



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES of the meeting of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION October 2, 2008

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, December 4th, 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 Adventure of the
Golden Pince-Nez"**
prepared by Carol Abrams.
This meeting's quiz: "The
Adventure of the Cardboard Box"
prepared by Roger Burrows.

Call to service

As you'll appreciate the administration of the Society's business is taken care of by a committee comprised of a few volunteers, working primarily behind the scenes. As the positions on the executive are held for a period of two years, it is now time to call upon any other members of the Society who would like to step forward and contribute their talents in any of the following capacities:

Sovereign	(president)
Shilling	(vice-president)
Half-sovereign	(secretary)
Florin	(treasurer)
Half-crown	(Mrs. Hudson)

So, if you've ever had a hankering to be a coin (and who hasn't) do let us know by phone (514-935-9581), e-mail (info@bimetallicquestion.org) or in person at the next meeting. (Thanks to Wilfrid for his creative wordsmithing)

Annual Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner

This annual festival of Sherlockiana traditionally takes place on the third Saturday of each New Year. This year's feast is scheduled for Saturday, the 17th of January, 2009 at the Montefiore Club at the same reasonable tariff at last year, \$43 per person. Further details will follow by e-mail and regular mail. A planning meeting for the event has been scheduled for Tuesday, the 9th of December. If you would like to contribute ideas, songs, puzzles, games, speeches, limericks, etc, please contact Kathryn Radford at the meeting on December 4th, or Jack Anderson by phone (514-696-2603) or e-mail jack.anderson@bellnet.ca

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, October 2nd, 2008 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abrams, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Patrick Campbell, Wilfrid deFreitas, David Dowse, Chris W. Herten-Greaven, David Kellet, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner, Arlene Scher, Fiona Sorel.

Regrets: *Elles/Iles ne regrettent rien sauf que Paul Billette qui voyageait dans la ville du petit moineau*, Cheryl Surkes who has gone to London to visit ..., and Kathryn Radford.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called promptly to order at 6:35 by Jack Anderson.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Show and Tell, Doggs and Katz, Lords and Ladies, and And and And)

1. The Higher You Go.

The upper floors of the Sherlockian museum on Baker Street has wax figures from the different stories. Someone dared to observe that there are "tatty" exhibits above the pub. There are actually 17 steps going up to SH's rooms. Different people from around the world, with various diseases have left bite marks on the fake crumpets. In the sitting room, there is a picture of St. Paul's school. Jack Anderson's father went to that school. Jack has a picture of himself sitting in one of the chairs of this Sherlockian room. There is a Sherlock Walk, of course, which tourists and aficionados are wont to take in the area of Baker Street. Non-Sherlockians are confused by this, because they are hearing the homonymic equivalent and visualizing "Sherlock Wok" which of course would be an intriguing London-Chinese-Victorian eatery conjuring up Poitrine du Corneille à l'orange sucrée and other delicacies. These people and their ghosts have been wandering the area for years looking for a good place to eat.

2. **A Brolly by Any Other Name.**

Maureen Anderson was able to restore a found umbrella to its rightful owner, Arlene Scher. Since this transaction occurred during the "Show and Tell" part of our evening, we felt obliged to report on it.

Ever the sleuth, Patrick Campbell deduced that Maureen's kleptomania had induced her to take the umbrella but she recanted, and came up with the "somebody left this behind at the last meeting" story.

Who ya gonna believe?

3. **John Hancock Visits the BmQ**

Patrick Campbell asked us all to sign a Sherlockian memorabilia book.

Those of us who could, did.

Those of us who couldn't, taught.

4. **The Reichenbach Sanction**

Patrick informed us that a few years ago, a Swiss student who was going to McGill, had been attending meetings of the BmQ. That student eventually went back to Switzerland, and founded a Sherlockian society there, The Swiss Messenger. Patrick showed us a copy of their newsletter. The young man works for the Red Cross there.

5. **Analyze This**

Patrick asked us to rate the Sherlockian Granada programs starring Jeremy Brett. He does not want us to compare them with the stories. Rather, he would prefer that we rate them as television shows. At our last meeting in August Patrick provided these criteria, with "0" being the lowest score, and "10" the highest for each show.

