



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower  
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

July 13, 2004

**Welcome**

to the thrumming of summer, the prancing of lambs,  
the zinging of insects' legs in the tall goldenrod.  
Did the World's Most Famous Consulting  
Detective ever break a sweat in the  
dog days of a London August?  
Come to our next meeting.  
Ask, and ye shall learn.

## **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. at:

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

## **And the point is ...?**

- 1) You may have noticed we never add the postal code to the address of the Westmount Public Library. This is because if you mailed yourself there, you might arrive late and miss the meeting. Yes, we admit it. The omission of the postal code is intentional. However, its absence may offend the delicate sense of balance in nature in some of our members. We apologize for this and hope that the following explanation will suffice. We want you there in person. Consider too that if we were to provide the postal code, you would be tempted to wrap yourself in a large box and have yourself delivered. Have you thought about the pitfalls of that line of approach?
  - a) The box would be too large to cram through the letter hole.
  - b) You might arrive on a week-end, and have to stay in your box until Monday morning.



- c) You might be visited by small dogs on leashes commandeered by Westmount dowagers identified in a previous newsletter. The dogs would do to your box what they were described as doing on the park lawn in that newsletter.
  - d) Since we are an equal opportunity organization, we have also anticipated the dangers to your box from roaming cats, even those with long white fur, pink button noses, velvet collars, and shiny tinkler bells. Cats will find your box an obstruction and mark it as their territory. No deodorant known to man or woman will separate you from that olefactory tangle of territorial cats that will seek to number you among their valued scentables.
  - e) Your box might be joined by the box of another Bimetallic member who had the same brilliant idea you did. After about 4 ½ hours beside each other, one or the other of you might receive information psychically in the form of strange vibrations or unexplained noises or plaintive calls for help that there is an inhabited neighbouring box. There would ensue, possibly, a need to entertain and converse with each other for the duration of the evening or week-end which would be quite exhausting and trying to your nerves. If non-stop scintillating conversation doesn't do it, you will be kept awake at night by the sound of your neighbour's stomach's grumbling from hunger.
  - f) Kids might reposition your boxes and use them as goalposts for summer hockey. Fortunately, we no longer have horse-drawn milk wagons in Westmount, so the hockey pucks will most likely be tennis balls. Those of you who love tennis may not object to the rhythmic or erratic thwacking, thumping, and exploding of tennis balls against your box. Gradually, however, your ability to hear will diminish, so the harsh banging of balls inside your head will not be an issue.
  - g) It will be dark inside your box, and despite the conversations with your neighbour, yourself, your various selves, and your emerging and exponentially amplifying demons, you will experience sensory deprivation. You will hallucinate. You will rant. Your box and the noise it makes will be taped by an eight-year-old kid for a summer camp project. You will deny everything, to no avail. The kid will get a syndicated home video tv show and you will continue your downward spiral.
  - h) For light, you will flick your Bic, strike a match, rub two pieces of cardboard together, experience dry mouth and grind your teeth, thus emitting sparks, and igniting your cardboard box. You will give off puffs and wisps of smoke for months through your ears and other convenient orifices, you will pay handsomely for extinguishing therapy, and your hairdresser or barber won't be able to de-frizz your hair for at least a year.
  - i) People will ask you why you mailed yourself to the Westmount library in a large cardboard box and you will not have an answer.
- 2) By contrast to the inanities of the individual writing this Bimetallic Question newsletter, the society is comprised of a marvelous and compelling assemblage of talented, interesting, and worthy individuals, some of whom rank at or near the forefront of world-class Sherlockosophy. This modest and unassuming group welcomes all comers and has shown, time and again, its generosity and willingness to share knowledge, camaraderie, friendship, and good times with them. The fact that this newsletter can at times go a bit over the edge does not



in any way necessarily reflect the opinions of the members; it is a credit to their open-mindedness that they accept the occasional tongue-in-cheek, if slightly irreverent jibe at the seriousness of the Holmes canon. We joust with good taste because we want to appeal to a wide cross-section of individuals and a strong sense of aesthetics. We are proud and thrilled to be part of a worldwide network of Sherlock Holmes societies with whom we share information and ideas on a regular basis. It is also super and totally neat that we can travel to many parts of the world and be welcomed by people who share our interests which encompass so much more than Sherlock, and which we share at our meetings. We believe in expanding our horizons and we welcome new people to come, observe, participate, and share. Welcome to all!

