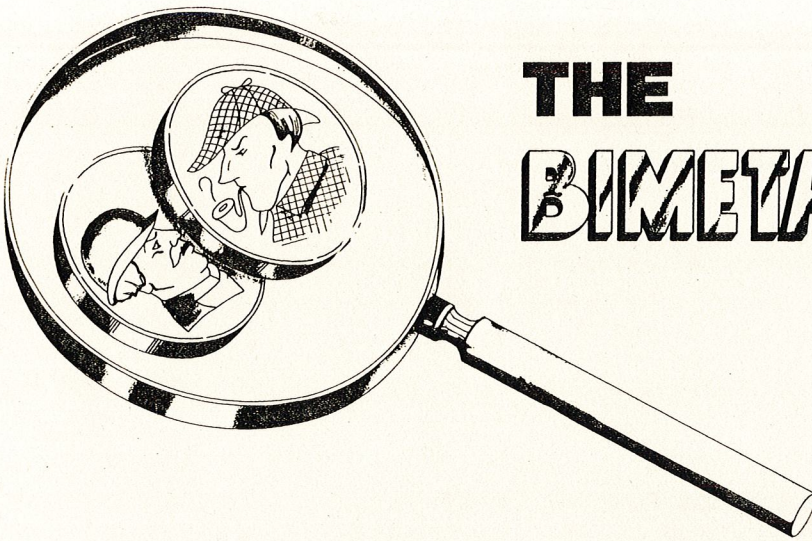


6 OCT 2004



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower  
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

November 4, 2004

Welcome

to another newsletter of the Bimetallic Question  
wherein Mrs. Hudson takes us into a  
forbidden corner of her Victorian  
cuisine and in so doing reveals  
the darker side of her palate.

To the familiar strains of Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* theme music, we pan in on the three-quarter back view of a shortish woman, more approaching the latter boundary of middle age than having just left its beginning. She is neither stout nor thin; in fact, she is rather formless as she bends over a concatenation of utensils bubbling and gurgling on her vast stove. An array of herbs and spices, and a pearl-grey earthenware jar of salt cram the beautifully-grained yew table beside the stove. One of the lathe-turned legs is slightly askew, although it has been solidly in place for nigh unto a half-century, and will no doubt continue to provide yeoman's service for eons beyond its present owner's time.

This is the domain of Mrs. Hudson whom Oscar Wilde would never accuse of behaving as though she had a past and who comes to us in a confluence of visual, olfactory, and emotional sensations as the engineer who provides the fuel for the redoubtable engine that drives Sherlock Holmes, the WGCD, and the Boswell who follows, shadows, opines, complicates, elucidates, and eats.

The sun is streaming its brilliant and welcoming rays through the crystal-clear window in the center of the far wall, creating a slowly sliding parallelogram of near-white light onto the stove, as though the attention of the universe must needs rivet itself on what happens there. The brouhaha subsides somewhat as Mrs. Hudson stirs, dollops, adds, subtracts, stands back, unfurrows her brow to reveal a complexion and topography of skin as smooth as an infant's. She sighs.

This is a fine day for crow.

~~http~~  
[HTTP://RADIO-CANADA.ca](http://radio-canada.ca/REFUGE)  
/REFUGE



### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. at:

The Westmount Public Library  
(Westmount Room)  
4574 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec

**The Next Quiz: The Final Problem**, prepared by **David Kellett**

**Minutes** of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec.

### **Present:**

Everyone who was there. This included:

Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, David Dowse, Elliott Newman, Arlene Scher,

### **Regrets:**

Stanley Baker, Wilfrid de Freitas, Joan O'Malley

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Our Sovereign Paul Billette called the meeting to order promptly at 6:35 p.m.

