

The Mazaroff Mystery

by J.S. Fletcher



CHAPTER VIII—Continued

"I'm coming to that, now," continued Eccleshare. "I had told Parslave to meet me on the path between High Cap lodge and the Woodcock about eight o'clock. I strolled out to meet him, as soon as dinner was over at Courtthope's. That would be about ten minutes to eight. We met a little to the further side—the side nearest the Woodcock—of Relver's den. As far as I can recollect, it would then be just after eight o'clock. We stood a few minutes, talking. Then—"

"A moment, if you please," interrupted Maythorne. He produced a memorandum book, and laying it open on the table before him, drew Eccleshare's attention to a rough diagram pencilled on one of the pages. "Here's a sketch that I made the day of my arrival at the Woodcock," he said. "A sketch of the paths across the moor. Now there are two paths that lead from the direction of High Cap lodge and go towards the Woodcock. One leads directly across the front of Relver's den, at the very foot of the rocks—we'll call that the higher one. The other is some fifteen or twenty yards lower down—amongst the heather; we'll call that the lower one. Which path were you and Parslave on?"

Eccleshare bent over the diagram for a moment, twisting it round so as to get a clear idea of its geography. He put his finger on a spot.

"We were about there," he said. "On the lower one. But I don't know if you've made it quite plain—those two paths (one, the lower one's a mere sheep track) almost meet on the west side, the High Cap lodge side of Relver's den, near Cowie's cottage. They're only separated there by a yard or two. Then the lower one goes away through the heather to the top side of High Cap lodge; the other one passes High Cap lodge on the lower side at fifty or sixty yards distance and breaks into the moorland road to Cloughthwaite."

"Well," said Maythorne. "Anyway—you and Parslave were on the lower one?"

"We were on the lower one—perhaps a hundred yards from Relver's den, and," continued Eccleshare, "as I was saying, we stood there a few minutes, talking. It was then quite dark, but a clear, starlit night. We were just moving away, in the High Cap lodge direction, when we heard a shot fired. It seemed, as far as we could make out, to be in Relver's den, or just beyond it—I think it must have been in Relver's den, because there was a distinct echo from the rocks. We heard nothing follow—no cry, scream, anything of that sort. Neither of us took any particular notice—I think we each had the same idea; that it was a gamekeeper who was after something. In fact, we heeded it so little that we went on talking about our own business for a minute or two after the shot was fired. Then because it was time for Parslave to be getting on to catch his train we moved—coming over to the other path because it leads directly to the moorland road. We had just got on it when we heard steps coming along from the direction of Relver's den. There were some high, thick bushes close by, and I really don't know why we did it, but we did—we sort of instinctively moved into their shadow, where it was quite dark. And then, a minute later, walking very swiftly, a woman passed us."

"A woman!"

"It was Manners who let out this sharp exclamation. Like all the rest of us he had been following Eccleshare closely; now he showed signs of excitement; clearly, some notion had suddenly come to him.

"A woman!" repeated Eccleshare, quietly. "A woman—tall, slender, walking very quickly indeed—we heard her breathing, sharply. She was past and gone, like a flash."

"In which direction?" asked Maythorne.

"Towards Marrasdale," replied Eccleshare.

"And then?" suggested Maythorne after a brief pause.

"Then Parslave and I went on again—he was getting pressed for time. We neither heard nor saw anything there. We passed Cowie's cottage. You say Cowie saw us together. Probable—but we never saw him. We walked quickly across the moor, struck the high road, and parted. I went into High Cap lodge, and Parslave—but let Parslave himself tell you what he did."

"We all turned to Parslave, who still sat perched on the edge of a chair near the door, twiddling his thumbs.

"Went straight along the road to Petherby station, then," said Parslave. "Caught the nine-fifteen train—last train that is—to Newcastle. Got to Newcastle at ten-fifty. Put up at a temperance, near the station, for the night. Went to see Mr. Gra'man, the

lawyer, as soon as I'd had my breakfast next morning—about ten o'clock, that 'ud be. When I'd done with him, got a bit of a snack and then caught the twelve-ten express to London. Got to King's Cross at a quarter to seven that evening. Came straight here—and been here ever since."

