



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

The next meeting of the **BIMETALLIC QUESTION** will be held on Thursday, June 6, 2002 at 6:30 p.m. SHARP at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec. To avoid receiving a summons from Inspector Lestrade, please pay close attention to parking signs while parking your hansom carriages.

The NEXT QUIZ: Elliott Newman will prepare "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax".

MINUTES of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, April 6th, 2002 at the Westmount library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec.

Present: Maureen Anderson, Rachel Alkallay, Stanley Baker, Paul Billette, David Dowse, David Kellett, Elliott Newman and Heather Wileman-Brown

Regrets: Lawrence Reich, Wilfrid de Freitas, Jack Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Charles Purdon & Colin Semel

CALL TO ORDER: David Dowse opened the meeting at 6:33 p.m. and welcomed those present. He reminded everyone that meetings would be held on Thursdays, that being the only evening the library is available.

SHOW/TELL:

Members were quite playful this evening entertaining each other with jokes such as: What's a Henway, response: about 2 pounds. Discussions ranged from "The assault of Neptune – Steamer" *foot by foot, the old ship crept forward, some- times losing more than she gained, but always coming back for another assault upon the crushing waves* – to food allergies, Coal Scuttles, Diogenes, Wellington – the boot – named after Lord Wellington and ending with a discussion on sayings including one of my favourites: If it is not broken don't fix it.

A light agenda greeted the members this evening starting with David Dowse reading a delightful mystery; challenging not only our listening skills; but our investigative ones as well. We were enthralled with his assortment of formidable mysteries. Was he also responsible for the mystery of the warm April evening we encountered. The only blight on the otherwise gracious evening was a summons to keep our voices down. We were a little over zealous, perhaps ruffian like. No, just enthusiastic Bimetallic members.

Essential to all our gatherings followed the quiz presentation and discussion. This evening's selection Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's: "The Golden Pince-Nez".

QUIZ: Maureen, acting on behalf of Jack in his absence, circulated the quiz amongst attending members. She provided the elementary instructions and assisted the markings by providing the responses Jack prepared. A few additional points were provided to members whose responses contained humour. This was due primarily to the delinquency of Maureen resulting in a limited list of possibilities to ponder. Unfortunately, not too many members took the opportunity to gain points for humour. Congratulations Jack, as usual, a challenging quiz!

The winners of the quiz were:

- 1st Prize 56.5/68 Elliott Newman ("Sherlock Holmes and The Red Demon" by Larry Millett) and Calem Port (White and Dry) – WELL DONE ELLIOTT!
- 2nd Prize 54/68 David Kellett ("The Case of Compartment 7" by Sam McCarver) and Port (Fine White)
- 3rd Prize 46/68 Rachel Alkallay ("The Jewel of Covent Garden" by Wayne Worcester) and Lagrima Porto.

TOASTS

This evenings toasts were presented by: Rachel Alkallay who provided us with an impromptu **To The Master**, followed by David Dowse **To Dr. Watson, To The Woman, To Mrs. Hudson and To The Society** ending with a society toast to the **Queen Mom**.

TO THE MASTER

"To the Master" by: Rachel Alkalley

It's funny to think ... I have been a member of the society for twenty years (since I was two years old). Assuming that membership in the society has always been \$18.00 a year, (and it was not always that – at one time it was \$10.00), it has cost me only \$360.00 for membership in the Society, one of the cheapest, and most stimulating pleasures, to be had in life. To the Master!

Note, any members who have particularly good toasts are invited to submit them to David Dowse for future use.

David Kellett in honour of this evenings quiz circulated a pince-nez he had in his possession and asked members to depict the owner. Rachel's deductive skills this evening surpassed all other members. Rachel, the master would have been proud.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting closed early this evening, at 8:50 p.m.

MRS HUDSONS CORNER:

In honour of our next story: The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax

"I can say no more for the instant. I will leave you this card so that you may be able to keep in touch with us. Now, Watson, if you will pack your bag I will cable to Mrs. Hudson to make one of her best efforts for two hungry travelers at 7:30 to-morrow."