- 1) First toast was by Paul Billette to the Master.  
Paul had canvassed certain members beforehand to ask them to prepare toasts.  
We are pleased to reproduce these texts in the following minutes.
- 2) Maureen and Patrick are working on a list of story titles comprising quizzes from the past. This much-needed project will help us fill in the gaps in our own knowledge of the canon by reminding us of stories we have overlooked in the administration of our quizzes. If released before the upcoming holiday season, it will certainly bring Joy to the World. If released after the New Year, it will most likely bring Perennial Gladness. Thank you, Maureen and Patrick.
- 3) We resolved to include our web site address in all newsletters. You will find it at the bottom of the last page. If you can't wait, it's [www.bimetallic.org](http://www.bimetallic.org)



- 4) David Dowse recounted the first meeting between himself and Wilfrid de Freitas to found the society 25 years ago. This momentous event was photographed and written up by a reporter from the *West Island News and Chronicle*. We hope to include the article and photographs on our web site. Almost certainly, vestiges of this reportage may appear in our commemorative volume, right, David? We can't wait.
- 5) David Kellett, with concurrence from David Dowse, said he did not like the movie "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen." Released within the past 18 months and pursuing a long and happy half-life in video stores, we see Sean Connery as Alan Quartermain and a collection of well-coiffed fictional characters sprung from the pages of *Boys' Own Annual* (we wish!) banding together to rid the world of evil and traveling between England and Africa. Elliott Newman (some would say a fictional character, but Elliott would protest) professes to have no standards at all and claimed to have enjoyed the movie very much, especially Sean Connery's lisp or slur which seems to be becoming more pronounced as he weathers the cameras over the decades.
- 6) In **Show and Tell**, David Dowse shared his impressions of the analytical methods of the fictional sleuth Dr. Thorndyke (The name alone evokes pain and dysfunction. Do we agree, Dr. Freud?). Forensically active during the 1880s, Dr. Thorndyke operated according to a "cut-and-dried formula," David told us. David added that we miss the Holmesian (my Word Thesaurus doesn't like this word, so we may substitute "Holmesmanesque" for little additional satisfaction) atmosphere. A decided lack of camaraderie between Thorndyke and his assistant makes for a far less satisfying dimensionality of character than we find in the WGCD and Watson. Less intricate were the plots, enabling David to solve a few of the stories. David outlined the Thorndyke story formula involves starting in the present and working backwards. This is easy enough, since we are given all the clues.

Elliott asked: Why is Holmes so popular while Thorndyke is relatively obscure?

David replied that people believed Holmes was real. He was seen as a champion of the common person.

Patrick Campbell included that (the mystique) that contributes to the popularity of Holmes is that he is never properly described. His creator goes only so far in endowing him with mannerisms.

(Doesn't the Lone Ranger have more evident motivation than Holmes? Holmes's idiosyncrasies are like metal threads in the tapestry of his identity. His fussiness is our exasperation and we love him for those quirks. But there are too many unanswered questions about him. Because he provokes, because his causes are admirable, because he falls and rises again, because he triumphs on the side of right, we accept and demand him. This gives him dimension and credibility.)



David Kellett said that Holmes was a humanist while Thorndyke was a forensic detective.

David Dowse continued that Thorndyke carries a scientific box with him. His cases presage the forensic programs we have been seeing on television since *Quincy* and including *CSI*. You can find out more in *Dr. Thorndyke: His Famous Cases As Described by R. Austin Freeman*. Pub: London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1929 (written in the 1880s). These 37 stories will transport you back to a precursor of Holmes and in many respects, will present a satisfying and challenging read.

- 7) Following the subject of forensic medicine, Rachel opened a discussion on "the perfect murder," referring to the drowning of a mental patient by an orderly in a Montreal-area hospital.

Paul noted that in cases like these, "the little grey cells of Inspector Poirot" were called for.

- 8) David Kellett recounted an amazing coincidence. While working on the second toast ever he was to deliver to the society this evening, his copy of *Canadian Holmes* slapped through the letter slot. This issue contained the first and only other toast he had made, years before. Here is David's new Toast to Watson:

