

THE MAZAROFF MYSTERY
by **J. S. Fletcher**
Illustrations by **Irwin Myers**
W. N. U. Service
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CHAPTER X

We Know That Man!

I snatched at the newspaper eagerly enough; there was that in Maythorne's manner which showed me that here was news of importance. I saw it at once—there it was, in big letters in the stop-press space:

"About half past four this afternoon Mr. Kiltwhaite, grocer of 623x Harrow road, having occasion to visit a yard at the back of his premises, in search for some crates stored amongst a quantity of similar odds and ends, came across the dead body of a man which had evidently been dragged across the yard through the rear entrance and partly concealed by loose timber. He at once summoned the police, and on examination it was found that the man had been murdered by repeated blows on the head with some heavy instrument. He is a man of presumably thirty years of age, small of stature, of slight build, wearing spectacles, the lens on the right being shattered; he is respectfully dressed, and a new Trilby hat was found lying beneath the body. He had evidently been robbed after being struck down, as there was nothing on him in the way of money or valuables, nor were there any papers that could lead to identification; everything, in fact, of this sort had been carefully removed, and the only articles found in the clothing were a fountain pen and two recently pointed lead pencils. New Scotland Yard was at once communicated with and detectives are making a careful investigation. Anyone recognizing the dead man from the foregoing description should at once communicate with the police authorities."

I laid the paper down and stared inquiringly at Maythorne. He slapped his hand heavily on the paragraph I had just read.

"Holt!" he exclaimed. "That's the chap who followed those three women away from Short's hotel the other night! A million to one on it!"

"You think so?" I said, incredulously.

"But—there are lots of men who correspond to that description."

"That's the man!—I'll lay anything!" he declared. "And this thing getting more of a mystery than ever. Look at it!—Mrs. Elphinstone, her daughter, and her maid, without a word to Elphinstone, suddenly clear out of Short's late at night. They are seen to be followed by a man who had previously inquired if the Elphinstones were staying at Short's. They never return, the women; from that moment to this—all this time having elapsed—seventy-two hours!—nothing whatever has been heard of them. And then this discovery is made—the man who was seen to follow them is found murdered—head battered to pieces—and robbed! Now—why?"

"If he is the man!" I exclaimed.

"I'll surprise me more that I've been surprised, so far," he retorted, "if he isn't the man. But we'll soon settle that. Come along—I've got a taxi outside. We'll go round by Short's, get hold of that under hall porter, and go up the Harrow road."

"To see—him?" I asked.

"What else?" he answered. "Come on!—you don't know what depends on it. Not—where those women are. In danger, for anything we know."

"I went willingly enough, then. Somehow, it had not struck me up to that time that Sheila might be in real danger: I had fancied, rather, that she was probably assisting her mother in flying from justice, or, at any rate, from distasteful inquiries."

We rode round to Short's, and after some slight delay, carried off the under hall porter. Once in the cab again, Maythorne showed him the newspaper description of the murdered man.

"Does that answer to the man you saw following Mrs. Elphinstone three nights ago?" he asked.

The under hall porter, a sharp-eyed fellow, nodded.

"I should say it did, sir, myself," he answered. "Yes, it's a good description of him, taking it altogether. It doesn't mention that he'd a slight brown moustache, though. If this dead man has—"

"We shall soon see that," said Maythorne grimly. "A few minutes—"

Mr. Kiltwhaite's grocer's establishment was away up at the poorer end of the Harrow road—a very modest establishment, too, catering for a humble class of customers. But when we got out of our cab and walked towards it, we found that for once if any rate it was a center of vast interest. It was a center of vast interest. It was a center of vast interest. It was a center of vast interest.

dale standing inside, in conversation with the grocer, an excited and voluble person who was obviously retelling his story for the xth time. Corkerdale nodded significantly as Maythorne advanced on them.

"Have you seen the man?" asked Maythorne.

"We haven't, yet," replied Corkerdale. "He's at the mortuary, of course. We'll go round there. Well," he continued, turning to the grocer, "we'll look in again when we've been to the mortuary, and perhaps you'll show us the premises where you found him?"

"Anything you please, Mr. Corkerdale," replied the grocer, rubbing his hands. "Always glad to assist the police, sir. These gentlemen, I suppose, are in your line, too?"

"Bit that way," answered Corkerdale, with a smile at Maythorne.

"Well," he went on, motioning us to follow, "we'll just step round—it's not far."

He led us along the dismal road to a still more dismal, if more spick-and-span building, the gloom and somberness of which was accentuated by its air of officialism and formality. We trooped one after the other, under the guidance of a police constable, into a whitewashed chamber. There, on a center table or slab, was laid out, stiffly evident under a white covering, what we had come to see. The police constable began to turn back the sheet: Maythorne motioned the under hall porter to go nearer.