Smoked Haddock Flan

6 oz. Shortcrust Pastry
1 ½ lb. Smoked Haddock, cooked and flaked
2 hard boiled eggs, sliced
1 small onion, thinly sliced
1 ½ - 2 lb. cooked creamed potato
2 oz. Grated Cheddar Cheese
½ pint milk (infused with slice of onion, herbs, bayleaf and peppercorns)
¼ oz. Butter
1 rounded tablespoon flour
Salt and Pepper to Taste

- Set oven to 400 Degrees Fahrenheit.
- Place an 8 inch flan ring on a lightly greased baking sheet and line with the pastry.
- Place the flaked fish on the pastry with the onion on top and sliced eggs around the edge.
- Melt the butter in a pan, stir in the flour and blend in the strained milk. Add the cheese and season.
- Stir constantly until it thickens. Spoon the sauce over the flan. Put the cream potato in a piping bag fitter with a large rose nozzle. Pipe potato around the edge of the flan and across the centre, in a lattice pattern.
- Place in the oven for 20-30 minutes until brown. Serves 4-5 hungry travelers.

Source: Favourite Farmhouse Recipes – Traditional Country Fare compiled by Carole Gregory.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

The 2nd Annual Sherlockian Picnic at the Mt. Philo State Park, Charlotte, Vermont. Hosted by the Goose Club of the Alpha Inn. When: Saturday, June 15, 2002 commences at 11:00 a.m.. Cost \$10.00 US per person. Please make cheques payable to Jeanette Pyle. Return the enclosed form with payment by June 1st. For more details contact burcharb@together.net.

Thurston's Billiard Night at the McGill Faulty Club will be held September 4th, 2002. More details to follow.

All that remains is to end the minutes by challenging you with the **Puzzler** for that is what awaits those brave enough:



- 1) Who sat near Holmes at seat 07 in the reading room of the British Museum?
(Two Words – 4,4) _ _ _ _ _
- 2) On what street was the Diogenes Club located? (Two Words – 4,4)
_ _ _ _ _
- 3) What was the title of Professor Moriarty's 1st book? (5 Words – 7,2,3,8,7)
_ _ _ _ _
_ _ _ _ _

Answers to last month's Puzzler: 1. The Game is afoot. 2. Brain Attic & 3. The Toe of a Persian slipper

We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the June 6th meeting.

Must dash! The next adventure awaits.

Your humble servant,
Maureen

IMPORTANT NOTE: Members who would like to actively participate in contributing articles, recipes or information on upcoming events, etc. for the newsletter are welcome. Please contact Maureen Anderson at: jmanderson@videotron.ca.

Our first contribution has been provided by Elliott Newman and is attached for your reading pleasure.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Cheques for 2002 Membership (January-December) are over due;
please forward your payment of \$18.00 to
Charles Purdon at the following address:
7370 Cannes, St-Leonard, Quebec H1S 2R1

Members who have already paid this year's annual dues please disregard this reminder.



2nd ANNUAL SHERLOCKIAN PICNIC
JUNE 15, 2002
MT. PHILO STATE PARK,
CHARLOTTE, VT
Hosted by the Goose Club of the Alpha Inn

What: A day of Sherlockian activities and canonical food to be enjoyed with fellow Sherlockians.

Who: Members of the Goose Club of the Alpha Inn, The Bimetallic Question, and The Baker Street Breakfast Club.

Where: The group shelter at Mt. Philo State Park, Charlotte, VT (Charlotte is about 15 miles south of Burlington. The park is easily accessible from U.S. Route 7).

When: Saturday, June 15, 2002 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM (People are welcome to arrive earlier or stay later. Park hours are 10:00 AM to dusk.)

Cost: \$10.00 for food, payable with your registration plus \$2.00 per person park entrance fees, payable at the gate.

Tentative Schedule

11:00 Arrival and welcoming activities

12:30 Canonical luncheon

2:00 Each society is asked to present a favorite activity. Each activity should take about half an hour to complete.

3:30 Further entertainment by the Goose Club.

6:00 Optional dinner.