"Let me ask Parslave a question while I think of it," said Crole. "Parslave!—do you mean to say that since you left Marrasdale, you've never heard of the murder there?—from the newspapers?"

"I can't read, sir," answered Parslave. "I've no scholarship. Can't neither read nor write."

"But you've been in the company of Doctor Eccleshare's housekeeper," continued Crole. "Do you mean to say that she's never read anything about it to you—out of the papers?"

Parslave shook his head.

"No, sir—she hasn't," he replied.

"Don't seem a paper-reading woman, that. Her reads them story papers—tales—such like. But I ain't seen her reading of newspapers."

"Well, but you've no doubt been in the habit since you've been here, of going out to have a glass of ale at some public house or other," persisted Crole. "Have you never heard it mentioned at such times?"

"No, sir," answered Parslave, with solemn assurance. "Never! I always go out to take a pint of ale at the public up the street, but I ain't never talked to nobody—don't understand this London talk—'tis all so much furrin language to me. And I ain't never heard nobody talking of the murder."

"You can take it from me, Mr. Crole," said Eccleshare, "that Parslave never heard of Mazaroff's murder at all until last night, when I returned home. I told him—we had a talk last night about our own experiences near Relver's den that evening—in the light of what we remembered, of course."

"That's just what I want to ask you some questions about, Doctor," said Crole. "It seems to me that we're getting nearer a solution of this mystery than we've ever been before. Now, you won't mind if I ask you a few straightforward questions?"

"Ask me anything you like," replied Eccleshare.

"You were at the inquest on Mazaroff's body at the Woodcock," said Crole. "You gave evidence—"

"Purely professional evidence," interrupted Eccleshare.

"Precisely—as to the cause of death," assented Crole. "Now, why didn't you tell the coroner and the jury what you've told us just now?"

"And—if I may put a word in," said Manners, quickly, "why didn't you tell us—the police—all you've just told us about Parslave, when you knew quite well that we were looking for him?"

"As to your question, Manners, I wasn't aware of the hue-and-cry for Parslave to the extent you think," answered Eccleshare. "My time wasn't spent in the Marrasdale district, so much as on the east side of my host's house. As to yours, Crole—well, I've told you I possibly made a mistake—no doubt I did. But I had reason for silence. They're easily summed up. The person that Parslave and I saw hurrying away from Relver's den, where, presumably, murder had just been committed was—a woman!"

Crole summoned our undivided attention with a swift glance round the table. He went forward to Eccleshare.

"Now, Doctor!" he said. "Don't let's beat about the bush any longer—let's get at the truth, however unpleasant it may be. Did you form any opinion as to who that woman was?"

Eccleshare made a gesture of dislike at the situation. But he bowed his head and replied without hesitation.

"I did!—certainly!"

"Who was she?"

"Mrs. Elphinstone!"

"You feel sure of that?"

"Positive—without doubt. Ask Parslave!"

Crole turned sharply on Parslave. And Parslave threw up his head with a jerk.

"What do you say, Parslave? Who was the woman that passed you?"

"Mistress Elphinstone, sir—no doubt on it! Never had no doubt—myself."

Crole turned again to Eccleshare.

"You said it was dark, then, but clear, starlit. How did you recognize her?"

"Figure, walk, profile," replied Eccleshare. "I'd no doubt at the time, and I've none now. The woman who passed Parslave and myself just after—at least almost just after—we heard the shot fired, was Mrs. Elphinstone."

"That's why you kept silence?" suggested Crole.

"I thought things out, next morning," answered Eccleshare. "I kept silence—Parslave, of course, had gone. I—well, I didn't want to give a woman away. And after all—there might be explanations."