**The Next Quiz: The Illustrious Client,** prepared by **Rachel Berman.**

**Minutes** of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec.

**Present:**

Carole Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Céline Armstrong, Stanley Baker, Mac Belfer, Rachel Berman, Rivka Berman, Patrick Campbell, Sarah Dawbarn, David Dowse, David Kellett, Francis K. Lalumière, Richard Lord, Elliott Newman, Ruth Pidduck, Lawrence Reich, Arlene Scher, Colin Semel.

**Regrets:**

Jack and Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette.

**SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT THIS NIGHT'S MEETING:** This meeting was a little unusual in that we had undertaken:

- 1) An advertising blitz in the form of a poster announcing "An Evening with Sherlock Holmes." This small poster was put up on bookstores and libraries in Westmount, the West Island, and downtown by Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, and Elliott Newman.
- 2) We invited Sarah Dawbarn, Montreal Director of the British Council (Canada) to attend our meeting, and to provide insights about how we can utilize resources and ideas in our programming and membership activities.
- 3) Stanley brought three new attendees, two of whom signed on as new members.

**CALL TO ORDER:** David Dowse, our immediate past Sovereign, called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm and welcomed those present.

- 1) David Dowse opened the meeting, and thanked those involved for distributing flyers. He also thanked Sarah Dawbarn for attending.
- 2) Francis Lalumière toasted the Master.



- 3) David hosted a repeat of a club favourite, Kim's game, in which 53 items were this time placed on a table. After being allowed several minutes to study the table and remember the items, we then had several more minutes to write them down.

Newcomer Carol Abramson won with a top score of 34. Another newcomer, Céline Armstrong, joined regulars Patrick Campbell, David Kellett, and Francis Lalumière with scores of 30 each.

- 4) David Dowse toasted Doctor Watson in a fine, perceptive, lyrical, nostalgic tribute to his important place in the canon and in Holmes's life. Here is the text of David's toast:

*He didn't change. We know just about all there is to know of importance about the "good doctor" from his first introduction to Holmes at Bart's Hospital and there is little else we learn in the thirty odd years of their association.*

*He seems very one-dimensional with his raison d'être to highlight and chronicle the adventures of Sherlock Homes. True, he had a drunken older brother, a penchant for the horses, a short but distinguished medical/military career, and a wife or two.*

*He took people at their face value; he saw the image projected, not what lay beneath.*

*He was a contented man, a romantic, a man easily impressed by the ladies and by royalty.*

*He was a loyal man to the point of never thinking to contradict or confront a statement or action of Holmes. His friend's values were his values, almost exclusively.*

*Watson was not ambitious or manipulative or self-centered. He was very sympathetic, almost fawning, toward Holmes's clients, especially the rich or pretty ones.*

*Family and his medical practice took a back seat to any opportunity to be with Holmes on a case. There were no children for Watson and Mary, and one wonders why he bothered to get married at all.*

*He could easily have had dalliances with any number of females on the side without interrupting his bond with Holmes. Yes, it would have provided real excitement if Watson had become involved and compromised by an unfortunate and indiscrete adventure with a duchess, an upstairs chambermaid, a spy, or a lady's companion who was coincidentally in liaison with Moriarty. How would Holmes have saved the reputation, to say nothing of the life, of his dear friend? But who would have penned such a story? Certainly not Watson or Holmes; perhaps Moriarty himself!*



*But no, let us come back to reality. Watson would never have wavered in this manner. He would never have let his Dr. Jekyll out of the box! He ran on the same tracks – the straight and the narrow – story after story.*

*It never ceases to amaze me how Watson was always amazed himself by Holmes's acts of deductive reasoning or how Watson's efforts at reasoning were almost the exact opposite to those of Holmes. He knew the Master's methods but by applying them, he always got a different answer. As I have said to Rachel, there are a hundred ways to kill a cat, but Watson never got the right one, i.e., Holmes's one.*

### ***Did Holmes really need Watson?***

*To solve the adventures – NO!*

*To run the criminals to ground – NO!*

*To live at 221B Baker Street – NO!*

*To sit down and chronicle each and every adventure – Probably!*

*Holmes did not need to perform this long and tedious task (He did it only once).*

*Holmes did not need to broadcast his successes to establish his reputation or boost his ego.*

*Holmes said he needed Watson to be his wall, his sounding board off which to bounce ideas. The responses that Watson gave to Holmes helped him focus and direct his mental energies in the right direction to solve the case.*

