

Minutes of the meeting of The Bimetallic Question February 3rd, 2011

Date of next meeting

Thursday, April 7th, 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 Problem of Thor Bridge”
prepared by Roger Burrows

Minutes of the meeting of THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, February 3rd, 2011 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Nitika Dosaj, David Dowse, Ann Elbourne, Susan Fitch, Chris Herten-Greaven, David Kellett, Malcolm McRae, Elliott Newman, Kevin Riemer (guest), Carole Rocklin, Arlene Scher, Ron Zilman

Regrets: Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Wilfrid de Freitas, Tom Holmes

A l s o I n s i d e . . .

A timely “Summary of Our Annual Dinner” complete with toasts

See the first three items of these minutes, as well as the separate section of toasts etc.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order promptly at 6:30 by our new Sovereign, Ron Zilman.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Summer and Winter, These and Those, Talent and Genius)

1. No Room at the Top

The Bimetallic Question gladly welcomed its new Sovereign, Ron Zilman for a two-year term of fun, frivolity, and Sherlockian responsibility. Good luck, Ron.

2. A Modest Review of Our Annual Dinner (i), or How Could So Many People Who Had Such a Good Time Pan the Food So Resoundingly?

Aye, there's the rub.

In what had been an evening of hope, joy, trust, and only a bit of swilling in the library, we who attended the December meeting of the BmQ listened to the well-researched and cogent reports of our expeditionary forces who had sought out the most suitable places for our annual dinner. This was reported to our gentle readers in the minutes to that meeting, in a section entitled: The Annual Dinner (iv) and subtitled *An Informed Discussion Among Elegant People*. It was easy to infer that with "elegant" people making intelligent and informed decisions, the path to victory was clear. *Populi non potent pecare*. The people can do no wrong.

But somehow it did, according to our some of our reviewers.

An explanation:

We had been forewarned about the limited parking in the immediate area of the hotel. After all, this was Old Montreal on a Saturday night. For only twenty dollars each, up to three cars could enjoy valet parking, provided they called ahead. The rest of us parked on the street, or on a nearby lot. Not so bad. We left our wheelchairs at home, and walked. As we approached our shrine for the evening – the St. Sulpice Hotel, we threw down our crutches and marched bravely onward.

The facilities were outstanding, in general. The hotel lobby, where we herded together, was a mixture of old and new – ancient stonewalled foundations supported wooden beams, wallboard, mirrors, and accoutrements of a tastefully and elegantly (there's that word again: we BmQers do have an affinity for that kind of thing) appointed open area. Elements melded together in some kind of positive statement of interior design. The happy bartender cheerfully charged us nine dollars for a fractional glass of wine, so we could make it an even ten with the tip. Those who bought a bottle fared somewhat better. Those who purchased five or more did superbly, but likely regretted it the following morning.

The salon wherein we dined was Spartan yet comfortable. Rectangular with an alcove, it was easily large enough for our group of 55+, and could have accommodated more. The speaker's dais was located midway down the longitudinal stone wall facing the entrance and the alcove. It was situated ideally, so that everyone could hear clearly without using a microphone. Those with hearing aids used them to advantage. The carpeting muffled the extraneous noises of waiters and eaters, while the stone wall behind the speakers provided bounce and

projection of the sound. We gave the room top marks for ambiance and utility. It was different from the Montefiore, but we do need to move forward.

The food was another story. Your lowly scribe numbers among his acquaintances the head chef of the Wolfgang Puck restaurant in Minneapolis. Although lowly, your scribe takes food seriously. He makes lots of allowances for others' shortcomings because he knows well the nature of experimentation. Pernod is not always the solution to a lacklustre sauce. When the hors d'oeuvres floated out and among us, several of us who have food allergies noted that seafood appetizers were on the same tray as other genres. This is a no-no because of the contamination risk. Therefore, people who must watch what they eat could have none of those items. Sure, that left more for the rest of us. But in the end, the tidbits weren't all that tasty anyway.

When a grilled chicken breast gives every appearance of having been zapped in the microwave and then seared on a grill for a few minutes to score on the burn stripes, this scribe is more than a little incensed. There is no mistaking the rubbery taste and texture of a chicken breast that has had its three minutes in the micro. Drop it, it bounces. Dribble it against the gym floor, and it springs back up into the palm of your hand – eccentrically, perhaps, but nonetheless what has once been a modest, unassuming chicken has suddenly become elastic, and perhaps more lively on a plate than it was back at the ranch scrabbling for lunch in the dust. Others reported that the chicken was overdone. Vegetables were miniscule, a new concept in adding colour to the plate. These were shadows of colours. The salmon was fishy – that is, a bit on the aged side so that the fishy, salty smell (that's right, smell) creating a heavy, unpleasant impression on the palate. The soup was cold and should not have been. The rolls were so-so and could have used more imagination in their variety. At most tables, butter was a scarce commodity, so that inter-table trading went on. Butter disappeared like one of Dr. Joe's tricks. Most of those who had the hard, brown thing for dessert left it after one or two bites. We're not sure what it was, but apparently they had been prepared, because we saw them on quite a few tables. The amount of sugar in those brown things would have kept a primary school in perpetual motion for six months. Coffee and tea were a long time coming. When the six-ounce cups were filled to the regulation four ounces, we learned the true meaning of cold. The attempt to get a refill proved frustrating to a lot of us.

