The Mazaroff Mystery

by J. S. FLETCHER

Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS

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W. N. U. Service

CHAPTER IX—Continued

—15—

He hurried out—to return within a minute or two with Mr. Elphinstone. And, for the first time since the beginning of my acquaintanceship with him, Maythorne showed evidence of something close akin to excitement.

"Here's a new development!" he exclaimed as he came into the room. "Mr. Elphinstone has been to my office and followed me here to tell me that Mrs. Elphinstone has disappeared!"

We all turned on Mr. Elphinstone. He was shaken out of his usual dreaminess; he looked perturbed, dismayed, puzzled, wholly at a loss. Standing there a little within the doorway, blinking at us as if unable to make us out or reckon us up, he nodded automatically at Maythorne's announcement. But he was sufficiently master of himself to confirm it, in words.

"Since last night!" he said. "Disappeared—completely! Most extraordinary—and unpleasant—and embarrassing—I really do not know what to think—or do!"

Crole, who had given the two policemen a sharp glance on hearing the news, pushed a chair toward the newcomer.

"Sit down, Mr. Elphinstone," he said. "Perhaps we can help you a bit. When did Mrs. Elphinstone disappear?"

Mr. Elphinstone dropped into the chair, and looked round us again.

"Just so!" he said. "The fact is, the whole thing is really most confusing. Last night, of course! We left Miss Apperley's flat and went to Short's hotel. We had dinner on our arrival, in our own private sitting room. It was some little time after that that Sheila came. She—"

"Oh!—Miss Merchison came there, did she?" interrupted Maythorne.

"Miss Merchison—Sheila—my stepdaughter—yes. She came. She and her mother went into the adjoining bedroom—to talk. I heard them talking. I—I went away—downstairs, you know—I thought I'd smoke a cigar in the smoking room. I was down there perhaps an hour. I foregathered with a man who turned out to be something of an archeologist—interesting conversation. Perhaps I was a little longer away. Then I went up to our rooms again. There was nobody there—nobody at all! I thought perhaps Mrs. Elphinstone and Sheila had gone into the drawing room, and I went there, but they were not to be seen. I waited some time. Then, as they didn't come, I made some inquiry. And I found—really most astonishing!—I found, from the hall porter, that Mrs. Elphinstone and Sheila, and Alison Murdoch had all gone out of the hotel some time before, evidently soon after I had gone down to the smoking room. And—"

"Pardon me, Mr. Elphinstone," broke in Maythorne, "but—who is Alison Murdoch?"

Mr. Elphinstone looked at his questioner pretty much as a man looks who wonders that anybody shouldn't know as much as himself.

"Alison Murdoch?" he answered. "Oh, ah!—you're not a Marrasdale man, of course. Alison Murdoch is a sort of foster-sister of my wife's. Brought up together, as children, you know. Then at one time she was for many years my wife's maid—still acts in that capacity when we go traveling, as in this instance. But for some few years she has lived in a little house at Marrasdale—Birnside, really—on her own means—little competency, you know. An active woman, though—in the tourist season, for instance, she helps them at the Woodcock with their cooking—clever, bustling woman!"

"And she went out last night with Mrs. Elphinstone and Miss Merchison?" asked Maythorne.

"So I learned from the hall porter. He said that Mrs. Elphinstone and her maid—they know them both well enough at Short's for we are always up, all three of us, two or three times a year, and Miss Merchison, whom, of course, they also know well, all went out together about—I think he said half past nine."

"Did he call a cab for them?" demanded Maythorne.

"No—he said they turned to the left, down the street—walking," replied Mr. Elphinstone. "Dear me!—I really can't think why they should go walking at that hour of the evening!"

"But the point is—did they, or any one of them, return?" inquired Crole.

