



THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES of the meeting of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION December 4, 2008

DUES ARE DUE!!!

If you haven't already paid your dues for 2009 please send your cheque
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([514-935-9581](tel:514-935-9581) or wilfrid@defreitasbooks.com)

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, February 5th, at 6:30 p.m. at:
The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Westmount, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

"His Final Bow"
prepared by
Marie Burrows.

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, December 4th, 2008 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, Mac Belfer, Paul Billette, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Patrick Campbell, Lionel Cuccioletto, Stephanie Cuccioletto, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Chris Herten-Greaven, David Kellett, Lars Lökvist, Helen Mayer, Kathryn Radford, Arlene Scher, Bonnie Stone, Cheryl Surkes, Ronnie Zilman.

Regrets: Jack Anderson, Elliott Newman, Heather Wileman-Brown.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called promptly to order at 6:30 by Kathryn Radford.

PREFATORY NOTE:

Keeping one eye on world events and t'other on the BmQ, your Lowly Scribe missed this historic meeting of the association. Having co-founded (not *confounded*) a community newspaper in the Eastern Townships, he was invited to a 25th anniversary reunion in the beautiful town of Knowlton where a surprising number of the original journalists are still above ground and clinking glasses. Special thanks to Maureen Anderson and David Dowse for taking notes at our meeting and passing them along to your – as ever – L.S.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating A and M, Standard and Poor, C and TV, Radisson et DesGroseillers)

1. Through a Glass Darkly

The first item on display was us. A CTV mobile television crew, comprising an interviewer, cameraman, and equipment, filmed the meeting. Their purpose was to do a piece for the about-town entertainment segment of their nightly news. They interviewed David Dowse in his Sherlockian dressing gown with his pipe, magnifying glass, and pet speckled band (nicknamed "Hisser" for its rhyming qualities). David expertly filled them in on the basics of our club – its origin, reasons why interesting people join the BmQ, and the enduring fascination with Sherlock Holmes. The CTV people also interviewed Kathryn Radford. Scheduled broadcast times were on January 6, at noon and 6:00 p.m. during the CTV news.

2. It's a Date!

The meeting confirmed Saturday, January 17 as the evening of our annual dinner at the Montefiore Club on Guy Street.

3. David's Moral Compass

David Dowse gave a puzzle to test the moral decision-making abilities of our members and guests. The challenge was to decide whom to pick up at a bus stop: a sick old lady; your best friend who had saved your life five years ago; or the (wo)man of your dreams. You can only have one passenger beside the driver in your car. Your Lowly Scribe's Elevated Assistant did not include results of the quiz, but it sounds like a poser that will rock our Society to its foundations.

We wonder what the ethical SH would have done under similar circumstances? Disguised himself so as to be unrecognizable? Turn himself into a limo? Reduce the pedestrians to bees so he could fit them all in?

4. **The Emanation**

Note-taking at meetings is a frantic thing, folks. Before Your Lowly Scribe's Elevated Assistant knew it, a copy of *Mrs. Beeton's Household Management* appeared on the table, in surprisingly pristine condition. We did not notice who had brought it, and *poof!* before you knew it, we were off in a heady rush to the next fascinating material manifestation of The Master's works, which was ...

5. **The Boris Yeltsin?**

Patrick Campbell showed a Sherlock Holmes Book signed by Boris Yeltsin and his wife. Isn't this an amazing thing? How many of us sign our books along with our spouses? Nobody, right? Unless there is a division-of-property settlement in the offing. There must be more to this. Consider: IF this is the real Boris Yeltsin and his Wife, why would they both sign it? No-brainer. This is Russia, man. Everything belongs to everybody. They didn't even need a pre-nup for this. Their book belongs to both of them. Nay, it belongs to – you guessed it – the people. Or it would have in the old regime. Ach, so many complicated issues. Did they read it? Are they ready for the quiz?

6. **Sealed with a ...**

Patrick also showed a box of Bank of England sealing wax. Since the economy is sliding downhill and it's snowing outside, maybe we can use it to wax our skis, if we haven't burned them to keep warm?

7. **What would Freud say?**

Paul Billette showed *The Doyle Diary*, a book of pictures drawn by Doyle's father. Since Your Lowly Scribe was not there to witness it, we cannot report if they were that kind of Victorian drawings, or the other kind. We are aware, however, of the profound influence of Holmes's father on his son. Charles Altamont Doyle was a chronic alcoholic who worked but little, but had pretensions and some friends, both artistic. 1893 was a pivotal year for the successful writer SACD. His father passed away, and the writer himself decided once and for all to put an end to the World's Greatest Consulting Detective, in "The Adventure of the Final Problem." SACD's wife Louise was diagnosed with consumption and was given only a few months to live. Doyle had already spent most of 1890 studying Opthamology in Vienna, a specialty he would never put to much use in his medical practice, but which comes to the fore in the canon. (Ever notice how SH focuses on "seeing," and not nearly as much on the other for senses? He is noticeably devoid of "feeling;" he is rather impervious to Mrs. Hudson's cooking smells and the taste of her food, although Watson makes fleeting reference to her culinary accomplishments; SH has an ear for dialect and throws himself into numerous roles, although the effect disguises and impersonations is primarily visual. The stinging "Good night, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," while auditory, is a far second to the overall affect of the Woman and her attributes.) Was it a

coincidence that SACD should be in Vienna in 1893 where Sigismund Schlomo Freud was already practicing his “talking cure” brand of medicine? Did they meet? Did the young British student attend lectures given by Freud and his colleagues? Gentle readers, these are serious questions and worthy of further study.

