done the research on the subject in 1894-1895, it is possible the monograph remained unpublished even decades later. (Not to dispute with either Holmes or Watson, but I should add that one of the professors at my alma mater, David Crook of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, wrote his dissertation on Lassus in the mid-1990s.) In a recent anthology of essays on the composer, editor Peter Berquist notes "one regrets the non-existence of Sherlock Holmes's monograph."*

*Would Holmes have shared his notes on the subject with others in musicology? His interest in the subject might point to his attendance at Cambridge, as the choir at King's College was one of the few places in the nineteenth century where one could hear what has since been termed "early music." Cambridge scholar Edward Dent was one of the early presidents of the IMS. Daniel Francis Tovey and J.A. Fuller Maitland certainly wrote to other scholars. Rosa Newmarch wrote program notes for several concerts that Holmes and Watson could have attended in London, most notably the famous "Proms." While it is unlikely as the decades progressed that Holmes may have made a habit of overseas travel for academic conferences, we have seen that he could have been called out of retirement for service to his country—perhaps (as it did for Moriarty in the films *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *A Game of Shadows*) travel to society meetings could have served as a cover for other activities? To the society!*

## **22. Close of the Meeting**

Raf adjourned the meeting at 9pm.

### **Appendix I: Financial Statement from Paul**

Opening balance JAN 1 2017 : **\$641.42**

Closing balance DEC 31 2017 : **\$894.00**

Total Receipts : **\$2675.00** (consist of dues, SH Dinner, and book sale).

Total Expenses : **\$2442.42** (consist of plaque for trophy, *Gazette* ad-discontinued this year- Photocopies, stamps, SH Dinner, cards, and Mrs. Hudson's cart).

### **Appendix II: *Totally British* Report from Miyako**

Well, it's not Holmes, but Hercule Poirot is returning for the holiday season with *Murder on the Orient Express*, with all A-list actors/casts from all over the world! Literally, I mean all fantastic actors' names make my head spin! (Johnny Depp, Dame Judi Dench, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Poirot is played by Sir Kenneth Branagh!) This novel was published in 1934 and became one of Agatha Christie's most famous and beloved mystery stories. I do hope young viewers (teenagers included) would discover the charm of mystery and learn about the world history of that time.

Mary Berry, the star of *The Great British Bake-Off*, has her new show, *Mary Berry's Country House Secrets*. Through her expertise about food, she visits Britain's manors and gardens to introduce the lifestyle in the countryside to keep the British tradition going strong. *Downton Abbey* fans would love to see the episode of Highclere Castle, I bet!

The January issue of *Totally British* is featuring a new programme, *Julie Walter's Coastal Railways*, for viewers to see the beauty of the British Isles! We have some railway enthusiasts in our Sherlock Holmes society, and it's a perfect programme to watch and enjoy, especially when Julie takes a ride on the very famous Jacobite steam trains in Scotland, known as the "Hogwarts Express" by Harry Potter fans. Harry Potter fans enjoyed looking at an amazing view of Glenfinnan Viaduct when characters took the Hogwarts Express. I'm certain that Julie and the TV crew chose the spot to raise the rating. As we all know, Mrs Hudson was a Scotswoman; therefore, I'm imagining she could have had the opportunity to take the Jacobite trains when she went back to see her relatives or friends there sometimes?? I'd love to take the West Highland Line trains someday, and I know that keeping the steam engine lines is one

of the resources of tourism today, especially for the train enthusiasts who think of the railways so romantically and nostalgically. We can still imagine how Victorians during Holmes's times took those trains. Personally, I'm a fan of *Poldark*, so Julie's episode in Cornwall from Saint Erth to Saint Ives really gives us viewers more ideas about the story's landscapes! Lovely and stunning beauty!

On Netflix, *The Crown* series was one of the biggest hit TV shows in 2017, winning two Golden Globe awards! As I was watching the Queen's X-Mas greeting speech on TV, it's really remarkable to know that Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip have been married for over 70 years! Well, the show *The Crown* portrays a very different picture of course, but when they were younger, they had many difficult moments, and the creator/writer Peter Morgan is really merciless on the characters who struggle to have sanity in a very difficult situation. And, in a way, through this show, young people can certainly learn more details about the British history in the 1950s, such as the Suez Canal Crisis, the Pro fumo scandal, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's rise, fall, and public humiliation, and the big social change after World War II. Even normal marriages hit turbulent moments, and Elizabeth and Philip are really having a hard time in the second season of this series! These days, royal family members seem to be content, and 2018 offers the birth of the third child of Prince William and Kate, and the wedding of Prince Harry. I'm certain the Queen is content and happier.

As a period drama fan, I'm looking forward to the upcoming ITV series *Vanity Fair* (based on William Makepeace Thackeray's novel). There are many versions of this show already, but I'd like to see how Olivia Cooke plays the heroine Becky Sharp in King George VI's court.

Speaking of Dame Julie Walters again, her latest film, *Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool*, offers the romance between a Hollywood star and British younger lover. How romantic!

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, April 5, 2018, at 6:30 pm.

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 promptly and fully included in the minutes.