"Explanations!" exclaimed Crole. "Ex—"

"Here's something that needs explanation," interrupted Maythorne. "Doctor Eccleshare and Parslave agree that they heard a shot fired near Relver's den soon after eight o'clock. Old Mr. Hassendean told us, Crole, when you, Holt, and myself met him there, that he heard a shot fired, about ten o'clock. Now then—which of those shots was it that killed Mazaroff? Remember!—neither Eccleshare nor Parslave saw anything of Mazaroff near Relver's den at eight o'clock. And yet, if the eight o'clock shot killed him, he must have been about there when they were. What do you make of that?"

"Don't know—it needs thinking out," answered Crole. "But—to my mind, the pertinent thing is this. Doctor Eccleshare and Parslave are both dead certain they saw Mrs. Elphinstone come away from Relver's den, where, afterwards Mazaroff's lifeless body was found, robbed of money, valuables, papers, and his will. Now then, neither Manners nor Corderdale know this—and I'm going to tell them, as police officers. A few nights after the murder, Mrs. Elphinstone was found to be in possession of the will! How did she get it?"

CHAPTER IX

Missing!

It needed no more than a glance at the two policemen to see that this announcement produced an effect on their officially trained minds which was equivalent to letting in a sudden flood of illuminating light on a hitherto

dark subject. Corderdale looked at Manners; Manners stared at Corderdale; then both turned on the solicitor.

"Mrs. Elphinstone!" exclaimed Manners. "In possession of the missing will?"

But Corderdale's first remark was in a quieter tone.

"That'll need some explanation," he said, with a significant look. "As I understand matters, the will was in Mazaroff's pocket when he was murdered."

"As far as is known, it was," replied Crole. "He carried it away from Postthwaite's office at York, in his pocket, anyway, and it certainly wasn't amongst his effects at the Woodcock, which we examined after his death. Explanation, yes! But I'll tell you how we came to find out that Mrs. Elphinstone got it. He went on to narrate the happenings of the previous night but one, on which Sheila came to me with the missing will."

"Now," he continued, "the thing of course, is—how, where, under what circumstances did Mrs. Elphinstone get hold of that will? Last night, after Mrs. Elphinstone arrived in London, Maythorne saw her and tried to get an explanation out of her. He got nothing!"

"Not a word!" said Maythorne. "She showed nothing but defiance. I pointed out the inference that might

be drawn; the suspicion that might be thrown upon her—all no good! She refused to say or tell anything."

"And that makes me think," remarked Crole, a little eagerly, "that Mrs. Elphinstone, after all, may have a proper and reasonable explanation to give. I can't think that a woman of any common sense—and she's a shrewd, clever, hard woman!—would be so foolish as to behave in this fashion unless she knew she was safe. You hinted that you'd have to give information to the police, didn't you, Maythorne?"

"I did!"

"And it produced no effect on her?"

"Not the slightest! Her whole attitude was that of—mind your own business!"

Crole began to drum the table with his fingers, looking round at the rest of us as if he wondered whether anybody had got any suggestion to make. As nobody spoke, he made one himself.

"I wonder of Mazaroff, or Merchtson, as he really was, met Mrs. Elphinstone, or Mrs. Merchtson, as she really is, at any time while he was at the Woodcock before his death?" he said.

"Possible!"

"I don't think he did," replied Maythorne, at whom Crole was looking particularly. "There's nothing whatever to suggest it. Of course, if Mrs. Elphinstone could be got to speak it would clear up a tremendous lot."

"From what little I saw of Mrs. Elphinstone at Marrasdale," observed Crole, "she's the sort of woman who will not speak—until it pleases her to do so! A hard woman—d—d hard!"

"Where is Mrs. Elphinstone to be found?" asked Corderdale.

"Short's hotel," replied Maythorne.

"Then I think Manners and I had better go there and see her," said Corderdale. He turned to Eccleshare. "You spoke of leaving England, doctor? When?"

"I've not quite settled the exact date," replied Eccleshare. "I thought about the end of next week."

