

The Mazaroff Mystery

By J. S. FLETCHER

W. N. U. Service

Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS

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THE STORY

Mervyn Holt is engaged by a man calling himself Mazaroff as a traveling companion. After a short tour they put up at the Woodcock Inn on Marradale moor. They meet, casually, Mrs. Elphinstone and Sheila Merchison. Mazaroff tells Holt they are his wife and daughter and that his real name is Merchison. That night Mazaroff fails to return to the inn and his disappearance is unexplained. Holt meets Sheila and tells her of Mazaroff's disappearance. Holt is questioned by Police Sergeant Manners and a reporter, Downes. Mazaroff's murdered body is found. Crole, Mazaroff's lawyer, and Maythorne, private detective, arrive. Valuable diamonds that Mazaroff usually carried are missing. A gun, stolen from Musgrave, is found at the scene of the murder. Evidence at the inquest proves Mazaroff was Merchison. His will leaves all to Holt. Herman Knopf, close friend of Mazaroff, is in London. From him it is learned that Mazaroff possessed two remarkable diamonds.

CHAPTER V—Continued

"Well, about a month or five weeks ago, I was called to the telephone one afternoon, and found Sir Samuel speaking to me. He wanted me to go round to Park lane there and then, to look at and estimate the value of a diamond that had been offered to him. I found Sir Samuel and Lady Loeke in their library; they had with them a stranger whose appearance, as I recollect it, corresponds with the description of Mazaroff given in the newspapers—I particularly remember the cast in the left eye. He was not introduced to me by name. It appeared that the stranger was one who was interested in diamonds in a large way, had heard of Sir Samuel and his wife as possible buyers, and was willing to sell them something of very special value; to wit, a remarkable pair of blue diamonds, of which he had one in his pocket. It was this that I was asked to see. He told me that it was one of a pair—the other was equally fine. He further said that he had been in the diamond trade for some years, in South Africa, had now retired, and this would be his last deal. What the Loeokes wanted to get at was—what were the two diamonds worth? The would-be vendor and myself had a good deal of talk about the matter. He was very fair and reasonable, and he and I eventually came to a decision as to a proper price for the pair.

"And what might that be?" asked Crole, eagerly.

"Well," answered Frobenius, "we agreed that a fair price would be a hundred and sixty thousand pounds." Crole let out an exclamation of astonishment.

"One hundred and sixty thousand pounds!—for a couple of diamonds!" he said. "Whew!—that's a bit exceptional, isn't it?"

"You have to bear in mind that the diamonds are exceptional," answered Frobenius. "The sum we agreed upon was a reasonable price—not an extravagant one."

"And what happened?" asked Maythorne. "Was the deal carried out?"

"That I do not know," replied Frobenius. "I perceived that after having agreed with the seller as to what would be a fair price, my part was played, and I left seller and buyer talking the matter over."

"You've heard nothing since?" inquired Crole.

"Nothing. I haven't seen Sir Samuel Loeke, nor Lady Loeke, since that afternoon," said the Jeweler. "And of course I haven't seen the blue diamond man. But I feel sure that he was the man who is referred to in the newspapers as Mazaroff."

"I don't think there's much doubt about that," assented Crole. "Well, now, we'd better get in touch with these Loeke people," he continued, glancing at me and Maythorne. "Park lane, you said?"

Mr. Frobenius gave us the exact address of Sir Samuel Loeke and left us. Crole and I, as if by common impulse, looked at our companion.

"Well?" said Crole. "What's Maythorne asking himself?"

Maythorne looked up from a pattern which he was mechanically tracing on the tablecloth.

"Only one thing to ask—at present," he said. "Did Mazaroff sell those diamonds to Sir Samuel Loeke? If he didn't—"

"Well?" demanded Crole.

"Then, in that case, Armintrude's got them—in my opinion. And—the job will be to prove that he has! Where have we got the slightest clue to what we want to establish—that he and Mazaroff met on that first day after Mazaroff and Holt arrived at the Woodcock? But we're getting at something—and it all points to Armintrude. Now let's see this Sir Samuel man and get a step further."