Service was a definite liability that night. While the waiters were congenial, there were not enough of them OR the food was not ready in the kitchen. Take your choice.

We had difficulty getting wine later in the evening since all the staff (three of them?) had been deployed into the dining area.

In balancing out our various levels of satisfaction and disillusionment, what we had been calling poor service might well have had a deeper cause, back in the kitchen.

Your Lowly Scribe has concluded that the reason there was only one washroom for ladies and one for gentlemen on that level of the hotel, was that the management never expects anyone to eat the food. But we fooled them!

Honestly folks, the food wasn't that bad! But we owe it to ourselves to scout out other places next time, and possibly eat at them to confirm that they are worth eating at.

3. A Modest Review of Our Annual Dinner (ii), or Did We Flop?

Absolutely not!

Many people polled informally said that this was the best program ever. The pacing was smooth and brisk, yet there was a relaxed air to the gathering. If the purpose of the dinner is to get together and enjoy each other's company while paying something more than lip service to Sherlock Holmes and his legacy, then we succeeded resoundingly. We pulled together, and organized another memorable evening.

It was due to the organizational efforts of our members listed here that the evening was a success: Rachel Alkallay, Paul Billette, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Chris Herten-Greaven, Elliott Newman, Ron Zilman.

To all, a big thank you!

4. A Modest Review of Our Annual Dinner (iii), or How Can We Do Better Next Time?

Plan earlier.

Take the time to investigate.

Look below the surface.

Create a checklist.

Level the playing field among prospective venues.

That way, things can still go wrong, but at a higher level.

5. Caught in the Act

At our February meeting, Paul Billette passed around duplicate copies of the many photos he had taken at the dinner. He invited us to pick the ones we wanted to bring home. They were very well taken, and will represent nice memorabilia of an exceptional organization comprised of a warm group of people who contributed to a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

6. Rafferty and the Rat

Roger Burrows asked us to name the Sherlockian connection to a recently-deceased British singer-songwriter. The answer is "Baker Street", the biggest hit of the recently-deceased Gerry Rafferty. Alas there is no mention of TWGCD in the lyrics. He also passed around an LP (remember them?) with another Sherlockian reference: "The Tale of the Giant Rat of Sumatra" by the Firesign Theatre.

7. Bring Back Those Radio Days

The web site www.otrcat.com offers old-time Sherlock Holmes radio programs from Britain and America, including the canon and many pastiches. Now we can get CDs of programs from 1930-1956 at reasonable prices. Thanks to Ann Elbourne for this tip.

8. Paradise Lost

David Dowse showed us two books and a DVD that he had received for Christmas. The books were *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes* by Jamyong Norbu, subtitled: *The Adventure of the Great Detective in India and Tibet*, and *The Sherlockian* by

Graham Moore. The DVD contained the three episodes broadcast so far of the new BBC TV series *Sherlock*. In addition, we were shown an article on beeches in Westmount, reminiscent of tonight's story "The Copper Beeches."

9. Greater than Ever

Susan Fitch pointed to a magazine article maintaining that the popularity of Sherlock Holmes is greater than ever. The article appeared in the British publication *Country Life* for May 27, 2009.

(Would it not be a worthwhile endeavour to research the reasons behind the popularity of SH? There are so many aspects to this question.)

10. What Was That?

Chris Herten-Greaven cited author William Cheslock who has written a study of assassinations. Chris suggested we might ask him to come to Montreal to speak at our next dinner. This followed Chris's information on their being proof of voices from the dead.

11. Of Birds and Prey

Marie Burrows said she likes to watch hawks coming through her property outside Ottawa. Recently she saw a small white animal. She recognised it as a stoat (ermine) whose coat turns white in winter (presumably to confound the hawks). She knew this because she had seen Maureen Anderson's fur-trimmed hat at the dinner.

12. Dyslexia. Agian.

Marie Burrows showed us a Sherlockian reference containing a complete list of the stories. She had observed an error in the presentation of the title, "The Adventure of Black Peter" which in this case appeared as "The Adventure of Peter Black." What's wrong with that? Inquiring minds want to know.

13. Take a Deep Breath and Stick Out Your Chess

Nitika Dosaj brought in a chess set from the Sherlock Holmes museum in London, in which the pieces are all Sherlockian characters. Not only are they highly creative, but the characters in the white pieces are different from those in the black pieces. This makes sense, because you'd want the good guys and the bad guys on opposite sides, right? Hel-lo?

14. First Toast – To the Master

by Ron Zilman

(taken from www.sherlockholmes.com)

When Arthur Conan Doyle first introduced Sherlock Holmes to the reading public in 1887, nothing could have prepared him for the fact he had created a character who was destined to become the most famous detective in the world.

(He became) so famous that when Conan Doyle who had loftier literary ambitions feared that Holmes was keeping him from better things and tried to kill him in 1893, there was a public outcry. He held out for ten years, but finally resurrected Holmes in 1903 and continued writing Holmes stories until the end of his life. After Conan Doyle's death in 1930, Sherlock Holmes enjoyed and continues to enjoy, what must surely be the most extensive afterlife of any character of fiction.