"Look well—see if you can identify him," whispered Maythorne.

But the identification did not come from the under hall porter.

We had all crowded close to the still figure; we all looked steadily at the dead man's face. And in that instant Manners and I, after a single glance at it, turned sharply on each other; a look of mutual understanding flashed between us, and we let out the same simultaneous exclamation.

"We know that man!"

The others turned on us, then, questioningly.

"You know him—both of you!" exclaimed Maythorne. "Then, who is he?"

"Newspaper reporter from up our way," answered Manners. "Name of Bownas. I don't suppose you ever saw him when you went up there—his work was more to the other side of Gilchester. But Mr. Holt here knew him. That's Bownas, right enough?"

"He came to see me, at the Woodcock, with Manners, after Mazaroff's disappearance," I said. "I saw him, just once, afterwards—in Gilchester. But that is Bownas, without doubt?"

"And murdered here in London?" muttered Manners. "Good Lord!—what's it mean! There's more in this—"

"A moment!" interrupted Maythorne. He turned on the under hall porter. "Don't make any mistake!" he said. "Is that the man who came to Short's hotel, and whom you afterward saw following Mrs. Elphinstone and her daughter and the maid? Look well at him, now!—be sure!"

But the hall porter shook his head as much as to imply that all the looking in the world wouldn't make him surer.

"Oh, that's the man!" he exclaimed. "I knew him at once. There's no doubt about it!"

Recognized him as soon as I set eyes on him. Of course, he's lost his color, but—

We went out of the mortuary, and into an office where there were more officials. They evidently knew Corkerdale, and after a few minutes' whispered conversation with him they produced some clothing. Corkerdale immediately placed his finger on a label with in the Trilby hat.

"That wasn't mentioned in the newspaper account," he said. "See—Borden Clothing company, Carlisle, New, too. Let me have a look at his other things." I stood by, watching curiously while Corkerdale and Manners and Maythorne went through the dead man's garments. They found but one thing of any note—a tailor's label sewn within the inside breast pocket of the coat, showing that the suit had been made in Newcastle. It had a late and a number on it, and Corkerdale remarked that there was a clew to identification, if necessary.

"It's not necessary," remarked Manners. "I know the man well enough. Bownas—reporter of the Tread & Border Gazette at Gilchester. And I'd like to know what he was doing here!"

"What was he doing at Short's

hotel?" suggested Maythorne. "That's more like it Manners! But that's obvious—he was after Mrs. Elphinstone. He followed her, too, when she went out. Where? Now, then, did she, and her two companions, come to this quarter of the town? If they did—why? And where are they?"

"Let's go back to the grocer's," said Corkerdale.

We went out again into the gloomy road. The under hall porter, having done what was required of him was anxious to go back to the hotel. Maythorne sent him off in a taxicab: the rest of us returned to Kiltwhaite's shop. Maythorne and I walked side by side—at first in silence.

"What do you make of this, Maythorne?" I asked at last.

"God knows!" he answered. "It seems evident that the poor fellow we've just seen followed the Elphinstones—Mrs. Elphinstone, of course!—to London, tracked them to the hotel, went after Mrs. Elphinstone when she went out that night, but—as to the rest—"

"Do you think he followed them—here?" I suggested. "If so, what could they want in this neighborhood?"

"Shabby and sordid enough for anything, hereabouts, isn't it?" he answered, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Again I say—who knows?—who knows anything? Let's have a look at the place where he was found, however—we may get some idea of something."

The grocer took us through his shop into his back yard. It was a dismal place, all the more dismal because that was an unusually fine spring evening. It seemed to be a sort of dumping ground for boxes, barrels, chests, old tins, crates, all the refuse of a chandlery shop; and it was of some extent, running from the back of the premises to a high wall in which there was a crazy door.

"Here's where I found him!" whispered Kiltwhaite in a half-awestruck whisper. "I wanted some planking out of this pile of old wood: I pulled some aside, and there was a man's arm! And then—well, then I found the rest. I saw signs of a struggle. But," he added, "some of your people that have been here already, Mr. Corkerdale; they say that there are clear indications that he'd been dragged in here, across the yard, from the door there."

"What's outside that door and the wall?" asked Corkerdale.

We all went to look. There was a narrow, stone-paved lane there, running from a side street between the backs of the Harrow road houses and those of some street or terrace set, further back. It was fenced in by high walls for all its length: there were only two feeble gas lamps to light it; it was dark, silent.

"One of your men says there are bloodstains on the stones—just there!" whispered the grocer. "Of course, you know, I never heard anything—and I've not heard, either, of anybody who did so far."

