The Man in Lower Ten

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SYNOPSIS.

Lawrence Blakeley, lawyer, goes to Pittsburg with the forged notes in the Bronson case to get the deposition of John Gilmore, millionaire. In the latter's home he is attracted by a picture of a young girl, whom the millionaire explains is his granddaughter. A lady requests Blakeley to buy her a Pullman ticket. He gives her lower eleven and retains lower ten. He finds a drunken man in lower ten and retires to lower nine. He awakens in lower seven and finds his clothes and bag missing. The man in lower ten is found murdered. Circumstantial evidence points to both Blakeley and the unknown man who had exchanged clothes with him. Blakeley becomes interested in a girl in blue. The train is wrecked. Blakeley is rescued from the burning car by the girl in blue. His arm is broken. They go to the Carter place for breakfast. The girl proves to be Allison West, his partner's sweetheart. Her peculiar actions mystify the lawyer. She drops her gold bag and Blakeley puts it in his pocket. Blakeley returns home. He finds that 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. Blakeley learns that a man named Sullivan leaped from the train near M——, and sprained his ankle. He stayed some time at the Carter place.

CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"Was the name Blakeley?" I asked.

"It might have been—I can't say. But the man wasn't there, and there was a lot of noise. I couldn't hear well. Then in half an hour down come the other twin to say the gentleman was taking on awful and didn't want the message sent."

"He's gone, of course?"

"Yes. Limped down here in about three days and took the noon train for the city."

It seemed a certainty now that our man, having hurt himself somewhat in his jump, had stayed quietly in the farm house until he was able to travel. But, to be positive, we decided to visit the Carter place.

I gave the station agent a five-dollar bill, which he rolled up with a couple of others and stuck in his pocket. I turned as we got to a bend in the road, and he was looking curiously after us.

It was not until we had climbed the hill and turned onto the road to the Carter place that I realized where we were going. Although we approached it from another direction, I knew the farm house at once. It was the one where Allison West and I had breakfasted nine days before. With a new restraint between us, I did not tell McKnight. I wondered afterward if he had suspected it. I saw him looking hard at the gatepost which had figured in one of our early mysteries, but he asked no questions. Afterward he grew almost taciturn, for him, and let me do most of the talking.

We opened the front gate of the Carter place and went slowly up the walk. Two ragged youngsters, with even to freckles and squints, were playing in the yard.

"Is your mother around?" I asked.

"In the front room. Walk in," they answered in identical tones.

As we got to the porch we heard voices, and stopped. I knocked, but the people within, engaged in animated, rather one-sided conversation, did not answer.

"In the front room. Walk in," quoted McKnight, and did so.

In the stuffy farm parlor two people were sitting. One, a pleasant-faced woman with a checked apron, rose, somewhat embarrassed, to meet us. She did not know me, and I was thankful. But our attention was riveted on a little man who was sitting before a table, writing busily. It was Hotchkiss!

He got up when he saw us, and had the grace to look uncomfortable.

"Such an interesting case," he said nervously. "I took the liberty—"

"Look here," said McKnight suddenly, "did you make any inquiries at the station?"

"A few," he confessed. "I went to the theater last night—I felt the need of a little relaxation—and the sight of a picture there, a cinematograph affair, started a new line of thought. Probably the same clew brought you gentlemen. I learned a good bit from the station agent."

"The son-of-a-gun," said McKnight. "And you paid him, I suppose?"

"I gave him five dollars," was the apologetic answer.

Mrs. Carter, hearing sounds of strife in the yard, went out, and Hotchkiss folded up his papers.

"I think the identity of the man is established," he said. "What number of hat do you wear, Mr. Blakeley?"

"Seven and a quarter," I replied.

"Well, it's only piling up evidence," he said cheerfully. "On the night of the murder you wore gray silk underclothing, with the second button of the shirt missing. Your hat had a B. in gilt letters inside, and there was a very minute hole in the toe of one black sock."