Perhaps one of the quirkiest twenty-first century *homages* to Holmes belongs to the award-winning American TV series *House*, which began transmitting in 2004, starring the British actor, Hugh Laurie. Now into his fifth (sic) season, Dr. Gregory House is in many respects a medical Sherlock Holmes, and series creator, David Shore, has admitted that even Dr. House's name is meant as a subtle homage. The show draws heavily upon Holmes archetypes, such as House's reliance on psychology to solve a case, his reluctance to accept cases he does not find interesting, his drug addiction (Vicodin instead of cocaine), his home address (apartment 221B), a complete disregard for social mores, personal talents (playing piano and guitar, rather like Holmes's violin), as well as Holmes's characteristic ability to judge a situation correctly with almost no effort. Dr. House's confidant and sounding board is Dr. James Wilson.

To the Master!

15. Pleased to Meet You

We invited our evening's guests, Nitika Dosaj, Kevin Riemer, and Malcolm McRae, to introduce themselves and tell us what brought them to our society.

16. The New, Improved Bimetallic Question

Ron Zilman mentioned David Dowse's recent email to Wilfrid de Freitas concerning the future of the society. This subject will be dealt with later in these minutes.

17. The Emperor's New Smorgasbord

Mavericks that we are, we have decided to comply with the regulations of the Westmount Public Library regarding the prohibition of consuming food or drink on the premises. In future,

- Mrs. Hudson will not bring in port and sherry
- She will not set a genuine glass wine cup at each place at table
- She will not levy a fee of one dollar per
- She will not clear off the glasses at the end of the evening
- We will, however, hoist imaginary glasses filled with an imaginary drink when making our very real toasts
- Chris will not bring in his gourmet pâtés and cheeses along with snaps, biscuits, and melbas
- Other non-volunteers such as Maureen and Jack will definitely not bring in those yummy shortbread cookies in collectors' tins from the islands
- We will not reek of wine, pâté, and cheese as we leave and say good-night to the library staff

When Chris was thanked for his past generosity, he said he was happy to do it. We hope he will understand and continue not to bring goodies in the future in the same unstinting manner as he has in the past.

We trust the foregoing is quite clear and unequivocal.

18. Entertainment for the Masses

Ron Zilman mused that last year, the society enjoyed a beautiful Victorian tea party at the Abramsons. In past years, we have played pool and snooker, done target shooting, had a car rally, and enjoyed a lawn party on the concrete chez Wilfrid and Susan de Freitas. This year, we are thinking about combining an outdoor bar-b-q beside the library, with a viewing of Shakespeare in the Park. A committee is underway to plan this and similar activities.

19. Second Toast – To Doctor Watson

by Susan Ruth Fitch

We're living in edgy times. Is it okay to portray Sherlock Holmes as impolite? My own answer would be "No." However, regarding this question, and along somewhat fanciful lines, I like to think that when Arthur Conan Doyle created a brilliant yet brusque detective hero in Sherlock Holmes, and his solid yet warm confrere Dr. Watson, he was bringing us the original "good cop; bad cop" crime-solving team.

A Toast to Dr. Watson: The Original Good Cop

Here's to a man of gentle mien:
When our Sherlock was seeming a trifle mean
Watson mended that social gap.

Yes, today when niceness is out of style
It's good to remember John Watson a while.
Holmes oft hid his gentler side.

He was the original "good cop."
The thought of danger could never stop
Watson's sorties to sleuth with Holmes.

Ah! Here's to a medical man with flair.
Mary Morstan decided him *quite* debonair.
Love was sparked on a case with Holmes

And in diligence taking his pen in hand
He regaled the nation, regaled the land
With his gripping tales of Holmes.

"Here's to you, old chap!" one night, said Holmes.
"I'm grateful you penned those wretched tomes.
Bless you Watson." And so say we.

To Dr. Watson!

20. Special Toast – To the Luminaries of Yore

We delivered a toast to our ex-sovereign Wilfrid de Freitas, as well as to others who have imbued our society with the special light of their passion, warmth, and generosity.

21. Third Toast – To the Woman

by David Kellett, for Rachel Alkallay

Since Rachel couldn't attend the meeting, David led us in an impromptu toast. He observed that Irene Adler enjoys a very small role in the canon. "Why, then, did Sherlock Holmes go to such an elaborate end to get the photo? We don't know."

Maureen Anderson replied, "To keep it close to his heart and his pocketbook."

22. Quiz – Results

Story: *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* prepared by Marie Burrows.

Possible total: 66 points

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	Roger Burrows	59	"Keep Calm & Carry On" desk notes
2.	Carol Abramson	56½	"To Do" aids
3.	Ann Elbourne	50	"To Do" aids

The next quiz, based on *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, will be prepared by Roger Burrows.

23. Some Thoughts on Tonight's Story

Marie noted that tonight's quiz story has the first of four Sherlockian Violets:

- Violet Hunter (The Copper Beeches)
- Violet Smith (The Solitary Cyclist)
- Violet Westbury (The Bruce-Partington Plans)
- Violet de Merville (The Illustrious Client)

Violet Hunter is also the first of four governesses in the canon.

Roger Burrows noted that some Sherlockian scholars believe that Violet Hunter is appropriately named since she is hunting for Sherlock Holmes. He also observed that Rucastle is one of the most unpleasant characters in the canon.

Maureen called him "a true Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde."

There ensued a discussion on how Holmes knew that Fowler was a seaman.

24. Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Maureen Anderson for Jack Anderson

Impromptu.