"Better put it off a bit, doctor," suggested Corderdale, quietly. "As far as I can see, your evidence will be wanted—and so will your man's. Now," he continued, "I suppose Parslave there is a native of this place, Marrasdale? Just so—then he's very well acquainted with the personal appearance of Mrs. Elphinstone?"

"Known her a many years, sir—ever since she came to live at Marrasdale tower," replied Parslave.

"You'd be in the habit of seeing her regularly, Parslave?" suggested the detective.

"Most every day, sir—here and there."

"And you've no doubt that it was Mrs. Elphinstone you saw that night, coming away from the place where you heard the shot fired, and where Mazaroff's dead body was afterwards discovered?"

"Not a doubt about that, sir! Take my solemn 'davy twas Mrs. Elphinstone."

"And you've no doubt either, doctor? though you, of course, being, I gather, a mere visitor to these parts, wouldn't know Mrs. Elphinstone so well?"

"I've no doubt," replied Eccleshare. "Although I was only a visitor, I know Mrs. Elphinstone well enough. My host, Mr. Courtthope, is her nephew. He, Mr. Armintrude, and myself, dined at Marrasdale tower two or three times during my stay. I often met Mrs. Elphinstone out on the moors, or in the village. I'm positive she was the woman Parslave and I saw coming away that night from Relver's den."

Corderdale turned to Manners. "I think we'd better go round to Short's hotel," he remarked.

"That's what I think," agreed Manners. "Can't be left where it is."

We all got up. There was a brief silence. Crole was just going to say something when a knock came at the door. Eccleshare's housekeeper put her head inside.

"There's a young man outside, sir, wants to know if Mr. Maythorne is here?" she said. "Come in a taxi, sir, with an old gentleman. The young man said—if Mr. Maythorne's here which his name is Pickles."

"One of my clerks," muttered Maythorne. "Excuse me!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

This Week

by ARTHUR BRISBANE

That New Baby More Land for Us Two Great Corpses Time to Advertise

A reporter said "the birth of a boy made Lindbergh's biggest dream come true."

The birth of a girl might have made a bigger dream come true.

First, an older sister is a good influence on younger brothers.

Second, girls, not boys, inherit the genius of the father.

But the Lindbergh baby boy will inherit through his mother the talent of his grandfather, Dwight W. Morrow, and that is worth having.

Scientists tell you:

"Acquired characteristics are not inherited."

They are wrong. If acquired characteristics were not inherited we should all still be cave men.

The Lindbergh baby, inheriting flying on both sides, will fly naturally.

The United States considers claiming ownership of great areas over which Commander Byrd flew recently in the Antarctic. We may follow the example of Great Britain and other nations, saying: "That land is ours, for we saw it first." It would add 150,000 square miles to our possessions.

The land and open sea in these regions are valuable already, the water for whale fishing and other live crops, the land for its mineral possibilities.

In years to come, with the shifting of the pole those lands will be warm and fertile. But that will be thousands of years hence. By that time the earth's governments may think only of making land useful to all human beings, not about grabbing and owning.

For the second time men have succeeded in flying the Atlantic, coming westward.

Soon, of course, regular flights at stated hours will be provided for passengers.

And only a little while ago the idea of any flying was ridiculed. Men progress quickly, once they start.

Children of today will ask about "the old days, when people crossed the ocean on the water," as they now ask about stage coach days.

And those now living will cross to Europe for about \$10.

King George and Queen Mary joined with others in celebrating the end of seventeen years' work, that has restored St. Paul's Cathedral in London to a safe condition.

The fine old building is worth saving.

And in its vault under heavy stone monuments lie what is left of two bodies more important to the modern British Empire than any other two. They are Wellington and Nelson, not far apart, resting in solemn half darkness.