We chartered a taxicab and were driven to Park lane, where we pulled up in front of an imposing mansion, at the door of which we were encountered by footmen whose liveries were rather more gorgeous than the usual

run of things in that way. The room into which we were ushered after we had sent in our cards looked as if some very high-class upholsterer had been given carte blanche to wreak his own will and fancy on it. A little, apple-cheeked, rotund man, who wore mutton-chop whiskers and a ready smile came bustling in, a big half-smoked cigar in one pudgy hand.

"I know what you chaps have come for!" he exclaimed, beaming from one to the other of us. "This Mazaroff affair!—I've read it all in the papers, and your names, too, same as what I see on your cards—just so. Now then, what's it all about, gentlemen? It's a queer business, I think—what?"

"You're aware of it, then, Sir Samuel?" suggested Crole. "Well up in things as far as they've gone?"

"Who isn't?" exclaimed Sir Samuel. "Been plenty in the papers, anyway. Of course me and her ladyship's read all we could set our eyes to. It was only this morning she says to me, 'Sam!' she says, 'as sure as fate somebody'll be coming to us about this here affair!' And—there you are! But I'll tell you what—come this way, gentlemen, and then her ladyship can hear all you've got to say."

We followed Sir Samuel out of the cold grandeur of our first haven into the less formal and more comfortable harbor of another and smaller room, where we found Lady Loeke. She was as rotund as her husband; her dress was of the latest fashion, and she had many rings on her fingers, and it struck me that she was somewhat sharper of intellect than Sir Samuel, not quite so open, and infinitely more watchful.

"Of course I knew we should have inquiries made here," she observed, in a slightly affected tone. "I said so, this morning, to Sir Samuel."

"As I've just told 'em," said Sir Samuel. "Though, to be sure, I've no idea as yet as to how they got here. Nobody knows about our transactions with Mazaroff outside ourselves—so far as I know. Of course, Mazaroff may have talked. But now—how did you come to hear of us?"

"My dear Sir Samuel," replied Crole, solemnly, "there are mysteries within mysteries! A man of your position, and your knowledge of the world will understand me when I say that it is a big thing. You've already read a good deal about it—now, to be brief, what can you tell us?"

Sir Samuel settled himself in a chair.

"Well," he said, with a glance at Lady Loeke. This Mr. Mazaroff called here one day—just as you've done—and introduced himself as a man that had had big dealings in diamonds and the like in South Africa. He'd heard, so he told us, of Lady Loeke as a likely purchaser of something exceptional in diamonds, and he'd thought she'd like to see a particularly fine bit of property that he'd got in that line of goods. Then he told me it was a pair of very fine and rare blue diamonds, and he produced one."

"Only one?" inquired Maythorne.

"Only one. The other," continued Sir Samuel, "he said was in the possession of his agent, a Mr. Armintrude, of Courthope's bank, who was just then away holiday making in Northumberland. He said he should be seeing Mr. Armintrude very soon, and he would get the fellow diamond from him—"

"Unless!" interrupted Lady Loeke. "There was an 'unless' about it."

"So there was," admitted Sir Samuel. "Yes—unless Armintrude had got a definite offer from some other cus-

tom—Armintrude, he said, had had the first blue diamond in his possession for some months and might have found an advantageous customer for the pair."

"Then you didn't buy?" asked Maythorne.

"No—we didn't buy," replied Sir Samuel. "What we did was this—I telephoned our regular Jeweler, Frobenius, and got him to come here and examine the diamond that Mazaroff had with him. They agreed that a reasonable price for such a pair of blue diamonds would be a hundred and sixty thousand pounds. After Frobenius had gone, Mazaroff and I came to this agreement—if his agent, Armintrude, hadn't got a better offer, or made some arrangement to which they were committed, Mazaroff was to get the second blue diamond from Armintrude, and, on his return to London,

or he could tell you himself. But I never heard him speak of meeting Mazaroff again—did you, Maria?"