We went back to the shop and stood discussing the matter and its probabilities for some little time. Then the grocer's telephone bell rang. He went to answer it, and looked round at us.

"If one of you gentlemen's Mr. Maythorne," he said. "He's wanted."

Maythorne crossed over and took up the receiver. A moment later, he too, returned on us.

"From the under hall porter?" he exclaimed. "Mrs. Elphinstone and Miss Merckson are back!"

CHAPTER XI
Accused!

I had been pretty much of a passive spectator and observer up to that point, but as soon as Maythorne made his startling announcement I leaped into action. I was half way to the shop door before his last word had left his lips; he himself was scarcely less rapid of movement and his hand was on my arm as I crossed the threshold.

"Where are you going?" he exclaimed.

"Where? Short's, of course!" I answered. "Aren't you?"

"To be sure!" he said. "But—a moment. These other two had better come, as well. And—a word with this grocer chap."

I waited impatiently outside the shop until the three men joined me. We had some little difficulty in finding a taxicab; they were not plentiful in that dreary quarter; when at last we had packed ourselves into one I chafed all the time its driver was running down to a more palatable neighborhood. My three companions had relapsed into silence; each seemed to be following some train of thought of his own. Nobody spoke, indeed, until we were close to Short's hotel; then Manners suddenly gave voice to what he evidently was thinking.

"That poor fellow Bownas must have come up to London by the same train that the Elphinstones came in!" he said, in the tone of a man who thinks that he has made a startling discovery.

"Evidently!" remarked Maythorne, in his direct manner. "Evidently!—since he presented himself at their hotel very soon after they got there."

"What I meant," said Manners, "was this—if he did, as he must have done, he was tracking them—or some one of them."

"That, too, seems evident," rejoined Maythorne. "I should say he was! Especially as he followed the three women when they went out!"

"Why?" asked Manners. "Why? That's what I like me!"

There was a brief silence on that when Corkerdale spoke.

"Newspaper man, you say he was," he remarked. "Reporter. Those chaps have a trick of poking their noses into

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"No, sir. Only the lady and her daughter. I think Mrs. Elphinstone's ill, sir. There's a doctor gone up."

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"The doctor's evidently telephoned for a nurse," observed Maythorne. "Um!—we can't very well break in on illness."

But Corkerdale shook his head and his face grew inflexible.

"Illness or no illness, Mr. Maythorne," he said. "I'm going up! Things are a bit too thick, too serious. And there's the young lady. She'll know where her mother's been and where they've come from. And—where's that other woman, the maid? We'll go up, Manners."

Maythorne and I followed them. We went up to the floor on which the Elphinstones' suite of rooms was situated. At the door Corkerdale paused and turned to me. "Mr. Holt knows the family," he said in a suggestive whisper. "Go in, Mr. Holt, and just see how the land lies! We don't want to intrude, you know, nor to make any bother, but we must have some explanation. Get the young lady to yourself and—"

He broke off with a meaning nod at the door, and, anxious enough to see Sheila and to make sure that she was safe, I tapped at the panels and walked into the room. I saw Sheila at once; she was standing on one side of the hearth; Mr. Elphinstone, in his usual semi-dressed, semi-perplexed state, stood at the other; between them, his hat in his hand, stood a tall, professional looking man whom I had just set down as the doctor we had heard of. He was speaking as I entered, and with a mere glance at me, he went on:

"—after a good night's rest, quite all right. I think. But I will call again, Mr. Elphinstone, in a couple of hours, and perhaps give Mrs. Elphinstone a sleeping draught. Keep the nurse all night—she'll save you a lot of trouble. I think that's all at present."

He turned and made for the door, and as I was still close by it, I opened it for him, let him out, and shut it on him, at the same time slipping the latch—those three outside were not coming in until I was sure of something. I turned; Sheila was already advancing towards me.

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Too Careful

A government official who wished to keep his wife in ignorance of the amount of money he had, hit upon a bright idea. He put his wad in an official envelope, addressed to a man higher up. If his wife should find the envelope in his pocket, she would never think of opening it.

One day he missed the envelope and asked his wife if she had seen it.

"Yes, dear," she replied. "I came across it in your old coat. I've mailed it."

Goloshes

Charles Richard, age four and one-half years, was watching his mother dress a turkey. When she removed the skin from the feet he asked: "What are you doing, taking the turkey's goloshes off?"

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"I Pulled Some Aside, and There Was a Man's Arm!"

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The under hall porter hurried down the steps at Short's and opened the door of our cab, glancing knowingly at Maythorne.

"Come in just as I got back, sir," he announced in an undertone. "Both



"I Pulled Some Aside, and There Was a Man's Arm!"

of 'em! In a taxi. So I telephoned up there to you, at once."

