



## The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure XLIX – The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone

This story really does save the best till last, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

Written in the third person and detailing the disappearance of a valuable precious stone, this story gets off to a rather slow start and I miss Watson's narrative voice. Maybe it was because I was reading at 5.30am, but I have to confess that I fell asleep half way through and woke up just in time to rush out of the house and get my train to work. I'm sitting on it now, and must confess that despite the middle of the story sending me to sleep – the ending was great and got my full attention.

Count Sylvius, a typical upper-class wrong 'un, has stolen the stone and Holmes has all the evidence against him but still doesn't know where the gem has been hidden. Knowing that the Count is pretty keen to see him dead, Holmes sets up a life-like dummy in the window of 221B in the hope that it will be this, and not he, which any bullets are directed towards. He then gets the Count to visit him and offers to let him go as long as he gives up the stone's location. He



calls up the count's associate who is standing guard in the street and allows them time to confer together. He tells them that he will go into another room and play on his violin so as to not hear their conversation but actually uses a secret door to nip in behind the curtain and sit in place of the dummy. A gramophone plays violin music to foil the pair and as Holmes listens to their conversation, the count reveals that he has the stone upon him. Holmes suddenly springs out from hiding, takes the stone and facilitates their arrest. Hurrah!

Then the client is summoned and Holmes can't help having a little more sport. Lord Cantlemere is very skeptical of Holmes abilities and sneers when the detective suggests that he has not been able to find the stone. He actually slips it into the Lord's pocket and happily toys with him before revealing the truth. This is brilliant, great fun and, as always, it is most enjoyable to see Holmes get one over a difficult client or official.

This is also the story in which we meet Billy, the wise young page, who seems to have taken over some of Watson's role and 'Helped a little to fill up the gap of loneliness and isolation which surrounded the saturnine figure of the great detective'.

Watson does seem rather surplus to requirements in this one as his only role is to go for the police. He doesn't even write up the story and therefore a strange air of chance seems to hang over proceedings – Watson is much older now, has a life of his own but Holmes' world has not changed leaving him rather lonely except for his young page.

It's hard for me to score this one as I didn't really think much of it until the concluding moments and though Billy is a spirited young man, he is no match for Watson.

**I have to give it just 6 out of 10, especially as the dummy idea is hardly new –  
having featured so heavily in The Empty House.**

**Charlotte Anne Walters**

**November 05, 2011**