8. If you like ~~katz~~ cats

Chris W. Herten-Greaven showed two books handed down by his grandfather on infamous man eaters – tigers and leopards.

9. The game's aboard

David Kellett showed a detective board game in which the players travel through London in search of Jack the Ripper. It's called the “Finding Jack” game.

10. At least he agreed to stand still for the photo

Cheryl Surkes and her husband went to London and had their picture taken beside the statue of The Great Detective. It was difficult to get a picture because of all the soccer fans pouring out of a nearby pub. The Surkeses also went to see *The Mousetrap*, running continuously for 57 years.

11. LMPPSSTAEI – Unscramble, erase, start over

Patrick Campbell identified an interesting word in “The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez”: palimpsest. It refers to a writing material such as a parchment or tablet used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased or scraped. The word originates in the Greek *palimpsēstos*, meaning “scraped again.” Formerly, a standard parchment for writing was four times our letter-sized 8½” x 11” paper sheet.

12. Ashes to ashes

Sherlock Holmes used ashes to find a killer. Today it's DNA; it used to be a smoking gun. The “ash” branch of detection preceded SH by thousands of years. In the second book of *Daniel*, ashes on the floor were used to expose the idol worshippers of Bel the Dragon; they ate the food which was offered to their pagan god.

13. What happened to the question?

Patrick asked the very important question: “What happened to the body?” Indeed. If anyone knows, please show us at our next meeting.

14. A new kind of Victorian hands-free device

Wilfrid deFreitas showed his “Pince Oreille” which hooks onto the ears with thin wires. Can you imagine overworked waiters and room service personnel in hotels carrying multiples of trays, all supported in an Alexander Calder-like thin

wire framework which ultimately hooks onto the ears? Quick! Get it patented before Monty Python does!

15. Continuing the metaphor

In a continuation of the discussion of ashes on the floor, someone mentioned that in the tale of Tirstan and Isolde (or Iseult), sand was put on the floor between the beds of the two lovers to see if they were visiting each other at night. Brilliant! If anyone cared that much, they could have called in the CTV crew. What if the lovers used pogo sticks, eh? Wot then?

16. Annual Budget

Rather than typing up our Annual Budgets for the past two years in entirety, here is a summary:

	<u>Dec. 31, 2006</u>	<u>Dec. 31, 2007</u>
Cash on hand	\$ 1,354.33	\$ 1,962.54
Total income	\$ 3,879.12	\$ 4,334.60
Expenditure	\$ 1,916.58	\$ 2,079.78
Cash on hand	\$ 1,962.54	\$ 2,254.82

Cost of mailing and stationery will be submitted by Maureen Anderson.

17. The piper must be paid

Dues for 2009 are \$20 per person; \$30 per couple. Much of this goes to supplying paper for the minutes, and mailing them.

18. Call to service

Some changes in leadership for the coming year:

Florin (treasurer)	-	Paul Billette
Sovereign	-	Wilfrid de Freitas
Mrs. Hudson	-	Roger and Marie Burrows

19. Quiz – Results

“The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez” prepared by Carol Abramson.

Possible total: 101

Winners were:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Prize</u>
1.	Marie Burrows	94	Round the Fire Stories
2.	Roger Burrows	92	Christmas Miscellany
3.	David Kellett	82	1001 Q - puzzlies

The next quiz will be based on “His last bow” prepared by Marie Burrows.

20. First Toast – To the Master
by Wilfrid de Freitas

A toast to The Master. Easy, one might be forgiven for thinking, but one could just as easily be wrong. By my calculations, with our Society approaching its thirtieth anniversary in 2009, we have already had somewhere in the region of 175 such toasts at our meetings, so it's difficult to avoid repetition.

However, there's one aspect of The Master that I don't recall being mentioned: which is that he is responsible for bringing a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment into the world. Pick up a newspaper, turn on the radio or television, and the chances are that all we hear are reports of disaster, natural and otherwise, death, destruction, and financial mayhem. However, once every couple of months, for a brief moment when we get together at times like this, we can turn our attention to one of the more important things in life, as they say in America, the pursuit, if not of happiness – then certainly of pleasure. We welcome this evening some new faces who we hope will share our enjoyment now and in the future – all courtesy of The Master.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I ask you to raise your glasses in a toast to The Master.