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 0 | Didn't like it, turned it off |
| 1 | Watched reluctantly |
| 2 | Not particularly interesting |
| 3 | Not bad |
| 4 | Moderately entertaining |
| 5 | Entertaining |
| 6 | Very entertaining |
| 7 | Most enjoyable |
| 8 | Very good entertainment |
| 9 | Excellent |
| 10 | Absolutely splendid |

In between each number you can award numbers 1 to 9 as a further refinement, for example:

7.1 is just above "most enjoyable"

7.5 is midway between "most enjoyable" and "very good entertainment"

7.9 is just below "very good entertainment"

6. **Here/Not Here**

Patrick informed us that although he had been at the previous meeting of the society, he had not signed in. Therefore, the Lowly Scribe, ever a sickening

stickler for snippets of signatures, did not include Patrick in attendance. This matter is rectified herewith. Patrick, like Kilroy, was here.

7. **A Warren of Treasure Niches**

Jack Anderson visited New York City to witness the demolition of Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, and Shea Stadium in Queens. Does he love baseball? Tenants of Shea have included the New York Mets (baseball, 1964-2008), the Jets (football, 1964-1983), the Yankees (baseball, 1974-1975), and the Giants (football, 1975).

While in the Big Apple (*breathe*) Jack went downtown to Warren Street, and the new home of the Mysterious Bookshop. It reminded him of The Sleuth of Baker Street on Bayview in Toronto, below the 401. There are wingback chairs at The Sleuth, probably not enough for everyone to sit in at one time, and potentially a source of conflict among certain patrons. In addition, one of the cats in the Toronto shop has "expired" and will probably not revive. However, we happen to know that Maureen and Jack always have cats for adoption, and may consider breathing new life into The Sleuth in the form of a domestic feline of any size, shape, and color.

Back to The Mysterious Bookshop. If you haven't visited the shop or their website, you should. Their old location until two years ago, in mid-town, across from Carnegie Hall, occupied two levels of an ancient brownstone. You had to walk down a few steps to get in, then make your way past the cash at the entrance, and ceiling-high stacks of new paperbacks, and up to the second floor via a black wrought-iron winding staircase to the collectables section which included a sizeable Sherlockian area. All of this was as nothing compared with the huge, packed, dust-gathering nations of books behind a locked door and in a huge room. Books were everywhere in that private room, all the way up to the 12 or 14-foot ceiling. It was the owner Otto Penzler's office, when he was there. Books spilled over tables and desks, and onto the floor. They were on the chairs, beside the chairs, under the chairs. The furniture might have been semi-valuable antiques; at least, they were old and interesting. You couldn't tell for sure because they were covered – plastered, slathered, coated, piled over, dumped upon – with books, books, books – all old, not shiny. Was there a threadbare carpet on the floor? No one knew. No one could remember. There were books on the floor. Blizzards of books that could smother a house, a village. Landslides of books, laying waste to everything in their path. Books covering books eating books obliterating books.

The employee who had admitted me into that room explained that Otto Penzler had the bulk of his collection at his home in Connecticut. This stuff was nothing. Oh. I had recently spoken to him by phone and he had told me there was a certain lady in California he was interested in, and that he was off to see her. Shortly thereafter, The Mysterious Bookshop downsized to what Jack visited at 58 Warren Street. *Sic transit Gloria mundi*. But we do need a storefront, a place to serve coffee and hold readings for six people.

As some of you know, Otto Penzler is the publisher of the Mysterious Press, a division, your Lowly Scribe believes, of Bantam. It has produced some wonderful mysteries, and like willing cats, revived others for a second chance at life. He

continues to be very active in publishing. He co-authored a crimelit encyclopedia and co-won an Edgar. It remains to be seen how successful the physical bookshop will be in its present location. It's not far from city hall, Ground Zero, little Italy, and it's a block over from the Fountain Pen Hospital at 10 Warren Street, which is more like a museum of writing instruments. There are also shops where you can buy a shirt for three dollars.

8. ***Bric-à-brac***

Jack announced that he collected *bric-à-brac*. While we were waiting for the punchline, he showed us a comic book featuring Sherlock Holmes entitled *Scarlet in Gaslight*. He also showed a *Sherlock* magazine, and another magazine entitled *Mystery Scene* which he believes has stopped publishing this year.

9. ***Pastiche Ice-cream?***

Roger Burrows showed us a collection of four books by June Thomson. They are labeled *The Secret Files of Sherlock Holmes* and are pastiches.

10. ***Who?***

Patrick Campbell informed us that Isaac Asimov had been a member of a Sherlockian society in the US. He had been given the title "The Remarkable Worm," taken from a story in the canon. Patrick had written Asimov who wrote back saying he detested the title. He wrought his revenge by becoming famous and growing higher than a worm.

11. ***First Toast – To the Master***

By Fiona Sorel

In eighteen hundred ninety-five
when gallantry was still alive,
the world was a far safer place –
because of Sherlock Holmes.

