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# THE MAN IN LOWER TEN

The Great Mystery Story

by MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

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CHAPTER XXX.  
FINER DETAILS.

At ten minutes before 2 the following day, Monday, I arrived at my office. I had spent the morning putting my affairs in shape, and in a trip to the stable. The afternoon would see me either a free man or a prisoner for an indefinite length of time, and in spite of Johnson's promise to produce Sullivan, I was more prepared for the latter than the former.

Blobs was watching for me outside the door, and it was clear that he was in a state of excitement bordering on delirium. He did nothing, however, save to tip me a wink which meant "As man to man, I'm for you." I was too much engrossed either to reprove him or return the courtesy, but I heard him follow me down the hall to the small room where we kept outgrown law books, typewriter supplies and, incidentally, our wraps. I was wondering vaguely if I would ever hang my hat on its nail again, when the door closed behind me. It shut firmly, without any particular amount of sound, and I was left in the dark. I groped my way to it, irritably, to find it locked on the outside. I shook it frantically, and was rewarded by a faint whisper through the keyhole.

"Keep quiet," Blobs was saying humbly.

"You're in deadly peril. The police are waiting in your office, three of 'em. I'm going to lock the whole bunch in and throw the key out of the window."

"Come back here, you imp of Satan!" I called angrily, but I could hear him speeding down the corridor, and the slam of the outer office door by which he always announced his presence. And so I stood there in that ridiculous cupboard, hot with the blast of a steaming September day, musty with the smell of old leather bindings, littered with broken shoes and handless umbrellas. I was appalled with rage one minute, and choked with laughter the next. It seemed an hour before Blobs came back.

"He came without haste, strutting with new dignity, and paused outside my prison door."

"Well, I guess that will hold them for a while," he remarked comfortably, and proceeded to turn the key. "I've got 'em fastened up like sardines in a can," he explained, working with the lock. "Gee whiz! you'd ought to hear 'em!" When he got his breath after the shaking I gave him, he burst into a splutter. "Hired! I know," he demanded sulkily. "You nearly broke your neck getting away the other time. And I haven't got the old key. It's lost."

"Where's it lost?" I demanded, with another gesture toward his coat collar.

"Down the elevator shaft." There was a gleam of indignant satisfaction through his tears of rage and humiliation.

And so, while he hunted the key in the debris at the bottom of the shaft, I quieted the prisoners with the assurance that the lock had slipped, and that they would be as free as lords as soon as we could find the janitor with a pass key. Stuart went down finally and discovered Blobs, the key in his pocket, telling the engineer how he had tried to save me from arrest and failed. When Stuart came up he was almost cheerful, but Blobs did not appear again that day.

Simultaneous with the finding of the key came Hotchkiss, and we went in together. I shook hands with two men who, with Hotchkiss, made a not very animated group. The taller one, an oldish man, lean and hard, announced his errand at once. "A Pittsburgh warrant," I inquired, unlocking my cigar drawer.

"Yes, Allegheny county has assumed jurisdiction, the exact locality where the crime was committed being in doubt." He seemed to be the spokesman. The other, shorter and rotund, kept an amiable silence. "We hope you will see the wisdom of waiving extradition," he went on. "It will save time."

"I'll come, of course," I agreed. "The sooner the better. But I want you to give me an hour here, gentlemen. I think you can interest you. Have a cigar?"

The lean man took a cigar; the rotund man took three, putting two in his pocket. "How about the catch of that door?" he inquired jovially. "Any danger of it going again?" Really, considering the circumstances, they were remarkably cheerful. Hotchkiss, however, was not. He paced the floor uneasily, his hands under his coat tails. The arrival of McKnight created a diversion; he carried a large package and a corkcreeper, and shook hands with the police and opened the bottle with a single gesture.

"I always want something to cheer on these occasions," he said. "Where's the water, Blakeley? Everybody ready?" Then in French he toasted the two detectives.

"To your eternal discomfiture," he said, beaming jovially. "Master you go home and never come back. If you take Monsieur Blakeley with you, I hope you choke."

The lean man nodded gravely. "Pardon," he said. But the fat one leaned back and laughed loudly.

Hotchkiss finished a mental synopsis of his position, and put down his glass. "Gentlemen," he said pompously, "within five minutes the man you want will be here, a murderer caught in a net of evidence as fine that a mosquito could not get through."

The detectives glared at each other solemnly. Had they not in their possession a scabbard containing a wallo and a bit of gold chain, which, by putting the crime on me, would leave a gap big enough for Sullivan himself to crawl through?

"Why don't you say your little speech before Johnson brings the other man, Lawrence?" McKnight inquired. "They won't believe you, but it will help them to understand what is coming."

"You understand, of course," the lean man put in gravely, "that what you say may be used against you."

"I'll take the risk," I answered impatiently.

"It took some time to tell the story of my worst than useless trip to Pittsburgh, and its sequel. They listened gravely, without interruption."