(It must be noted that all or most glasses raised contained cranberry juice, due possibly to the television crew who must not drink while working and us who may not drink alcohol on television. We must get to the bottom of this. – L.S.)

21. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson
by Patrick Campbell

This is a brief toast to a most remarkable man that we all know as the colleague and biographer of an even more remarkable man, renowned to one and all as Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street.

Without the diligence of the former, we would, believe me, know little of the latter. But here we have a problem because, as none of us have met the real-life Dr. Watson, we know him most intimately through his writings, and also by a series of skilled, or perhaps less skilled actors who, over the years, have portrayed our hero on stage or on the silver screen. Three of the best-known actors who have played the part within my memory, are Nigel Bruce (with Basil Rathbone as Holmes) and either David Burke or Edward Hardwicke who have played the part more recently in the Granada television series with Peter Jeremy William Huggins as Holmes. (Stage name: Jeremy Brett. Can you imagine Huggins as Holmes? The alliteration alone would trip up the most adroit Sherlockian. – L.S.) Now in this series we find that David Burke played the good doctor in the first 13 of the 41 episodes, which covered 42 of the sixty stories, and Edward Hardwicke took the part for 27 that followed. You may have observed that 13 and 27 do not total 41, and that is because Dr. Watson was not present during the story we are featuring this evening (GOLD).

To be honest, I have enjoyed all three of these fine actors, so I leave you to choose among them, but we must never forget the original himself. So I ask you to raise your glasses to the estimable Doctor John Watson. Late of the Army Medical Department.

22. Third Toast – To the Woman

by Roger Burrows

Is it I-ree'nee, I'reen, or I-reen'? Despite the fact that she was born in New Jersey, her story is intimately linked with central Europe, so I prefer a more continental pronunciation: i-ray'na.

Whatever the case, she was a remarkable woman; both in having a successful career culminating in prima donna at the imperial Opera in Warsaw, and in subsequently beating Sherlock Holmes at his own game. She made an impact not only on him, but on Dr. Watson too: she is mentioned by name in three stories apart from "A Scandal in Bohemia." But why does she also make an impact on us?

I think there are two reasons. Firstly, as introduced by the King, she appears to be another villain, even if not a particularly vicious kind. Subsequently, we discover another side to the story and realize that we have misjudged her. She has an air of nobility that the King himself lacks – as Holmes says, she is indeed on a very different level from His Majesty.

Secondly, she uses Holmes's methods to beat him. She forms a theory about the clergyman who is brought into her house and then dons a disguise in order to follow him, undetected, to verify the theory. No one else in the Canon, apart from Holmes himself, demonstrates this level of cool calculation under pressure. No wonder that Holmes's choice of reward from the King is a photograph of the lady in question.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Mrs. Godfrey Norton, the late Irene Adler – The Woman!

23. Fourth Toast – Mrs. Hudson

by Stanley Baker

(Since Stanley delivered the toast in Spanish, and since your L.S. was not trained to keyboard in that language we are unable to bring you his toast at this time. How do you say "cranberry juice" in Spanish" anyway? – L.S.)

24. Fifth Toast – To the Society

by Marie Burrows

This is the eighth consecutive meeting of The Bimetallic Question that I have attended and I thought that it would be an appropriate time for me to express my respect and admiration for The Society.

In looking back over the various toasts to The Society since I first began to attend, I was struck by Paul Billette's observations at last January's birthday dinner. He said, "We embrace all who share a love of the Master and an admiration for his biographer."

Whilst concurring with Paul's sentiments, I have been able to think of a few additional reasons to propose a toast to The Society:

First, we can buy a glass of port or sherry for a dollar at 6:30 p.m. and they don't kick us out until 9 o'clock.

Second, our odds of winning a prize for the quiz are better than Lotto 649.

Third, we get to dress up in Victorian costumes for the birthday party of a man that (according to a report cited by Sovereign Jack Anderson) only 58 per cent of Britons believe actually existed.

Lastly, we encounter no barriers to joining The Society – even people from Ottawa can buy a members hip and show up for the meetings.

Please raise your glasses to The Society!

25. Future Toasts

To The Master	-	David Dowse
To Dr. Watson	-	Mac Belfer
To The Woman	-	Cheryl Surkes
To Mrs. Hudson	-	TBA
To The Society	-	Chris W. Herten-Greaven

26. Mac's Corner

The Killing Game

by Mac Belfer

My tumbling thoughts
Play with the fleeing day
A losing game

And time
Watching my loss
Smiles without pity

Beware of brooding night
When rampant thought
Begets a fiercer foe

When ghostly players
In tight circle bound
Begins the killing game

Who would have thought
Eternity
Could be a single night

Or find
Redemption
In rays of dawning day

Our dear friends, you would confer a great fervour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, February 5th, 2009, at 6:30 p.m.

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