

THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

Welcome

Doubly Dyslexic Holmes

A young man with a dog from North Soames
was informed by a doubly dyslexic Holmes:

I can see by your pet
you've not been to Afghanistan yet
for there's no ban on his tali, and he roams.*

*According to Doyle biographer W. Throgmorton Puji, DLITT (Oxon), OBE, FRCS, PDQ, ETC, the good doctor tried his hand at many literary forms before landing upon the short story. "A Scandal in Bohemia" and the fascinating triangular relationship among Watson, Irene Adler, and the WGCD is the first story in the canon. It was in an earthenware Queen Anne cookie jar in a cupboard of an isolated farmhouse in Flanders that the eminent Dr. Puji found the above limerick, signed with Doyle's medicinal scrawl, as inscrutable as though he were writing a prescription and defying the apothecary to understand it. Of the limerick's authenticity, there can be no doubt. The handwriting, for one thing. And the origin of the paper, the ink, and - not the least of all! - the caricature of an athletic-looking, mustachio'd Doyle in full command astride his beloved bicycle with the caption beneath: "Baker Street: most irregular!" While Puji has made much of Doyle's inclusion of a young man and a dog from North Soames in the poem, posterity is grateful that Doyle replaced them with the mysterious Irene Adler. More interesting yet is the suggestion that Doyle had considered assigning the troublesome problem of dyslexia to the WGCD. What a world of difference would have resulted had instead of your garden variety of cocaine addiction, Sherlock Holmes would have been - dare we say it - dyslexic? We are also grateful that Doyle veered away from the limerick as a form of personal expression, instead bequeathing us the amazing canon of which this five-line abomination is little more than inconsequential pap. For more on how to make

sense of Doyle's unforgivable flight into verse, please see Dr. Puji's brilliant research at the end of this newsletter.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, October 2nd at 6:30 p.m. at:

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

Special thanks to Patrick Campbell who took minutes of the proceedings of the August 8th meeting, passed them along expertly to Maureen Anderson who handed them off adroitly to Elliott Newman, typist-in-residence.

Meters are lurking, your dollars are working. Please continue to feed the parking meters outside the library. It is not necessary to take them for a walk. Just pop quarters.

The dowagers of Westmount and their parade of undersized doggies have continued throughout the summer. With October approaching, be suspicious of fallen leaves. Better to hopscotch around them. No telling what they conceal.

The Next Quiz: "The Seent Valley of Fear," prepared by Patrick Campbell.

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, August 8, 2003 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec. This meeting, like the previous one, took place one week later than scheduled. Please note we're back to "first Thursday" for the next meeting.

Present: Rachel Alkallay, Peter Allan, Ethan R. Allen, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, Shigeko Betts, Paul Billette (Happy Birthday!), Patrick Campbell, David Dowse, Linda Hartt, David Kellett, Anita Miller, Niketh Pareek (Happy Birthday!), David Reich, Dale Wharton, Karen Winkler,

Regrets: Elliott Newman.

CALL TO ORDER: Sovereign David Dowse opened the meeting at approximately 6:30 p.m. and welcomed those present.

1. The meeting began with a few words from David Dowse, who announced a game suitable for Sherlockians, actually based on "Kim's Game," as described in Rudyard Kipling's book, *Kim*.
2. The conversation turned to "glaring errors" as found in minutes of the meetings (except these minutes) and on websites. Our current "minutes" committee is hard at work planting misleading subtleties into our communications to keep the members on their toes. *Sempre vigilens!*

3. Remember Kim's Game in Minute #1 above? David held off for a while as a number of people came in, and the tables had to be rearranged to seat them all. With the rearrangement complete, Paul distributed his Tesora sherry and a bottle of Nova Scotia port, smuggled in, naturally.

Peter Allan recalled 25 of the 30 items. Maureen 24, and Rachel 20. Prizes were distributed.

