



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

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## *Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

**Date of our next meeting:** Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 at 6:30pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

**The quiz at the next meeting:** Due to time constraints at our April meeting, we were not able to have a quiz that night. Therefore Raf Jans will present the quiz on *The Adventure of Black Peter* at our June meeting.

**Next meeting's toast presenters:** The Master: Kristin Franseen; Dr. Watson: Maureen Anderson; The Woman: Anne Millar; Mrs. Hudson: Chris Herten-Greaven; The Society: David Dowse.

**Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question** held on Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

**Present:** Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Louise Corda, David Dowse, Philip Ehrensaft, Susan Fitch, Kristin Franseen, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Anne Millar, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner, Kathryn Radford, Carole Rocklin, Bruno Paul Stenson, Ron Zilman. Dickens Fellowship guests: Ellie Clavier-Rothstein, Timmy Cohen, Edith Coleman, Judith Elson, Charlotte French, Zsuzsanna Kapas, Maureen McKen, Sylvia Rabinovitch, Marlene Raich. Special Guest Speaker: Mr. Clifford S. Goldfarb, with Mrs. Doris Goldfarb, and Dr. Michael Goldfarb.

**Regrets:** Wilfrid de Freitas, Jack Anderson, Arlene Scher, Nathalie Ellis.

[ How do I have my regrets included in the minutes? Simply call or email a Sherlockian colleague(s) whom you think will be attending the meeting. Ask them to express your regrets at the start of the meeting, and they will be duly recorded on the attendance sheet and in the minutes ! ]

## ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION



Charles Dickens



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

### 1. Call to Order:

The meeting was something special. It was the first time another society was invited to sit in and participate at one of our regular gatherings. Dr. Ellie Clavier-Rothstein and 8 members of the Montreal Dickens Fellowship joined us. In addition, we had the pleasure of the company of Clifford S. Goldfarb, his wife Doris, and son Dr. Michael Goldfarb. Mr. Goldfarb, the noted Doylean scholar, was present to give a speech entitled, *If Arthur Conan Doyle met Charles Dickens*. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 by our sovereign, Carol Abramson.



Bimetallic Question and Montreal Dickens Fellowship Members with Clifford S. Goldfarb

Carol asked everyone to introduce themselves and indicate which group they were with. Carol then, on behalf of herself and all of the Bimetallic Question, expressed our sincere condolences to Dr. Joe Schwarcz and his entire family on the recent loss of his beloved wife Alice. Dr. Joe has been a great friend and long-time supporter of the Society for many years and Alice has attended many of our birthday dinners with him in the past. She was well known and well loved within the community, and her loss will be deeply felt.

Rachel Alkallay noted the passing in February of Karin Winkler, a Bimetallic Question member for many years. Brought in to the Society by Stanley Baker, Karin was a gracious European lady who loved Sherlock, animals, intelligent conversation, and was a very kind person.

## **2. Toast to the Master by Rachel Alkallay**

*Rachel gave a fine toast to the Master, unavailable at publication time.*

## **Show and Tell**

### **3. Have You Met My Brother?**

Ron Zilman showed us a book entitled *Mycroft Holmes* written by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (Yes - the basketball player) and Anna Waterhouse. In it we are introduced to Mycroft in his younger days, before his brother came into prominence.

### **4. Classic Quotable Holmes and Some Modern Detecting Humour**

It was great to see Louise Corda with us again after some time away. She reminded us of one of her favourite quotes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's, from *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*, "My name is Sherlock Holmes. It is my business to know what other people don't know." Louise also gave us a cartoon that puts a police detective in his place.



*"Maybe it's always the person you least suspect because you're not a good detective."*

### **5. Stay Tuned for the Weird and Wonderful**

Bruno Paul Stenson said that at our next meeting in June he will bring and play some of his weird and exotic musical instruments. He also invited us to visit the Stewart Museum on St. Helen's Island Saturday, Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, when he is scheduled to give a presentation on this subject there.

<http://www.stewart-museum.org/en/upcoming-exhibitions-159.html>

## 6. Getting a Rounders to It

Given that the baseball season has just begun, Chris Herten-Greaven showed us a book on the game of Rounders, the precursor to baseball. All the rules similar and different to baseball were explained.

