



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

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

As may be seen from the table, there is no full agreement

among our chronologists as to when this story 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, a half-Italian nobleman turned criminal mastermind. Sam Merton, punch-drunk boxer, the count's muscle. Billy, Holmes' young but very wise and tactful page boy. Lord Cantlemere, one of the Great Detective's three eminent employers in this case.

Notable Quotes:

"Mr. Holmes always knows whatever there is to know."

"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."

"Your morals don't improve, Watson. You have added fibbing to your other vices."

"We are greatly your debtors, Mr. Holmes. Your sense of humour may, as you admit, be somewhat perverted, and its exhibition remarkably untimely, but at least I withdraw any reflection I have made upon your amazing professional powers."

<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-Gold</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>

The Mazarin Stone

The precious stone in this case (no carbuncle it!), is clearly identified as a yellow diamond and hazily described as “the Crown diamond.” It is practically certain that it was named after Cardinal Jules Mazarin, the Italian statesman who succeeded Cardinal Richelieu and ran France, leaving his mark on Europe, while Louis XIV was still a minor.



If one is to believe Alexandre Dumas in *Twenty Years After* and *The Viscount of Bragelonne*, Mazarin was Queen Anne of Austria’s lover as well as a devious a greedy tightwad, who would have been unlikely to have owned such a gem. All of his nefarious schemes were of course thwarted by d’Artagnan and his stalwart companions.

According to Watson, The Mazarin Stone was worth £100,000, roughly \$38,000,000 today. First-water yellow diamonds are certainly not inexpensive gems. The yellow shade must be extremely pure and clear, which has

earned them the nickname of Canary Diamonds. They cost up to 50% more than fancy yellows, which makes them more expensive than their white counterparts. A first-quality intense yellow diamond averages \$7,000 per carat.

It should be noted, however, that the value of any such gem is not limited by the current asking price per carat. Its provenance and history also influence its cost. An emerald necklace known to have been owned by, say, the Empress Eugenie, would be worth far more than an identical one lacking in such history. Therefore, a £100,000 price for a renowned diamond bellowing to the Crown is not unlikely.



What *is* unlikely is that Count Silvius intended to have the stone cut into various sizes. Surely such a well-practiced, successful blackguard would have known that there exist very wealthy collectors who would have been willing to pay full price for the purpose of owning such a unique gem.

In fact, his reputation seems to have been unearned, considering the clumsy way in which he dealt (or attempted to deal) with Holmes. His choice of a partner for such a high-level, important crime—a has-been palooka with scrambled brains—also says little about his criminal potential.

This Case’s Authorship



I, for one, stand firmly in the camp of those who think that this case was not authored by Watson; aside from the fact that it is written in third person, the way the case is told and the way the story develops is very un-Watsonlike. His surprise, “What—the hundred-thousand-pound burglary?” is extremely atypical. The Good Doctor would not have been at all surprised over the fact that when a national treasure of such magnitude is stolen, the premier detective in Europe is not going to be called into the investigation; he would have been

surprised if it had been otherwise!

It seems strange that Watson would have left out how Count Silvius managed to steal such a national treasure. In BLUE, we are told how James Ryder came to have possession of the jewel.

Then we are asked to believe that Billy the page “had helped a little to fill up the gap of loneliness and isolation which surrounded the saturnine figure of the great detective.” Indeed? In 1903 Sherlock Holmes would have been 49 years old and at the height of his powers—not at all decrepit and seeking a surrogate son. This would have been more believable had he been training the lad to become a detective—passing on his hard-learned experience to a succeeding generation. However, we see no indication of this: Billy seems to be a page and little else.

Finally, Lord Cantlemere has got to be one of the most two-dimensional, unpleasant characters in the whole of the Canon. It is almost as if His Lordship had been conjured out of thin air just to give Holmes someone to tweak a nose: a disapproving, unbelieving person who does not believe Holmes to be everything that he has proven to the world since at least 1881 that he is.

As I remarked, most un-Watsonlike!

What else happened in 1903:

Empire



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

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

◀ 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

Joseph Chamberlain begins Tariff Reform Campaign.



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

Foundation of universities at Liverpool and Manchester.

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 sixty-eight-and-a-half years.

Road speed limit in England increased to 20 mph.

World

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

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

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

Belgium introduces Old Age Pension plan.



Foundation Bank of Persia loans with large Russian interests.

◀ Russian massacre of Jews at Kishinyov.

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 *Ernani*.

Elgar, *The Apostles*, an oratorio.

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.

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*.

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

Shaw, *Man and Superman*.

Science and Technology

First radio press messages published by *The Times*.

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

Tsiolkovski publishes paper on astronautics.

Henry Ford founds his motor company.

Wilhelm Einthoven invents the electro-cardiograph.

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

Bertrand Russell publishes *Principia Mathematica*.

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..."

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