

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 Marrasdale moor. They meet, casually, Mrs. Elphinstone and Sheila Merchlison. Mazaroff tells Holt they are his wife and daughter and that his real name is Merchlison. 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, Bownas. 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 Merchlison. His will leaves all to Holt. Harman Kloop, close friend of Mazaroff, is in London. From him it is learned that Mazaroff possessed two remarkable diamonds, which he had offered for sale to Lord and Lady Loelke. Loelke says Mazaroff had one of the stones and his agent, Armitrade, the other. Miss Merchlison arrives at Holt's rooms with the missing will which she had stolen from her mother.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

—11—

"Mervyn!" she whispered. "Parslave! Gone in—there!"

"Parslave!" I exclaimed. "The man missing from Marrasdale? Impossible!"

"I tell you Parslave has just gone into that shop—the tobacco shop! Parslave is in that shop! Come back!"

"You're certain?" I said.

"Dead certain! Parslave is in there! Watch for him—let me stand in this shop door."

"He'll know you?"

"Of course! If he comes this way, I'll slip into this shop and buy something—anything. If he goes the other way—follow. Good Heavens!—what is he doing here—in London?"

It was a drapery establishment by which we were standing, with a deep doorway—Sheila slipped within its shelter; I, half-hidden, kept an eye on the tobacconist's door. And presently out came a tall, wiry fellow, obviously a countryman, bronzed in cheek and neck; he turned along the pavement, away from us.

Sheila came out of the doorway and glanced down the street.

"That's Parslave!" she said. "But I knew it was. What next?"

"We must follow him," I answered.

"No matter where he goes, I'm going to track him. Look here—I'll keep a little way behind him; you keep a little way behind me."

So we began our chase of this man who had disappeared from Birnside on the night of Mazaroff's murder, and for whom the police had already instituted a hue-and-cry.

Parslave went slowly away in front, and just as slowly Sheila sauntered after me in the rear. He was an easy man to follow, and it needed little watchfulness on my part to see that he had not the ghost of an idea that he was being followed.

He turned to his right sharply, into Praed street, crossed the roadway, and a little further along the other side, turned again. Sauntering after him, at a considerable distance, I saw him enter the side door of a house—a rather bigger, more pretentious house than those that flanked it. Then he disappeared. I hastened my steps, walked swiftly past the house he had entered, and on the side door, on a dirty, unclean brass plate read, to my utter amazement:

"Dr. Eccleshare
Surgery Hours 9:30 to 11 a. m. 7 to 8:30 p. m."

I hurried back to the top of the street, where Sheila was already hanging about.

"Got him?" she asked.

"I touched her arm with one hand, pointing with the other to the house at the further end of the street.

"You see that house down there?—the one that stands out from the rest?"

"I see it!"

"That's Eccleshare's! Eccleshare's, do you understand? Doctor Eccleshare. Eccleshare's—good Lord! And—Parslave's in there!"

Then silence fell upon us. We stood, mutually questioning each other. Sheila spoke first.

"Eccleshare's house!—and Parslave in it? Then here's some devilry at work. Mervyn!—what's to be done? Of course, I see how things are. Eccleshare sent Parslave here—to hide!"

But I had been thinking during that moment of silence—thinking fast.

"There's only one thing to be done," I said. "Look here—you do just what I tell you. Get a taxicab. Go straight to Maythorne's—103B Conduit street—got that?—and tell him exactly what's happened. Get him to come back here with you, and to bring his clerk, Cottingley. Meanwhile, I'll keep an eye on Parslave and that house. Now—hurry!"

She went off on the instant, without as much as a word, and I turned to watch the house fifty yards away.

And I had not watched long before Parslave came out again, and came my way, too. He was carrying a rush basket, such as servants use when they go shopping. I sauntered after him (on the opposite side). He went to a grocer's shop; he bought potatoes and a couple of fine cauliflowers. And, that little domestic mission fulfilled, he went leisurely back to Doctor Eccleshare's. I pictured him and some housekeeper woman in there—Parslave would doubtless be peeling the potatoes, like any tame family man, and exchanging pleasant talk with the female presiding genius—and yonder in the Northumbrian wilds, three hundred miles away, the police were wanting him . . . on suspicion of murder!

I was laughing softly over this when a hand was laid on my arm. I looked sharply round—to see Maythorne's queer clerk, Cottingley. He jerked a thumb over his left shoulder, silently, and following the gesture I saw, a few yards away, Sheila, Maythorne, and a strange man, somebody or other got up for the part of the confirmed loafer, the type that just hangs about, and hangs about.

