

The Mazaroff Mystery

by J.S. Fletcher



WNU SERVICE

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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. They go to her cousin's (Verner Courthope) shooting box hoping to find some word of Mazaroff. There they meet Mr. Armistead and Doctor Eccleshare. 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. Mrs. Elphinstone scoffs at the idea that Mazaroff is Merchlison and produces apparent proofs of his death. A gun, stolen from Musgrave, is found at the scene of the murder.

CHAPTER III—Continued

The scrap of paper was a receipt for a registered letter, dispatched from Cape Town, and addressed to the Imperial Banking Corporation of South Africa, 605 Lombard street, London. Maythorne pointed to the date—January 17—on the postmark.

"Nine months since," he remarked. "How long had Mazaroff been in England when you met him at the Cecil?"

"A few weeks," I replied. "As far as I know."

"I know," said Crole. "He came to England in July—about the end of the month."

"Then the letter, or packet, or whatever it was, to which this receipt refers, was sent off from Cape Town to the London branch of this bank some months before Mazaroff came here," observed Maythorne. He turned the receipt over. "There's an indorsement on the back—letters and a figure," he continued. "See? BL. D. L. What's that mean, I wonder?"

He carefully put away the receipt. "We'll just keep the knowledge of that to ourselves, for the present," he said. "If the police come here this afternoon, as they're pretty sure to, after that gun business, and want to examine his effects, let 'em. But I'll keep this scrap of paper to myself—I want to work things up from it."

The police came to the Woodcock a little later. They asked a lot of questions of Musgrave about his gun, and of me and of Webster about our movements on the night of the murder, of Crole about the dead man's identity and position; of me again about the money and valuables he was likely to have on him. And in the course of their investigations a fact came out of which I, until then, had been unaware. It turned out that after dinner on the night of the murder, while I was busied in writing some private letters, Mazaroff, who was naturally a sociable man, had strolled into the bar-parlor of the Woodcock, where a highly diversified assemblage had gathered—farmers, cattle dealers, drovers, idlers, all homeward bound from Cloughthwaite fair. There he had made himself very agreeable, and had treated the entire company to drinks and cigars, which he paid for with a five-pound note, taken, said the barmaid, from a note-case that seemed to be pretty full, and in open view of anybody and everybody.

This bit of news appeared to give considerable satisfaction and even relief to the police officials, and Manners, who lingered behind when his superiors went away, found it impossible to refrain from communicating to me his belief that they were on the right line of pursuit.

I communicated the police sergeant's notions to Crole and Maythorne. Maythorne seemed to understand Manners' standpoint.

"Following the most probable line," he remarked. "A sensible one, too. Here's an evidently wealthy man, traveling in a luxurious car of his own, puts up at a roadside inn, goes into a public bar-parlor, lets it be seen that he's lots of money on him, and strolls out on a lonely moor after night has fallen. What more likely than that one of the men here who should slip after him, murder him, and rob him?"

"With Musgrave's gun?" I asked.

"Nothing out of the way about that little detail!" said Maythorne. "What was easier than for the murderer to take down the gun from those hooks, and slip out after Mazaroff?"

"That would presuppose a knowledge that the gun was there," remarked Crole.

"Precisely," agreed Maythorne. "There were no doubt local characters about who know quite well what was in this room and what hung on that wall. I think Manners has got hold

of a good theory—murder for the sake of robbery. But—whether it's the right one or not—um!"

"You doubt it?" I asked.

He gave us a candid, confidential smile.

"If you really want to know," he replied, "I neither doubt it nor agree with it. At present I don't know where we are. I'd like to know a lot of things yet. In particular—who was the man that Mazaroff said he wanted to see, hereabouts? Did he see him? If so, when—and where? If he hadn't seen him, was he on his way to see him at the time of the murder? Again—does this man, whoever he is, know Mazaroff as Mazaroff or as Merchlison? Was Mazaroff murdered as Mazaroff, an unknown man here, or as Merchlison, a man who had been known here?"

"Ah!" muttered Crole. "My question!"

CHAPTER IV

The York Solicitor

The inquest was duly opened next morning. Crole, as a solicitor whom he had employed in London, and I, as his traveling companion, identified the dead man as Salim Mazaroff, and told what we knew about him: Eccleshare and the local doctor testified as to the cause of his death; the men who had found the body at Reiver's den gave evidence as to the circumstances under which they came across it. At this stage an interruption came through the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone and Sheila, with whom appeared an elderly man of professional bearing; Manners, by whom I was sitting, whispered to me that this was Mr. Wetherby, Mrs. Elphinstone's lawyer.