Suggested items to bring:

Folding lawn chairs

Sunscreen and bug repellent

Your favorite Sherlockian activity (one per society)

Other Helpful Information:

For those wishing to spend the weekend in the Burlington area, a wide variety of options exist. Nearby attractions include Shelburne Museum, Shelburne Farms, Lake Champlain, The Vermont Teddy Bear Factory, Stowe, the Essex Outlet Fair, Dead Creek Wildlife Area, and the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. A wide range of lodging, camping and dining options also exist. Some Goose Club members may also be able to provide overnight home hospitality.



Reservation Form

Return by June 1, 2002

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____, State/Province _____

Zip/Postal Code _____ Phone Number: (____) _____

E-mail Address _____

Fax _____ I/We plan to stay for dinner: Yes _____ No _____

I/We are interested in home hospitality: Yes _____ No _____ # of people _____

Number of family members attending: _____ Projected arrival time _____

Names of family members attending:

Important Information we should know (i.e. special medical or dietary needs):

Return this form by **June 1, 2002** with payment of \$10.00 per person to Jeanette Pyle, 16 Browe Court, Burlington, VT 05401. Please make checks payable to Jeanette Pyle. Questions may be directed to Jeanette at the above address or to Brenda Burchard at burcharb@together.net.

You will receive a confirmation letter with directions to Mt. Philo and more information about home hospitality, if you express an interest in it.

Imagery, Contrast, and Suspension in
"The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton"
by
Elliott Newman

"The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" provokes serious interest in Doyle's manipulative technique well beyond the purely cognitive level. The subtle and contrived use of language draws attention to itself and demands investigation. The repetition of images and comparisons is pervasive. The pattern of creating a situation then abandoning it only to have it reappear later reflects a literary artistry that provides levels of meaning, and enrichment beyond our expectations of even a superlative detective story.

To begin, some definitions and explanations are required. First, "imagery." At the simplest level it is a cognitive device dealing with images created with words. However beautiful or evocative a string of words creating a scene, unless we have had an experience with the central aspect of that string of words, we are not going to understand the phrase as intended, the image will elude us, and the text will confuse us. This also means the writer will have failed to draw us into his world and in all probability, we will read no further. Although primarily a poetic concept, imagery also plays an important role in visual and graphic art, sculpture, music, drama, fiction, non-fiction, cinema, architecture, and so on. By touching on a thing or experience to which we can relate, literary (artistic) imagery can take us through the psyche to the soul, gathering momentum as it passes through our aesthetic beings, pervading our spiritual beings with the comfort or taunting of our icons of faith or lack thereof. However complex an image may be, it requires our being able to recognize it at the basic cognitive level before we can deal with it in any abstract sense.

The second point, "contrast," is easier to conceptualize because it requires no work at all to recognize a contrast at the cognitive level. We had to learn contrasts when we were infants. Not to learn them would threaten our very survival. Here are some simple ones: cold - hot, light - dark, high - low, hard - soft, loud - soft. The first set (cold - hot) is a tactile image. Or is it? Although we are initially taught these concepts in relation to surfaces and items that are safe or dangerous to touch, can they not also relate to a person's nature? motives? character? spirit? Similar levels of meaning can be assigned to light - dark. And the third (hard - soft) can obviously encompass more than the world of boiled eggs. The fourth (loud - soft), while repeating ostensibly the same word in "hard - soft" sets up a whole different set of possible connotations, initially - but not exclusively - auditory. Contrasts help a work of art to explain itself in our minds and spirits by creating movement, cessation, interruption, and fixed and variable points. No work of art can move forward without evident or implied contrast. Contrast is the lull before the storm, the pause before the punch line, Miss Havisham's moribund, backward-looking gossamer cobwebs of ghosts and decay against Pip's youthful great expectations.

Contrast and its rhythms pervade art. The bombastic four-note opening phrase of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* sets up immediately a structure of contrast with the rapid monotonic three-note figure followed by a sustained single note. For purposes of our discussion, let us call this sustained note a "suspension" of the action of the narrative of the symphony. A suspension, therefore, is anything that creates a pause and breaks the flow. It can be a long note, a pause with no sound at all, or a flight to another theme. All of these have their counterparts in the short story under discussion, as we shall see.