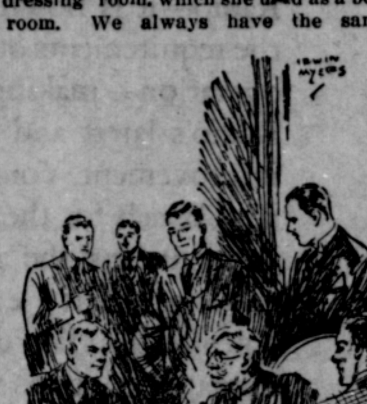
"None returned!" said Mr. Elphinstone. "I waited up till midnight—eventually I retired—very much puzzled. And—I was so fatigued I fell asleep at once, and slept soundly until morning. To my great amazement, I found that neither Mrs. Elphinstone nor Alison Murdoch had come back—Sheila, of course, I supposed to be at Miss Apperley's. So, after getting a little breakfast, I drove to Miss Apperley's, and just caught that young lady as she was leaving for her classes. To my still greater amazement she knew nothing whatever about Sheila. Sheila, she said, had suddenly remarked, after sitting in silence for a long time the previous evening, that she would go to Short's hotel and have things out with her mother, and had set off there and then—and had never returned! So," concluded Mr. Elphinstone, waving his silver mounted cane, "there it is! All three have vanished!—in London! I thought of Mr. Maythorne and went to his office—and was brought along here to him. And I was going to ask you, Mr. Maythorne—do you think it possible they have been kidnaped?"

No one laughed: Mr. Elphinstone's simplicity was too apparent. He was very grave, too, in his simplicity, and Crole was equally grave in replying to his ingenuous question.

"No, Mr. Elphinstone, no, I don't think it possible for three women to be kidnaped, even in London," he answered. "I think you'll find that they went out on some business of their own, and that they had good reasons—again of their own!—for not returning. But let me ask you for a little more information—when your wife and her daughter went into the bedroom to talk in private, where was Alison Murdoch?"

Mr. Elphinstone considered this for a moment.

"Probably," he replied at last, "probably in the next room to that—a dressing room, which she used as a bedroom. We always have the same rooms when we stay at Short's. There's a sitting room, a bedroom, and a dressing room: Alison Murdoch always has the dressing room. I should say she'd be in there when my wife and Sheila went into the bedroom."



"Do You Think It Possible They Have Been Kidnaped?"

"Did you find out from the hall porter if they took anything away with them?" inquired Crole. "Any light baggage—anything of that sort. As if they, or one or other of them, meant to stay away for the night?"

"I didn't inquire," replied Mr. Elphinstone. "But I'm sure they didn't. The hall porter—an intelligent man whom I've known for many years—told me this morning that his own opinion, when they went out was—well, in short, one that would never have occurred to me."

"And that was—what?" asked Crole.

"He said he thought the ladies were going to have what he called an hour at the pictures," answered Mr. Elphinstone. "Of course, I didn't understand him. He explained that just round the corner from Short's, in the direction they took, is one of these new-fangled cinema theaters, where, I am told, moving pictures are shown. But I can't think—"

"I think we may take it that they didn't go there," remarked Maythorne. He glanced significantly at the two policemen. "This'll have to be gone into carefully," he murmured. "Your line!"

"We don't know that Mrs. Elphinstone mayn't be found at Short's—when Mr. Elphinstone goes back there," said Crole, glancing at his watch. "It's now noon, and—"

"We don't," interrupted Maythorne. Then, in an undertone, he muttered: "But I guess he won't! Mr. Elphinstone!" he continued, raising his voice, "I want to show you something—something that I have in my pocket. Here it is," he went on, producing the cairngorm brooch, and laying it on the table. "Tell me!—have you ever seen that article before?"

Mr. Elphinstone peered carefully at the brooch and then looked up, quickly.

"Where did you get this?" he asked, as if in surprise. "To be sure—it belongs to my wife!"

Maythorne bent over the table toward Manners and Corkerdale and for a moment or two spoke to them in a whisper: I gathered that he was telling them how and when he found the brooch which he had just exhibited. Again he turned to Mr. Elphinstone.

"You've no doubt that this is your wife's brooch?" he asked. "After all, I suppose that one of these things is very like another."

"That's is my wife's property!" affirmed Mr. Elphinstone with more decision of will and manner than he usually showed. "I bought it for her myself, years ago, in Inverness. It is one of two—they are precisely alike. The stones are of a rather uncommon sort of cairngorm; the silver mountings are old. I bought the pair in a sort of odds-and-ends shop in Inverness—I remember the circumstances very well. But to be sure!—I haven't seen either brooch for years."