## 7. Positive Reviews for *Mr. Holmes*

Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier passed around a copy of a news bulletin from the Japanese Society of Montreal. In it there is a review of the 2015 film, *Mr. Holmes* starring Sir Ian McKellen. Here is Miyako's presentation of the bulletin:

This is *Montreal Bulletin* for Japanese people who live here to be informed by, a newsletter published by volunteers at the Japanese Culture Centre. There is a page by Ms. Junko Fiyita who's a great movie fan and loves to talk about movies, sharing her opinions etc. with readers. I've never met her but I always read her articles in the newsletter. In this issue she talks about *Mr. Holmes*, and I thought I could share her description of her impressions on this film! Ms. Fujita writes:

Everyone talks about *Star Wars* these days, and I admit that it's the most talked-about film in the last several months. But I personally am very happy that Season 4 of *Sherlock* has started on television. Of course I love watching Mr. Robert Downey Jr. or other actors who played Sherlock Holmes, but this time, I'm introducing Mr. Ian McKellen to you! Who? That McKellen, you may ask?! The actor who's in *The Lord of the Rings*?! *X-Men*?! It's true! Of course the film is not an action film like Robert Downey Jr's but I recommend it highly because it's really worth going to the theatre to watch. Mr. McKellen I



hear, is 76 years old now and he's playing a Holmes who's 93 years old! In this story, he's very old and retired in 1947, taking care of his beloved honeybees. He lives with his housekeeper Mrs. Munro and her son Roger. I find this story interesting because Sherlock Holmes is portrayed as a real personality, not a fictitious character. Holmes even goes to see a film based on a story which Dr. Watson wrote. He doesn't wear his famous deerstalker hat and he uses abusive language, saying that he likes cigars (not a pipe!) Mr. McKellen's old Holmes really looks great. As a Japanese, I have to mention that he even visits Hiroshima after the atomic bombing. Mr. Hiroyuki Sanada plays a man "Umezaki" who

invited Holmes to Japan. Holmes is troubled with his own unfinished business, but of course he's always intelligent, and has a clear head exceptionally, and yet he's a real old man here. He's losing his memories, and suffers from senile dementia. I'd like to applaud Mr. McKellen for playing such a Holmes who's in agony. This is absolutely brilliant! And the film depicts this deeply with scenes of his past mistakes, and the affection between his housekeeper's son and himself. Don't you think it's interesting??? This film will be released in Japan soon, in March, I hear, and of course it's already released in North American theatres. It's not flashy but I'd recommend such a film to you!

**Miyako's note:** I'd like to add some comments. In this film, *Mr. Holmes*, he corresponds with a Japanese man and gets a Sansho plant to bring back to England. He thinks this plant's peppers could help his arthritis and possibly even his senile dementia. Sansho is a Japanese pepper. (Holmes calls it prickly ash.) In fact in my parents' backyard there is a Sansho tree, and we use Sansho tree's leaves to kill fishy smell to eat our fish soup. Sansho peppers are very hot and spicy and in this film, little Roger eats his breakfast oatmeal with it and spits it out. In Japan Sansho peppers are used, to eat BBQ eels called unagi-kabayaki or unagi-don, to kill the fishy taste, to work up our appetite especially in the Japanese very hot and sticky summer with high humidity when people don't feel like eating. I don't know where Holmes got this idea to help his arthritis etc, but usually in Japan Sansho peppers are used to bring back appetite. When it's fresh, it really smells good!

Personally I really enjoyed *Mr. Holmes* - and as you noticed, there is no murder case in this story. Just solving the mystery. And it's a story about a family that Holmes never had. Roger became like a substitute of his grandchild, and Holmes cares for him enormously and eventually leaves all his estate etc. to him and his mother Mrs. Munro. I was quite moved by their relationship, and I suppose the writer of this story, Mr. Mitch Cullin, wanted Holmes to be happy in his old age, surrounded by people he cares about, to end his life.

## 8. Great Downtonesque Expectations

As an added bonus, Miyako talked about a recent edition of the magazine, *Totally British*. Here is Miyako's review of some highlights of this magazine:

*Totally British* magazine's April issue #41 is out right now, and are you a fan of *Downton Abbey*? This show ended last year and its creator Julian Fellowes has followed it by working on the adaptation of Anthony Trollope's novel *Doctor Thorne*, as a screenplay writer, to satisfy his hard-core fans again for a while. This story takes place in 1850s England and the fans of Charles Dickens would love to look at those fancy costumes and aristocratic houses etc. When you watch this show, you feel you are watching *Downton Abbey* all over again with Mr. Fellowes's style of presentation and characters. I enjoyed every minute of it! When the DVD comes out, I'd buy it to add to my collection. Also, WPBS-Ottawa and Vision TV are showing *Arthur and George*, based on Conan Doyle's private life, and the documentary *How Sherlock Changed the World*.