Beethoven uses the suspension to make a dramatic point. He repeats the identical figure, but several semitones lower. There follows a mathematical reiteration of the motif mathematically, but in different convolutions and possibilities of which we are all aware even though we might not have thought about the work in those terms. What has helped to make this artistic is the interplay of consistency (the motif) and contrast (loud-soft, fast-slow). What turns it to a major work of art are the levels at which we experience it. Its palpable artistry churns in its meanings that transcend our ability or willingness to deal with it on conscious and sub-conscious levels or to express its effect on us other than by uttering variants of "I don't know why I like it, but I do," or equally significantly, "It's so-o-o-o-o-o cool."

What does all of this have to do with "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton?" Simply this: there are artistic elements of imagery, contrast, and suspension in Doyle's short story that elevate the work beyond the level of a great and influential detective story. Through the ensuing discussion, the gentle reader is cordially invited to decide just how artistic Doyle was, and to what degree this particular story may withstand the test of time as a work of literary merit.

Using our definitions of "imagery," "contrast," and "suspension" we shall now examine how Doyle weaves a fascinating revelation of images on several levels, and how, like Beethoven, Doyle uses the repetition of motif, the manipulation of rhythm and suspension, and the drama of contrast to intensify the appeal of "The Adventures of Charles Augustus Milverton."

The rooms at 221B Baker Street are Eden to the cerebral Holmes, his loyal and devoted Watson, and the seemingly divinely-inspired stratagems concocted by Holmes to foil the forces of evil threatening the world beyond their doorstep. What greater temptation then, to flaunt the law the laws of Man, can be placed before Holmes than by a serpent with an apple, in this case, Charles Augustus Milverton, compared by Holmes with "the serpents in the Zoo" (572), residing in Appledore Towers, and compared in cunning with "the Evil One", or devil. (573)

Appledore Towers alone evokes on a cognitive level (a) the *apple* that we associate with the temptation of Adam and Eve; (b) the *gold* of avarice (dore); and (c) the presumption of those who would reach superior or divine knowledge and power through purely physical means and must be destroyed (the *Tower of Babel*). Milverton's evil is connected with these images in Holmes' simile of him, that he "tortures the soul and wrings the nerves in order to add to his already swollen money-bags." (573) We know from the outset that the tower must fall.

A look at the following sentence fragment suggests several implications:

"serpents in the Zoo .. the slithery, gliding, venomous creatures with their deadly eyes and wicked, flattened faces." (572)

Here, Doyle establishes the imagery of the snake as it lends its attributes to Milverton. Doyle uses a popular poetic device, alliteration, in the repetitive "f" of "flattened faces." He provides movement in the sentence fragment with "the slithery, gliding, venomous creatures", and actually brings us to an abrupt halt in "with their deadly eyes and wicked, flattened faces."

The word "flattened" suggests an end of movement, a finality. In this way, Doyle not only introduces a central character; he expands our impression of him beyond the limited capability of a simple, static description by introducing imagery, alliteration, and movement, and the abrupt cessation of movement. This is quite an accomplishment in so few words. But to what effect?

Perhaps the answer lies in Doyle's use of alliteration ("flattened faces"). A rereading of the fragment makes us wonder why he hasn't used alliteration earlier in the same fragment when the structure seems to call for it. After all, it would be so simple to write "slithery, sliding", instead of "slithery, gliding." Some might argue that two groups of alliterative words in the same sentence would be overdoing a not-too-spectacular poetic device. Possibly. But how many writers have described the movement of a snake as gliding? Very few in comparison with those who prefer to think of the movement as sliding, and leave gliding to creatures of the air. There is a paradoxical contrast here that makes us pause. It implies a deeper significance that will reveal itself on the next page of the story.

As though answering the question, Doyle reappears on the next page in his further description of Milverton, with the hard "g". Its reintroduction serves to bridge the gap between the two aspects of the character. The "slithery, gliding" reptile becomes Milverton the person with "gold-rimmed glasses" and the "hard glitter of those restless and penetrating eyes." More human, but still, plain in its imagery and symbolic in its portent.

The effect of not completing the alliteration on the first page of the text, but following up and reinforcing it on the second is an example of suspension. Not continuing to use it once it is introduced sets up an subconscious expectation in the reader. As with Beethoven's bombastic three-note motif followed by a sustained note, we know something is coming.

