



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XLIX – The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone

First published in:

The Strand Magazine, October 1921, and *Hearst's International Magazine*, November 1921. Note: This story was first written as a stage play by A. C. Doyle, and called "The Crown Diamond". The story is told in the third person, not by Watson.

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

In the summer. No clue as to the year. Maybe 1903, maybe 1894, maybe not.



Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

"It was pleasant to Dr. Watson to find himself once more in the untidy room of the first floor in Baker Street which had been the starting-point of so many remarkable adventures." Sounds like he was visiting, not residing there. Billy the page is on the job.

Opening scene:

Being a play, the entire story takes place in the rooms at 221B. About 1/3 of the way into the story, Watson is sent off on an errand and does not return.

Client:

The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary. Also Lord Cantlemere, who was skeptical of Holmes' abilities, but came around at the end.

Crime or concern:

A £100,000 burglary, of the great yellow Mazarin stone, the missing Crown jewel. (There is no mention in this story of the circumstances regarding the actual crime, only that it had occurred.)

Villain:

Count Negretto Sylvius, a big, swarthy fellow, with a formidable dark moustache shading a cruel, thin-lipped mouth, surmounted by a long, curved nose like the beak of an eagle. He had a brilliant necktie, shining pin, and glittering rings which were flamboyant in their effect. Not only that, but he had dark, hairy hands.

Motive:

£££ (\$\$\$ to Americans)

Logic used to solve:

Sylvius demands to know why Holmes's agents have been following him. Holmes explains first that it was him in disguise, and then likens his crimefighting activities to the Count's own lion-hunting activities in Algeria – the danger is exhilarating, and it rids the country of a pest.

Holmes then proceeds to make his own purpose plain and tells the count that he wants to know where the Mazarin Stone is. Holmes even boasts that the count will tell him. At first, the count denies that he even knows, but Holmes tricks him into revealing that he does. He also outlines all the evidence that he has against the count for this theft, and other crimes.

Policemen:

Youghal of the C. I. D., to whom Holmes instructed Watson to deliver a few lines scribbled in a notebook.

Holmes' fees:

No mention, but given the illustrious clients, probably pretty decent.

Transport:

None. This was a stationary adventure.

Food and drink:

No mention

Vices:

Holmes says he hopes that Watson has not learned to despise his pipe and lamentable tobacco.

Other cases mentioned: Old Baron Dowson, who said of Holmes, "What the law has gained, the stage has lost."

Old Mrs. Harold. She left Count Sylvius the Blymar estate. The count quickly gambled it away.

Miss Minnie Warrender, who was done in by the count.

Notable Quotables:

"The faculties become refined when you starve them. Why, surely, as a doctor, my dear Watson, you must admit that what your digestion gains in the way of blood supply is so much lost to the brain. I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix. Therefore, it is the brain I must consider." – Holmes

Other interestings:

The etymology of "Negretto Sylvius". We understand that the Latin word or name "Silva" or "Silvi" means forest, or woods, and we believe that "ius" is a suffix meaning pertaining to, or something similar. "Negro" in various languages and forms means black, and the Italian word for "black" is "nero" which is close but not right on. "Etto" is an Italian suffix that represents small, or feminine, and Count Negretto Sylvius was half Italian, for what that's worth.

The name Blackwood does not appear in the Canon, but it was the name of a British magazine that was a competitor to *The Strand Magazine*, publisher of many of the Holmes stories. The new movie about Sherlock Holmes, interestingly titled "Sherlock Holmes" was released in December 2009, and has a villain named "Blackwood".

A wax bust and an air gun, and a technological miracle, the gramophone. all make their appearance.

When all was said and done:

Once he recovered the diamond, Holmes slipped it into the pocket of Lord Cantlemere, then told him, "Your pleasure in telling of this successful result in the exalted circle to which you return will be some small atonement for my practical joke. Billy, you will show his Lordship out, and tell Mrs. Hudson that I should be glad if she would send up dinner for two as soon as possible."

McMurdo's Camp