The story is still current that Nelson was buried hurriedly because it was necessary. When shot down on his flagship, he was put into a cask of rum, at sea, to preserve his corpse from decay, as was customary with important dead sailors, and other sailors are said to have drunk the rum through a hole in the barrel leaving the admiral without protection, or preservation. The story is not proved.

The Prince of Wales, 36 years old last week, has ordered himself, as a birthday present, a new airplane, described as "luxurious, with a totally enclosed cabin, making it unnecessary for His Royal Highness to wear a flying kit."

The Prince sets a good example in flying.

And the world likes him. For him, you might rewrite the text to read: "See, that a prince, diligent in his business, he shall stand before men."

These are dull days, and energetic days for advertising. The turtle ran while the rabbit was asleep, and won. The wise advertiser builds his business while other indulge in a "false economy" nap.

Mr. Dave Lewis, advertising manager of Cadillac automobile, has framed on his office wall the reply of the champion "hog caller," when asked how he won the competition:

"You must have appeal as well as power in your voice. You must make the hog believe that you have something for him."

In modern business, you must not only make the hog believe that you have something for him, you must really have something for him.

Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt says: "Character building begins in the cradle."

Parents should train children from their babyhood.

An old English horse trainer was asked: "When should I begin training my colt?" and told that the colt was three weeks old, said: "You have lost the three most important weeks."

Children should be trained with kindness and explanation, never with whipping or other brutality, from babyhood.

But don't waste too much time correcting and nagging concerning faults that the child will outgrow with time; and not otherwise.

Be sure you're right, then go ahead. The applause doesn't matter, and, besides, it might never come, anyway.—Lynchburg Advance.

(©, 1936, by King Features Syndicate, Inc.)

CHIC "GOING AWAY" COSTUME; FOR THE DAINTY FLOWER GIRL

AFTEr her wedding gown of tulle, satin, lace, orange blossoms and all things lovely, the next number on the bride's dress program, and one of outstanding importance, is her "going away" costume. Of course Mrs. Newlywed aspires to appear at her most charming and chic as she and himself make a smiling exit amid showers of rice, eager to catch train

Not so "strictly tailored" is the bride in the panel. Her bolero costume is styled of navy flat crepe. The soft-tied bows add a feminine touch. Among other of her possessions this bride has a lovely lace blouse to wear with this silk two-piece, likewise a cunning short sleeved model of dotted swiss, one of rose-color handkerchief linen which is lavishly frilled. The

latest fad in corsage bouquets even for those who are not brides is white orchids, and she is wearing just such.

The Important Flower Girl. It is not only the pridelful feeling of being flower girl that counts with the very young, but after the wedding scene becomes just a memory, little Miss Flower-Maiden is going to experience continued joy in the possession of a perfectly lovely frock to wear to parties for a long time to come.

Which is the reason why mothers should make it a point to look to the future in selecting a dress which will not only add a touch of beauty to the bridal cortege, but which will through-out months following answer the question for little daughter of "what to wear" at this festive occasion or that to which she is invited.

The charming flower girl in the picture is exquisitely gowned in a dainty frock of pink mousseline de soie, thus again emphasizing the voguishness of sheer weaves for this summer. It is made over a slip of satin, inset with ecru lace. The simplicity of its fashioning has much to do with its attractiveness. A unique touch is the tied-over-the-shoulder rose-tinted ribbons

Smartly Tailored Two-Piece Outfit. or boat which shall bear them away to honeymoon lands.

To choose a smartly tailored two-piece for travel wear, always bespeaks good judgment. The thought takes on special allure this season, since the blouse is being made to play a role of unusual "ascination" in the present-day world of fashion. Under the caption blouse, designers are putting forth the most beguiling models fancy can picture. Wherefore the bride who chooses a tailored suit can at will change the character of her costume through the magic of its accompanying blouse.

As to whether the two-piece tallieur be of wool or of silk is optional, for as far as fashion is concerned, the honors are about equally divided between the two. There is this in favor of modern woolsens, being delightfully lightweight they are very adaptable to summer comfort. Then, too, the flair for color,

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