

The MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY By HAROLD MAC GRATH

\$10,000 FOR 100 WORDS.

The Million Dollar Mystery story will run for twenty-two consecutive weeks in this paper. By an arrangement with the Thanhouser Film company it has been made possible not only to read the story in this paper but also to see it each week in the various moving picture theaters. For the solution of this mystery story \$10,000 will be given by the Thanhouser Film corporation.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE CONTEST.

The prize of \$10,000 will be won by the man, woman, or child who writes the most acceptable solution of the mystery, from which the last two reels of motion picture drama will be made and the last two chapters of the story written by Harold MacGrath.

Solutions may be sent to the Thanhouser Film corporation, either at Chicago or New York, any time up to midnight, Jan. 14. This allows several weeks after the last chapter has been published.

A board of three judges will determine which of the many solutions received is the most acceptable. The judges are to be Harold MacGrath, Lloyd Lonergan, and Miss Mae Tines. The judgment of this board will be absolute and final. Nothing of a literary nature will be considered in the decision, nor given any preference in the selection of the winner of the \$10,000 prize. The last two reels, which will give the most acceptable solution to the mystery, will be presented in the theaters having this feature as soon as it is possible to produce the same. The story corresponding to these motion pictures will appear in the newspapers coincidentally, or as soon after the appearance of the pictures as practicable. With the last two reels will be shown the pictures of the winner, his or her home, and other interesting features. It is understood that the newspapers, so far as practicable, in printing the last two chapters of the story by Harold MacGrath, will also show a picture of the successful contestant.

Solutions to the mystery must not be more than 100 words long. Here are some questions to be kept in mind in connection with the mystery as an aid to a solution:

- No. 1—What becomes of the millionaire?
- No. 2—What becomes of the \$1,000,000?
- No. 3—Whom does Florence marry?
- No. 4—What becomes of the Russian countess?

Nobody connected either directly or indirectly with "The Million Dollar Mystery" will be considered as a contestant.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Stanley Hargreave, millionaire, after a miraculous escape from the den of the gang of brilliant thieves known as the Black Hundred, lives the life of a recluse for eighteen years. Hargreave accidentally meets Braine, leader of the Black Hundred. Knowing Braine will try to get him, he escapes from his own home by a balloon. Before escaping he writes a letter to the girls' school, where eighteen years before he mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. That day Hargreave also draws one million dollars from the bank, but it is reported that this dropped into the sea when the balloon he escaped in was punctured.

Florence arrives from the girls' school. Countess Olga, Braine's companion, visits her and claims to be a relative. Two bogus detectives call, but their plot is foiled by Norton, a newspaper man.

By bribing the captain of the Orient Norton lays a trap for Braine and his gang. Countess Olga also visits the Orient's captain and she easily falls into the reporter's snare. The plan proves abortive through Braine's good luck, and only hirelings fall into the hands of the police.

After failing in their first attempt the Black Hundred trap Florence. They ask her for money, but she escapes, again foiling them.

Norton and the countess call on Florence the next day, once more safe at home. The visitors having gone, Jones removes a section of flooring, and from a cavity takes a box. Pursued by members of the Black Hundred, he rushes to the water front and succeeds in dropping the box into the sea.

Countess Olga, scheming to break the engagement existing between Florence Hargreave and Norton, invites them both to her apartments and pretends to faint in the reporter's arms. Florence appears in the doorway just at the planned moment, and as a result gives Norton back his ring.

Accomplices of Braine succeed in kidnapping Florence while she is shopping and hurry her off to sea. Norton receives a wireless later informing him that the girl had leaped into the sea and been drowned.

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CHAPTER X. THE PAST A BLANK.

It was perfectly true that Florence had cast herself into the sea. It had not been an act of despair, however. On the contrary, hope and courage had prompted her to leap. The night was clear, with only a moderate sea running. At the time the great ship was passing the Banks, and almost within hail she saw a fishing schooner riding gracefully at anchor. She quite readily believed that if she remained on board the George Washington she was lost. She naturally forgot the marvel of wireless telegraphy. No longer may a man hide at sea.