"Mrs. Elphinstone didn't wear them, then?" suggested Maythorne.

"She thought them old-fashioned and rather too heavy," replied Mr. Elphinstone. "She looked on them, I think, as curiosities—she said they'd been used, originally, for fastening plaids—men's plaids, you know, at the shoulders—and she put them away. I don't remember that she ever did wear them—but I have no doubt whatever that what you show me is one of the pair. Now, where did you get it?"

"Let it suffice for the moment, Mr. Elphinstone, to say that I found it, accidentally," answered Maythorne. "Picked it up, you know—when I was at Marrasdale. Never mind more, just now."

He replaced the brooch in his pocket and rose, looking round at the rest of us. "Well?" he said. "What next?"

Nobody made any suggestion. The next words came from Mr. Elphinstone.

"I wish I knew what has become of my wife!" he said, plaintively. "Can no one think of anything to do?"

"She'll have to be sought for, sir," said Corkerdale. He nudged Manners. "We'd better be doing something, I think," he murmured. "The hotel first, eh?"

Maythorne turned to Ecclesbare.

"I suppose you're on the telephone?" he said. "Just so!—let us ring up Short's and find out if Mrs. Elphinstone has returned there."

He went out into the hall with Ecclesbare; the rest of us waited until their return a few minutes later. Maythorne shook his head.

"No news!" he answered. "They haven't been back there—up to now. But—as they set out from there I suppose that's the best base from which to conduct operations?"

"We're going there, anyway," said Corkerdale. "Mrs. Elphinstone's got to be found! Perhaps Mr. Elphinstone will come with us?—we may hit on some clew from something that's been left."

We left the house. Outside, across the street, Johnson was still loafing about. He caught Maythorne's eye; what Maythorne did in the way of signaling to him I did not make out, but Johnson loafed away, and still further away, and faded out of sight.

"No need to keep that chap hanging round," observed Maythorne. "Now for Cottingley—I think I shall put Cottingley onto the track of Mrs. Elphinstone—he'll find her a lot quicker than any professional police will."

"Where's he going to pick up a clew?" inquired Crole, sarcastically.

"Leave that to Cottingley!" retorted Maythorne. "He'll see a clew where no one else would. All he wants is clear—and concise—instructions to start out on."

We found Cottingley at the top of the street. He was eating an apple, in supplement to his lunch of bread and cheese. Phlegmatic as ever, he turned with us toward the nearest cab-rank, Maythorne talking to him as we went along.

"What next?" asked Crole as we reached Edgware road again.

"I'm just going round by Short's hotel," answered Maythorne, "to hear if those chaps have made anything out, and to give Cottingley a start. Better come, both of you."

"I won't," said Crole. "I must get back to my office. I can do no good at Short's, and you can ring me up if you've any news. Oh, by-the-bye," he added, as Maythorne signaled to a taxicab driver, "I forgot to mention it before, Holt. Armintrade's check duly arrived this morning. So that's all right, and I suppose we've finished with his part in all these mysteries."

"Finished with nothing, Crole!" exclaimed Maythorne. "The curtain is still up—well up!—on everything. Coming, Holt?—you'd better."

I went with him. I was not so much concerned about Mrs. Elphinstone as about Sheila. That some new and very serious situation had arisen when Sheila called on her mother the previous evening there could be no doubt—nothing else, I was sure, could have occasioned the strange departure and disappearance of which Mr. Elphinstone had told us. What was it?

It took little time to run round to Short's, a famous, if somewhat old-fashioned hotel in the West end, greatly in favor with country family people. While we rode there Maythorne occupied himself in posting up Cottingley in all our doings that morning, and especially about the disappearance of Mrs. Elphinstone. Cottingley soaked it all in without saying a word; he was still eating apples, and he munched them steadily while his employer talked. But as Maythorne made an end Cottingley also finished his last apple, and tossing the core out of the cab window, rapped out a word or two.

"Steamship offices!" he said. "Likeliest place, first."

"Good!" assented Maythorne. "There may be something in that. All right!—you get on to it. But first, we'll see if anything's turned up here."