4. David explained how we issue the minutes of each meeting. On this note, it was observed that the frame for the crossword puzzle was missing a row of spaces. It will be reissued.
5. Ethan R. Allen, a relatively new member had read about us in a newspaper. He brought a work colleague, Peter Allen who although having read only three of the stories, is, vicariously, a walking Holmes encyclopedia since his mother was a great reader of Doyle (and Walter Scott). In addition, Peter has relatives with an interest in Holmes.
6. Dale Wharton had a question concerning Holmes's death. Apparently, perplexity will continue to run rampant because we never did answer Dale's question. Dale, please come to the next meeting of the BMQ and insist on a straight answer!
7. Niketh Pareek works for the *Westmount Examiner*, and he came along to see just what we were up to. (Murder, mayhem, and illegal parking, no doubt!)
8. Linda Hartt, another new member, has read many of the stories.
9. David Reich has read Doyle, he says, from the age of 1½, and he brought a gigantic volume of Sherlock Holmes.
10. For Show and Tell, Patrick showed three copies of various reproductions of Beeton's Christmas Annual (first appearance of Sherlock Holmes in "A Study in Scarlet"), from different versions of *The Strand* magazine, in original covers, and a partial set (23 out of 25) of the Boguslavsky cigarette cards of Conan Doyle characters.
11. David Dowse explained that we are open for new members, fees being \$18 per year. In the event that the beautiful, atmosphere-imbued reading room of the Westmount Public Library becomes too crowded for our needs, we understand that the most under-utilized landfill site in Canada, the Olympic Stadium, may become available. We'll keep you posted.

David wants you to know that we now have a web site. We're open to suggestions about how to make it more interesting and to meet the eclectic needs of all potential Bimetallic Questioners in the Montreal area.

12. David Kellett then laid out the terms and conditions of the quiz, which he said was difficult. We had 20 minutes. The winners and their scores and prizes, were:

1 st : Patrick	31	Box of shells
2 nd : Paul	23	Cabbage in a Ming vase lookalike
3 rd : Stan & Rachel	21	Stan won the toss and a pair of candlesticks

13. There was some discussion about "we have a new cook ..." We assume this is not Mrs. Hudson, so there must have always been a cook, unnamed, in the kitchen.
14. There followed the reading of Act 2 Scene 2 of *Tides of the Wight*, the Sherlock Holmes cliffhanger written by BQ's own Patrick Campbell. The parts were read by Stanley, David Kellett, David Reich, Anita, and Patrick.
15. The next quiz will be on "The Valley of Fear," prepared by Patrick Campbell.

THE MYSTERIOUS BOOKSHELF - A taste of fiction obviously inspired by the WGCD.

In our last newsletter, we waxed rhapsodic about the charms and contents of The Mysterious Bookshop on New York's West 57th Street. Since then, Eva and Elliott Newman made a pilgrimage to the place to bestow a quantity of our BQ newsletters for pick-up by like-minded aficionados of the stories of the WGCD. Our hopes of meeting the shop's proprietor and author in his own right, Otto Penzler, were dashed when he had to leave for "the coast." Instead, Eva and Elliott were treated to a tour of Mr. Penzler's office, a cavernous room straight out of Henry James, Dickens, the Brontes, and Damon Runyon, all rolled into one. The sheer size of the room was humbling, possibly thirty or more feet by at least fifteen, and soaring to a height of twelve feet or more. An ancient and cranky undersized, under-powered air conditioner was wedged into a corner of the room next to entrance, possibly into what served as a window opening. We spoke above its clatter. And it did little more than clatter, since its size and current state of inefficiency were quite unequal to the task of cooling the giant room. There were books everywhere: from floor to ceiling, wall to wall, on chairs, tables, desks, boxes, the floor, on other books. Ladders set into rails stood like geometric sleeping sentries tilted quixotically against the shelves, offering bibliophiles and acrobats to take their life in their hands and climb to greater heights to reach more rarefied volumes. Here were the tomes of some obscure estate; there were priceless volumes in leather and gilt and delicate brown paper that had weathered perhaps two hundred winters, crossed an ocean or two, and sustained the crumbs of a thousand meals, and thousands more forbidden fingerprints which in themselves doubtless ran through lives more fascinating than those on the pages they caressed and smudged. If walls could talk, this room screamed from on high, low down, eye level, behind a desk, every crevice. Our guide on this confined and infinite expedition casually observed that this room contained far fewer books than those to be found in Mr. Penzler's home in Connecticut!

In the future, we hope to show you a few of the snapshots we took in this room. We will post them on our web site, and possibly even print one up in the newsletter, if we can get a good-enough quality.

As you can see, we have not provided you with any of Mr. Penzler's excellent reviews this month. But we have led you through a most fascinating collection of mysterious bookshelves!

MRS. HUDSON'S CORNER:

Lemon Barley Water

Juice and rind of 1 lemon

25g of pearl barley

15g of sugar

1 litre of boiling water

Peel the rind of the lemon very thinly.

Squeeze the juice from the lemon.

Add the lemon juice and rind to the pearl barley in a large bowl.

Pour boiling water on to all the ingredients and leave to cool.

