



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
June 2, 2005

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on:
Thursday, August 4, at 6:30 p.m. at:

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

The Quiz at the next meeting

“The Sussex Vampire”

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, June 2nd, 2005 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Rachel Alkallay, Mac Belfer, David Dowse, David Kellett, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner

Regrets: Stanley Baker, Paul Billette, Joan O'Malley.

Special thanks: to all those who showed up. It's exhausting and embarrassing to take notes of a meeting when no one is there.

CALL TO ORDER:

Our ex-Sovereign David Dowse called the meeting to order promptly at 6:30 p.m.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION:

- 1) David Dowse surveyed the sea of five expectant faces, and took quick action by asking, "Except for the Holmes canon, what is your favorite mystery story?" If our meeting notes serve us correctly, Erica Penner responded with *The Davinci Code* and another novel entitled *Angels and Devils*, by the *Code's* author, Dan Brown.

Mac Belfer's vote went to the novels of Raymond Chandler and his very unique protagonist, Philip Marlowe. Mac also gave honorable mention to P.D. James.

David Kellett said that except for the canon, he doesn't read any more. However, his favorite mystery story is Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue." David reminded us that Poe is credited with inventing the mystery story.

Elliott Newman opted for *Mystic River* by Dennis Lehaine because of the poetic power of Lehaine's prose. A seasoned, if young writer whose fame had rested heretofore on his Kenzie-Gennaro mysteries, Lehaine broke through a few boundaries with *Mystic River*, blazing a new trail away from the terse and familiar "hard-boiled" detective style of the Chandler genre. See the Oscar-winning movie for the plot, the intricate story, and the magnificent portrayals of the leading characters. Read the novel for a rare and surprising treat that combines edge-of-your-seat suspense with incredulity and masterful writing.

Rachel Alkallay particularly likes *Call for the Dead* by John Le Carré. Rachel also cited works by Robert Goddard, the British writer of psychological period mysteries. One such example is *Past Caring* in which Sir Winston Churchill appears as a character in the Boer War.

David Dowse answered his own question with *Whose Body?* By Dorothy L. Sayers. This work is the second in a series after *Strong Poison*. It involves a body that has been discovered on a rock by the sea, with clues as to its identity and manner of death hidden in different places.

- 2) David Dowse offered the first toast to the Master, "here in spirit."
- 3) SHOW AND TELL
 - a. David Dowse teased us with an object, introducing it by, "I have something under this tablecloth that you will covet very much. To identify it, you will each ask a yes/no question. We'll go around the table with your questions until you guess what it is."

We went through the standard questions such as: "Is it a vegetable?" "Was it ever alive?" "Did it ever visit Minsk?" and so on, until David Kellett became quite convinced it was a two-part item, and said he knew what it was.

David was right and it turned out to be a most remarkable and imaginative Sherlock Holmes teapot (Does this elevate or diminish the image of the WMFCD?). The cover and finial were Baskerville Hall, and the sides represented the illustrated covers of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and *The Valley of Fear*.

David Dowse pointed out, with the Holmesian scholarship for which he is justly noted, that the images on the teapot are somewhat misleading. They were, he said, a composite of three unconnected images:

- (1) The illuminated figure is Holmes as seen by Watson on the moor. Such happenstance never happened.
- (2) The entire hound is outlined in a glow. Rather, parts of the canine's body were rubbed to bring out the spectral effect.
- (3) Homes and Watson are seen hunched together, but in a context not shown in the Paget illustration, not suggested in the prose.

Notwithstanding these grievous errors, David was right about our covetousness. We all seriously coveted that charming porcelain creation. However, David wrapped it up and took it away with him at the end of the meeting, for some reason.