"Guv'nor!" said Cottingley, as if introducing Maythorne. "Here!"

I went up to Maythorne and Sheila, Cottingley at my heels. The loafer person made a slinking movement to



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the rear, and began to study the contents of a shop window. Maythorne gave me a glance that meant more things than I could realize.

"Now then, Holt," he said, plunging straight into business. "Miss Merchlison's given us a description of this man Parslave—just you give us another, so that Cottingley and this other man of mine will know him to the last detail. Here—Johnson!"

The loafer individual slid close to us, like a shadow sifted by a moving light, and he kept his eyes on me without blinking while I rapidly but thoroughly detailed a description of Parslave.

Cottingley nodded at Maythorne, nudged the loafer, and they turned away, with seeming utter indifference. Sheila stared after them in obvious wonder.

Maythorne laughed and motioned us toward the end of Praed street.

"You two young people can go off duty now," he said. "Parslave is as safe as if we'd got him inside the jewel case at the Tower! Take my advice—go somewhere and have the day to yourselves. Leave all this to me—the only thing is that I want you, Holt, to look in at my office at six o'clock sharp this evening. Now—I'm off! Business!"

Minimum of Waste in Sardine-Canning Plant

In a Down East sardine canning factory the only thing that is wasted is the odor. That may not be a dead loss, for there are persons who assert they like the smell of a sardine factory. The scales are sold to the manufacturers of artificial pearls. The fish meal is in demand in Germany and in this country. The waste oil is collected and utilized in the production of paints and varnishes. Even the tin cuttings from the cans are baled and shipped to England for reprocessing into new sheets of the metal.

Down East sardines are sent to 95 different countries. In Java, when

Not Included

The librarian had missed some of her regular visitors in the children's room. One day a little girl came in who was a cousin to the missing ones. On being questioned as to where her cousins had been so long, she told the librarian they had had the scarlet fever, "but," she added, "the rest of the family are not guaranteed."

He was in the taxicab which he had kept waiting and was being driven away before we could say anything. We both looked at each other and laughed.

"That's good advice of Maythorne's, anyhow," I said. "Let's follow it. Let's go somewhere where we can talk about—"

"What?" she said as I hesitated.

"Ourselves!" said I. "We've had enough of other people."

We had a delightful lunch in a delightful, old-fashioned inn; we spent the afternoon amongst the autumn-tinted lanes, and . . .

But that, after all, has nothing to do with this story, though it has all to do with Sheila and myself. At half past five I took her back to her friend's flat, and then went on to Conduit street and Maythorne. He immediately waved a telegram at me.

"Here you are, Holt," he said. "More developments. A wire from your man, Webster."

There was no great amount of wording in Webster's telegram, but such words as were there conveyed a good deal of highly important information. This is what Webster said:

"Courthope, Armitrade, Eccleshare, Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone all left here for Carlisle by eight o'clock train this morning."

I handed back the telegram without comment.

"Carlisle, of course, means London," Maythorne said. "The scene of operation's shifted, Holt!—we've got some of the chief actors close at hand."

"Mrs. Elphinstone, of course, has come after her daughter," I suggested.

"And the will," he answered. "Or to find out what her daughter's done with the will. Well—there are two men we'll have to have a pretty straight talk with tomorrow. We're going to have it out with Armitrade. After that, we're going to interview Eccleshare—and Parslave, possibly with a little police assistance, if need be. But tonight you and I are going to see Mrs. Elphinstone. We know where she's to be found—and we'll go now and find her."

"Where?" I asked, wondering if he had some further information.

"Can you doubt?" he answered with a laugh. "She'll be found at Ashington mansions—where, I suppose, you've just left her daughter. I want to ask Mrs. Elphinstone a question or two. And I may as well tell you, Holt—she won't answer 'em! Tonight, at any rate."

"That I quite expect," said I.

"Just so! But she'll answer 'em tomorrow—or next day—or the day after that," he said, with a significant glance. "The thing is, first, to put them to her."

We rode up to Malda Vale and got out of our cab some twenty or thirty yards short of Ashington mansions. Maythorne immediately nudged my elbow.

"What did I tell you?" he said. "They're here, now!"

In front of the main entrance to the flats a taxicab stood. And within it sat a woman—a tall, angular, elderly woman, dressed in somewhat rusty black, who stared straight in front of her until, attracted by our momentary halt and seeing our eyes turn in her direction, she gave us a quick side glance only to withdraw it sharply and to look ahead again, still more steadily. We passed on and entered the door.