**Special note from David:** *If any members or guests have a passion about a Sherlockian subject and would like to share it with others, feel free to submit it in writing and it will appear in the minutes. It could be a comment, quote, cartoon or picture, I am happy to give you a chance to show your stuff. That is what being a member of the Bimetallic Question is all about, an opportunity to express and share your love of anything and everything to do with the Sherlockian world.*

## 9. Of Matches and Men

Chris Herten-Greaven brought in from his family archives, two silver ash trays with the heads of two Dickens characters (Fagin and The Artful Dodger) embossed at their centres, marked Birmingham 1806. He then recounted how he miraculously came across two more ash trays exactly the same, at a



local garage sale (Mr. Pickwick and Uriah Heep). As frosting on the cake, he showed us a small book describing all the London silver hallmarks. A few meetings ago Chris pulled from his pocket two small wooden match boxes with intricate inlays of a pipe and magnifying glass. Chris's Argentinian roots payed off and low and behold what did he find recently but the wax Vesta matches to fill his boxes.

#### **10. An Excellent Find from France**

Anne Millar delighted us with her presence after a long absence from the Society. She described how she found on E-Bay, for \$30.00 from France, a collection of Sherlock Holmes and Raffles stories.

#### **11. Good Memories of Our Younger Days**

Even going further into our past, there again appeared one Philip Ehrensaft a very early and welcome returned member from the Society's young days.

#### **12. A Difficult Bag**

Chris Herten-Greaven rounded out the *Show and Tell* with a reference to one of Mrs. Hudson's culinary masterpieces, Smoked Woodcock. For our pleasure he passed around a plate with a painted picture of a real woodcock, a bird said to be very difficult to bag.

*Note from Susan: Woodcock are presently being fitted with satellite tags by the U.K.'s Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, to monitor their migration and attempt to increase their numbers.*

<http://www.gwct.org.uk/game/research/species/woodcock/tracking-woodcock-by-satellite/>



#### **13. Toast to Dr. Watson by Raf Jans**

Dr. Watson certainly has many exceptional qualities: he was a brave soldier, a helpful doctor, a ladies' man, and a successful writer. However, his most admirable quality is perhaps his infinite amount of patience and tolerance. Who else would be able to put up with Sherlock Holmes on a daily basis? Of course, we all would like to meet Sherlock Holmes, talk to him, and see him in action. But live with him? No thank you! I would not want to live with a drug-addict. I would not tolerate any malodorous chemical experiments during my breakfast, lunch or dinner. And I certainly would not allow any pistol practice going on in my living room.

Or, as Watson puts it much more eloquently: "I have always held, too, that pistol practice should distinctly be an open-air pastime". When Holmes in one of his queer humours would sit in an armchair, with his hair-trigger pistol and a hundred Boxer cartridges, and proceed to adorn the opposite wall with a patriotic V.R. done in bullet-pocks, Watson reported, "I felt strongly that neither the atmosphere nor the appearance of our room was improved by it." (MUSG) Yet, he is able to put up with all this.

Their relationship started as a purely economic transaction for both sides, i.e. sharing an apartment is cheaper than renting it on your own. Yet it quickly evolved into a textbook of friendship. How lucky Holmes is to have Watson as his friend! And he knows it. Holmes often introduces Watson to others as: 'my friend and colleague', or 'my trusted comrade and biographer', or 'my friend and associate'.

Note that Watson, in Holmes's view, is first and foremost his friend. When it comes to patience and tolerance, when it comes to being a real friend, we cannot help but think of Dr. Watson who embodies all of these qualities. I propose a toast to Dr. Watson.

#### **14. Chateau Ramezay Tour Proposals**

Bruno Paul Stenson offered to lead museum tours for Bimetallic Question and Dickens Fellowship members as follows:

A Day at the Museum, Part 1: Come join us on Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm when our own Bruno Paul Stenson will lead us back in time at the Chateau Ramezay. If we have more than 20 participants, then there will be another tour at 2:30 pm. The group rate is \$9.00 for adults, \$8.00 for seniors, \$6.50 for students and \$5.00 for children over 5 years old.