"Hush," McKnight protested. "If word gets to Mrs. Klopton that Mr. Blakeley was wearing stolen or robbed, or whatever it was, with a button missing and a hole in one sock, she'll retire to the Old Ladies' home. I've heard her threaten it."

Mr. Hotchkiss was without a sense of humor. He regarded McKnight gravely and went on:

"I've been up in the room where the man lay while he was unable to get away, and there is nothing there. But I found what may be a possible clew in the dust heap.

"Mrs. Carter tells me that in unpacking his grip the other day she shook out of the coat of the pajamas some pieces of a telegram. As I figure it, the pajamas were his own. He probably had them on when he effected the exchange."

I nodded assent. All I had retained of my own clothing was the suit of pajamas I was wearing and my bath robe.

"Therefore the telegram was his, not yours. I have pieces here, but some are missing. I am not discouraged, however."

He spread out some bits of yellow paper, and we bent over them curiously. It was something like this:

Man with p—— Get——

Br——

We spelled it out slowly.

"Now," Hotchkiss announced, "I make it something like this: The 'p——' is one of two things, pistol—you remember the little pearl-handled affair belonging to the murdered man—or is it pocketbook. I am inclined to the latter view, as the pocketbook had been disturbed and the pistol had not."

I took the piece of paper from the table and scrawled four words on it.

"Now," I said, rearranging them, "it happens, Mr. Hotchkiss, that I found one of these pieces of the telegram on the train. I thought it had been dropped by some one else, you see, but that's immaterial. Arranged this way it almost makes sense. Fill out that 'p—' with the rest of the word, as I imagine it, and it makes 'papers,' and add this scrap and you have:

"'Man with papers (in) lower ten, car seven. Get (them).'"

McKnight slapped Hotchkiss on the back.

"You're a trump," he said. "Br—is Bronson, of course. It's almost too easy. You see, Mr. Blakeley here engaged lower ten, but found it occupied by the man who was later murdered there. The man who did the thing was a friend of Bronson's, evidently, and in trying to get the papers we have the motive for the crime."

"There are still some things to be explained." Mr. Hotchkiss wiped his glasses and put them on. "For one thing, Mr. Blakeley, I am puzzled by that bit of cinder."

I did not glance at McKnight. I felt that the hands with which I was gathering up the bits of torn paper were shaking. It seemed to me that this astute little man was going to drag in the girl in spite of me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A New World.

Hotchkiss jotted down the bits of telegram and rose.

"Well," he said, "we've done something. We've found where the murderer left the train, we know what day he went to Baldmore, and, most important of all, we have a motive for the crime."

"It seems the irony of fate," said McKnight, getting up, "that a man should kill another man for certain papers he is supposed to be carrying, find he hasn't got them after all, decide to throw suspicion on another man by changing berths and getting out, bag and baggage, and then, by the merest fluke of chance, take with him, in the value he changed for his own, the very notes he was after. It was a bit of luck for him."

"Then why," put in Hotchkiss doubtfully, "why did he collapse when he heard of the wreck? And what about the telephone message the station agent sent? You remember they tried to countermand it, and with some excitement."

"We will ask him those questions when we get him," McKnight said. We were on the uprolled front porch by that time, and Hotchkiss had put away his notebook. The mother of the twins followed us to the steps.

"Dear me," she explained volubly, "and to think I was forgetting to tell you! I put the young man to bed with a spice poultice on his ankle; my mother always was a firm believer in spice poultices. It's wonderful what they will do in croup! And then I took the children and went down to see the wreck. It was Sunday, and the minister had gone to church; hasn't missed a day since he took the pledge nine years ago. And on the way I met two people, a man and a woman. They looked half dead, so I sent them right here for breakfast and some soap and water. I always say soap is better than liquor after a shock."

Hotchkiss was listening absently; McKnight was whistling under his breath, staring down across the field to where a break in the woods showed a half dozen telegraph poles, the line of the railroad.

"It must have been 12 o'clock when we got back; I wanted the children to see everything, because it isn't likely they'll ever see another wreck like that. Rows of—"

"About 12 o'clock," I broke in, "and what then?"