We left the cab a little way from Short's, and walked along towards the principal entrance. Manners and Corkerdale were just coming out as we reached it—I thought I saw in their manner that they had heard something.

"Well?" asked Maythorne as we joined them. "Any news?"

"Nobody's returned," replied Corkerdale, "and there's nothing in Mrs. Elphinstone's or the maid's rooms to suggest why they ever went away. But we have heard a bit that the old gentleman hadn't found out when he set off to you this morning."

"What's that?" asked Maythorne.

"Odd circumstance, to be sure!" answered the detective. "I'd like to know what it means. Got it from the under hall porter. He says that some little time after Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone and the maid arrived last night—he knows all three well enough, he says, as they come there two or three times a year—a man came into the entrance hall and asked him if they—naming them—were stopping there? He said they were, and he believed they were then having dinner. The man went away. But this under hall porter also says that he noticed the same man hanging about the hotel front after that, and that he was there, as if watching when Mrs. Elphinstone and her daughter and the maid went out—in fact, he's positive that the man followed them down the street and round the first corner. And—that's all!"

"And a good lot!" remarked Maythorne. "Could he describe the man?"

"Oh, yes! A little, thin man, about thirty or so; slight brown mustache, wore spectacles; very respectably dressed; wore a Trilby hat—looked like a clerk or commercial traveler—something of that sort," replied Corkerdale.

"Did he say anything to the under hall porter as to why he wanted the Elphinstones?" asked Maythorne.

"No—the man asked him if he could take up any message," said Corkerdale. "He replied no—it didn't matter: he wouldn't disturb them if they were at dinner; he'd look in again."

"And he didn't look in again?"

"No—the last the under hall porter saw of him, he was following the three women down the street."

Maythorne remained silent for a minute or two.

"Well," he said at last. "I suppose you'll follow things up in your own way. If I can be of any help, let me know. If I hear anything, I'll let you know, Corkerdale. May as well help each other." He turned away, Cottingley and I following him. After going a short distance, he motioned to the clerk.

"Try your line—the shipping offices, Cottingley," he said. "May be some good."

Cottingley went off, and Maythorne and I walked on in silence for a while.

"This is a queer business, Holt!" he said after some time. "That Mrs. Elphinstone is either guilty or is privy to somebody else's guilt seems dead certain! But—where on earth has she disappeared to? And when and where are we going to get news of her?"

I got no more light on that problem for more than two days. Nobody heard anything, nobody discovered anything. I called continually at Short's. Mr. Elphinstone, after being at his wits' ends, settled down to a sort of philosophic calm, waiting. And nothing happened, until, on the third night after the disappearance, Maythorne rushed up to my rooms and thrust an evening newspaper before me.

"For God's sake, Holt!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Read that!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Desolation in Wake of Gigantic Gold Dredges

Automobile tourists through the northern part of California are liable to have their attention attracted to mountains of cobblestones frequently seen. Sometimes these piles are 50 or 60 feet high and several hundred feet long. They are never beautiful and they add nothing to the landscape. In fact, they are eyesores, but there is little prospect of their removal. These piles are the accumulation of the gold dredges, gigantic constructions which eat their way through the land and leave a trail of desolation. Farm lands and orchards are brought up by the operators and left in ruin, for the land is useless for any purpose whatever after the passage of the dredger. These machines cost about a quarter of a million dollars, but the cost of operation is very small. A large quantity of the earth must be treated to recover a small quantity of the yellow metal, but at that the business is very profitable. The stones taken from the soil are useful only to grind up for cement, but the piles standing today will offer crushed stone sufficient for the demands of the entire country for many years.—Washington Star.

Chestnut Trees

There is a Chinese hairy chestnut and a Japanese chestnut, but no Japanese hairy chestnut. The Chinese hairy chestnuts are being brought to this country in the hope that they will replace our chestnut trees which were destroyed by a blight. While the trees grow slowly and do not bear a good crop for about ten years, they are believed to be sturdier than the Japanese chestnuts, which bear in two or three years.