In case you want more, join us for, A Day at the Museum, Part 2: On Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm, Bruno will once again, as he did a few years ago, guide us through the halls of the Redpath Museum, on a Sherlock Holmes-themed tour based on the Canon and Holmes's own visit to the museum. Admission is \$7.00. As with the Chateau Ramezay, if we have more than 20 participants, then there will be another tour at 2:30 pm. If you missed this tour the first time, here is another opportunity.

For both tours, please RSVP to Carol Abramson at [clz\\_abramson@yahoo.com](mailto:clz_abramson@yahoo.com) as soon as possible as we need to know how many people will be attending.

#### **15. Musings from More Museums**

Rachel Alkallay is looking for new suggestions of small museums for a second volume of her book, *Montreal's Other Museums*. You can reach her at: [puplellilac@yahoo.ca](mailto:puplellilac@yahoo.ca)

#### **16. A Birthday at Rasco's**

Ellie Clavier-Rothstein told us how as a special treat her husband once held a birthday celebration for her at the old Rasco's Hotel, where Dickens stayed when he visited Montreal in 1842. Adjacent on St. Paul is what is now the Old Spaghetti Factory restaurant. It has a Dickens room with some mementos of Dickens's visit. As Ellie was saying, the only thing authentic to the original hotel is the façade, everything else has been modernized.

#### **17. Toast to the Woman by Elliott Newman**

When looking for a literary precursor to Irene Adler, we might well consider the eponymous heroine of the Daniel Defoe novel, *Moll Flanders*. Since Moll was born into literature in 1722, 169 years before Irene, we can assume she had a lot of time to steep her way through the teapot of fiction before infiltrating the creative subconscious of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Of the two female characters, Moll was by far the craftier, more blatantly felonious and criminal, and - in a word - desperate of the two.

Here, in one of the earliest novels of the English language, is Defoe's introduction to his heroine, summarized in the lengthy title:

The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, &c. Who was Born in Newgate, and during a Life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest, and died a Penitent. Written from her own Memorandums.

Born of a convict mother who was transported to America, Moll fell into a great number of relationships while committing various misdeeds. She fled to England, where she became a person of some interest to the law, and escaped back to America where she was reunited with a well-to-do son and thanks to him, lived out the balance of her life in relative comfort. Not that much comfort, though, for without a Watson of her own, she was reduced to writing her own memoirs.

There is something of the Lola Montez in Moll Flanders. Lola, we remember, was likely the real-life inspiration for the finely-tuned, operatic Irene Adler. Lola, with a somewhat bohemian lifestyle, a dance-hall resume, and a penchant for travel and violence provided the raw energy which Doyle pared down to a digestible Victorian level. He also cut back a bit on the scale of Irene Adler's romantic activities, but then, we didn't know her very long, did we?

While we may think of a creative artist or writer as someone who works in solitude, there is always a necessary connection to sources of information and inspiration in the real world. Defoe based his Moll Flanders partially on Moll King, a criminal he met while visiting Newgate Prison. It would take less than 170 years for Moll Flanders to reemerge in some form in the guise of Irene Adler, with bits of the contemporary Lola Montez attached.

Friends of the Society, the more we talk about The Woman, the more complicated she becomes.

To the Woman!

## **18. Meet the Montreal Dickens Fellowship**

It was with great pleasure that Sovereign Carol Abramson introduced Ellie Clavier-Rothstein, President of the Montreal Dickens Fellowship to say a few words about her group and their history.

Ellie's love of Charles Dickens began when she was 14 years old. The family was in the market for a bookcase in an antique shop. They made the purchase and as an added bonus tucked into shelves was a complete leather bound set of the works of Charles Dickens that they also bought for a pittance. Ellie's first book read was the Old Curiosity Shop. Ellie has not slowed down since in her love of everything Dickens. She is versed herself to the point where she now teaches courses in Dickens at the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning.

The International Dickens Fellowship was founded in London in 1902 and chapters were opened in Toronto in 1905 and in Montreal in 1909. Sadly the Montreal Fellowship died apparently due to lack of membership in 1963 but due to Ellie's efforts it once again sprang to life in 2012. The meetings are now held in this very Westmount Room of the Westmount Public library on the first Tuesday of the month from 1-3 in the afternoon. The web site is [www.dickensmontreal.ca](http://www.dickensmontreal.ca) We listened with great interest to Ellie express her passion for everything Charles Dickens, even explaining for us the less than stellar side of Dickens's family life and his treatment of his wife and children.

Carol thanked Ellie for her presentation and received an invitation for her and the Bimetallic Question



to attend any of their regular monthly meetings held at the Westmount Public Library. It is hoped that future outings to the Chateau de Ramezay, the Redpath and McCord museums can include our friends from the Montreal Dickens Fellowship.

