



SYNOPSIS.

Lawrence Blakeley, lawyer, goes to Pittsburgh with the forged notes in the Bronson case to get the deposition of John Gilmore, millionaire. A lady requests Blakeley to buy her Pullman ticket. He gives her lower 10 and retains lower 10. He finds a drunken man in lower 10 and retires in lower 9. He awakens in lower 7 and finds his clothes and bag missing. The man in lower 10 is found murdered. Circumstantial evidence points to both Blakeley and the man who stole his clothes. The train is wrecked and Blakeley is rescued from a burning car by a girl in blue. His arm is broken. The girl proves to be Alison West, his partner's sweetheart. Blakeley returns home and finds he is under surveillance. Moving pictures of the train taken just before the wreck reveal to Blakeley a man leaping from the train with his stolen grip. Investigation proves that the man's name is Sullivan. Mrs. Conway, the woman for whom Blakeley bought a Pullman ticket, tries to make a bargain with him for the forged notes, not knowing that they are missing. Blakeley and an amateur detective investigate the home of Sullivan's sister. From a servant Blakeley learns that Alison West had been there on a visit and Sullivan had been attentive to her. Sullivan is the husband of a daughter of the murdered man. Blakeley's house is ransacked by the police. He learns that the affair between Alison and his partner is off. Alison tells Blakeley about the attention paid her by Sullivan, whom she was on her way to marry when the wreck came. It is planned to give Mrs. Conway the forged notes in exchange for Sullivan. Mrs. Conway kills herself and Bronson, and the ashes of the forged notes are found in the room.

CHAPTER XXX.—Continued.

"When did you find it?" asked the lean detective, bending forward.

"In the morning, not long before the wreck."

"Did you ever see it before?"

"I am not certain," she replied. "I have seen one very much like it." Her tone was troubled. She glanced at me as if for help, but I was powerless.

"Where?" The detective was watching her closely.

At that moment there came an interruption. The door opened without ceremony, and Johnson ushered in a tall, blonde man, a stranger to all of us. I glanced at Alison; she was pale but composed and scornful. She met the newcomer's eyes full, and caught unawares, he took a hasty backward step.

"Sit down, Mr. Sullivan," McKnight beamed cordially. "Have a cigar? I beg your pardon, Alison, do you mind this smoke?"

"Not at all," she said composedly. Sullivan had had a second to sound his bearings.

"No—no, thanks," he mumbled. "If you will be good enough to explain—"

"But that's what you're to do," McKnight said cheerfully, pulling up a chair. "You've got the most attentive audience you could ask. These two gentlemen are detectives from Pittsburgh, and we are all curious to know the finer details of what happened on the car Ontario two weeks ago, the night your father-in-law was murdered."

Sullivan gripped the arms of his chair. "We are not prejudiced, either. The gentlemen from Pittsburgh are betting on Mr. Blakeley, over there. Mr. Hotchkiss, the gentleman by the radiator, is ready to place ten to one odds on you. And some of us have still other theories."

"Gentlemen," Sullivan said slowly, "I give you my word of honor that I did not kill Simon Harrington, and that I do not know who did."

"Fiddlededeel!" cried Hotchkiss, bustling forward. "Why, I can tell you—"

But McKnight pushed him firmly into a chair and held him there. "I am ready to plead guilty to the larceny," Sullivan went on. "I took Mr. Blakeley's clothes, I admit. If I can reimburse him in any way for the inconvenience—"

The stout detective was listening with his mouth open. "Do you mean to say," he demanded, "that you got into Mr. Blakeley's berth, as he contends, took his clothes and forged notes, and left the train before the wreck?"

"Yes."

"The notes, then?"

"I gave them to Bronson yesterday. Much good they did him!" bitterly. We were all silent for a moment. The two detectives were adjusting themselves with difficulty to a new point of view. Sullivan was looking dejectedly at the floor, his hands hanging loose between his knees. I was watching Alison, from where I stood, behind her, I could almost touch the soft hair behind her ear.

"I have no intention of pressing any charge against you," I said with forced civility, for my hands were itching to get at him, "if you will give us a clear account of what happened on the Ontario that night."

Sullivan raised his handsome, haggard head and looked around at me. "I've seen you before, haven't I?" he asked. "Weren't you an uninvited guest at the Laurels a few days—or nights ago? The cat, you remember, and the rug that slipped?"

"I remember," I said shortly. He glanced from me to Alison and quickly away.

"The truth can't hurt me," he said, "but it's devilish unpleasant. Alison, you know all this. You would better go out."

His use of her name crazed me. I stepped in front of her and stood over him. "You will not bring Miss West into the conversation," I threatened, "and she will stay if she wishes."

The MAN in LOWER TEN

by MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
AUTHOR OF THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY M. G. KETNER
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Johnson Ushered in a Tall Blonde Man, a Stranger to All of Us.