- b) Rachel provided us with news about Colin Semel, our cherished, exuberant thespian and vaudevillian who has regaled us with song and entertainment, anecdote and reminiscence over the years. Due to the organizational efforts, patience, and stamina of Maureen Anderson, our own Mrs. Hudson, Colin has relocated to a seniors residence in Outremont. In failing health, Colin found it difficult to remain in his third-floor walk-up on Fairmount Street, even though it was across the road from Montreal's oldest bagel bakery. We are not certain if he will remain his new abode, since he is having some adjustment challenges there. One of the amenities is a budgie which is thus far nameless and may one day be breakfast. Colin would dearly love to hear from us. Here's where he is for now:

Colin Semel
1904 Van Horne Avenue, #232
Telephone: 738-2665

- c) David Dowse showed us a framed post card of Reichenbach Falls.
- d) David Kellett shared a collection of photos showing former BmQer Bruce Holmes' being inducted into the Bootmakers Club (The Toronto Sherlockian society). These were taken recently at Clyde's in Pointe Claire. At that get-together, Tom spoke of life in Halifax.
- e) David Kellett produced a photocopy of the article "Mysterious Circumstances," subtitled "The Strange Death of a Sherlock Holmes Fanatic," Richard Lancelyn Green, which appeared in the December 13, 2004 edition of the *New Yorker* magazine. David loaned it to a BmQ member.

- f) David also produced a tape of *Murder by Decree*, along with *CSI – A Holmes Mystery*, and *L.A. Confidential*.
 - g) David Dowse showed us a full-sized mounted replicated poster sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Railroad, originally produced in the 1890s. It advertised fares for traveling to various destinations around the world. Because of what we today would term racial stereotyping, this poster cannot be shown, even for its historical interest.
- 4) David Kellett administered his quiz based on “The Adventure of Abbey Grange.” The quiz consisted of 30 questions and a tie-breaker and was preceded with a marrow-freezing proclamation by David: “It’s quite difficult.” There was a possible 73 points.

The winners were:

First:	Erica Penner	53
Second:	Rachel Alkallay	38
Third:	David Dowse	33

The prizes were (all novels):

Maeve Gincy, <i>Trilogy</i>
Dan Brown, <i>The Davinci Code</i>
Oscar Wilde, <i>A Life in Letters, Writing, and Wit</i>

D. Dowse thanked D. Kellett “for a thought-provoking and challenging quiz.”

- 5) Rachel recounted the mysterious story of returning a debit card she had found at a bank machine.
- 6) David Dowse expressed a problem he had with the credibility of part of the quiz story: Why did Mary Fraser come to England from South Australia? Her complaint that the structured society is strangling her was simply not credible. Furthermore, David is convinced she was a gold digger on the prowl for a wealthy husband. And – hold onto your hat – David suspects that Mary colluded to kill Sir Eustace. She was not the type to wait a year for her gentleman friend to come back. She manipulated events in order to take the money and run. Finally, David believes she was the kingpin and deceived everybody.
- 7) The next quiz, to be prepared by Erica Penner, will be based on “The Sussex Vampire.”
- 8) The meeting broke up at 8:50 p.m.

MRS. HUDSON'S CORNER

Leaving no ladle unturned, Mrs. Hudson has once again dug into the archives of her famous Victorian cuisine for this one:

MRS. HUDSON'S CORNMEAL PORRIDGE

Ingredients:

- 4ozs. Cornmeal
- 1 pt. water
- 1 cup milk
- Salt to taste, nutmeg, (vanilla optional, however highly recommended)
- Sugar to taste or fat-free condensed milk
- ½ teaspoon salt

Method:

- Mix cornmeal in ½ pt. water
- Bring remainder of water and milk to boil and stir in cornmeal and salt
- Cook for about 10-12 minutes
- Sweeten to taste and add nutmeg and vanilla
- Serve hot

ADDENDA

To paraphrase the American bucolic poet Robert Frost, "Something there is that doesn't love a blank page," or Macbeth: "Is this a blank page I see before me?"

The point, dear friends, is that in order to save the planet from blank pages, you are hereby invited to send in your book reviews and comments about detective, crime, and mystery fiction that is dear to your heart. You can deal with why you did or didn't like a story or a book, or even a part of a book. You can compare a book with another book or even a painting. You can compare and contrast a book with its film version. You can describe how lovely the lilac spine of one book blends in ever so subtly with the puce spine beside it on the shelf of your simulated white birch Ikea Sven cabinet under the Olaf lamplight. Even prose and poetry are welcome. If poetry, try to inject a little blood. Or an absence of blood, as in this gruesome couplet by urban poet Pinto Rhodes in "Alley Death:"

Drained it was and passing fair

This well-knifed cadaver in the summer's air.

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, August 4th, 2005, at 6:30 p.m.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org