This Week

by ARTHUR BRISBANE

Texas Surprises Them
Whiskers the Fashion
Get Your Automobile
You Have a Rich Uncle

Another young American surprised the world last week in London. This one, Wilmer Allison, from San Antonio, Texas, beat Henri Cochet, the world tennis champion, in three straight sets.

London could not have been more surprised if the young Texan had lifted up the Nelson monument with one hand.

If you plan a trip to London, and want to look fashionable, let your beard grow, in caveman fashion. Young Oxford men and the "young set" generally are doing that.

Britain decides that whiskers are necessary to celebrity; a man cannot look convincingly eminent clean-shaven.

They overlook at least three—Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon. They were clean shaven and quite convincing.

That style will not last. Whiskers are nests for germs, traps for crumbs, needed only by those that lack character. In the case of doctors, they should be made illegal. Scarlet fever and other germs cling doggedly to whiskers.

Lacoste, second among tennis players, last week married Mademoiselle De La Chaume, best female golfer in France.

According to eugenists, their child should be the earth's greatest tennis or golf star.

Very probably it will play neither game, and take to flying. Charles A. Dana used to tell of two highly intellectual stirpiculturists that married, determined to have a family of geniuses. They had one child, weak-minded.

Nature keeps us about even.

Automobile companies report sales greatly diminished in June.

This means that many Americans are making a serious mistake. Efficiency and rapid motion go together; you wouldn't think much of a bird that decided to economize by doing without wings. Better do without something else.

An automobile, wisely bought, used and cared for, is not an extravagance for any man. It is a necessary part of modern equipment, and to do without it is the worst kind of "false economy."

Secretary Mellon, keeper of the public purse, announces a satisfactory financial year, and a surplus of $184,000,000 in Uncle Sam's pocket.

Mr. Mellon reduced by $746,000,000 the public debt which now totals sixteen billions, one hundred and eighty-five millions. Not much for such a rich country. Business might be better if bonds were not paid off so rapidly.

But Mr. Mellon probably knows best.

Mr. Lingle, reporter for the Chicago Tribune, murdered, turns out to have been deep in the plans and probably sharing the profits of gangsters, according to detectives' statements. His salary was $65 a week and his income $60,000 a year.

The most serious statement in this lamentable exposure is that Lingle dealt in police promotion. To be made police lieutenant the charge was $1,500, for a captain, $5,000.

No wonder some of the police turn to graft and gangsters, when the position they hold is part of a graft system.

The incident in no way discredits the Chicago Tribune, which knew nothing of Lingle's underworld life.

However, Colonel McCormick and Major Patterson, whose ownership controls the Tribune, will want to know what particular individual in the Tribune organization did know of Lingle's activities, supporting him with the Tribune's authority and presumably sharing his profits.

Babe Ruth "slammed out" his thirty-first home run last week and is getting on toward forty years of age. That will interest millions.

Goethe "slammed out" the second part of Faust when he was seventy-two. That interests few.

Legs and arms rule now. Brains will control men's interest in the future, say, 100,000 years hence.

Williams, Boyd and Connor plan new deeds, having flown from New York to Bermuda and back, non-stop, in 17 hours and 1 minute. And Dorothy Hester, nineteen-year-old girl, in Portland, Ore., does an "outside loop," after one year's flying. Three times, with two failures in five tries, the young western girl did what few men ever have done and no woman ever attempted.

Mrs. Delia Akeley returns from the land of the African pigmies much impressed with the good qualities of those little people. She thinks it is a pity that they should be vanishing, rapidly.

Sometimes they eat each other, but they are affectionate, keep their word and have other good qualities.

It becomes us to remember that all of our ancestors were once cannibals. Only the races that ate human flesh, regularly, or in case of emergency, survived.

The others had no meat to give their children in times of famine.