"No—I never heard him say anything of that," replied Lady Loeke.

We had a little more conversation with this worthy couple, and then left them. I was anxious to get out of the house; I had an announcement to make which I could not make before.

"I say!" I exclaimed, seizing my companion's elbows. "You remember that—this morning—I spoke of seeing Mazaroff in conversation with a man who was a stranger to me, but whom Mazaroff evidently knew? Well—there's a photograph of that man—the very man!—on Lady Loeke's mantelpiece!"

The two men stopped, staring at me—Crole with an ordinary glare of surprise, but Maythorne with a sudden flash of the eye and an alertness that I had never noticed before in him: it was as if my remark had acted as an illumination.

"That's the man I saw talking to Mazaroff at Huntingdon and again at York," I asserted. "I recognized the photograph instantly."

"The probability is that that's the nephew we heard about—Mallison," said Maythorne. "Let's see—he was referred to as Lady Loeke's nephew and Sir Samuel spoke of him as knowing his way about town pretty well. Now then, where are we? Mallison, according to what we've just heard, met Mazaroff at Loeke's house. Mallison heard about, and saw, one of the blue diamonds. If the photograph is that of Mallison, as you assert, Holt, Mallison is the man to whom you saw Mazaroff talking first at Huntingdon and then at York. So—does Mallison know anything about this affair? That's to find out—when we can come across Mallison."

He paused for a moment in the middle of the sidewalk, hands plunged in his trousers pockets, eyes staring at the pavement. Suddenly he looked up, signaled to a passing taxicab, and motioned us to follow him into it.

"Come to my office," he said. "I've a chap there—my confidential clerk—who possesses one of the sharpest brains and most retentive memories in Europe. He'll know."

Maythorne's office was in Conduit street, so we were there in a few minutes. At each end of the room we entered stood a table-desk; at that at the further end sat, when we walked in, a young man who would have attracted my attention wherever I had met him. He was a smallish-sized chap, and his thinish person was arrayed in a tweed suit of very large checks; he wore a hunting stock instead of an ordinary collar, and its folds were gathered together by a gold horseshoe pin; he might, indeed, have been a head stable boy as far as this sort of thing went. But he had the sharpest and queerest pair of blue eyes I have ever seen; the most inquisitive nose, and the straightest line of lip above the squarest and most obstinate of chins—and yet these things were not, severally or collectively, the most remarkable of his features. The thing that one's eye went to first was the fellow's red hair—absolutely, genuinely red, a veritable flame of color. I don't know what Crole thought of him—he had doubtless seen him before, perhaps often—but my own mind immediately crystallized its impressions into a word at sight of the vivid poll, the sharp nose, the general aspect of ready watchfulness: Ferret!

"Cottlingley!" Maythorne said, going straight to the subject without preface. "Do we know the name Mallison?"

I saw a swift flash of light in the red-headed one's queer eyes—it was as if a lamp had suddenly been lighted somewhere behind them.

"We do! Mallison, James Mallison."

The creature's voice was as odd as his appearance. It was a sort of subdued falsetto—piping. Maythorne nodded.

"I thought you'd remember, Cottlingley. In what connection, now?"

"Welminster square affair. No direct connection—with him. One of our clients was in it, though. Mallison—his name was in the list. Memorized it. James Mallison—no occupation. Address—Park lane. Lady Loeke's nephew—that's who Mallison is."

"And that Welminster square affair, Cottlingley? Gambling business wasn't it?"

"Police raid in a private gambling house in Welminster square. About three or four months ago. Thirty or forty arrests. Mallison was one of the men on the premises. If you remember, one of our clients was there—came to you in a blue funk. Nothing! Like the scrapbook?"