- 5) Sarah Dawbarn explained the function of the British Council in facilitating cultural exchanges between England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and Canada. Her role is to develop links between British culture and opportunities in Quebec. She pointed out that there is significant exchange activity between academic institutions here and in England, including universities and public school boards. There are presently 25 young British students in Quebec helping to teach English to francophones, while there is an exchange of 25 francophone students to England. She offered to link our web site to others on her domain. Ms Dawbarn generously left us with a literary anthology of recent writings from Great Britain, and promised to return to a society meeting in the future.
- 6) In a script by Elliott Newman, Colin Semel performed an unforgettable Holmes as the society delivered on its promise to present "An Evening with Sherlock Holmes." Setting the record straight by recounting his version of Watson's true role in Holmes's life, Colin's Holmes denied the drug addiction problem entirely, and claimed the all-night sessions on cases were not a matter of choice or the product of a compulsive personality. They were necessary, he claimed, because Watson's indolence made it necessary for Holmes to work overtime in order to support them both. As Holmes complained of Watson:



*There he lay, snoring and hawking in the midst of my nocturnal labours, my beakers and flasks and phials and tubes sputtering with ammunition that would – I modestly admit – give if not birth, at least impetus – to a future world brimming over with forensic medicine ... yes, I admit it, here in these very rooms, with naught but the prone and regularly expelling, oozing, chortling body of the ox-like John Watson, M.D., taking good air, expelling bad; gurgling and drooling and rumbling and flatulating his appreciation of Mrs. Hudson's exquisitely served viands and comestibles while I would slave through each long night making inroads into science, and going where – yes! no ... consulting ... detective ... has gone before!*

*And further to suffer the calumnious slings and arrows of outrageous self-indulgent accusations that I spend my off-hours in opium dens, or injecting cocaine out of some existential angst, as if to imply that my mind cannot contain the vast, uncontrollable jungle of my alleged all-to-easily depressed psyche or purported addictive personality? Preposterous hogwash! That is Watson's fiction. Fantasy. A lie of the mind, written out of his own indolence and pathetic need to create for himself a hero's role by showing to the world how he was able to put up with me, calmly and masterfully steering and babysitting the uncontrollable genius that is Sherlock Holmes. Poppycock and balderdash!*

- 7) Third toast of the evening was to Mrs. Hudson, presented by Lawrence Reich.
- 8) We had further discussion on our society's hosting the Goose Club of the Alpha Inn from Vermont on Saturday, July 31, at the home of Eva and Elliott Newman, 12761 Clearview Street, Pierrefonds, QC (no postal code: all giant boxes will be left outside for the animals). Guests will begin arriving at 11:00 a.m. We are asking society members who will be attending to speak to Elliott about what to bring to the pot-luck lunch that we will start serving at noon. Call Elliott at (514) 685-6135 if he doesn't call you first! Following the food, we'll have games, puzzles, quizzes, and good times until about 4:00. After that, we'll head down to Old Montreal for an informal walking tour and dinner at a restaurant, to be determined. Since we are expecting up to eight (8) guests from Vermont, we will be accommodating them Saturday night in our homes. So far, the Billettes, the Newmans, and David Kellett have offered. We may need a few more homes. We'll be in touch with you about that. We have nothing official planned for Sunday, so you would offer breakfast/brunch to your guests, and you may want to suggest or accompany them on some form excursion to various parts of the city. Elliott will be in touch with you about (a) your attendance at this wonderful outing. It will be held rain or shine; (b) your pot luck choice; and (c) accommodation of guests.
- 9) Fourth Toast to "The Woman" by Mac Belfer.
- 10) **YE BIMETALLIC QUIZ.**  
Patrick Campbell devised a creative solution to administering his quiz on "The Retired Colorman." Since we could not anticipate how many people would be attending this meeting, he administered the quiz orally.



### **A FIRST FOR THE SOCIETY!!!**

For the first time ever, a visitor won the quiz, with a second visitor coming in fourth:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize: Rachel Berman
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize: David Kellett
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize: Stanley Baker
- 4<sup>th</sup> prize: Carol Abramson (who also joined the society as a new member that night.)

Rachel has selected "The illustrious Client" for her choice of the quiz story for our next meeting.

11) **The insidious worm of impending spring – Part Two**

In our last newsletter, you read that we had been reprimanded several times by the librarian for talking too loud. This time, when the librarian approached our glass doors, yours truly went crimson, believing his pen was scratching too noisily and would thus do in the society, forcing it to look for other, sound-proofed quarters. Nay, not so. This time, the librarian sweetly asked us if we would allow a newcomer to attend our meeting. We were delighted to welcome yet another interested participant to our ranks.

12) **Waxing literary – Part Two**

The deadline is approaching for the submission of articles and other printable materials that will go into our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Slim Volume. It's up to us to make this an *oeuvre* to be proud of.

Please speak to Patrick or Wilfrid about your thoughts in the matter.

**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 5th, 2004, at 6:30 p.m.