### **19. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Paul Billette**

Mrs. Hudson, I believe it's clear, was the bravest and most resilient occupant of the house she owned. Not because she courageously faced down airguns and street urchins and even - if her first name was Martha - evil German spies. No, Mrs. Hudson owns that title because she was a match for the likes of Sherlock "Shooting Walls Is My Angry Birds" Holmes, and John "Three Continents But Who's Counting Really" Watson. She was their one fixed point, and they owed her their domestic happiness - nay, even their lives, for would Sherlock Holmes ever have eaten had not Mrs. Hudson periodically placed trays of what experts refer to as "food" in front of his nose?

And so I propose a toast to the woman who knew everything about two ciphers - who was aware that John Watson had a mild dairy allergy and that Sherlock Homes hummed Chopin ditties while shaving. To the woman who knew them better than we ever will, and still - despite living with a pair of riddles - managed to produce a consistently good Scots breakfast. To Mrs. Hudson!

### **20. If Arthur Conan Doyle met Charles Dickens**

The climax of this evening's meeting was the introduction and speech of our guest Mr. Clifford S. Goldfarb of Toronto. He was here to deliver a speech entitled, *If Arthur Conan Doyle Met Charles Dickens*.



Ellie Clavier-Rothstein, Clifford S. Goldfarb, Carol Abramson and friends.

We learned a great deal about the comparable yet contrasting literary relationship between Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle in Cliff's truly fascinating presentation. "In some ways Conan Doyle could be considered as something of a Dickensian character", he noted while discussing the parallels between Dickens and Conan Doyle. Both knew poverty growing up and both had to make their own way in the world.

Conan Doyle was only 11 years old when Dickens died in 1870. What would they have talked about had they had the chance to meet as mature adults and writers? One subject stands out: Dickens's unfinished novel, *Edwin Drood*. Many times ACD tried to solve real life mysteries. Is it possible that

during a seance in Conan Doyle's home in 1927 the medium communicated with the spirit world to divine for those present the true continuation and ending of *Edwin Drood* intended by Dickens himself? Did Conan Doyle and Dickens, at this time, actually in some sense meet?

It is not our intention to try to summarize Cliff's presentation and answer these questions here in these minutes. Instead we invite you to consult an earlier published version of his investigations on *If Arthur Conan Doyle met Charles Dickens* in *Canadian Holmes*, Volume 31 Number 4: Canada Day (July) 2009. Please note, however, that Cliff's special April presentation to us was an updated version of the article with some significant additions and subtractions.

We all thanked Cliff heartily for coming to Montreal and addressing us this evening. Many of us bought copies of his book *Investigating Sherlock Holmes*, written with his friend Hartey R. Nathan.

## **21. Toast to the Society by Ronnie Zilman [gleaned from Baker Street Wiki.]**

Sherlock Holmes Societies are clubs where enthusiasts of Sherlock Holmes can gather together. The Sherlock Holmes Society, in London, and the Baker Street Irregulars, in New York, were both founded in 1934. Both are still active (though the Sherlock Holmes Society was dissolved in 1937 to be resuscitated only in 1951). The London-based society is one of many worldwide who arrange visits to the scenes of the Sherlock Holmes adventures, such as the Reichenbach Falls in the Swiss Alps. These two initial societies were followed by many more, first of all in America (where they are called "scions societies" - offshoots of the Baker Street Irregulars), then in England and Denmark. Nowadays there are Holmesian societies in many countries like India and Japan being the more prominent countries which have a history of such activity. To the Society.

## **22. Close of the Meeting**

Carol Abramson, Sovereign, thanked all for coming to this special joint meeting of the Bimetallic Question and the Montreal Dickens Fellowship and rang the bell to close at 8:45.

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, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, at 6:30p.m.

If you detect any errors or omissions in these minutes please do not hesitate to contact our recording secretary David Dowse at: [daviddowse@hotmail.com](mailto:daviddowse@hotmail.com).



Our Co-Founder David Dowse

Please forward the electronic version of your toast for inclusion in the minutes to our webmaster and secretary Susan Fitch at: [susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca](mailto:susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca) as she always enjoys toasts with her coffee.

A tip of the deerstalker hat to our sergeant-at-arms and vintner Hudson, Raf Jans, for printing and mailing Society minutes to all members requesting the paper version.