Wetherby lost no time in letting the authorities know why he and his party were there.

He said, addressing the coroner, "I wish to make an application to you on behalf of my client, Mrs. Elphinstone, of Marrasdale tower. To support it, I shall have—very briefly—to refer to some past history. Mrs. Elphinstone, as Miss Jean Linton, was married, some twenty-three or four years ago, to a Mr. Andrew Merchlison, who formerly had some connection with this neighborhood. The marriage was not a success, and to put matters plainly, Merchlison, within a comparatively short time and after making due provision for his wife, deserted her, and it was believed, went off to the East. Eight months after he had gone, Mrs. Merchlison had a daughter—the young lady whom you now see here, Miss Sheila Merchlison. Merchlison was never heard of again until some years later, when Mrs. Merchlison received news that he had been drowned off Mombasa, on the East African coast, while on a voyage from Bombay to Durban. From that time forward Mrs. Merchlison believed herself a widow, and in due course she married again, and became Mrs. Elphinstone. Now I come to the cause and reason of my application. Yesterday, Mrs. Elphinstone was visited by two gentlemen now present, who have, I understand, just given evidence—Mr. Holt and Mr. Crole. On the invitation of Mr. Crole, Mr. Holt informed Mrs. Elphinstone that on the second evening after he and Mr. Mazaroff arrived here at the Woodcock, Mr. Mazaroff told him that though he had a perfect right to the name he was now known by, having legally adopted it some years ago, he was in reality the Andrew Merchlison who had married Miss Jean Linton, and had left her, I need hardly say, sir, that this is a very serious matter for my client, and I think it will be well for all parties if Mrs. Elphinstone is allowed to view the body of this dead man, in order that she may see if she can recognize it as that of Andrew Merchlison."

"That seems, obviously, the very thing to do," agreed the coroner. "Perhaps you'll accompany your client, Mr. Wetherby?"

There was considerable hushed excitement in that room during the absence of Mrs. Elphinstone and her solicitor. Some of the older folk amongst the spectators whispered—the name Merchlison had evidently roused sleeping memories.

When Mrs. Elphinstone, followed by Wetherby, reappeared, at the coroner's suggestion, she went into the witness box and gave evidence. It compressed itself into this—she could not identify the dead man as Andrew Merchlison. Had the features remained unaltered, she said calmly, she might have done so, but as things were—impossible!

Crole, in his professional capacity, rose to ask Mrs. Elphinstone a question.

"Mrs. Elphinstone," he said, "had Andrew Merchlison a cast in his left eye?"

"Certainly, he had," she replied. "A decided one!"

Crole turned to the coroner. "Numerous witnesses can prove that the unfortunate gentleman into whose death you are inquiring had such a cast—a squint—in his left eye, sir," he remarked. "He also had a birthmark, in the form of a brown mole, or blemish, on his right forearm. That, however, is not an uncommon mark, I believe, and I don't attach great importance to it. But I am strongly convinced that further proof of the identity of the deceased as Andrew Merchlison will be found, and I should suggest—"

"There need be no doubt about it!" exclaimed a sudden voice from the spectators. "The man was Andrew Merchlison!"

I knew whose voice that was before I looked round. Old Mr. Hassendeane, whom I had noticed when Crole and I entered the room, had risen from his seat, and was smiling informally at the coroner.

"Mrs. Elphinstone can't be positive, I may as well say that I am! I knew Andrew Merchlison well enough in the old days, when he used to come here, and afterward when he was a young man—I knew him, too, after he'd married Miss Linton, now Mrs. Elphinstone. And my memory for faces is remarkably keen, and I recognized him easily enough when I saw him the other night. Andrew Merchlison, without doubt!"

"Where did you see this man, Mr. Hassendeane?" interrupted the coroner.

"I saw him the night on which he evidently met his death," replied the old gentleman. "It was in Birnside village street, near my house."

"And you are quite positive on this matter of identity?"