"I've seen that woman before, remarked Maythorne, as we crossed the hall to the elevator. "At Marrasdale."

"So have I," I answered. "I saw her about the Woodcock—in fact, I took her for the cook. What can she be doing—here?"

"Mrs. Elphinstone will know," he said. "But—I shan't ask her that, now. Well—what's this Miss Apperley's number?" he went on, as we were whirled upwards. "Twenty-seven? Right! Now then, Holt—we

representatives sought a new market, the natives would have nothing to do with the "little fishes boiled in oil." Two hundred free cases were offered if the prospective customers would place a 1,000 case order. At last the deal was made. The sardines were heaped high on trucks, together with a band of native musicians, taken from bazaar to bazaar, and sold. Thus introduced, there was no further difficulty in adding Java to the list of sardine consumers.—New York Times.

Early Handkerchiefs

The white handkerchief was considered bad form in ancient Rome. Although colored cloth squares were used for such purposes as headpieces, neckerchiefs and barber's accessories, the practice of "mopping" or "blowing" in public was frowned upon by the elite. Commentaries on Roman life cite the lack of the necessity to use a "nose" handkerchief as a desirable quality in a fiancee, and, conversely, the frequent need of a "sweat" handkerchief as a just cause for divorce.

walk straight in! We'll excuse ourselves to Miss Apperley afterward."

I did as he bade me. Without ceremony as much as a tap, I opened the door of Miss Apperley's sitting room, and Maythorne and I entered, abreast. We plunged into the middle of things. An acrimonious debate was already at its full height. Sheila stood, indignant and defiant, by the center table. Mrs. Elphinstone was enthroned, obviously in a fine temper, in an elbow chair by the hearth. Mr. Elphinstone was perched on the edge of a chair in another corner, nursing the handle of his umbrella and apparently as uncomfortable as a nervous and peaceable man can be.

"—not one word, good mother, till you tell me how you came into possession of that will!" Sheila was saying, and saying with emphasis, as we strode in. "It's up to you to speak first—you're . . ."

She broke off there, or, rather, Maythorne broke things off for her. He strode forward and took the words out of Sheila's mouth.

"Your daughter's in the right, Mrs. Elphinstone," he said in cool, even accents. "It's up to you to give explanations. Now, come, Mrs. Elphinstone—how did you obtain possession of Mazaroff's will—which is now safe, let me tell you, safe—in Mr. Crole's strong room. Come?"

Mr. Elphinstone groaned—wearily. But Mrs. Elphinstone showed temper—and fight.

"How dare you speak to me—me!—like that?" she demanded. "What right—"

"My dear lady!" interrupted Maythorne. "Be calm, and don't be foolish. Think a little. Here is a very wealthy man murdered under most suspicious circumstances. He has his will in his pocket, with other papers, and with valuables, and with money. He is not only murdered, but he is robbed of everything he has on him. Nothing can be discovered about his missing property. Then a few nights later, your daughter accidentally finds out that the will is in—your hands! What do you suppose the police authorities will say to that, Mrs. Elphinstone? I'm asking you."

Mrs. Elphinstone looked at him half-wonderingly, as though by instinct and slightly stupid people will look at a questioner: I could see quite well that she was wondering how he dared to be so plain-spoken and unceremonious.

Mr. Elphinstone groaned once more—audibly. "Most distressing!" he murmured. "Most—unpleasant. Really—I—I think, Marion, that—er—you know—if I were you—I—I think I should say how you got this—er document—I should—really."

"Mrs. Elphinstone will have to say how she got it, and from whom," observed Maythorne. "That will be without doubt abstracted—stolen—from Mazaroff's pocket by the man who murdered him. And, Mr. Elphinstone, it is later discovered in Mrs. Elphinstone's keeping. How come it there?"

Mrs. Elphinstone suddenly gathered up her wraps and her umbrella and rose from her chair.

"What right have you to ask me questions?" she demanded, facing Maythorne. "You're not a policeman, as far as I'm aware, and I don't know that you've any authority. I am going, and whoever wishes to see me will find me at Short's hotel. You'll find me there, Sheila—I shall not run after you again."

"That's a useful thing to know, Mrs. Elphinstone," said Maythorne, still pertinacious. "You will no doubt be called upon at Short's. This is a matter of murder! And whether you like it or not, Mrs. Elphinstone—or, as it should be, Merchlison—I am going to know who murdered Mazaroff. If you know, you're already an accessory after the crime."