In the same way that Doyle obviously arrests motion with "flattened faces", he suspends it further by introducing an unexpected and improbable image ("gliding"). Our attention is immediately diverted to a fuller exposition of the villain. Here, Doyle again liberally uses alliteration ("smilng face ... he will squeeze and squeeze until he has draind them dry"). With the battering of sounds and images reinforcing Holmes' disdain for Milverton, we are set up to despise the villain in part by the cacophony of sounds that attend and describe him.

We don't have long to wait. On the second page, Milverton is announced with assonance (vowel sound repetition) and alliteration in a "clatter and a rattle in the street below" as his carriage pulls up. Here, we are reminded that our villain is not symbolized in only animal terms. He carries discordant sounds with him like clanging chains. Upon Milverton's appearance on Baker Street, there is a restatement of the hard "g" sound of the first page, in

"the brilliant lamps gleaming on the glossy haunches of the noble chestnut"

and

"two keen gray eyes, which gleamed brightly from behind broad, gold-rimmed glasses"

and the unalliterated

"the hard glitter of those restless and penetrating eyes"

which as mentioned previously ties in the auditory effect of the hard "g" with the reptilian imagery.

The very next sentence offers us, "His voice was as smooth and suave as his countenance ..." thus building the rhythm of the prose until it stops cold against Holmes' "face of granite", only to resume momentum with another action and more alliteration, when Milverton "shrugged his shoulders, removed his overcoat, folded it with great deliberation over the back of a chair, and then took a seat."

How can such evil be tolerated in Holmes' Eden? His client, the damsel to be protected, is almost a fallen angel. Except for one minor indiscretion, she would be above reproach: unblemished, upper class, and innocent. Even her name - Eva - harks back to Eden. However, her surname, Blackwell, represents a potential for damage. Black is not good, unless Holmes can make a case for the "black" being a smudge against her, not of her own making. "Well" can suggest profundity and mystery, as in the depth of a well. To optimists, it may mean a happy ending. A well is also a source. In the mystical sense it is an oracular place of knowledge, of truth--about the world, how to deal with it, and insight into one's ability to handle that newly revealed truth. The messages of the well are never clear. But they are always important. Ignore or misinterpret them at your own peril. What insights will Holmes glean from this well? How will its messages guide and define him further?

The conundrum of Lady Eva Blackwell's name provides yet another unsettling mark against the world outside 221B Baker Street: the world, however noble its elements, corrupts everyone. Even when supporting a justice based on altruistic conscience, we can become, like Holmes, accomplices of destruction and evil. Paradise, then, is illusory. The snake is everywhere. Our only safety, is in understanding messages beyond the purely cognitive level. However much we reason, there are forces beyond our control. Failure to respond to and master them will spell our doom. The snake is a symbol that can appear in any form.

The snake we have been expecting appears before us as a cocky, leonine image. Milverton's appearance in an astrakhan overcoat conjures an unkempt lion, with his "large intellectual head."

With the appearance of Milverton, the exposition is over and the literary quality of the story takes a turn south. The haggling dialogue between Holmes and Milverton over the Blackwell case comes across as a preliminary sparring match necessary for both sides to illustrate their adversarial relationship. The rich imagery and contrast minutely set up in the story's exposition is not continued. However, the contrast between the previous lush and lavish symbols, poetic devices, and suspensions, and the required business between the hero and his antagonist does serve a very important function. It supports the longevity of Holmes as a beloved literary figure even while the story refocuses onto building a plot that will heighten in suspense and swashbuckling heroism, climax in irony, and dissolve in the morality of his decision not to rat on the elegant, mysterious murderer.

The fast-paced dialogue is a bridge between the emotionally ruminative and vituperative Holmes at the beginning of the story, and the brilliant, compassionate intuition of Holmes, the man of action. It is his sense of justice and his colorful articulation of moral outrage that endear him to us. We know he will not sit idly by and watch the snake escape scot-free. With Holmes on the case, Destiny can be altered. The tower will fall and Paradise is not entirely lost.