Before Columbo and Kojack
when there was a case
they had to crack
who was on the fastest track?
Only Sherlock Holmes.

A hundred years and more have passed
since that timeless die was cast
and other sleuths have come and gone,
and made their mark –

But not for long!
So lift your voice and raise your glass!
And praise the one whose face will last!
Never let his memory pass –

Drink to Sherlock Holmes!

12. In Flagrate, Corpus Delicti

"I've done another outrageous thing," David Kellett began softly. "I've had my own tombstone carved ... and dated."

In a society of punchlines, we were politely waiting for David's.

Yes, another outrageous thing. So?

He showed us pictures of his grandparents' tombstones, that of Lord Baden Powell, and his own which he called "elegant and eloquent."

Oka-a-a-y.

According to the information on the sketch of the tombstone, David Kellett as we know him will have been no more in about three years. He will have shuffled off this mortal coil, kicked the proverbial bucket, turned his craft to pushing up daisies, gone to that great whatever in the wherever, taken up residence in a narrow plot of soil somewhere, become a grave man and food for worms.

Actually, the Divine Creator may decide to snuff him before then, but David has generously given himself three years. Since granite is hard to erase, we hope David's reckoning whether plus or minus, is nevertheless wrong.

What is to be done?

Should the Lowly Scribe do as they do in newspapers? Manicure an obituary beforehand so that on the fateful day, there it is – all compiled, massaged, shaped, contoured, skewed, barbed, pointed, lachrymal in the appropriate places, severely respectful and awed, listing next-of-kin, bequests to unheard-of foundations (who gets the Golf, David?), contributions to humanity, children in the woodwork? Do we keep on file that shot of David in the Himalayas with his signature jacket? Did he keep pets? A sparrow? Will scores of beautiful and mysterious women in black veils drift up to the casket and leave a black rose from a dollar store, cry softly, break into screams of hysteria, collapse across the the stern figure with the snooker (I know, I probably have this wrong too) fingers, and have to be dragged to the BmQ for a dollar's worth of port to steady them?

David, what have you opened up here? Jousting with Eternity is bigger than all of us.

But it sure provides grist for the mill.

Thanks again.

13. When the Lowly Scribe Was Not Eating Alice's Mushrooms

Hey, David Kellett: if you want more on the James Phillimore Society, there are over 34,000 references on Google.

Type in james phillimore society (note the spelling), *et voilà!*

The third site down will take you to Sherlockian.Net:Singular Sets of People, an essay by Bill Vande Water.

14. The Forger's Spell

Elliott Newman informed the society about a book he had read entitled *The Forger's Spell*, by Edward Dolnick. It's about the career of Han Van Meegeren, a Dutch artist of some talent but no artistic genius who specialized in creating forgeries of classical Dutch artists, particularly Johannes Vermeer. Van Meegeren operated in the years leading up to and including WW II. Aside from the millions he made from his deceptions, his claim to fame is that he was able to deceive the art-hungry Herman Goering and received more than 130 valuable old paintings in return for one of his forgeries. Van Meegeren's genius was that he was able to distract the viewer from the imperfections and inaccuracies that he knew the more astute would find in his forgeries. He created a counter-rationale

to “nothing could be that bad” by making it that bad – in only one or two places – on a canvas. So, while certain renowned experts were railing against these forgeries, others were just as stubbornly supporting their authenticity. The law came calling only when the Dutch police were hunting down Nazi sympathizers after the war. They discovered Van Meegeren’s name on a manifest of paintings belonging to Goering. They never suspected forgery. In fact, Van Meegeren’s life was at risk as a Nazi sympathizer, until he proved, in prison, that he was capable of producing the canvases he had sold. Although he was put on trial, he became a national hero of sorts, with a movement to erect a statue in his honor. He was given a brief sentence for forgery, but died of heart failure in prison, a hero. His story is a textbook on con artistry. The author, Edward Dolnick, had already won an Edgar for a book on the theft of Edvard Munch’s “The Scream.”

15. Buzz, Buzz, Buzz

Fiona Sorel told us about *The Beekeeper’s Apprentice*, by Laurie R. King. If you want to find out about SH’s declining and happy days, read this excellent book.

16. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by ?

This was extemporized.

It took us back to an earlier Afghanistan, and the twice-wounded hero of Maiwand.

17. Déjà Vu

Jack Anderson recalled a photo of his grandfather, an officer in the Black Watch regiment, sitting on a camp stool in Basra in 1915.

On television, he saw the same Black Watch regiment 90 years later doing duty in Basra.