25. Fifth Toast – To The Society

by David Dowse

Impromptu

26. Drudge Work

Paul Billette suggested that someone other than the winner of the quiz should create the next quiz. He mentioned that one flaw in this approach is that it would enable a strong winner to win more quizzes, thereby knocking out others. David Kellett pointed out that, in any case, it would not be fair to change the system part way through the year.

27. Next Meeting's Toast Presenters

To the Master	-	Chris Herten-Greaven
To Dr. Watson	-	Marie Burrows
To the Woman	-	Carol Abramson
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Maureen Anderson
To the Society	-	Nitika Dosaj

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, April 7th, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. Bring a friend.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to:

<http://www.bimetallicquestion.org>

The Annual Bimetallic Dinner 2011 at an (Extended) Glance

*What Happened in Old Montreal
on January 22, 2011*



Pictures courtesy of Paul Billette, Maureen Anderson, and Roger Burrows

From the warm and comprehensive welcoming address by outgoing Sovereign Wilfrid de Freitas to the concluding moments of another memorable annual dinner, The Bimetallic Question once again showed a camaraderie and determination to go beyond its mandate to perpetuate the legacy of Sherlock Holmes. With the passing of long-time and much-beloved "Recruiting Sergeant" Stanley Baker on November 1, 2010, the undercurrents of dedication and friendship created a strong rallying point for attendees as the evening was dedicated to his memory.

Elliott Newman read excerpts from the tribute to Stanley which he had written with the support of many notable members of various Westmount associations including our own. Stanley was remembered as a man who made loving life and helping people easy. You

may view the tribute in its entirety on the Westmount Examiner website, www.westmountexaminer.com. Just enter "Stanley Baker" in the search box at the top of the home page.

The annual Bimetallic dinner tests the mettle of our speech-making abilities. We tend to pull out the stops for this special event, going the extra mile in creativity, imagination, passion, zeal, and anything else we can inject into our addresses to the Montreal aficionados of the exploits of The World's First (and Greatest) Consulting Detective. The toasts were, understandably, *non-pareil*. We reproduce them here for your perusal and enjoyment.

The venue this year was different. For the past several dinners, we had been fortunate in being able to enjoy the hospitality of the Montefiore Club on Guy Street, with its high ceilings and authentic Victorian ambiance. Sadly, that establishment is to be no more, having been sold off to Concordia University for an undisclosed purpose. We had been led there by longstanding BmQ member Rachel Alkallay, whose family's membership in that fabled place qualified us for admission. A sleuthing committee was set up for a replacement venue, and we discussed and evaluated the reports of various restaurants and locations around the city. All were meritorious.

But it was Rachel once again who came through with a real winner. From the moment we entered the lobby of the elegant Hotel St-Sulpice on the street of that name in Old Montreal, behind the Notre Dame Church with its pealing bells, we knew we were in for a treat. The restored interior of this centuries-old building in the heart of the historic *quartier* oozed class and comfort. Our assemblage of 55 attendees nestled comfortably into the fieldstone-walled salon in an intimacy we had not experienced before. We noted that the room could have accommodated more than that number. Aside from the characteristic friendship, caring, and warmth shown among our members, the slightly lower ceilings than at the Montefiore, controlled lighting, and wall-to-wall carpeting may have contributed to this feeling of comfort. The rectangular configuration of the room and the stone wall on one side enhanced the acoustics to the point that it was not necessary for any of the speakers to use a microphone. Stanley Baker watched over us sagely from his framed photograph on a table in an alcove formed by a pillar and a wall, facing the speakers. The food was imaginative and according to some, almost delicious; failing that, nearly acceptable.

We must not forget the yeoman efforts of Wilfrid de Freitas, Paul Billette, and others who outdid themselves in the planning and execution of the events. Every speech, appearance, and entertainment moved seamlessly from one to the next. From the *hors d'oeuvres* through to dessert and beyond, everything flowed.

Our guest speaker, Robert Landori, was a real find. After he claimed not to know too much about Sherlock Holmes, but to know about story-telling, we quickly realized that his modesty about Sherlockian knowledge was just another story. He wove a tale of mystery and suspense about a woman who was either widowed or abandoned in Sussex, and who befriended him in her eighties when he was but a young, persecuted lad at a private school in the area. True, the calabash pipe he produced at the end of his speech would never have come from Irene Adler because Sherlock Holmes did not smoke one, but why pick nits at this point? Undeniably, Robert Landori *is* a storyteller, and a passionate, entertaining one. If we can convince him that the proper study of mankind is Sherlock Holmes, we are assured from what we have seen that his learning curve will be steep and swift.

Along with the feeling and hope that Stanley Baker was watching over the dinner and had never actually left us, was the sad realization that nothing is forever. We are an aging and in some cases, an ailing population. Our prayers and thoughts are constantly with David Kellett who managed to make it out of his home to contribute staunchly to the dinner with a vigour belying the gravity of his medical condition. Since his appearance years ago on our scene, David has been a rock to our organization with his keen insights, eclectic experiences, greatly inspired imagination, his articulate and layered deliveries, and sustained generosity. His contributions to the society have been beyond measure. We pray they will continue for a long time.

We look to the future. We have begun discussing ways in which to broaden the appeal of the society, to make it interesting to younger members while retaining and piquing the interest and participation of our existing membership. We welcome Ron Zilman to the helm of The Bimetallic Question as our new Sovereign, as we move into the next exciting period in our history. He has some pretty big shoes to fill, and we're going to help him do it.