"Oh, very well," he said with assumed indifference.

Hotchkiss just then escaped from Richey's grasp and crossed the room.

"Did you ever wear glasses?" he asked eagerly.

"Never," Sullivan glanced with some contempt at mine.

"I'd better begin by going back a little," he went on sullenly. "I suppose you know I was married to Ida Harrington about five years ago. She was a good girl, and I thought a lot of her. But her father opposed the marriage—he'd never liked me, and he refused to make any sort of settlement."

"I had thought, of course, that there would be money, and it was a bad day when I found out I'd made a mistake. My sister was wild with disappointment. We were pretty hard up, my sister and I."

I was watching Alison. Her hands were tightly clasped in her lap, and she was staring out of the window at the cheerless roof below. She had set her lips a little, but that was all.

"You understand, of course, that I'm not defending myself," went on the sullen voice. "The day came when old Harrington put us both out of the house at the point of a revolver, and I threatened—I suppose you know that, too—I threatened to kill him."

"My sister and I had hard times after that. We lived on the continent for a while. I was at Monte Carlo and she was in Italy. She met a young lady there, the granddaughter of a steel manufacturer and an heiress, and she sent for me. When I got to Rome the girl was gone. Last winter I was all-in—social secretary to an Englishman, a wholesale grocer with a new title, but we had a row, and I came home. I went out to the Heaton boys' ranch in Wyoming, and met Bronson there. He lent me money, and I've been doing his dirty work ever since."

Sullivan got up then and walked slowly forward and back as he talked, his eyes on the faded pattern of the office rug.

"If you want to live in hell," he said savagely, "put yourself in another man's power. Bronson got into trouble, forging John Gilmore's name to those notes, and in some way he learned that a man was bringing the papers back to Washington on the Flier. He even learned the number of his berth, and the night before the wreck, just as I was boarding the train, I got a telegram."

Hotchkiss stepped forward once more importantly.

"Which read, I think: 'Man with papers in lower ten, car seven. Get them.'"

Sullivan looked at the little man with sulky blue eyes.

"It was something like that, anyhow. But it was a nasty business, and it made matters worse that he didn't care that a telegram which must pass through a half dozen hands was more or less incriminating to me."

"Then, to add to the unpleasantness of my position, just after we boarded the train—I was accompanying my sister and this young lady, Miss West—a woman touched me on the sleeve, and I turned to face my wife!"

"That took away my last bit of nerve. I told my sister, and you can understand she was in a bad way, too. We knew what it meant. Ida had heard that I was going—"

He stopped and glanced uneasily at Alison.

"Go on," she said coldly. "It is too late to shield me. The time to have done that was when I was your guest."

"Well," he went on, his eyes turned carefully away from my face, which must have presented certainly anything but a pleasant sight. "Miss West was going to do me the honor to marry me, and—"

"You scoundrel!" I burst forth, thrusting past Alison West's chair. "You—you infernal cur!"

"One of the detectives got up and stood between us."

"You must remember, Mr. Blakeley, that you are forcing this story from this man. These details are unpleasant, but important. You were going to marry this young lady," he said, turning to Sullivan, "although you already had a wife living?"

"It was my sister's plan, and I was in a bad way for money. If I could marry, secretly, a wealthy girl and go to Europe, it was unlikely that Ida—that is, Mrs. Sullivan—would hear of it."

"So it was more than a shock to see my wife on the train, and to realize from her face that she knew what was going on. I don't know yet, unless some of the servants—well, never mind that."

"It meant that the whole thing had gone up. Old Harrington had carried a gun for me for years, and the same train wouldn't hold both of us. Of course, I thought that he was in the coach just behind ours."

Hotchkiss was leaning forward now, his eyes narrowed, his thin lips drawn to a line.

"Are you left-handed, Mr. Sullivan?" he asked.

Sullivan stopped in surprise.

"No," he said gruffly. "Can't do anything with my left hand." Hotchkiss subsided, crestfallen but alert.

"I tore up that cursed telegram, but I was afraid to throw the scraps away. Then I looked around for lower ten. It was almost exactly across—my berth was lower seven, and it was, of course, a bit of exceptional luck for me that the car was number seven."

"Did you tell your sister of the telegram from Bronson?" I asked.

"No. It would do no good, and she was in a bad way without that to make her worse."

"Your sister was killed, I think?"

The shorter detective took a small package from his pocket and held it in his hand, snapping the rubber band which held it.

"Yes, she was killed," Sullivan said soberly. "What I say now can do her no harm."

He stopped to push back the heavy hair which dropped over his forehead, and went on more connectedly.

"It was late, after midnight, and we went at once to our berths. I undressed, and then I lay there for an hour, wondering how I was going to get the notes. Some one in lower nine was restless and wide awake, but finally became quiet."