"Hotchkiss here," I finished, "believes that the man Sullivan, whom we are momentarily expecting, committed the crime. Mr. McKnight is inclined to implicate Mrs. Conway, who stabbed Bronson and then herself last night. As for myself, I am open to conviction."

"I have no intention of pressing any charge," said the stout detective quizzically. "And then Allison was announced. My impulse to go out and meet her was forestalled by the detectives, who rose when I did. McKnight, therefore, brought her in, and I met her at the door."

"I have put you in a great deal of trouble," I said cordially, when I saw her glance around the room. "I wish I had not."

"It is only right that I should come," she replied, looking up at me. "I am the unconscious cause of most of it, I am afraid. Mrs. Dallas is going to wait in your room."

I presented Hotchkiss and the two detectives, who eyed her with interest. In her poised, her beauty, even in her gown, I fancy she represented a new type to them. They remained standing until she sat down.

"I have brought the necklace," she began, holding out a white-wrapped box. "As you asked me to do."

I passed it, unopened, to the detectives. "The necklace from which was broken the fragment you found in the seashell bag," I explained. "Miss West found it on the floor of the car, near lower ten."

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

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

"Did you ever see it before?"

"I am not certain," she replied. "I have seen one very much like it." Her tone was doubtful. 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, blond man, a student of law, with a gleam of his son; she was pale, but composed and scornful. She met the newcomers' 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, Allison, do you mind this smoke?"

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

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

"But that's what you're to do," McKnight jovially put in. "Any danger of it going again?"

"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."

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; he asked, "Where's the man Sullivan, whom we are momentarily expecting, committed the crime. Mr. McKnight is inclined to implicate Mrs. Conway, who stabbed Bronson and then herself last night. As for myself, I am open to conviction."

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## Striking a Match or Two

IT HAS been estimated that we of the United States consume 700,000,000 matches annually, and that ours is larger than that of any other country.

In the making of the match it is necessary to obtain the best grade of wood. No sapwood, no knots or cross-grained timber, is utilized by the hundreds of factories in this country that are busily engaged in turning out this article. The necessity for the best timber renders it imperative that the choicest trees and to see that none but the best wood goes to feed the match machines. For this reason a statement of the number of cubic feet of wood actually converted into matches each year would give but an inadequate idea of the number of trees consumed by the industry.

Accordingly, the match manufacturers are, as a class, as much concerned over the timber supply as any other whose welfare depends on the employment of forest products.

It is not to be assumed that, by reason of the smallness of matches, the makers thereof never utilize scraps or bits of wood left over. The contrary is the case.

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 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."

"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 Allison'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."

(To Be Continued.)

## Gamblers in Mulberries

LONDON's rubber craze suggests the days when people in this country thought their fortunes would be made out of silk raising, or, at least, the cultivation of mulberry trees. L. P. Brackett, in "The Silk Industry in America," gives this account of the man:

"One after another of the experimenters in silk culture began to advocate the Morus multicaulis and recommended their friends to cultivate the trees and raise silk. If they could, but at all events to raise mulberry trees. Grave doctors of medicine and doctors of divinity, men learned in the law, agriculturists, mechanics and merchants, and women as well as men, seemed to be infected with a strange frenzy in regard to this mulberry tree."

"They met in public places over bottles of Minor mulberry leaves, discussing seriously the glorious time when in the not distant future every farm should be a nursery for the young trees. Every house should have its cocooneries attached, its silk worms of the bivoltine, trivoltine or polyvoltine breeds, yielding two, three or more crops of cocoons per year. The farmers' wives and daughters, when not engaged in feeding the worms, were to reel the silk and perhaps to spin and twist it into silk stockings as cheap as cotton, and every matron and maid rejoice in the possession of at least a dozen silk dresses. It does not clearly appear where and on

what occasions they were to wear these dresses, while their whole time was to be occupied with the care of the silk worms and cocoons."

"Gideon B. Smith of Baltimore," says Posselt's Textile Journal, "is said to have owned the first mulberry tree in the United States, which was planted in 1835, but Dr. Felix Pascals of New York was the first to make known to the public the remarkably rapid growth and supposed excellent qualities of the tree, and so may be said to have opened this Pandora's box, from which so many evils escaped. The excitement in regard to the Morus multicaulis grew steadily; slowly, indeed, at first, but increasing with geometrical progression until 1839, when it culminated in utter ruin to the cultivators. The splendid and warlike operators, men who did not believe in its loudly heralded virtues, were fairly carried off their feet by the surging tide of speculation. The young trees or cuttings, which were sold in 1834 or 1835 for \$3 to \$5 a hundred, came soon to be worth \$25, \$50, \$100, \$200 and even \$500 a hundred."

"In the spring of 1839 Mr. Whitmarsh and Dr. Stebbins of Northampton, Mass., were rejoicing over the purchase of a dozen mulberry cuttings, not more than two feet long and of the thickness of a pipe stem, for \$25. 'They are worth \$50,' exclaimed the doctor in his enthusiasm."

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