Toasts and Other Items from the Annual Dinner

First Toast – To the Master

by David Dowse

What am I to do?

Uncle Jack is dead, murdered last night, of that I am sure. But the questions remain: who did it? how was it done? and why?

The images of the missing will, the broken medicine bottle, and the stranger who called at the home after midnight, all swirl in my mind.

But here I am, on his doorstep. I am sweating freely and I pace nervously back and forth on the sidewalk. Do I ring the bell or do I make a mad dash for the train station and escape from London? I am confused and frightened, but I am determined to clear my name and reputation.

Why else would I leave the mansion at 3:00 a.m., catch the milk run to London, and arrive at this door to beg for help from the only man who can save me from the gallows: Mr. Sherlock Holmes?

I turn and pull the bell. I hear the soft tread of approaching feet behind the door. Then it opens and the smiling, motherly face of the landlady greets me. I apologize profusely and implore her to bring me to the rooms of Mr. Sherlock Holmes with utmost haste. She taps her foot, sizes me up, and then ushers me into the hallway, up the seventeen steps to a sitting room. I produce a card and give her my name. She knocks and announces me to two gentlemen who are sitting by the fire smoking their after-breakfast pipes.

So I imagine what it was like for the worried young nephew as he brought his case of murder to Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the world's first consulting detective.

What I wouldn't have given to have been in that man's shoes!

To have been calmed and reassured by the Master's voice, and given an armchair by the fire and a glass of brandy.

To have been astounded and flabbergasted by his observations and deductions of my origins, trade, and family connections as well as the purpose of my early morning visit to 221B Baker Street.

To have been probed by the dagger-sharp questions which pull the story, setting, and characters from my jumbled brain.

And then the pause as I waited on the edge of my chair, while the great man paced up and down the room, deep in thought.

At last the proclamation: He will take my case and will return with me on the earliest train to begin "The Adventure of the Purple Paragon."

What an introduction!

What a man!

I give you Sherlock Holmes.

Second Toast – To John H. Watson, M.D.

by Patrick Campbell

I have always maintained that while many of us think they choose their own path through life – and all of us make a succession of decisions from day to day – a considerable number of the *really* important decisions are not of our own choosing.

As an illustration of this, let us consider the life of John H. Watson, M.D., to give him his correct title, at the time when he returned aboard the troopship *Orontes* from service in the second Afghani war of 1878-1880, and, with no kith or kin in England, settled in a private hotel on the Strand. Now his income of 11/6 per day (or some £210 per year) was insufficient to permit his staying in even the cheapest of hotels, so his decision was to seek a less expensive domicile.

From then on, pure chance ruled, for his encounter with a former acquaintance led to his meeting with a man of whom he knew nothing, yet one who was to dominate his subsequent life.

Doctors tend to keep careful notes of their numerous patients, so again chance ruled. Gradually his notes grew into more detailed records, and the rest is history.

Thereafter our good doctor encountered a series of people, from the highest to the lowest of the land and, without the painstaking records of this remarkable man, we would have only the two lame tales that Holmes himself recorded, which surely would have been entirely insufficient data to have kept the Sherlockian Canon in constant print from 1887 to 2011.

Chance rules the lives of all of us, from the foremost in the land to the most lowly.

So here's a toast to one of the diligent observers of those more gifted than most of us.

To John H. Watson, M.D.,
Late of the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers

Third Toast – To the Woman

by Heather Wileman-Brown

Ladies and Gentlemen, my toast is to The Woman, Irene Adler.

She is the antagonist of “A Scandal in Bohemia,” who made her entrance in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s first story published in *The Strand* magazine, in July of 1891 in Britain, and in August of the same year in the United States, in the magazine of the same name.

Thereafter Irene Adler was always referred to by Dr. Watson when speaking to Holmes as “the Woman.”

She was a retired opera singer and active adventuress whose activities were frowned upon by Victorian Society. She was an independent, resourceful, and intelligent woman. These were traits which Sherlock Holmes admired.

She was one of only four people to best Holmes, and the only woman to have done so.

Irene was an inspiration to The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes, a society founded in 1965 in New York City, as a response to the exclusive male membership of The Baker Street Irregulars Society.

The BSI began to change their policy, and to admit women into their midst in 1991, after their Annual Master’s Birthday Dinner had been picketed by members of the Adventuresses.

This policy of exclusion spawned another group: CALABASH, an acronym for The Convivial Attendant Liaisons among BSI and the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH).

Irene Adler is cloaked in mystery. She made a singular impression on Sherlock Holmes, being both his adversary and his muse.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you to raise your glasses to “The Woman.”

Fourth Toast – To Mrs. Hudson

by Marie Burrows

Good evening. It is my pleasure to propose a toast to Mrs. Hudson, the landlady. A landlady, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is someone keeping a boarding-house or lodgings.

And in the recently published book, “Sherlock Holmes for Dummies”, author Steven Doyle, publisher of the *Baker Street Journal*, describes the landlady Mrs. Hudson, as one of the supporting characters in The Canon – someone who helps us to complete the picture of Sherlock Holmes’s life and world.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I don’t need to tell you that Mrs. Hudson is considerably more than a mere supporting character. Mrs. Hudson owned and managed 221B Baker Street, the most famous boarding-house in Victorian London!