18. Put This in Your Pot and Boil It

Marie Burrows received a cookbook as a birthday gift, *Dining with Sherlock Holmes*.

19. Coming Soon to a Logo Near You

Our society’s slogan, or motto, will be added to our logo (graphic symbol).

It is *venatio adest*.

It does not mean “Venice is to the East” or “Venice advertises in the East.”

It means “the hunt is on.”

Wot?

20. Caustic Isn’t Necessarily a Bad Thing

Wilfrid informed us that British publishers are still using acid-laden paper for their books. This means that the pages turn brown in five years. John Milton knew this and he still wrote copiously? What was he thinking?

21. A Tour in the Offing

Jack Anderson asked Chris Herten-Greaven to follow-up on his contact at the Parthenais Institute (for legal matters) so that we might have a tour of the place. This is Quebec’s equivalent of the laboratories seen on TV shows such as C.S.I. Last year a group from our society visited the R.C.M.P. crime lab in Westmount which deals with commercial/civil crimes.

22. Third Toast – To the Woman

by Carol Abrams

She was a woman unique within the Canon. Irene Adler was the only woman able to best Sherlock Holmes at his own game. Beautiful, clever, an accomplished actress, and an opera diva, Irene was a woman wronged by a King, and one determined to have her revenge. Adept at understanding human passions and vices, she used a little blackmail to remind the king of Bohemia what place she had held in his life. She owned an indiscrete photograph that could ruin his intended society betrothal. Sherlock was put on the case. While Holmes managed to discover the hiding place of the photograph, he was unable to retrieve it at the time. In the interim, Irene followed him home in disguise, and uttered her infamous greeting, "Good-night, Mr. Sherlock Holmes." By the next morning, when Sherlock and the King arrived at her home to remove the evidence, they discovered that Irene had flown the coop with her new husband, and had left her own photo in the place of the one they were searching for. With it was a letter addressed to Sherlock advising him the King was safe from blackmail, as she had married "a better man than he." Sherlock retained her photograph as his reward, and kept it in a place of honor in his home. And thus in his life, she became – The Woman.

To Irene Adler, The Woman.

23. Movie! Movie!

Jack Anderson let us in on the latest movie scoop. A new Sherlock Holmes movie is in the offing, with Canadian Rachel McAdams (from the McAdams Family) as Irene Adler. Robert Downey Jr. will be Sherlock Holmes, and Watson will be portrayed by Jude Law (?!). Watson with testosterone? Guess what the title will be.

24. You Guess, You Win

David Dowse correctly guessed the answer to Patrick Campbell's riddle of the tiger. His response of Sebastian Moran netted him a book: *Villain's Paradise: A History of Britain's Underworld* by Donald Thomas, provided by Jack Anderson who bought a second copy in error. It is a fascinating read about the explosion of criminal activity in Britain between 1945-1970.

(from the flyleaf) "The war ended, but rations didn't. Austerity persisted, and privations belied promises of an economically and socially sunlit future for post-war Britain. Only the black market thrived. And the incidence of armed robbery and violent crime increased by 40 percent between 1940 and 1945. By 1970 the crime rate had tripled.

Venturing into the urban underbelly of post-war Britain, and especially that of London, *Villain's Paradise* explores the shadowy ganglands where armed robbery, prostitution, drugs and protection flourished. It charts the paths of crooks and thugs who stole, collected, peddled, pimped, and killed by their sobriquets: the Velvet Kid, Johnny the Gent, the Monkey, the Professor, the Ferret, the Hat, Big Albert, Jack Spot, It discovers the cops the gangland bosses bent."

25. Flesh and Crumpets?

Chris Herten-Greaven talked about infamous man-eating tigers he has heard and read about, including those in *Man-Eaters of the Kumaon* by Jim Corbett.

