



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XLIX – The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone

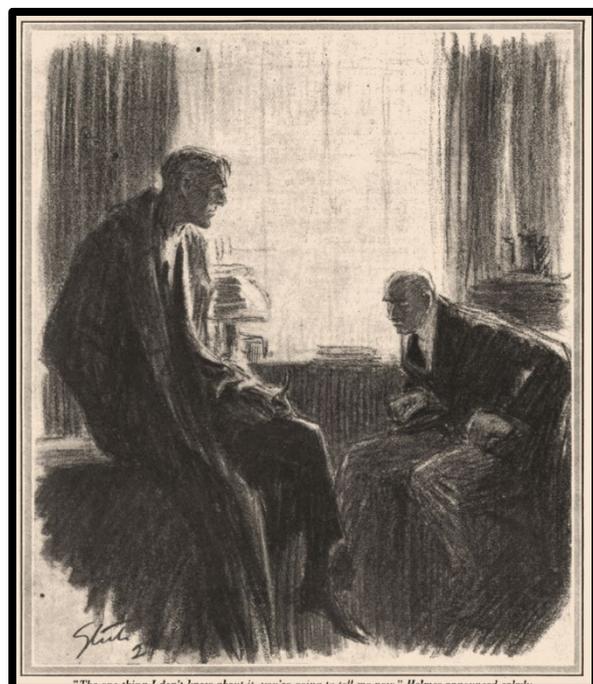
What the law gained, the stage lost. In the case of this weekend's stagey story, most readers agree that's a good thing. Of course that tale is *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone*. My questions and comments:

Holmes and Watson. The familiar sitting room. Billy. The wax bust. High-ranking government officials. A stolen jewel. A disguise. A foreign bad guy. Cutting-edge technology. This story has all the elements of a really good Sherlock Holmes tale. So what's the problem? Why doesn't MAZA live up to its promise?

A parasol is used as a feminine prop to help make Holmes' disguise all the more convincing. Had he no parasol, what other Victorian-Edwardian accessories might he have carried to create the illusion of femininity?

An eminent peer and courtier-like Lord Cantlemere should urgently want to see the jewel recovered, no matter what it takes and no matter who does the job. How come Cantlemere would "rather" see Holmes fail at the task?

Why are boxers, like MAZA's Sam Merton, and 3GAB's Steve Dixie, cast in a generally unfavorable light?



Much is made of the fact that then-child actor Charlie Chaplin portrayed Billy the page boy in an early Sherlock Holmes theatrical production. Besides a delightful Cockney delivery, Chaplin brought real-life experience to the role: when he was 10 years old he actually worked as a uniformed page boy, first in the home of a London doctor and then for a disabled British Army officer. Chaplin is said to have liked being in service so much that he dreamed of someday becoming a butler. Success as “Billy” sealed his fate, though, and Chaplin soon found himself in America under contract to appear in two-reel “flickers” for Keystone. The rest is cinematic history. But we sometimes overlook another tidbit from Chaplin’s early days. After he arrived in the United States the young actor quickly established himself as a regular customer at a local saloon-and-boxing ring on Santa Fe Avenue, in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Vernon. When each day’s shooting was over, Chaplin headed there to spend a relaxing evening. The name of the joint? It was “Doyle’s.”

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