"Good!" answered Maythorne. "But—only Mrs. Elphinstone and Miss Merckson? Not the maid?"

"No, sir. Only the lady and her daughter. I think Mrs. Elphinstone's ill, sir. There's a doctor gone up."

Maythorne turned to the two policemen. But before he could say anything, a woman in the uniform of a professional nurse came hurrying round the corner and sped up the steps into the hotel.

"The doctor's evidently telephoned for a nurse," observed Maythorne. "Um!—we can't very well break in on illness."

But Corkerdale shook his head and his face grew inflexible.

"Illness or no illness, Mr. Maythorne," he said. "I'm going up! Things are a bit too thick, too serious. And there's the young lady. She'll know where her mother's been and where they've come from. And—where's that other woman, the maid? We'll go up, Manners."

Maythorne and I followed them. We went up to the floor on which the Elphinstones' suite of rooms was situated. At the door Corkerdale paused and turned to me. "Mr. Holt knows the family," he said in a suggestive whisper. "Go in, Mr. Holt, and just see how the land lies! We don't want to intrude, you know, nor to make any bother, but we must have some explanation. Get the young lady to yourself and—"

He broke off with a meaning nod at the door, and, anxious enough to see Sheila and to make sure that she was safe, I tapped at the panels and walked into the room. I saw Sheila at once; she was standing on one side of the hearth; Mr. Elphinstone, in his usual semi-dressed, semi-perplexed state, stood at the other; between them, his hat in his hand, stood a tall, professional looking man whom I had just set down as the doctor we had heard of. He was speaking as I entered, and with a mere glance at me, he went on:

"—after a good night's rest, quite all right. I think. But I will call again, Mr. Elphinstone, in a couple of hours, and perhaps give Mrs. Elphinstone a sleeping draught. Keep the nurse all night—she'll save you a lot of trouble. I think that's all at present."

He turned and made for the door, and as I was still close by it, I opened it for him, let him out, and shut it on him, at the same time slipping the latch—those three outside were not coming in until I was sure of something. I turned; Sheila was already advancing towards me.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XI

Accused!

I had been pretty much of a passive spectator and observer up to that point, but as soon as Maythorne made his startling announcement I leaped into action. I was half way to the shop door before his last word had left his lips; he himself was scarcely less rapid of movement and his hand was on my arm as I crossed the threshold.

"Where are you going?" he exclaimed.

"Where? Short's, of course!" I answered. "Aren't you?"

"To be sure!" he said. "But—a moment. These other two had better come, as well. And—a word with this grocer chap."

I waited impatiently outside the shop until the three men joined me. We had some little difficulty in finding a taxicab; they were not plentiful in that dreary quarter; when at last we had packed ourselves into one I chafed all the time its driver was running down to a more palatable neighborhood. My three companions had relapsed into silence; each seemed to be following some train of thought of his own. Nobody spoke, indeed, until we were close to Short's hotel; then Manners suddenly gave voice to what he evidently was thinking.

"That poor fellow Bownas must have come up to London by the same train that the Elphinstones came in!" he said, in the tone of a man who thinks that he has made a startling discovery.

"Evidently!" remarked Maythorne, in his direct manner. "Evidently!—since he presented himself at their hotel very soon after they got there."

"What I meant," said Manners, "was this—if he did, as he must have done, he was tracking them—or some one of them."

"That, too, seems evident," rejoined Maythorne. "I should say he was! Especially as he followed the three women when they went out!"

"Why?" asked Manners. "Why? That's what I like me!"

There was a brief silence on that when Corkerdale spoke.

"Newspaper man, you say he was," he remarked. "Reporter. Those chaps have a trick of poking their noses into

places and things where they've no right to be. Pongers, as it were. I've had more than one game of mine spoiled by that sort? Get it into their heads that it's a fine thing to do a bit of detective work for their papers. Gets 'em credit with the editors. I should say this chap's been going on a line of his own since that murder—and you see what it's brought him to! Murdered, himself!"

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

OREGON STATE NEWS OF GENERAL INTEREST
Principal Events of the Week
Assembled for Information of Our Readers.

The annual convention of Oregon Christian church was held at Turner last week.

Mr. and Mrs. William Gauntlett of Bandon celebrated their golden wedding at their home recently.

Caterpillars stopped a train a few days ago on the Yaquina branch of the Southern Pacific railway.

The Eastern Oregon Pioneers' association will meet at the camp grounds on the John Day highway July 25, 26, and 27.

Hay balers are being put in condition by owners in the Dayton vicinity in anticipation of a good run to begin July 15.

Claude Hale, Imbler mayor and deputy sheriff, was struck by a hit-and-run motor