Maythorne nodded his head and held out a hand, and the clerk, turning to a big table that stood in the center of the room, took up a soddily bound volume which proved to contain newspaper cuttings, and with almost unerring celerity found a page and handed the book over. Maythorne glanced at the extract, and then twisted the volume toward Crole and me.

"Eternal Light"

The illumination used in the "Eternal Light" in New York city is procured through the electric lights. These lights are attached to circuits connected in such a manner that if one falls another automatically will begin functioning.

good-fellowship and freeing them from the embarrassment so overpowering in children whose only contact with strangers has been formal.

"Many a child who would have been repelled at first by the technical difficulties of the violin or piano, has come happily to these more difficult musical instruments by way of their humbler and more easily mastered brothers in the musical family."

Buried With His Five Wives

In a country town not more than ten miles from Springfield, Ill., is a cemetery near the roadside whose ancient stones, moss-covered and weather-beaten, attract the passerby who may be interested in curious epitaphs. In the center of one lot is a large monument on which is inscribed:

"Here lies John Jones, aged ninety-two. At rest." On the side of the monument are five small stones exactly alike, each bearing the name of a woman and date of death and each having this inscription: "Beloved wife of John Jones."—Springfield Republican.

Lessening Aversion to Formal Music Lessons

Children's aversion to music lessons, entailing long hours of practice for many months, can be overcome by making them familiar at an early age with musical toys, according to Frank H. Richardson, M. D., in Woman's Home Companion.

"Many families have found the approach to a real appreciation and love of music is made easier by having the simpler musical instruments around where they can be picked up and played casually even before formal lessons have begun," says Doctor Richardson. "Such simple things as the fife, flangeolet and piccolo; the banjo, mandolin or even the humble ukulele; the xylophone or bells will often tempt not only the child but also the guest in the home.

"Improvised ensembles prove delightful ways of teaching children

First Fireplaces Were Wooden

Many of the first fireplaces were built of wood, and plastered over on the inside with a sort of mud mortar. These early crude fireplaces were huge things, and unquestionably it is from them we got our story of Santa Claus and the chimney. Certainly he would have had no difficulty coming down those early flues. In fact, they were provided with steps on the inside in order that the man of the house could patch the cracks in the plaster with new mud.—Successful Farming.

Just a Little Smile



WOULD BE BETTER SWIMMER

A clergyman went out with a boatman to try his luck at deep sea fishing. They were a long way from shore when a sudden squall blew up which seemed likely to overwhelm the small craft.

"I wish I had been a better man," groaned the boatman, as he strove at his oars.

"And I wish I had been a better swimmer," remarked the clergyman, thoughtfully.

QUIET AND PLEASANT



"You say you've had a very quiet and pleasant time at home lately?"

"Yes; my wife and I don't speak."

Obstruction

You'll always find a faction That is hard to understand, Who criticizes action When it ought to lend a hand.

Wins on a Hot Tip

Higgins—Hullo, Matthews, old chap! I hear you backed Perfect Fool at the races the other day and made a small fortune.

Matthews—Yes, I didn't do badly. "How did you spot the winner?"

"Oh, they were the last words my wife said to me as I left the house."

Happy Boyhood

"Do you recall being a happy, bare-foot boy?"

"Not exactly," answered Farmer Cornstossel. "About the happiest days I remember are those when I managed to get a new pair of shoes."—Washington Star.

The Test

Mrs. Pester—Are you sure this is a thoroughbred Boston terrier?

Mr. Pester—Reasonably sure. Why?

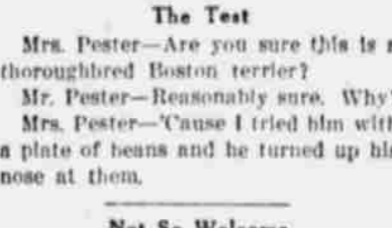
Mrs. Pester—"Cause I tried him with a plate of beans and he turned up his nose at them.

Not So Welcome

"I sold our ship would come in this week. Was I correct?"

"Well, partly. My salary was docked."