*It wasn't until the very last minute, that I was asked to do this. Paul and I played musical answering machines and computers, so it was only yesterday that I knew I had to do this and that it would be Watson. As a result I don't have a formal toast; so if you'll bear with me I'll just ruminate a little. All the toasts to Watson stress his steadfastness, his loyalty, his good nature. But think about it. It must have been damned difficult to put up with someone like Holmes. I mean really; a man who finds it amusing to decorate the walls with a bullet-pocked V, who keeps his correspondence impaled on the mantelpiece with a knife, his tobacco in a slipper, and takes heroin and cocaine to alleviate his boredom. Please! Yet Watson puts up with all of it. There is an axiom. Talent recognizes genius. I'll repeat it so you're sure: talent recognizes genius, and I believe that we have an operative example of this here. But make no mistake. Holmes values Watson's friendship very deeply. There are other friends. There's Mycroft, but he's a brother, and Holmes, whilst not a misogynist, has little use for women. So there's only Watson, and that deeply-held friendship is symbiotic for both. This is often overlooked, leaving Watson to be regarded not only as Holmes' partner in crime, and his Boswell!*

*So that's what I propose. A toast to the man as a friend; something that he really was. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you*

*Dr. John Watson, Friend*



- 9) Rachel has been in touch with the money person at the Montefiore Club whose hospitality we had enjoyed for our 2003 annual banquet. This time, a per-capita price of \$43 was quoted. Various opinions:

Rachel: Montefiore has a Victorian character. We were crowded at the Vieux Port.

Patrick: Can we find out what the house wine is?

The Montefiore was one of the best places we have ever been to, although I have always enjoyed the Vieux Port.

David Douse: I liked the Vieux Port. It's cozy, intimate, smaller.

We have had a relationship with the Vieux Port for about 10 years. They have a choice of three plates, and excellent desserts.

Maureen: I felt hemmed-in at the Vieux Port, although they offer more variety.

David Kellett: We should have a vote.

- 10) Patrick has all 28 volumes of *Canadian Holmes*.

- 11) Patrick continued with two items from our last meeting, and a new one.

- (a) Under what circumstances, if any, would the title of (medical) doctor be used in Victorian England?

ACD himself answered this question in "The Field Bazaar," an apocryphal story involving the WGCD, written in 1896 to raise money for the enlargement of Edinburgh University's cricket ground. The story appeared in the university's magazine, *The Student* on November 20, 1896. Referred to in Peter Haining's collection, *The Final Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, pp. 80-81.

The answer: As a Bachelor of Medicine, Watson was not eligible to be called "doctor."

- (b) The solution to second item from our last meeting is in "The Second Book of Daniel," the story of Bel and the dragon in which the king prays to the idol of a Babylonian dragon. Daniel slays the dragon and destroys the temple. Found in *The Apocrypha*, pp. 111-112, verses 3-22, and referred to in "the Golden Pince-Nez" of the Canon, p. 473.

- (c) Did ACD anticipate or influence the invention of the wristwatch? Patrick read "The Man of the Watches" which appeared in *Strand* in 1898. (According to one Sherlockian, *Strand* was "canon fodder." We wonder aloud: what, then was "canon mudder?") The story involves the murder of a man on a train who had six watches one of which was strapped to his wrist: "In his pocket ... and one small onset in a leather strap and fastened around his left wrist." (Isn't it nice when the quotation bears out the assertion?)



Cut to Santos Dumont, possibly the first man to fly in a hot air balloon and dirigible. According to historian Sherwood Harris, Dumont went aloft in 1899, and in 1901 flew from St. Cloud to Paris and back. In 1905, he flew in the first successful heavier-than-air ship. We are interested in Dumont's exploits not because we are adding aeronautics to our focus of passion. Rather, it was Dumont's request to his friend Cartier that interests us. In 1901-1902, Dumont asked Cartier to fashion a watch he could wear on his wrist, to keep his hands free while navigating the dirigible. This was done, and it became the first recorded use of the wrist watch, some three years after ACD's use of it in "The Man of the Watches."

- 12) Maureen told us she collects cookbooks and has some very old ones. Paul said he had seen a collection of old cookbooks in the national archives in Ottawa.
- 13) David Kellett mentioned that his birthday was to be celebrated the day after our October meeting. He confidentially outlines some of his birthday plans. We wish David a hearty congratulations and Herculean strength in carrying out these plans!

13) **YE BIMETALLIC QUIZ.**

Winners of the Quiz, The Adventures of the Red Circle, prepared by Carole Abramson.

1) David Kellett with 26 3/4 (Book - The Sherlock Holmes Triviography and Quiz book "Kathleen Kaska").