The shift to the order of business between the Holmes and his antagonist suspends the deep and profuse imagery of the exposition. The plot moves forward, since we now see for ourselves the intelligent clarity and dastardly nature of Milverton. The narrative makes a token return to animal imagery halfway through their dialogue when Holmes appears to back down after Milverton threatens to leave. Thinking he has gained the upper hand, Milverton pretends to be as harmless as a housecat:

"I was sure that you would see it in that light," he purred. (p. 574)

A half-page later, when Holmes and Watson try to prevent Milverton from leaving,

*Milverton had glided as quick as a rat to the side of the room
and stood with his back against the wall. (p. 575)*

Milverton, now a cornered rat, produces a revolver, and leaves.

Having been described as a gliding serpent, having entered as some shaggy-coated predator, having subsequently been described as a cat, and now a rat, Milverton's movement is once again described as gliding. This is followed immediately by two quick episodes of contrast in which Holmes broods in his chair, then springs into action, disappears into a room, only to reappear as "a rakish young workman."

The standard poetic device of pathetic fallacy is used here in the usual way, to allow nature to establish the mood, in this case, turmoil:

*a wild, tempestuous evening, when the wind screamed
and rattled against the windows ... (p. 575)*

Holmes' return from his forays reveals ironies that function on several levels. Holmes, the bachelor, is engaged. The irony is compounded when he announces he is engaged to Milverton's housemaid. It is so unexpected that someone of Holmes' social standing would unite with a working-class girl. Holmes excuses his deception by saying that he needed information from her about her employer, and anyway, Holmes' rival would most certainly marry her when Holmes' young persona ceases to exist.

Holmes' deception of the housemaid is a faint foreshadowing of his larger, more personally dangerous plot to burgle the Milverton residence and seize the letters of Lady Eva Blackwell. Watson's physical and moral discomfort over the plot are easily assuaged. As long as he is included, he agrees that breaking into the house and stealing the blackmail evidence are proper. The emotional high of this escapade serves to impel the story forward at a quicker pace. While Watson's adrenaline is pumping, we are brought back to a black Eden in of all places, Appledore Towers. As Holmes and Watson break into the house,

The thick, warm air of the conservatory and the rich, choking fragrance of plants took us by the throat. (p. 578)

Levels of contrast pervade this sentence. The warm air provides insulation between the house and what we presume to be the cool, damp evening. The realm of the plants harks back to the pristine, fecund Eden, a place of beauty and innocence. The second half of the sentence undoes the image of beauty and innocence, prepares us for the access into the house, and reminds us that crime has a consequence. The "choking fragrance" is anything but beautiful when one has to fight for one's breath, and "took us by the throat" suggests a hangman's noose, or at least an extension of the choking image. The entire effect of the sentence is of hyperbole, or poetic exaggeration. As a mood-setter, it is masterful. It is also a further example of Doyle's manipulation of imagery, contrast, and suspension. The conservatory itself is a necessary insulation, or suspension between the outside world and Milverton's study where Holmes, like a deity, witnesses the administration of human, if not Divine, justice.

The motifs of animal nature and harsh sound accompany Milverton throughout the story through to his execution by the mysterious widow. Each of the five bullets she fires into his chest is accompanied by a cry from her. The sixth and last bullet results in a cry from Milverton: "You've done me." The musical equivalent of this would be a fugal pattern in which one motif answers another. As one would to a despised animal, his executioner "ground her heel into his upturned face." Our last view of the villain reiterates the consonant sounds of the hard "g" and the "f" introduced at the beginning of the story.

Undeniably, "The Adventures of Charles Augustus Milverton" occupies a respected niche in the Holmes canon. Doyle's use of imagery, contrast, and suspension in the Milverton story points to his literary strengths and may suggest further rewarding study of his work as literature. There is much in Doyle's style, as well as his social, spiritual, moral, literary, and aesthetic concerns that will reward the serious student. These areas of profound interest transcend the joy we derive from approaching Holmes on the purely cognitive level. Occasionally, when we least expect it, we are grabbed by them and continue to wonder: what is it about Sherlock Holmes and his world that engages us so? The answer will lie in further investigation, exploration, and detection by us, gentle readers.