"I am absolutely positive! The man was Andrew Merchlison, whatever"

duced himself as staying in York for a few days at the North Eastern hotel. He then informed me that he was a very wealthy man; that he had made his money in various trading concerns in the East, and lately in extensive diamond dealings in South Africa; that he had now retired from all this, had realized his various properties, and lodged all the proceeds in cash at his London bank, the Imperial Banking Corporation of South Africa, pending investment in this country. Then in a rather jocular fashion he remarked that up to then, as he had no children, and no relations, he had never made a will, but he now desired to do so. He produced a sheet of paper on which he had written out his wishes, handed it to me, and asked if I could put it into shipshape form. I told him I would have the will prepared for him, and he was to call and execute it at any time after three o'clock that afternoon. He returned to my office at half past three, when the will was ready for his signature. He duly appended that and carried the will off with him. It was not until some days later that I found that I had omitted to give him his own original draft, which I found lying amongst some papers on my desk. I went round to the North Eastern hotel with it, myself, but learned then that Mr. Mazaroff and his friend Mr. Holt had left for Durham and the north, leaving no address. I therefore locked up the draft. Yesterday I read in the newspapers the various accounts of what had happened here, and as I particularly noticed that Mr. Mazaroff had been robbed of his papers as well as his money and valuables, I thought it my duty to come here at once and tell what I knew."

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure, Mr. Postlethwaite," the coroner said. "Now, according to you the deceased man carried off this will in his pocket. It appears from the evidence that everything he had on him—money, valuables, papers—was stolen, most likely by the murderer or murderers; presumably the will has gone with the rest. However, it's something to know that such a document was in existence. You say he told you he was a wealthy man. Did he say how wealthy?"

"Yes. He told me he was worth about eight hundred thousand pounds."

The coroner leaned back in his chair, put the tips of his fingers together, and looked round the court. Then he turned again to the witness.

"I think we'll trouble you to read that draft, Mr. Postlethwaite," he said, quietly.

Postlethwaite read—amidst a dead silence:

"This is the last will of me, Salim Mazaroff, of the Hotel Cecil, London, in the county of Middlesex and of 941 Darling street, Cape Town, South Africa. I devise and bequeath all my estate and effects, real and personal, which I may die possessed of or entitled to unto Mervyn Holt, of 559a Jermyn street, London, absolutely, and I hereby appoint the said Mervyn Holt sole executor of this my will and I revoke all former wills and codicils."

This was all. But I was suddenly conscious that all eyes had turned from the witness to me.

The first thing that I was accurately conscious of after the crushing shock of the York solicitor's announcement was Crole's voice, close to my ear.

"Keep quiet, Holt!" he was whispering intently. "Keep quiet—calm!"

I don't think I did more than hear him—I was watching the coroner, feeling, now, that he, somehow, crystallized in himself all that the various people in that room were thinking and wondering.

The coroner looked around—at nobody in particular.

"I understand that the will has not been found," he said. "The theory is that it was stolen by the supposed murderer, with other of the deceased's papers. Nobody knows anything about it, eh?"

Wetherby was suddenly on his legs, with a sidelong glance at me.

"As Mr. Holt, the beneficiary, is present, sir," he said, "I should like to ask him if he knows anything about it?"

"I know nothing about it!" I exclaimed. "I never heard of it!"

Wetherby gave me another look; there was something cynical in it which I strongly resented.

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The coroner glanced at the solicitors gathered about the table at the head of which he sat.

"I think we had better adjourn for a fortnight," he said. "During that time—"

Just then a policeman opened the door of the room, ushering in a young, spectacled man. The coroner paused and glanced inquiringly at him.

The newcomer pulled out a card-case and, advancing to the head of the table, whispered a few words in the coroner's ear. I saw a look of something between surprise and perplexity cross the coroner's face.

"We seem to be dealing with a strangely mysterious matter, quite apart from the death," he remarked. "This gentleman"—he glanced at the card—"Mr. Stephen Postlethwaite, solicitor, from York—tells me that he saw accounts of this case in the papers yesterday, and has hurried here to give some information. I suppose we'd better have it now?"

Mr. Postlethwaite formally described himself as a solicitor. He produced a diary, and exhibited an entry which recorded a call from Mr. Salim Mazaroff.