HOW LONG MARRIED



"So you are married? For how long?"

"Well, let's see—for about six dresses, three hats and a half dozen crying fits."

Harsh Experience

A member I should hate to be Of a grand jury clinic, For what I learned might render me Thenceforth a suffering cynic.

Still Patiently Waiting

Mr. Knox—I think some time during his life a man's better-self comes to the surface. Jane.

Mrs. Knox—Oh, I hope so! I have been waiting for years and years for yours to come to the surface, John.

A Safety Deposit

The Prestidigitateur—Ha, ha! Didn't know you had all that money in your whiskers, did you?

Mr. Longbrush—Yes, I did. I hid that money there so my wife wouldn't find it in my pockets—hand it over.

Something Missing

Martin—if you refuse to marry me I'll blow out my brains.

Mabel—Why, that's impossible.

Martin—Perhaps you think that I haven't a pistol?

Mabel—Oh, no doubt you have a pistol.

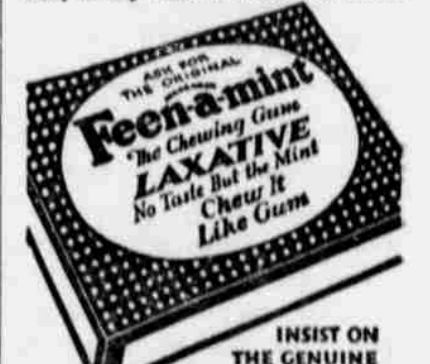
Back to Normalcy

Jake—Did Jones get married at last?

Lew—No; he told me he'd wait till times became more normal, and I think that by that time he will be more normal himself.

tired every morning?

Get poisons out of the system with Feen-a-mint, the Chewing Gum Laxative. Smaller doses effective when taken in this form. A modern, scientific, family laxative. Safe and mild.



Feen-a-mint FOR CONSTIPATION

Brutus Hero of Play

According to the general judgment of critics and actors, Brutus is the hero of the play "Julius Caesar." He speaks 727 lines; Antony, 327 lines; Cassius, 507 lines, and Caesar, 154 lines. Richard Burbage first played the role of Brutus.

LUMBAGO?

A pain in the lower part of your back can torture you. But not for long, if you know Bayer Aspirin. These harmless, pleasant tablets take away the misery of lumbago, rheumatism, neuralgia, headaches, toothaches, and systemic pains of women. Relief comes promptly; is complete. Genuine Aspirin cannot depress the heart. Look for the Bayer cross, thus:



Famous Pennant in Museum

The home-bound pennant of the battleship Oregon, preserved in the Naval Academy museum, is 510 feet long, representing one foot for every man aboard the vessel at the time it visited the Asiatic station after the Spanish-American war. The pennant is of silk, and was made by the crew.

Take August Flower

Don't let constipation poison your system. August Flower corrects constipation—even stubborn cases—almost like magic! Sweetens stomach, stirs liver, aids digestion. GUARANTEED All Druggists.

For CONSTIPATION

Nation's Infancy

In 1775 the estimated population of the American colonies was 2,900,000. The population of the principal colonies was: Massachusetts, 335,000; Pennsylvania, 800,000; New York, 130,000; North Carolina, more than 265,000, and Virginia, 450,000.



A Sour Stomach

In the same time it takes a dose of soda to bring a little temporary relief of gas and sour stomach, Phillips Milk of Magnesia has acidity completely checked, and the digestive organs all tranquilized. Once you have tried this form of relief you will cease to worry about your diet and experience a new freedom in eating.

This pleasant preparation is just as good for children, too. Use it whenever coated tongue or fetid breath signals need of a sweetener. Physicians will tell you that every spoonful of Phillips Milk of Magnesia neutralizes many times its volume in acid. Get the genuine, the name Phillips is important. Imitations do not act the same!

PHILLIPS Milk of Magnesia

W. N. U., Portland, Mo. 21-1930.

(TO BE CONTINUED)