



*An Inquiry into:  
"The Adventure of  
the Mazarin Stone"*

Vol. XII No. 30 • March 18, 2021

“The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone” was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in October 1921. It is part of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*.

As the table shows, not all our chronologists are agreed as to the year in which this case took place. If we go by the date arrived at by the majority, 1903, then

at the time Holmes was 49 years old and Watson 51.

***Main Characters:***

Count Negretto Sylvius, an evil half-Italian nobleman turned criminal mastermind. Sam Merton, a punch-drunk boxer who serves as the count’s muscle. Billy, one of several of Holmes’ young but very wise and tactful page boys. Lord Cantlemere, one of the Master Sleuth’s three eminent employers in this case.

***Notable Quotes:***

“Mr. Holmes always knows whatever there is to know.”

“I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix.”

“Your morals don’t improve, Watson. You have added fibbing to your other vices.”

“Life is full of whimsical happenings, Watson.”

***A Brief Factoid***

This case is unique in being the only published one where the action exclusively takes place in the sitting room at 221B Baker Street.

<i>The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Summer</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Summer 1903</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Summer 1903</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1903</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>Summer 1903</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Summer 1904</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Summer 1903</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Summer 1903</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Summer 1903</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Friday, June 1, 1894</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1903</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Summer 1903</i>

*Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist’s results for their research framework.*

## *Non-Watsonian?*

Aside from the fact that the story is written in the third person, as well as other details such as the writer stating that Holmes did not laugh much (he did), this may be an apocryphal tale. Canon scholars



also point to the improbability that there was a door directly connecting the sitting room with Holmes' bedroom. No such arrangement is hinted at anywhere else in the Sacred Writings, and the possibility that there should have been two such passages seems highly unlikely.

We are also left hanging regarding how anyone could have known about the initial details of the con-

versation between Count Silvius and his cohort, Sam Merton. Did the Great Detective apply one of Doctor Watson's stethoscopes to the door as he put on the gramophone record?

It has been suggested that Watson (although he is not involved in the action for the greater part of the story) might have later heard from Holmes about his conversation with Count Sylvius. However, there was no way that he could have been privy to the subsequent exchanges between the Count and Merton, when the Great Detective himself was absent from the room.

Additionally, it seems inconceivable that so astute a planner as Holmes would have relied for his success on the off-chance that the two criminals would be simultaneously looking away when he moved the dummy, while not noticing the noise that such action must have produced.

For those on the opposite side of the discussion, some argue that the figurative twisting of the unappreciative peer's nose by our sleuth when he slipped the retrieved gem into Lord Cantlemere's pocket does indeed smack of pure Holmes; it fits his "impish habit of practical joking," and penchant for the dramatic. We, of course, have witnessed previous examples of these tendencies in NAVA and SIXN.

ALL PREVIOUS LISTS CANCELLED.

Stock List—April.

**CATALOGUE  
OF GRAMOPHONE  
7-inch RECORDS**



Copyright—His Master's Voice.

FOR USE ONLY ON THE

**GRAMOPHONE**

WHICH IS MADE BY

The GRAMOPHONE & TYPEWRITER Ltd.

Price 2/6 each.



TRADE MARK

GRAMOPHONE

Catalogues published by  
The Gramophone and  
Typewriter Co. Ltd.

With 1000 Catalogues.  
10s. 6d. Green Catalogue.  
7s. 6d. (Black) do.  
10s. 6d. Cream  
Paper do.  
7s. 6d. Purple do.  
Violet Network do.

"NEW STYLE No. 3," £3 3s.  
Fitted with "CONCERT SOUND BOX."

**THE SPRING SEASON.**

With the return of brighter and warmer weather, the Gramophone will again take up its position as the king of outdoor entertainers. So much pleasure and amusement were obtained by our friends in this way during the spring and summer months of last year, that we anticipate a greatly-increased demand for our Gramophones and Records during the next few months. Many new Records, by well known and popular artists, are added to our Catalogues each month, so that endless variety can be obtained.

In passing, it should be noted that it is highly unlikely that there a gramophone record of the *Barcarolle* for solo violin—or any record at all—would have been available in pre-1907 London.

### *On a Personal Note*

With the caveat that I most certainly do not consider myself a scholar, but a mere student of the Canon, in my thinking about this case I tend to lean towards someone other than Watson as the author—perhaps the Literary Agent.