"Mr. Mazaroff," he continued, "who was a total stranger to me, intro-

Scottish Abbey Holds Relics of Robert Bruce

Subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions, the trustees of Professor Noel Paton handed over the following articles to the kirk-session of Dunfermline abbey: 1. A portion of the skeleton of King Robert the Bruce, namely, the metatarsal or bone of the great toe. 2. A small portion of the outer leaden shroud of King Robert the Bruce. 3. A small portion of the tollie d'or in which the body of King Robert the Bruce was wrapped. 4. The remains of one of the iron nails which were found among the remains of the coffin in which the body reposed. 5. The remains of one of the six iron rings, or rather handles, which had been filled in with lead into the vault of the Bruce when first discovered on February 17, 1818. 6. Twelve

Rainbow Colors

In the rainbow in the inner or primary bow the colors of the spectrum are arranged in their order, red on the outside and violet on the inside. In the outer or secondary bow the colors are in the reverse order.

duced himself as staying in York for a few days at the North Eastern hotel. He then informed me that he was a very wealthy man; that he had made his money in various trading concerns in the East, and lately in extensive diamond dealings in South Africa; that he had now retired from all this, had realized his various properties, and lodged all the proceeds in cash at his London bank, the Imperial Banking Corporation of South Africa, pending investment in this country. Then in a rather jocular fashion he remarked that up to then, as he had no children, and no relations, he had never made a will, but he now desired to do so. He produced a sheet of paper on which he had written out his wishes, handed it to me, and asked if I could put it into shipshape form. I told him I would have the will prepared for him, and he was to call and execute it at any time after three o'clock that afternoon. He returned to my office at half past three, when the will was ready for his signature. He duly appended that and carried the will off with him. It was not until some days later that I found that I had omitted to give him his own original draft, which I found lying amongst some papers on my desk. I went round to the North Eastern hotel with it, myself, but learned then that Mr. Mazaroff and his friend Mr. Holt had left for Durham and the north, leaving no address. I therefore locked up the draft. Yesterday I read in the newspapers the various accounts of what had happened here, and as I particularly noticed that Mr. Mazaroff had been robbed of his papers as well as his money and valuables, I thought it my duty to come here at once and tell what I knew."

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Daddy's Evening Fairy Tale

MARY GRAHAM BONNER

JOURNEYING

David was wandering along with the Yangtze River, over in China.



Bamboo Trees Were to Be Seen.

"I must tell you about the Grand Canal," said Yangtze. "It was built as a trade route from me to the valley of Peking. It goes right across the plain, passing many cities and towns along the way. There are so many walled cities, too, and there are canals and locks and dikes."

It was all so beautifully arranged, and David did not wonder this was an old, old land, for it appeared so very wise and yet so quiet about its wisdom.

As they wandered more and more green and purple and yellow and black bamboo trees were to be seen growing so tall and yet always so graceful. And now, as it was getting darker, the lanterns along the way were being lighted, candles were flickering and the flowered pagodas, the swinging lanterns, the orchards of mulberry trees, the low voices of the people, the funny old water buffaloes and the quiet friendliness of Yangtze made David feel as though he were in a magic land.

Later on he left Yangtze and took a trip down along the Yellow sea passing Shanghai and Foochow, coming finally to Canton where he spent the night. And the fragrance of the flower pagodas and the music of strange reed instruments lulled him to sleep much more quickly than he wished.

David thought he might like to visit Siam where he had been told he could see pale elephants, as well as children who were famous for their swimming powers, or he thought he might like to see the Malay peninsula, so slim and proud of its figure. But he knew he couldn't see all the countries on this trip and he had always thought he might like to see India some day.

Wind came for him and gave him breakfast and then carried him to talk to the river Ganges.

David certainly felt familiar with rivers by this time and he greeted Ganges most cordially.

"You may find it a bit warm," Ganges told him, "as we have a good deal of hot weather, and then we have heavy rains, too. There used to be a bad time in the olden days when the water would go rushing down to the sea but dams were built and now the country is well irrigated—of course I can use such big words to you now that you're so familiar with rivers."

David nodded.

"Now the Brahmaputra and I join forces to make a fine delta at the head of the Bay of Bengal. Such a fine delta as it is—so fine in fact that that was why they built Calcutta here, and Calcutta is a busy, important city. The big ships come in here from the sea and meet the smaller boats that come down our rivers. If you wander along you'll see temples and interesting people and you'll see how we love tea and spices and sugar cane and cotton."

"You can have a ride on an elephant, too, but I mustn't keep you long as you've an invitation to go to the Home of the Snow."

"You'll find it chilly so you'd better not get too used to the warmth here."

"If you see any more of my river relatives you might tell them that Ganges sent his respects."

So David left Ganges then and was glad that he had had a little glimpse of India and its temples and had had a short ride on one of the elephants through a thick, unbelievably thick, jungle.

Disappointed

Little five-year-old James liked to help his mother feed the chickens and his mother often playfully called him a "young rooster." One day he overheard his mother and another lady talking about people of different countries. When the caller had gone home he asked his mother, "What does it mean to be English or French or Scotch?"