"The man in ten was sleeping heavily. I could hear his breathing, and it seemed to be only a question of getting across and behind the curtains of his berth without being seen. After that, it was a mere matter of quiet searching."

"The car became very still. I was about to try for the other berth, when some one brushed softly past, and I lay back again."



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- Trust situation and the advisability
- Of pressing for a Federal incorpo-
- Ration act.
- A decision in the tobacco trust
- Case, which was expected simulta-
- Neously, was not announced and
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"Finally, however, when things had been quiet for a time, I got up, and after looking along the aisle, I slipped behind the curtains of lower ten. You understand, Mr. Blakeley, that I thought you were in lower ten, with the notes."

I nodded curtly.

"I'm not trying to defend myself," he went on. "I was ready to steal the notes—I had to. But murder!"

He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Well, I slipped across and behind the curtains. It was very still. The man in ten didn't move, although my heart was thumping until I thought he would hear it."

"I felt around cautiously. It was perfectly dark, and I came across a bit of chain, about as long as my finger. It seemed a queer thing to find there, and it was sticky, too."

He shuddered, and I could see Alison's hands clenching and unclenching with the strain.

"All at once it struck me that the man was strangely silent, and I think I lost my nerve. Anyhow, I drew the curtains open a little, and let the light fall on my hands. They were red, blood-red."

He leaned one hand on the back of the chair, and was silent for a moment, as though he lived over again the awful events of that more than awful night.

The stout detective had let his cigar go out; he was still drawing at it nervously. Richey had picked up a paper-weight and was tossing it from hand to hand; when it slipped and fell to the floor, a startled shudder passed through the room.

"There was something glittering in there," Sullivan resumed, "and on impulse I picked it up. Then I dropped the curtains and stumbled back to my own berth."

"Where you wiped your hands on the bed clothing and stuck the dirk into the pillow." Hotchkiss was seeing his carefully built structure crumbling to pieces, and he looked chagrined.

"I suppose I did—I'm not very clear about what happened then. But when I rallied a little I saw a Russia leather wallet lying in the aisle almost at my feet, and, like a fool, I stuck it, with the bit of chain, into my bag."

"I sat there, shivering, for what seemed hours. It was still perfectly quiet, except for some one snoring. I thought that would drive me crazy."

"The more I thought of it the worse things looked. The telegram was the first thing against me—it would put the police on my track at once, when it was discovered that the man in lower ten had been killed."

"Then I remembered the notes, and I took out the wallet and opened it."

He stopped for a minute, as if the recalling of the next occurrence was almost beyond him.

"I took out the wallet," he said simply, "and, opening it, held it to the light. In gilt letters was the name, Simon Harrington."

The detectives were leaning forward now, their eyes on his face.

"Things seemed to whirl around for a while. I sat there almost paralyzed, wondering what this new development meant for me."

"Do you believe me now?" He looked around at us defiantly. "I am telling the absolute truth, and not one of you believes me!"

"My wife, I knew, would swear I had killed her father; nobody would be likely to believe the truth."

"After a bit the man in lower nine got up and walked along the aisle toward the smoking compartment. I heard him go, and, leaning from my berth, watched him out of sight."

"It was then I got the idea of changing berths with him, getting his clothes, and leaving the train. I give you my word I had no idea of throwing suspicion on him."

Alison looked scornfully incredulous, but I felt that the man was telling the truth.

"I changed the numbers of the berths, and it worked well. I got into the other man's berth, and he came back to mine. The rest was easy. I dressed in his clothes—luckily, they fitted—and jumped the train not far from Baltimore, just before the wreck."

"There is something else you must clear up," I said. "Why did you try to telephone me from M—, and why did you change your mind about the message?"

He looked astounded.

"You knew I was at M—" he stammered.

"Yes, we traced you. What about the message?"

"Well, it was this way; of course, I did not know your name, Mr. Blakeley. The telegram said: 'Man with papers in lower ten, car seven,' and after I had made what I considered my escape, I began to think I had left the man in my berth in a bad way."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Labor Officials Won't go to Prison. Washington.—Samuel Gompers, John Mitchell and Frank Morrison, president, vice president and secretary of the American Federation of Labor, respectively, stepped from without the shadow of the jail when the Supreme Court of the United States set aside their sentences of imprisonment for contempt growing out of the litigation between the Buck Stove & Range company and the federation. The Supreme Court left with the lower court, however, the right to reopen the proceedings.

Democrats on Wool Schedule. Washington.—Democrat members of the ways and means committee of the house undertook the task of drafting a bill reversing the wool schedule. The committee debated the situation for three hours without attempting to reach a decision as to whether the bill shall place raw wool on the free list or reduce the tariff 50 per cent or more. To put raw wool on the free list would cut off at once \$21,000,000 in revenue, while the entire wool schedule brings a revenue of more than \$40,000,000.

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