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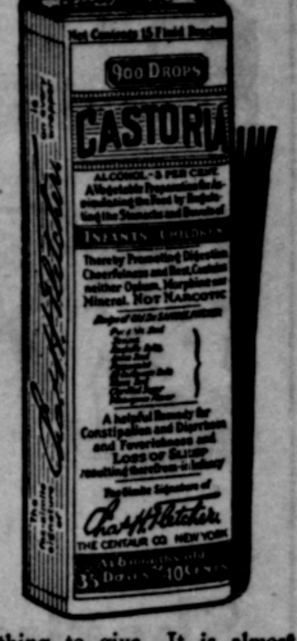
When Babies CRY



Babies will cry, often for no apparent reason. You may not know what's wrong, but you can always give Castoria. This soon has your little one comforted; if not, you should call a doctor. Don't experiment with medicines intended for the stronger systems of adults! Most of those little upsets are soon soothed away by a little of this pleasant-tasting, gentle-acting children's remedy that children like.

It may be the stomach, or may be the little bowels. Or in the case of older children, a sluggish, constipated condition. Castoria is still the thing to give. It is almost certain to clear up any minor ailment, and could by no possibility do the youngest child the slightest harm. So it's the first thing to think of when a child has a coated tongue; won't play, can't sleep, is fretful or out of sorts. Get the genuine; it always has Chas. H. Fletcher's signature on the package.

Jap Astronomers Proud of Great Observatory

The largest astronomical observatory in the Far East, and one which is surpassed only by observatories in Germany and the United States, has just been completed in Sanaka, a small suburb of Tokyo. The total cost of the work is put at $200,000. The length of the telescope is 11 meters and the diameter of the lens 26 inches. Work on the building to house this and many other scientific instruments which are included in the observatory equipment has been going on for more than three years under the direction of Doctor Hashimoto, a noted specialist in astronomical instruments. "At last the time has come when Japanese astronomers can work freely," the doctor said after the observatory had been opened. "Although we have had the will to go more deeply into astronomical lines in this country, we have been unable to do so because of lack of equipment. The situation was tantamount to being at war without weapons. We shall now be able to engage in friendly rivalry with our brother astronomers in all parts of the world."

Sports by Television Near

Football, baseball, cricket and other games may be projected by television, according to Sir Ambrose Fleming, inventor of the Fleming valve. In a recent address before the physical society in London he said this could be accomplished by the use of mirrors. Operators could employ a large mirror in throwing a small and very brilliant scene on a scanning disk. Behind this mirror could be placed a photo-electric cell, which would have projected on it a brilliant image spot by spot, as the scanning disk rotated. For this to be successful it would be necessary to make the photo-electric cell much more sensitive than those at present in use.

Sundial Made of Cement

One of the suburbs of San Francisco has undertaken to attract some attention to itself by erecting the largest sundial ever made. It is made of concrete and its top is high above the heads of the spectators and its shadow is cast upon the ground which is marked off for the purpose of indicating the time. The inclined surface of the dial is often irreverently used by children for the purpose of a kelly slide.

Blundering Fool

"My husband is forty. You wouldn't believe it, but there is ten years difference in our ages."

"Impossible! I'm sure you look quite as young as he does."—London Tit-Bits.

COULD HARDLY DO HER WORK

Strengthened by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Mission, Tex.—"I have used a good deal of your medicine and always find it gives wonderful help. I was feeling so weak and miserable that I had to lie down very often and I could hardly do my housework. I read in the paper how Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound had helped other women who were in the same condition so I said I will try it for myself. I am very much better now and I recommend this medicine, and will answer letters from women asking about it."—MRS. J. W. ALBERTSON, 1015 Miller Avenue, Mission, Texas.

Real Living Rooms

The beds have been taken out of the American living room. "Living room" now means something in our lives.—Woman's Home Companion.

UGLY PIMPLES?

Nature's warning—help nature clear your complexion and paint red roses in your pale, sallow cheeks. Truly wonderful results follow thorough colon cleansing. Take NR—NATURE'S REMEDY—to regulate and strengthen your eliminative organs. Watch the transformation. Try NR instead of mere laxatives. Mild, safe, purely vegetable—at druggists, only 25c

FEEL LIKE A MILLION, TAKE

NR TO-NIGHT
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W. N. U., Portland, No. 28–1930.

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Flit is sold only in this yellow can with the black band.

Here's the sure, quick, easy way to kill all mosquitoes indoors and keep 'em away outdoors!

Spray clean smelling
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Kills Flies Mosquitoes Moths Bed Bugs Roaches Ants
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