Of all the jarring and seemingly inconclusive aspects of this adventure, for me the one that grinds the worst is Watson's surprise: "What—the hundred-thousand-pound burglary?" Particularly after all his



years with Holmes and the adventures that they had shared, how could he possibly find it surprising that Sherlock Holmes, the Western World's nonpareil investigator, would investigate such a major case? Had he not been consulted, now *that* would have been surprising!

It is a pleasant thing to think that when Lord Cantlemere expressed that he and his colleagues were in Holmes' debt this translated into a somewhat more substantial expression of gratitude. We are told that the diamond was worth £100,000; in today's currency that would come to about \$38,000,000. If Holmes got the standard finder's fee of 10%, that would have amounted to \$3,800,000; a nice little nest egg (added to his others) to retire on.

Something else that I find curious is Holmes' attitude towards Count Sylvius. From the minute entries that he had in the small notebook that he consulted, it is clear that our sleuth had taken unusual efforts to document the nefarious Count's career—a career that appears to have included murder. It seems extraordinary to me, therefore, that he would have been so

willing to stay his hand in return for the gem.

It is one thing to be willing to compound a felony for the sake of fairness in a situation where the workings of regular justice might grind up an innocent, such as in *ABBE* or *BOSC*; it is quite another to be willing to let loose upon society a hardened criminal such as Sylvius. From what is set down, it appears that Holmes was quite willing to let the criminals go with just a wishy-washy warning: "What good are you going to get out of your diamond? None in the world. But if you hand it over—well, I'll compound a felony. We don't want you or Sam. We want the stone. Give that up, and so far as I am concerned you can go free so long as you behave yourself in the future. If you make another slip—well, it will be the last. But this time my commission is to get the stone, not you."

Some argue that this might have been merely a ploy on the Great Detective's part to gain time while the police arrived. Still others are convinced that Holmes was willing to let Sylvius go as long as he could retrieve the valuable gem with a minimum of fuss.

Deep waters indeed.

## *What else happened in 1903:*

### *Empire*



Britain and France agree to settle disputes through International Court at The Hague.

◀ Coronation Durbar for Edward III, King-Emperor, at Delhi.

British expeditionary force sent to Tibet.

Alaskan frontier question between Canada and U.S. settled by arbitration.

Exchange of visits between London and Paris; Arbitration Treaty establishes Entente Cordiale.

### *Britain*



Women's Social and Political Union formed to demand votes for women.

Foundation of universities at Liverpool and Manchester.

◀ Joseph Chamberlain begins Tariff Reform Campaign.

Establishment of Workers' Educational Association.

GRW introduces early motor-bus service from Helston to the Lizard; the initiation of bus services largely originates from railway companies.

Wyndham's Act--Irish landlords to be bought out; peasant ownership; repayments over 68-and-a-half years.

Road speed limit in England increased to 20 mph.

### *World*

Dutch Democratic Labor Party formed; general strike suppressed by troops.

Russian massacre of Jews at Kishinyov.

Murstep Program—Austro-Russian proposals to solve Macedonian problems fails.

Russia refuses to evacuate Manchuria under terms of Russo-Japanese Convention.

Belgium introduces Old Age Pension plan.

Foundation Bank of Persia loans with large Russian interests.

Alexander Obrenovitch and Queen Draga of Serbia assassinated; Peter Karageorgevitch elected king.

### *Art*

Barrie writes his play, *The Admirable Critchon*.

Degas, *Dancers in Yellow Skirts*.

First recording of an opera, Verdi's *Ermani*.

Elgar, *The Apostles*, an oratorio.

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*.

German, *A Princess of Kensington*, operetta.

Pisarro, *Bridge at Bruges*.

Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, a semi-autobiographical novel of middle-class life is published posthumously.

Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands*, a novel.

Shaw, *Man and Superman*.

### ***Science and Technology***



First radio press messages published by *The Times*.

Tsiolkovski publishes paper on astronautics.

Orville and Wilbur Wright make their first flight in a heavier-than-air machine.

◀ Bertrand Russell publishes *Principia Mathematica*.

Henry Ford founds his motor company.

Wilhelm Einthoven invents the electro-cardiograph.

J.J. Thomson publishes *Conduction of Electricity through Gases*.

Phenobarbitone, a long lasting sedative, developed.

### ***Next week's case: THOR***

Respectfully submitted,

### ***Murray, the Courageous Orderly***

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly..."

**If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at [CourageousMurray@aol.com](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**

© 2021 Alexander E. Braun