"The young man upstairs was awake," we went on, "hammering at his door like all possessed. And it was locked on the outside!" She paused to enjoy her sensation.

"I would like to see that lock," Hotchkiss said promptly, but for some reason the woman demurred. "I will bring the key down," she said and disappeared. When she returned she held out an ordinary door key of the cheapest variety.

"We had to break the lock," she volunteered, "and the key didn't turn up for two days. Then one of the twins found the turkey gobbler trying to swallow it. It has been washed since," she hastened to assure Hotchkiss, who showed an inclination to drop it.

"You don't think he locked the door himself and threw the key out of the window?" the little man asked.

"The windows are covered with mosquito netting, nailed on. The mister blamed it on the children, and it might have been Obadiah. He's the quiet kind, and you never know what he's about."

"He's about to strangle, isn't he," McKnight remarked lazily, "or is that Obadiah?"

Mrs. Carter picked the boy up and inverted him, talking amiably all the time. "He's always doing it," she said, giving him a shake. "Whenever we miss anything we look to see if Obadiah's black in the face." She gave another shake, and the quarter I had given him shot out as if blown from a gun. Then we prepared to go back to the station.

From where I stood I could look into the cheery farm kitchen, where Allison West and I had eaten our al fresco breakfast. I looked at the table with mixed emotions, and then, gradually, the meaning of something on it penetrated my mind. Still in its papers, evidently just opened, was a hat box, and protruding over the edge of the box was a streamer of vivid green ribbon.

On the plea that I wished to ask Mrs. Carter a few more questions, I let the others go on. I watched them down the flagstone walk; saw McKnight stop and examine the gate posts and saw, too, the quick glance he threw back at the house. Then I turned to Mrs. Carter.

"I would like to speak to the young lady upstairs," I said.

She threw up her hands with a quick gesture of surrender. "I've done all I could," she exclaimed. "She won't like it very well, but—she's in the room over the parlor."

I went eagerly up the ladder-like stairs, to the rag-carpeted hall. Two doors were open, showing interiors of four poster beds and high bureaus. The door of the room over the parlor was almost closed. I hesitated in the hallway; after all, what right had I to intrude on her? But she settled my difficulty by throwing open the door and facing me.

"I—I beg your pardon, Miss West," I stammered. "It has just occurred to me that I am unpardonably rude. I saw the hat downstairs and I—I guessed—"

"The hat!" she said. "I might have known. Does Richey know I am here?"

"I don't think so." I turned to go down the stairs again. Then I halted. "The fact is," I said, in an attempt at justification, "I'm in rather a mess these days, and I'm apt to do irresponsible things. It is not impossible that I shall be arrested, in a day or so, for the murder of Simon Harrington."

She drew her breath in sharply. "Murder!" she echoed. "Then they have found you after all!"

"I don't regard it as anything more than—er—inconvenient," I lied. "They can't convict me, you know. Almost all the witnesses are dead."

She was not deceived for a moment. She came over to me and stood, both hands on the rail of stair. "I know just how grave it is," she said quietly. "My grandfather will not leave one stone unturned, and he can be terrible—terrible. But"—she looked directly into my eyes as I stood below her on the stairs—"the time may come—soon—when I can help you. I'm afraid I shall not want to; I'm a dreadful coward, Mr. Blakeley. But I'll still. She tried to smile.

"I wish you would let me help you," I said unsteadily. "Let us make it a bargain; each help the other!"

The girl shook her head with a sad little smile. "I am only as unhappy as I deserve to be," she said. And when I protested and took a step toward her she retreated, with her hands out before her.

"Why don't you ask me all the questions you are thinking?" she demanded, with a catch in her voice. "Oh, I know them. Or are you afraid to ask?"

I looked at her, at the lines around her eyes, at the drawn look about her mouth. Then I held out my hand. "Afraid!" I said, as she gave me hers. "There is nothing in God's green earth I am afraid of, save of trouble for you. To ask questions would be to imply a lack of faith. I ask you nothing. Some day, perhaps, you will come to me yourself and let me help you."