Nearly every one of the 60 cases in The Canon begins or ends at her house. In fact, sometimes the game begins and ends at her house. Visitors to 221B include every cross-section of Victorian society, from the pompous King of Bohemia to the plodding Inspector Lestrade to Billy the page.

We can all picture the scene of cozy middle-class domesticity that Mrs. Hudson has provided: a fireplace complete with a roaring fire, a handsome mantle above; comfortable chairs situated nearby for the convenience of her lodgers and their visitors. Various tables are lined up along the walls and a sideboard accommodates that famous Tantalus and gasogene.

We can even picture the well-stocked kitchen on the floor below – Mrs. Hudson at the ready to provide a meal at any hour of the day or night. Can you picture how many times she ran up and down those 17 steps with a meal on a tray or a letter on a salver?

Dr. Watson faithfully chronicled the comfortable bedrooms and the large airy sitting-room at 221B Baker Street. For nearly 20 years, Mrs. Hudson kept the rooms in virtually the same condition. Even during the great hiatus from 1891 to 1894, the old chambers were left unchanged through the immediate care of Mrs. H. To this day, her old house at 221B Baker Street receives mail addressed to a previous lodger.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please raise your glasses to Mrs. Hudson of 221B Baker Street, the most famous landlady in Victorian London.

Fifth Toast – To the Society

by David Kellett

We have all been saddened lately by the loss of our dear friend Stanley. There has been lots of reminiscing tonight, and I'm sure many of you have read the thoughtful and heartfelt "Tribute To Stanley Baker" that Elliott created. I only knew Stanley through the Society, so I decided to use this toast to continue his work and try to get more of you to come to the meetings. This is the eighth consecutive dinner that I have attended and I see many faces out there which only appear at our dinners, which is of course the flagship event of our year; but you don't come to the meetings. So, I am going to tell you about some of the things we have done, what goes on at the meetings, and what you're missing out on. In other words the whole *spiel*; as to why you should come and at least give it a try.

Aside from being a long time member, Stanley's great claim to fame, within the society, were his efforts as the self-appointed Recruiting Sergeant. He worked hard at bringing new people to the meetings and single-handedly brought in more new members than the rest of us combined. This is one of the strengths of our Society. Everybody contributes what they do best. We have wonderful minutes that make us sound way much better than we really are. They get typed up and they get sent out. The website has recently been updated and expanded as well. Every year, this dinner, along with a speaker, gets organized, and a good time is had by all. And it's not just the meetings; we've had many, many supplemental events as well, most recently a Victorian Tea hosted by Carol and Jacob, that was a great success. Last year Wilfrid and Susan hosted an informal barbeque in their backyard. All we did was eat. Photos of the gluttonous are to be seen on the website. I personally enjoyed it immensely, when we took a geological/architectural walking tour along Sherbrooke Street, sponsored by McGill's McCord Museum. Excellent! We've played billiards (to which there is a reference in the canon) which is definitely up my alley. We also visited the R.C.M.P.'s crime lab, which is definitely *not* up my alley. We've tried to imitate Colonel Sebastian Moran by shooting at silhouettes of Holmes with air guns. We've worked the pledge drives at PBS, having sent a contingent to their last effort, and hosted two colloquia. But best of all are the meetings. They're very informal, and being an eclectic, even eccentric group, everybody gets to tell everybody else about what interests them. There have been discussions on topics ranging from pens, to stamps, to recipes for rabbit, to Harry Houdini. The main thrust is of course on things Victorian and the treasure trove that is the canon. Of late, the quiz has been hotly contested, leading to some terrific arguments for that crucial half a point that can be the margin of victory. We are incredibly fortunate in having, amongst our members, some truly, remarkable people. WHO ATTEND THE MEETINGS!!!!!! It's worth coming just to meet and get to know them.

But what of the future? In an age of rapidly proliferating diversions that promise instant gratification; it all seems so terribly quaint. The membership is greying, and young blood is scarce. One by one we die away. But the numbers really don't matter. For as long as ONE person, just ONE, knows of the times and the deeds of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and he feels for it, he feels it in his heart's core, then: "the game is still afoot." For the nonce, WE are the keepers of the flame and, I believe, that we do it very well.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I give you "The Bimetallic Question."

Presentation of the Quiz Trophy
by Patrick Campbell,
Sovereign Emeritus of The Bimetallic Question

For those of us who have spent uncounted hours following the fascinating tales of the trials and tribulations of the World's First Private Consulting Detective, our meetings of The Bimetallic Question have always been enlivened by what we call THE QUIZ, for prior to every meeting, a single story is selected out of the 60 stories of the Sherlockian Canon, and the winner of the previous quiz is honour-bound to prepare a challenging quiz for the next meeting.

There is no set of rules to guide the quiz-master, the only rule being that there are no rules, except for an understanding that the entire event is to be kept to a reasonable, but unstated time limit.

Now my task, for many years, has been to study the records of six meetings, February to December, and to determine who among us has been the most successful at these quizzes. The marking system is, I assure you, absolutely fair and above reproach, and it is based on a complex set of calculations, the casting of chicken bones onto a green baize cloth, and a meticulous study of the heavenly bodies passing along the plane of the ecliptic (path of the sun); such heavenly bodies being, of course, those that would in no way offend our rigorous Victorian moral principles.