Once cool, pour the lemon barley through a sieve and serve chilled for a refreshing Victorian drink.

Makes 4 glasses

*This recipe is compliments of the KS1 – History Activity Sheet Leighton Hall
web-site: <http://www.leightonhall.co.uk/schools/schoolshistory>*

MAUREEN'S MERRIMENT. This month's selection a poem entitled "**Guilt**" provided by one of our select members.

GUILT

*Is that which us
in savage bondage keeps
the heavy hand of slavery
never once loosens
its fearsome grip
on that we call our soul
the struggle then
fiercer than the wars
against some outer foe
where battles are sometimes won
has no chance of victory here
the wild cries
of folly and despair
are never heard
on this field of conflict
the struggle never ends
it shortens our reach
for what we want
and makes our dreams fade
before we know of what we dream*

M. Belfer

SANITY REGAINED: Answers to last newsletter's quiz. Not likely!

Know ye then, that due to Moriarty's, ok in all honesty, beyond Maureen's control, there was a slight typo, ok, major problem as a whole column was missing from last month's puzzle. There is a better chance now that our sleuths will be able to complete this adventure.

**Excerpted from the Writings of
W. Throgmorton Puji**

(Please see the limerick at the beginning
of this newsletter)

For the purists among us, it would appear at first blush that the connection between a roaming canine and Holmes' less-than-stellar conclusion in Doyle's limerick is nonexistent. To address the question: How could Holmes have concluded that the young man with the dog had never been to Afghanistan? The answer is simple, and comes to us from three estimable sources, to wit:

- 1) In his brilliant, yet little-known monograph entitled: "Whither Holmes? Whither Life?" William S. Baring-Gould cites the reference to "young man" as suggesting, beyond any conceivable doubt, that the young human male with the dog was not more than three years old, bore no bullet wound in his leg, spoke with a perfect Hampstead accent, and was accompanied by his nurse who swore on three Bibles that Baring-Gould happened to have with him, that said young man had never been farther afield than Charing Cross Infirmary to close a small cut sustained when he attempted to carve a live cow at the age of eighteen months. The dog, meanwhile, a fine example of nature's resulting whimsy when the family pet *in estrus* slips out the scullery door, was too busy licking himself to provide contradiction to this testimony.
- 2) Next, Sir Alfonse Quiller-Crouch (say this fast 15 times and you can do it for us at Show and Tell), being deep in his cups at the time of our interview on this point, peered over his goblet deep in contemplation, into the peat fire smoldering in the fireplace, and well beyond that into some miraculous vanishing point that is the source of all knowledge and *in vino veritas*, and mumbled, "Question the methods of Holmes?" And raising his left arm and pointing it beyond the fire, he quoth, "Verily, by my strong right arm, I say: The horror! The horror!"
- 3) Improbably enough, our next and final teacher on the subject is the illustrious doctor, biblical scholar, and luminary, Yousef ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides, also known as the Rambam. In his treatise "Going Holmes. Again." the Rambam pointed out that a certain type of dust flea, *phyaloptera caccanoots*, inhabits only Afghanistan, and attaches itself to all canines within the borders of that country. Furthermore, no antidote, vermicide, powder, nostrum, or compound can rid a canine of this parasite once infested. While the canine host itself is stuck with these critters for life, they cannot transfer to other dogs once the infected animal leaves beautiful Afghanistan. Therefore, the only place a dog could acquire these fleas, if you please, is by visiting that country. In fact, the Rambam casually observes (but with conviction!) that Holmes had investigated every silly millimeter of the dog's fur with

his powerful Bausch and Lomb magnifying glass. There was nary a trace of the dreaded *caccanoots* to be found, not even after flipping over the protesting hound and examining the tender feathery-coated groin area favored by such fleas. True, Holmes did discover the common garden variety British crumpet-loving flea, a few scratches and nibble marks, and a small wad of Wrigley spearmint chewing gum, imported into the country aboard the Cunard steamer *The Algonquin*, already chewed precisely 438 times, placed in the groin by someone with very small hands scrubbed clean three times weekly with Castille soap. The chewing gum was neatly camouflaged as a dangling ellipse of matted fur inside the left or right thigh area by rubbing it with earth taken from the clay pot facing the afternoon sun, and holding three nasturtiums (nasturtia?) enhanced with a pink ribbon, every day for the past two weeks. Small wonder then, according to the Rambam, that Holmes was able to report the cur, who quite evidently was given to roaming due to the toughness of his paw pads had never been to Afghanistan! To you unbelievers that scoff at the veracity of this report, citing the inconsequential and annoying sub-note that the Rambam had preceded the WGCD by several centuries, all this is dross from the mill of fine flax. Through his own powers of observation, connectedness, and insight, did not the Rambam say, "What higher form of synthesis be there than for a (wo)man to lay down his (sic) thoughts in the interests of truth?" What, ho, Watson! The game's four feet!