"Well," said his mother, "people are named after the country they come from. English people come from England, French people from France, and so on."

"And what am I?" asked James.

"Your daddy's people are Irish and I am Scotch, so that makes you Scotch-Irish," replied his mother.

"Huh!" said James in a disgusted tone. "I thought I was a Plymouth Rock."

Castoria

900 Drops

ALCOHOL-FREE CASTORIA

Castoria is a safe and sensible thing when children are ailing. Whether it's the stomach, or the little bowels; colic or constipation; or diarrhea, or the breath is bad. Whenever there's need of gentle regulation, Children love the taste of Castoria, and its mildness makes it suitable for the tiniest infant, and for frequent use.

And a more liberal dose of Castoria is always better for growing children than some needlessly strong medicine meant only for adult use. Genuine Castoria always has Chas. H. Fletcher's signature on the wrapper. Prescribed by doctors!

If Baby has COLIC

A cry in the night may be the first warning that Baby has colic. No cause for alarm if Castoria is handy! This pure vegetable preparation brings quick comfort, and can never do the slightest harm. Always keep a bottle in the house. It is the safe and sensible thing when children are ailing. Whether it's the stomach, or the little bowels; colic or constipation; or diarrhea, or the breath is bad. Whenever there's need of gentle regulation, Children love the taste of Castoria, and its mildness makes it suitable for the tiniest infant, and for frequent use.

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Fills Intermission

An intermezzo is a song or chorus or a short burlesque, ballet, operetta or the like given between the acts of a play or opera.

All must be earnest in a world like ours.—Horatius Bonar.

Old bachelors are women's rights and widowers are women's lefts.

Feat of Clay

We consecrate a great deal of sense because it was allowed by great men. There is none without his fable.—Emerson.

The wise too jealous are; fools too secure.—Congreve.

The world's an inn and death the journey end.—Dryden.

Doctor's PRESCRIPTION when system is sluggish; costs nothing to try

When your bowels need help, the mildest thing that will do the work is always the sensible choice. Take a laxative that a family doctor has used for all sorts of cases of constipation. Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin is so pleasant to the taste, so gentle in its action, it is given children of tender age and yet it is just as thorough and effective as stronger preparations. Pure senna, and harmless laxative herbs; ingredients that soon start a gentle muscular action. Avoid a coated tongue, bad breath, bilious headaches, etc. Every drug store has Dr. Caldwell's famous prescription in big bottles. Or just write Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, Monticello, Ill., for a free trial bottle.

Trees Given Odd Shape by Wandering Indians

In ancient days when wandering tribes of Indians made their way from Indiana north to the hunting grounds of Michigan it was their habit, when forming new trails, to bend and tie the twigs along the line of march in such a manner that as they grew they retained the shape in to which they were trained by the savages. There are many of these trail markers in western Michigan marking the trails of the Pottawatomies and other tribes that migrated back and forth before the day of the white man. They still live and are mighty oaks and maples. Despite their crook there is usually a good sawlog in the straight part above the bend. But they are treasured as historic monuments, reminders of the trail blazers who did not have axes or did not care to mutilate the tree by cutting.

Kill Rats Without Poison

A New Extremator that won't kill livestock, poultry, dogs, cats, or even baby chicks

K-R-O can be used about the home, barn or poultry yard with absolute safety as it contains no deadly poisons. K-R-O is made of Squill, as recommended by U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, under the Conable process which insures maximum strength. Two cases killed 375 rats at Arkansas State Farm. Hundreds of other testimonials.

Sold on a Money-Back Guarantee. Insist upon K-R-O, the original Squill extermiator. All poultry supply, drug, and seed stores—75c. Large size (four times as much) \$2.00. Direct (dealer cannot supply you. K-R-O Co., Springfield, O.

K-R-O KILLS RATS ONLY

PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM

Improves Condition, Stops Hair Loss, and Gives Color and Beauty to Gray and Faded Hair

FLORESTON SHAMPOO—Ideal for use in connection with Parker's Hair Balsam. Makes the hair soft and fluffy. 50 cents by mail or at drug stores. Hicon Chemical Works, Patuxent, N. Y.

REGAL COLON

WELL OR MONEY BACK

Your Price refunded or free refund—In the event of ASSURANCE, we give you satisfaction. The Dr. C. J. Donnan method of treatment. Used by us exclusively. Remarkable success has been obtained with PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM. MONEY BACK TODAY for FREE 100-page book giving details and hundreds of testimonials.

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Free from pimples!

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