Now, having collected and assessed all the data, it was soon established that exactly 75% of the score had been awarded to a mere three contestants; clearly intellectual giants among us. Further study indicated, curiously, that some 50% of the total marks had been amassed by someone using what I took to be a "nom de plume," for I looked up the name in the Montreal phone directory and drew a blank.

My next move was to locate my trusty Webster's dictionary, and found that the apparent pseudonym was an Anglo-Saxon word, *beorgan*, meaning "to protect", or "to shelter," but more commonly, and I quote, "a hole in the ground excavated by rabbits!"

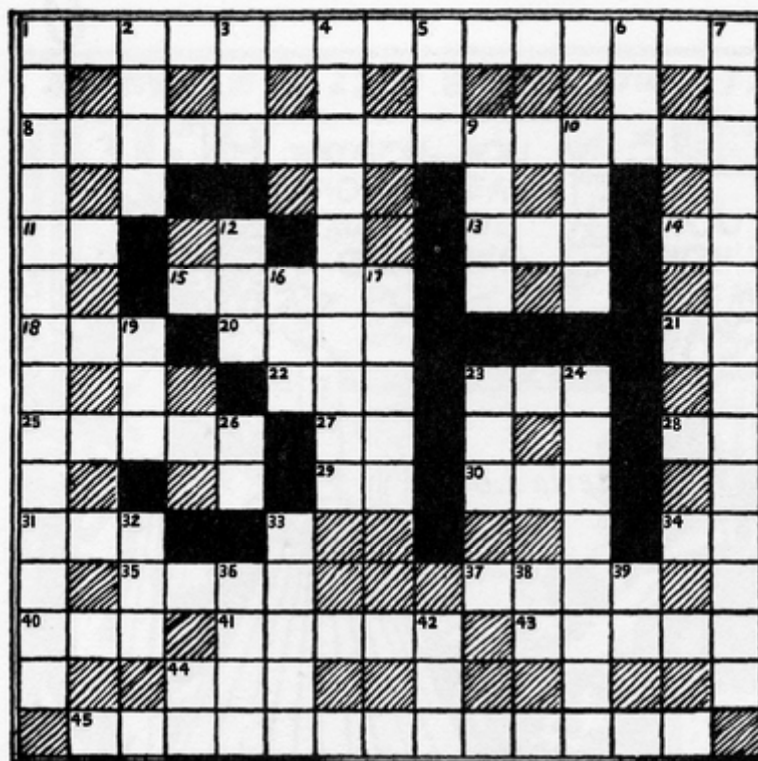
Aha! Now I have it! I will apply my Sherlockian skill to decode the puzzle; the winner must be not a single individual, but two persons of the name of Burrows.

With this information, I was soon able to separate the 18 marks into one of ten marks and one of eight, so, accordingly, I am pleased to announce the grand winner of this year's QUIZ TROPHY is ... Roger Burrows!!!

The Baker Street Irregulars Crossword Puzzle

This crossword appeared in Christopher Morley's "Bowling Green" column in *The Saturday Review of Literature* of May 3, 1934 with this offer: "All those who send ... correct solutions ... will automatically become members of the Baker Street Irregulars." There were 15 perfect solutions but (as you might have guessed) only those of the male gender received an invitation to the first formal meeting of the society.

An annotated solution is provided on the following page.




CROSSWORD 221 B (Baker Street Irregular)

Mycroft Holmes

ACROSS

1. A treatise on this, written at the age of twenty-one, had a European vogue and earned its author a professorship. (2 words, 8, 7)
8. It was of course to see these that Holmes enquired the way from Saxe-Coburg Square to the Strand (2 words, 10, 5)
11. How the pips were set (2)
13. Not an Eley's No. 2 (which is an excellent argument with a gentleman who can twist steel pokers into knots) but the weapon in the tragedy of Birlstone (3)
14. What was done on the opposite wall in bullet-pocks by the patriotic Holmes (2)
15. What Watson recognized when he put his hand on Bartholomew Sholto's leg (5)
18. Where Watson met young Stamford, who introduced him to Sherlock Holmes (3)
20. A kind of pet, over which Dr. Grimesby Roylott hurled the local blacksmith (4)
21. Holmes should have said this before being so sure of catching the murderers of John Openshaw (2)
22. The kind of Pedro whence came the tiger (3)
23. Though he knew the methods, Watson sometimes found it difficult to do this (3)

25. Patron saint of old Mr. Farquhar's affliction and perhaps of Abe Slaney's men (5)
27. Perhaps a measure of Holmes's chemicals (2)
28. In short, Watson (2)
29.  (2)
30. Curious that he did nothing in the nighttime (1)
31. This would obviously not describe the empty house opposite 221b Baker Street (3)
34. It seems likely that Watson's elder brother suffered from this disease (2)
35. Though you might have taken this at Lodge 29, Chicago, nevertheless, you had to pass a test as well at Lodge 341, Vermessa (4)
37. The *Star* of Savannah (4)
40. Mrs. Barclay's reproach (in The Crooked Man, of course) suggests the parable of this (3)
41. Scrawled in blood-red letters across the bare plaster at No. 3, Lauriston Gardens (5)
43. Holmes found this, because he was looking for it in the mud (5)
44. Suggests Jonathan Small's leg (3)
45. The brother who left Watson no choice but to relate The Final Problem (2 words, 5, 8)