Call to Alms!!!
Call to Alms!!!

With winter fast approaching and Montreal returning to the barren heath of white and grey and slush and cold, some of you might be wondering how to pass the interminably bleak hours between 3:00 p.m. (when the sun goes to Winnipeg) and 7:15 a.m. (when it reluctantly returns to our Metropolis). We have the answer! Why not do as W. Throgmorton Puji has done, and delve into your Flemish kitchens for more limericks, anecdotes and don'ts pertaining to the WGCD? With a little imagination (you know what that is!) you can actually find this stuff just about anywhere! Yes! The peripatetic Holmes has been known to pop up in the unlikeliest of places, in the most improbable of guises. Look for the WGCD and his immortal entourage everywhere, especially in your imagination! (Look, Wendy, I'm flying!!!) And once you've got in touch with your inner Holmes, please be good enough to share the fruits of your discoveries with the rest of us by e-mailing to elliottnewman@hotmail.com or bringing your discoveries to the very next meeting of the Bimetallic Question. If you are e-mailing, please entitle your transmission simply: Bimetallic Question. We get scores of spam each day, and we are a trifle quick on the trigger finger when it comes to nuking the many offers we receive to increase our size.

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, October 2nd, 2003, at 6:30 p.m.

The Wysterious Cryptic Puzzle

1										1 - A long-nosed fish in the U.S. intelligence?
2										2 - Shire on an old French king?
3										3 - Lord Harringby's abode.
4										4 - Sir George or (11)
5										5 - Occupant of High Gable.
6										6 - J.B. Williams' Old Hall.
7										7 - Enter the lodging house in this street, and leave via rectangular (14)
8										8 - Place for a shotgun?
9										9 - The door opener.
10										10 - A burnt cross?
11										11 - Common, towers, or mystery
12										12 - A stone that need not be turned.
13										13 - Is this don a striped cat?
14										14 - A square exit.
15										15 - Melville's Mansion.
16										16 - 12's lower village.

TOASTING THE PRIDE OF BAKER STREET

Niketh Pareek

Those who are in search of a good mystery need not look further than the Westmount Public Room of the Westmount Library, where every second month the Bi-Metallic Question uncovers secrets from the world of Sherlock Holmes.

It's 6:30 on Aug. 7, and as the fading light dims the room, the names Grimm, Andersen and Carroll etched in the stained glass window appear to glow. Meanwhile, a group of 18 people raise their glasses to toast the greatest detective in literature, immortalized by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

"A toast to the Master," announces David Dowse, sovereign of the Bi-Metallic Question for over seven years.

"To the Master," the group replies with equal respect.

The Bi-Metallic Question is a group of enthusiasts who meet every second month to celebrate the adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Founded 25 years ago, and numbering about 40 people, the group will be publishing a book on the history of the club this year.

At their meetings they distribute a copy of their minutes, which includes a recipe, crossword puzzle and amusing anecdotes of their exploits.

Following the toast, President Dowse displays a collection of items and instructs members to memorize them for a test. Quickly, the group gathers around and tries to remember the 31 objects on the table. After time expires, each member returns to their seat and begins to list the items they can remember. On his first visit to the society, Peter Allen won the

competition, successfully identifying 24 objects.

New members introduce themselves and give their reason for joining. The newly crowned champion, Peter Allan, tells the group that he's been a lifelong fan and has often given Doyle's stories as Christmas presents. Ethan Allan, no relation, came to the meeting because he saw an item advertising the event in *The Examiner*. He is surprised at the diverse group of people in attendance. "I thought this would be a meeting of egg-heads," he says jokingly.

A 'show and tell' section follows the group introductions. Patrick Campbell, white-bearded with a slight English accent, proudly displays his collection of Holmes memorabilia that he purchased around the world. His collection includes copies of *The Strand* magazine, where the exploits of Sherlock Holmes were first published. Among the more esoteric of items is his nearly completed collection of cigarette cartons that have pictures of characters found in Holmes adventures, drawn in the style of Victorian-era wood carvings.

When Dowse rings the bell again, signalling another toast, this time the group drinks to Sherlock Holmes' best friend and roommate, Dr. Watson.