The next moment I was out in the golden sunshine; the birds were singing carols of joy; I walked dizzily through rainbow-colored clouds, past the twins, cherubs now, swinging on the gate. It was a new world into which I stepped from the Carter farmhouse that morning, for—I had kissed her!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"You Don't Think He Locked the Door Himself?"

Turned Tables on Root

Secretary's Familiar Little Remark Didn't Seem as Funny as It Used To.

Senator Depew told a little story on himself and Senator Root in his speech at the dinner in Washington to Mr. Root by the New York Republican congressional delegation.

"When Root was secretary of state," said Senator Depew, "I went over to see him and asked him if he couldn't do something for me in the line of consular appointments. He said: 'Senator, I'm sorry, I would like do something for New York, but (and Mr. Root picked up a paper from his desk) I see that New York's quota is now exceeded by 14 per cent.'

"Well," continued Senator Depew, "I kept going to see Senator Root for a year. Every time I went to see him he would remind me that New York's quota was exceeded by 14 per cent. Finally I said: 'Mr. Secretary, I think you're a great statesman, but your mathematics are inclined to be automatic.

"After Mr. Knox became secretary of state," Senator Depew said, when the laughter had subsided, "Senator Root went up to see him about consular appointments. 'I'm sorry,' said Mr. Knox, 'but (and he turned to a document file) I find that New York's quota is now exceeded by 14 per cent.'"

He Could Not Recommend It.

The editor of the Plunkville Argus was seated at his desk, busily engaged in writing a fervid editorial on the necessity of building a new walk to the cemetery, when a battered specimen of the tramp printer entered the office.

"Mornin', boss!" said the caller. "Got any work for a print?"

"I have," answered the editor. "You happened in just right this time. I've got only a boy to help me in the office and I need a man to set type for about a week. I have to make a trip out west. You can take off your coat and begin right now. I start to-morrow morning."

"All right," said the typographical tourist, removing his coat. "What road are you going to travel on?"

"The X., Y. & Z., mostly. I've never been on it. Know anything about it?"

"I know all about it. I've traveled it from one end to the other."

"What kind of a road is it?"

"Punk!" said the printer, in a tone indicative of strong disgust. "The ties are too far apart!"—Youth's Companion.

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Elegant home, and lot 66 feet front by 20 rods deep (6 acres) on East Maple Avenue. Fine house in every modern convenience, including furnace, heat, etc. Fine barn, 30 x 40, with cement floor, heat. Will exchange for improved city property for portion of purchase price.

77
One lot on Woodward Avenue just south of Lincoln, owned by John Dwyer of Detroit. Any one whether in Oakland or Wayne will find this a bargain. For particular inquire of Mattie G. Smith, or at Exchange Bank.

147
Nice little home for some one of small means—1½ acres in a w d q s 14 of sec 31, Township of Troy. Some fruit, good well, good cistern, good barn and house, never dry; ½ mile east of Rochester interurban line to Detroit. Price $1,200. All cash and no grumbling will buy it at $1200. Hurry up!

167
Wants to trade for 30 or 40 acres on or near electric, 8 miles from Detroit, 10 acres in w ½ of s w ¼ of sec 11, Troy Corners, worth $2,000 (insured for $1,700); flowing well piped to barn; barn well adapted for stock or dairy; 1½ miles from electric at Troy Corners, where there are good schools and churches. Fare 17c to Detroit; 30 per acre.

180
Farm in Avon township; 15 acres of good clay loam, all cleared; small orchard, no buildings; within 2 miles of Rochester. For sale, or exchange for small farm.

194
Fifty acres in Township of Troy, adjoining the Joy Home Farm; 5 miles from Pontiac; 2 miles from Troy, depot; level, fine, fertile, fine, fertile, beautiful view; 5 acres of orchard; 2 acres of fine, fine, fine,