26. Fourth Toast – Mrs. Hudson

by Stanley Baker

Mrs. Hudson is Sherlock Holmes' devoted servant, as well as being his landlady or housekeeper. She is a fictional character, but then no one is perfect. She puts up with Holmes' erratic behavior, his arriving home at all hours of the day and night, his sometimes bizarre visitors of all persuasions. Perhaps, worst of all, there are his use of cocaine, apart from his pipe smoking and inexpert and painful violin playing. She wants the home to be clean and tidy, not as Holmes would have it. She is described as a good cook by Watson, who is a fan of hers. She is imagined to be a nice, motherly woman, getting on in years, perhaps a little on the plump side. This is how she is portrayed in numerous films and T.V. programs. She is Scottish, possibly a widow, or perhaps separated from her husband, believed to be Morse Hudson. Her first name is Martha and she has appeared, or has been mentioned in practically every story in the canon. A mystery worthy of Holmes himself is Watson's reference in "A Scandal in Bohemia" to "When Mrs. Turner has brought in the tray ..." There have been several explanations for this name, varying from Holmes' forgetting his servant's name, to a mistake by Doyle. In the original manuscript for "The Empty House," Mrs. Turner had been crossed out and replaced by Mrs. Hudson. One suggestion is that Holmes and Mrs. Hudson were secret lovers and they used the name Turner for their secret trysts in hotels. However, this is the least likely, based on Holmes' frequent musings about the fair sex. In "War of the Worlds," it was suggested that they were lovers, but Watson was too oblivious to notice, so it was not chronicled. However, if it is true – good for Mrs. Hudson! So – raise your glasses and drink to Mrs. Hudson and possibly, her secret love-life with the Master.

27. After folding and launching them, we discovered why they were called flyers

Jack Anderson gave us each a few flyers describing the BmQ. We are to give them away to prospective members.

28. We've Been Gazzetted

Rachel Alkallay said we were mentioned in the *Montreal Gazette*, not for any particular crime, this time, but to announce our meeting. Whom do we thank for this? Stanley? Good work. Can we get an honorable mention at the *Golden Globes*?

29. Quiz – Results

"The Adventure of the Cardboard Box" prepared by Roger Burrows.

Possible total: 50

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	Carol Abrams	46	<i>The Necropolis Railway</i> by Andrew Martin
2.	David Kellett	41½	Oktoberfest Mustard (not the book)
3.	Wilfrid de Freitas	35½	Congratulations

The next quiz will be based on "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez" prepared by Carol Abrams.

30. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by David Dowse

The following toast was rendered by David nearly a quarter-century ago. David has had it bound into an historic collection of the society's first-year memorabilia.

It is my pleasure to offer the last official toast of the evening to our Society, the Bimetallic Question. Just as this issue in 1895 of currency standardization involved two valuable metals, gold and silver, I feel our Society exists and develops because of two valuable principles.

First, there has to be in each of us a love of the fog-bound, cobblestoned, gas-lighted world of Sherlock Holmes. Notice I did not say "exhaustive knowledge." It is the game the hunt, the mystery, the gathering of clues to result in so logical, so elementary a solution which is what we all have a craving for.

Second, I think is the tolerance and acceptance of each member's personal degree of enthusiasm. Some of us are in the process of tasting for the first time the riches of some of the Sherlock Holmes Adventures. Others, like our old friend Martin Overland who recently passed away, like to sit back, enjoy the conversation, and throw in occasionally a piece of their ripe wit. Still others have done research in depth into an aspect of the stories and can't wait to share it with their fellow members; notably Mr. Bruce Holmes and his work on philately in the Canon. We all bring something different to our Society and this is the reason for excitement when we have new members join. What will they bring to enrich our time together?

The sole purpose of the Bimetallic Question is to enjoy ourselves and share our enthusiasm for the world of Sherlock Holmes.

May we continue to flourish.

To our Society, the Bimetallic Question

31. Future Toasts

To The Master	-	Wilfrid de Freitas
To Dr. Watson	-	Patrick Campbell
To The Woman	-	Roger Burrows
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Fiona Sorrel
To The Society	-	Marie Burrows

32. Unsolicited (and welcome) Advertising

We recently received this e-mail from the High Country.

From: "Connie Fitzpatrick" <confitz@bresnan.net>
Date: Mon, 22 Sep 2008 19:28:15 -0600
To: <info@bimetallicquestion.org>
Subject: **New Holmes Book**

Dear Members of the Bimetallic Society:

I am writing to tell you about my new book entitled, SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MONTANA CHRONICLES. It contains four novellas featuring the famous duo fighting crime in frontier Montana in 1896-97.

The book was published by Riverbend Publishing, a small but reputable house here in Montana. The book was neither a self nor subsidy publication. It is available on Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com. It is also available through local bookstores in your area. Several major book wholesalers have been taking ever larger quantities of the book. Please spread the word to your friends and other members of the Society.

From one Holmes devotee to another, thank you ever so much.

John Fitzpatrick

33. Mac's Corner

The Look of Love
by Mac Belfer

She stood at the door
and watched me
walk away
I turned
to wave goodbye
and caught her look
I never knew
a single glance
could bear the weight
of so much love
that day
the world looked different to me

(You see? Irene Adler is everywhere! – L.S.)

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 4th, 2008, at 6:30 p.m.

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