DOWN

1. A country district in the west of England where "Cooee" was a common signal (2 words, 8, 6)
2. Charles Augustus Milverton dealt with no niggard hand; therefore this would not describe him (4)
3. The kind of practice indulged by Mr. Williamson, the solitary cyclist's unfrocked clergyman—"there was a man of that name in orders, whose career has been a singularly dark one." (3)
4. There is comparatively as much sense in Hafiz. Indeed, it's a case of identity. (3 words, 2, 2, 6)
5. Caused the rift in the beryl coronet (3)
6. Many of Holmes's opponents had cause to (3)
7. Begins: "Whose was it?" "His who is gone." "Who shall have it?" "He who will come." (2 words, 8, 6)
9. of four (4)
10. The number of Napoleons plus the number of Randall gang (4)
12. One of the five sent "S.H. for J.O." (3)
16. To save the dying detective trouble, Mr. Culverton Smith was kind enough to give the signal by turning this up (3)
17. The blundering constable who failed to gain his sergeant's stripes in the Lauriston Gardens Mystery (5)
19. There was a giant one of Sumatra; yet it was unwritten (3)
23. How Watson felt after the Final Problem (3)
24. He was epollicate (8)
26. Initials of the second most dangerous man in London (2)
32. Though Miss Mary Sutherland's boots were not unlike, they were really odd ones; the one having this slightly decorated, and the other plain (3)
33. You may forgive the plural form of these tobaccos, since Holmes smoked so much of them (5)
36. Behind this Black Jack of Ballarat waited and smoked an Indian cigar, of the variety which are rolled in Rotterdam (4)
- 38 and 39. The best I can make of these is the Latin for the sufferers of the epidemic which pleased Holmes so extremely that he said 'A long shot, Watson, a very long shot,' and pinched the Doctor's arm (4)
42. One of the two in the cardboard box (3)
44. Initials of the street in which Mycroft lodged (2)

An annotated solution to the BSI crossword

by Roger Burrows

Each answer is followed by the name of the relevant story (if any), using the standard abbreviations.

ACROSS

1. **BINOMIAL THEOREM** (Moriarty's route to his professorship) [FINA]
8. **SPAULDING'S KNEES** (Vincent Spaulding, alias John Clay) [REDH]
11. **ON** ("Set the pips on McCauley ...") [FIVE]
13. **GUN** [VALL]
14. **VR** (abbr. for Victoria Regina, i.e. Queen Victoria) [MUSG]
15. **RIGOR** [SIGN]
18. **BAR** (the Criterion Bar) [STUD]
20. **PARA** (as in PARApet) [SPEC]
21. **DV** (abbr. for Deo Volente "God willing", since the perpetrators in fact drowned at sea before Holmes could catch them) [FIVE]
22. **SAN** (Don Murillo is "The Tiger of San Pedro") [WIST]
23. **SEE** (in my opinion, not a good clue since SH says to Watson "you see but you do not observe" in SCAN)
25. **VITUS** (St. Vitus's dance & reference to the dancing men) [STOC,DANC]
27. **CC** (abbr. for cubic centimetre)
28. **DR** (abbr. for Doctor)
29. **EE** (as Holmes notes, "the most common letter in the English language") [DANC]
30. **DOG** [SILV]
31. **LET** [EMPT]
34. **DT** (abbr. for Delirium Tremens, a disorder of the brain caused by alcohol abuse, often associated with trembling symptoms) [SIGN]
35. **OATH** [VALL]
37. **LONE** (the Bark *Lone Star*) [FIVE]
40. **EWE** (Mrs. Barclay likens her husband to David in 2 Samuel who sends Uriah to die so that he can marry Bathsheba, but is confronted by Nathan the prophet who tells a parable about a wealthy man who steals a poor man's only prized sheep) [CROO]
41. **RACHE** [STUD]
43. **VESTA** (a wax-stemmed match. later a short match with a wooden stem) [SILV]
44. **PEG** [SIGN]
45. **JAMES MORIARTY** (Colonel James Moriarty) [FINA]

DOWN

1. **BOSCOMBE VALLEY** [BOSC]
2. **NEAR** (in the meaning of stingy) [CHAS]
3. **MAL** (as in MALpractice) [SOL]
4. **AS IN HORACE** ("There is as much sense in Hafiz as in Horace") [IDEN]
5. **TUG** ("... they had each tugged at the coronet ...") [BERY]
6. **RUE**
7. **MUSGRAVE RITUAL** [MUSG]
9. **SIGN** [SIGN]
10. **NINE** (six Napoleons + three Randalls) [SIXN,ABBE]
12. **PIP** [FIVE]
16. **GAS** [DYIN]
17. **RANCE** [STUD]
19. **RAT** (The Giant Rat of Sumatra, an unrecorded story) [SUSS]
23. **SAD** (Watson says: "It is with a heavy heart") [FINA]
24. **ENGINEER** (epollicate means without a thumb) [ENGI]
26. **SM** (Sebastian Moran) [EMPT]
32. **TOE** [IDEN]
33. **SHAGS** (mentioned in several stories) [SCAN,TWIS,HOUN,CREE]
36. **TREE** [BOSC]
- 38, 39. **OVES** (Latin for sheep, which were lamed prior to the attempt on Silver Blaze) [SILV]
42. **EAR** [CARD]
44. **PM** (Pall Mall) [GREE]