Mrs. Elphinstone was at the door by this time, and her eyes were as hard as ever as she swept us all with a half contemptuous glance. "Are you coming, Malcolm? As for you, Sheila, if you want me again, you'll have to come to me. Otherwise—"

She made a gesture which seemed to indicate that she washed her hands of her daughter and of everybody present, and without waiting for Mr. Elphinstone, she marched off down the corridor.

Mr. Elphinstone shook his head—wearily and dependently. He looked round at all of us as if he wanted to speak, but no words came, and he presently turned and went after his wife. Maythorne closed the door, and glanced at us.

"You may think I was too explicit—perhaps brutal—with Mrs. Elphinstone," he said, "but I don't believe any of you understand. Knowing what I do—and Crole, of course, knows it now—I cannot keep this information from the police! It's impossible! We know—the police know—that Mazaroff was robbed as well as murdered. That will was on him! How did Mrs. Elphinstone get it? She is shielding somebody. That's the truth! Now, then—who is it?" Then, without waiting for any reply or remark, he tapped my shoulder and set off. I lingered a moment, to exchange a word or two with Sheila, and then followed him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



HIS DIFFICULTY

Little Billy, returning from dancing school, was asked by his mother, "How was the lesson?" to which Billy replied, "Not so good, Mummy."

"How do you mean, 'not so good'?"

"Well, said the contemplative four-year-old, "I couldn't get the step the teacher showed me."

"Oh, so that was it. What do you think was the trouble?"

"Well, Mummy, I've been thinking about it, and I think it was my feet."

GOOD AT HISTORY



He—Are you good at history?
She—Indeed I am! I never forget a date.

No Unemployment
Though compensation is not great
When politics goes dizzy,
There's work in every state
To keep large numbers busy.

Nothing to Worry About
Gentleman (buying a cigar)—By Jove! If I haven't left my pocket book at home.

Saleswoman—That's all right; you can pay me tomorrow.

Gentleman—Yes, but suppose I should get run over or get hit by a falling brick?

Saleswoman—Well, it wouldn't be any great calamity, anyhow.

Quo Vadis?
Policeman (to motorist who nearly collided)—Don't you know that you should always give half of the road to a woman driver?

Motorist—I always do, when I find out which half of the road she wants.—Boston Transcript.

Results of the Fray
"Say, old man, you are a sight! Why, you are pasted with fudge and smeared with chewing gum. Get mixed up in a candy store?"

"Worse than that. I attempted to umpire a basketball game between two girl tennis."

WOULDN'T TRY IT AGAIN



Diner—Let me see—I had a steak yesterday.

Walter—Yes, sir. Will you try it again today?

Diner—No, I think not. If you will bring me a different one I'll see what I can do.

The Fickle Public
How many a man of genial style
Who can't see when to stop
Is entertaining for awhile
And then proves just a flop.

Poor Papa!
He—My dear, you talked in your sleep a long time last night.

She—What did I talk about?

"Well—er—it seemed to be mainly abuse of me."

She—I wasn't asleep.

More Modernism
Jack—Why did you break with Alice, I thought you were crazy about her?

Jim—I am, but I decided I couldn't stand it to live with her folks.

Latest Car Out
Mrs. Bragg—My husband's car is the latest one out, you know.

Mrs. Cutter—Yes, I've heard the neighbors complain that it wakes them up when he puts it in the garage.

Just a Drop
Wife of aviator who is about to cross the Atlantic—But what would failure be?

Aviator—Oh, just a drop in the ocean.



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Her Need
Little Betsy, who was ill, and with the privilege of an invalid, demanded so much of her mother's time and attention that her older brother, Fred, was a little annoyed. One day when Betsy had kept her devoted parent reading aloud to her until she was almost hoarse, Fred remarked succinctly: "Well, mom, I think what Betsy needs is a 'talking picture of you.'"
—Boston Transcript.

for
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Or a Press Agent
A fourteen-year-old school boy has been expelled because his teacher's claim that he is incapable of telling the truth. If this young man doesn't mend his ways he will likely end up in the weather bureau.—Life.



"I Feel Like a New Person"

"I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound when I was tired, nervous and run-down. I saw the advertisement and decided to try it because I was hardly able to do my household work. It has helped me in every way. My nerves are better, I have a good appetite, I sleep well and I do not tire so easily. I recommend the Vegetable Compound to other women for it gives me so much strength and makes me feel like a new person."—Mrs. Lena Young, R. # 1, Ellsworth, Maine.

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