A quiz is handed out to the participants on 'The Problem of Thor Bridge', prepared by David Kellett, winner of the last quiz. The test is difficult, and demands exact answers. At stake is the privilege of selecting the next meeting's story, and with such a prize, members begin to scrutinize the ambiguous meaning of some questions. Campbell scores the highest on the controversial test and receives a dollar-store candlestick as his prize. He selects

'The Valley of Fear' as the story for the next meeting.

Shortly after, Stanley Baker raises his glass to announce a toast to Irene Adler, a character from 'A Scandal in Bohemia' — the only person who bested Holmes in any of the stories.

When asked why people come to these meetings, Dowse explains that it is not simply "an opportunity to get people together with friends to talk about the most published fictional character in history," but also a chance to "celebrate a period of history, the class system, the architecture, the British Empire, and social norms." Holmes was a bachelor his entire life, ingested controlled substances and lived with his best friend, but those were considered acceptable behaviours at that time. "If people took the time to learn the background," Dowse says, "they'd understand what the literature is all about."

The Bi-Metallic Question Sherlock

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Aug 14, 2003

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The Bi-Metallic Question Sherlock




Holmes Society's next meeting is on Thursday, Oct. 2 at 6:30 p.m. in the Westmount Room of the Westmount Library. All are welcome. For more information, call 931-8630.



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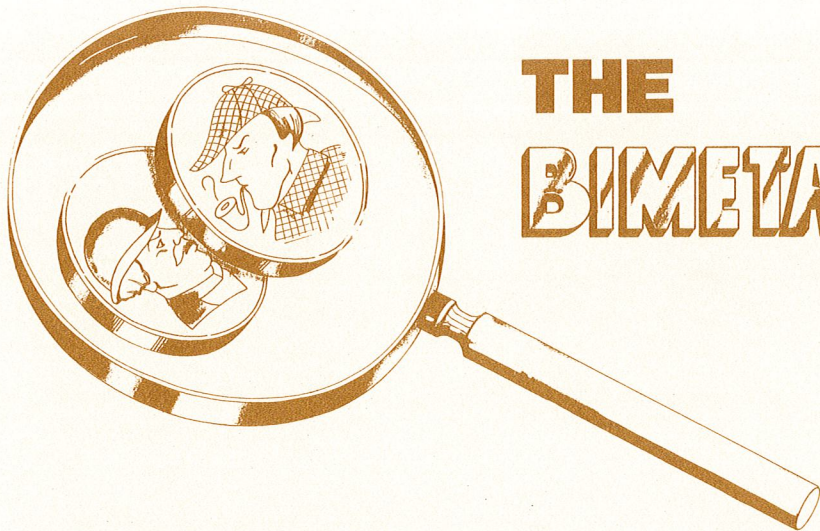
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THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

August 25, 2003

Sherlock in the Laurentians !

Dear Member or Past Member:

Some of you may remember that back in 1999 one of our members, Doug Grove, invited us to his lovely country home in St. Adele for the day. Each person brought along a dish - appetizer, sandwiches, salad, main course, desserts, breads, beverages - which we shared during the day (there are refrigeration and food-heating - but not cooking - facilities), and we took full advantage of the swimming pool for lounging and sunbathing.

Doug has repeated his invitation to our Society this year and suggested Sunday, September 14 as a suitable date - recognizing, of course, that no one date will suit everyone - so please consider this your invitation.

Doug's place is about an hour from Montreal and the plan would be to arrive there anytime from 10 a.m. onwards. We are negotiating with Patrick Campbell to lay out one of his devilish Treasure Hunts, and in case of inclement weather Doug's basement is well suited to indoor pursuits (whatever THEY might be!). We shall also have videotapes of previous Bimetallic Question events, such as the Garden Party in Hudson and the re-enactment of the Holmes-Moriarty struggle at the Reichenbach Falls (in Rawdon, Quebec!).

There is no charge and members and their families are all welcome: the only request is that everyone should bring along some comestibles or potables such as (but not limited to) those mentioned above to share with everyone. In addition, should you possess any suitable (or unsuitable, even!) games which you think may test our ingenuity or daring, please do bring them along. For those who need it we shall try to arrange a carpool, and driving directions will be provided as required.

Please call me at (514) 935 - 9581 (be ready for the answering machine in case we're out!) by Wednesday, September 10 if you'd like to join in; this way we can let Doug know in good time what sort of invasion he should plan for!

Sincerely

Wilfrid de Freitas
Event Co-ordinator

R.S.V.P: (514) 935 - 9581