2) David Dowse with 26 4/15ths (Single size teapot with tea).

3) Patrick Campbell with 24.5.

Next story is **THE FINAL PROBLEM**, with the quiz prepared by David Kellett

- 14) We performed a dramatic reading of ACT II - Scene 5 of a play by Patrick Campbell was read by the following individuals:

Jack - Rev. Keed

David Kellett - Holmes

Mrs. Mawby - Rachel

Const. Elderfield - Carole Abramson.

Inspector Pragnell - A. Cher (Guest who attended meeting with Carole).



Rachel made a toast to something brilliant. Unfortunately our notes aren't clear enough to determine on whom. (It may have been to the Society, or to Holmes)

Jack made a toast to Mrs. Hudson that was from Dr. Watson in "The Dying Detective," page 48, we believe.

*There is a Chinese proverb saying that the man may be the head, but the woman is the neck. She's the one who controls what direction the head moves.*

*To the woman who successfully oriented Holmes in the wrong direction.*

### **Mrs. Hudson's Corner**

Mrs. Maureen Hudson has graciously pointed our palates in the direction of crow this time. Yes, we understand that the scoffers among you will scoff. Others will gag. Still others will convert to The Way of the Vegan. But for the brave souls who dare venture into the realm of what has always been above us and under which we have donned inexpensive, broad-brimmed hats, we offer not jest, but crow. As in "Crow, Crow, Crow your boat ..." "Four-and-twenty blackbirds in a piece of pie." "Eat crow." "Something to crow about." "Old Crow." "Jim Crow." "Crow Indians."

The best way to find out all you need to know about crow is go to:  
<http://www.crowbusters.com/recipes.htm>

We have borrowed the following filleting exercise and recipe from their web site.

#### **How to Prepare a Crow**



It will come as little surprise to anyone that even the biggest crow doesn't make much of a meal. However, the fact that it is often possible to take large numbers at a time can compensate for this. Since a morning shoot can easily net from 10 to 100 birds, you want to limit the amount of time necessary to clean each bird. Put out of your head any idea of plucking a crow like you would a goose or duck. Besides the breast meat, there just isn't enough edible meat on a crow to make it worthwhile. Using the technique described below, you can extract the best meat of a crow within a minute or two with very little mess.

1. Lay the crow on its back in front of you with its head pointed to the right.
2. Take a finger and locate where the breast bone meets the upper abdomen.
3. With a sharp knife, make a cut across the cr+++ow (wing to wing) below the breast bone. Don't be concerned about cutting too deep, no edible meat will be damaged with this cut.



4. Holding the birds feet with your left hand, place 2 or 3 fingers under the skin where the cut was made and pull in opposite directions. The skinless breast meat should now be exposed.

5. Take the knife again and separate each breast half away from the bone starting in the middle and working outward. You should end up with 2 lime sized pieces of crow breast. Discard the remains properly.

The meat can now be frozen, marinated or freshly prepared.

(Dear Sherlockian friends, they show a small bowl filled with little red crow breasts, the size of big marbles. Accept this as an advisory.)

#### RECIPE



##### **Ingredients**

16 pieces of crow breast meat (no bones) (8 crows)  
16 pieces of green pepper  
16 cherry tomatoes  
8 button mushrooms  
8 ears of sweet corn  
1 1/2 cups of Teriyaki sauce  
1/2 cup melted butter  
8 kabob skewers

##### **Preparation**

Cut each piece of crow in half and place in a covered bowl with the Teriyaki sauce over night. Clean and cut each ear of corn into 3 pieces. Cook in boiling salt water for 10 minutes. Alternately put corn (3 pieces), green peppers (3 pieces) and cherry tomatoes (3) along with 4 pieces of crow meat on each skewer. Use 1 mushroom to top each skewer. Brush with melted butter and place on preheated grill for about 4 minutes. Flip, butter again and place back on grill for another 4 minutes. Repeat one last time for a total of 12 minutes or until they appear done. *Serves four adults.*

As you can see, we of the Bimetallic Question, with the help of Mrs. Hudson, will leave no stomach unturned in bringing you items of interest.

**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, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, at 6:30 p.m.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to  
[www.bimetallic.org](http://www.bimetallic.org)