So, with that quick thought which was a part of her inheritance, she seized the life buoy, climbed the rail, and leaped far out. As the great dark tossing sea swooped up to meet her she noted a block of wood bobbing up and down. She tried to avoid it, but could not, and struck it head on. Despite the blow and the shock of the chill water she instinctively clung to the buoy. The wash from the mighty propellers tossed her about, hither and yon, from one swirl to another, like a chip of wood. Then everything grew blank.

Fortunately for her the master of the fishing schooner was at the time standing on his quarter deck by the wheel, gazing through his glass at the liner and envying the ease and comfort of those on board her. The mate, sitting on the steps and smoking his

turning-in pipe, saw the master lean forward suddenly, lower the glass, then raise it again.

"Lord a'mighty!"

"What's the matter, Cap'n?"

"Jake, in God's name, come 'ere an' take a peek through this glass. I'm dreamin'!"

The mate jumped and took the glass.

"Where away, sir?"

"A p'int off th' sta'board bow. See some-thin' white bobbin' up?"

"Yessir! Looks like some one dropped a bolster 'r a pillar overboard. . . . Cod's whiskers!" he broke off.

"Then I ain't seein' things," cried the master. "Hi, y' lubbers!" he yelled to the crew; "lower th' dory. They's a woman in th' water out there. I seen her leap th' rail. Look alive! Sharp's th' word! Mate, you go 'long."

The crew dropped their tasks and sprang for the davits, and the starboard dory was lowered in shipshape style.

It takes a good bit of seamanship to haul a body out of the sea into a dancing bob-tailed dory, when one moment it is climbing frantically heavenward and the next heading for the bottomless pit. They were very tender with her. They laid her out in the bottom of the boat, with the life buoy as a pillow, and pulled energetically for the schooner. She was alive, because she breathed; but she did not stir so much as an eyelid. It was a stiff bit of work, too, to land her aboard without adding to her injuries. The master ordered the men to put her in his own bunk, where he nearly strangled her by forcing raw brandy down her throat.

"Well, she's alive, anyhow!"

When Florence finally opened her eyes the gray of dawn lay on the sea, dotted here and there by the schooners of the fleet, which seemed to be hanging in midair, as at the moment there was visible to the eye no horizon.

"Don't seem t' recognize nothin'."

"Mebbe she's got a fever," suggested the mate, rubbing his bristly chin.

"Fever nothin'! Not after bein' in th' water half an hour. Mebbe she hit one o' them wooden floats we left. Them digged liners keep on crowdin' us," growled Barnes, with a fisherman's hate for the floating hotels.

"Went by with never a toot. See 'er, jes' like th' banker's wife goin' t' church on Sunday? A mile a minute; fog or no fog, it's all the same t' them. They run us down an' never stop. What th'arnation we goin' to do? She'll haff t' stay aboard till th' run is over. I can't afford t' yank up my mudhook th'is time o' day."

"Guess she can stand three 'r four days in our company, smellin' oilcloths, fish, kerosene, an' punk t'bacco."

"If y' don't like th' kind o' t'bacco I buy, buy your own. I ain't objectin' none."

The mate stepped over to the bunk and gingerly ran his hand over the girl's head.

"Cod's whiskers, Cap'n, they's a bump as big's a cork on th' back o' her head! She's struck one o' them floats all right. Where's th' arnica?"

For three days Florence evinced not the slightest inclination to leave the bunk. She lay on her back either asleep or with her eyes staring at the beams above her head. She ate just enough to keep her alive; and the strong black coffee did nothing more than to make her wakeful. No one knew what the matter was. There was the bump, now diminished; but that it should leave her in this comatose state vastly puzzled the men. The truth is she had suffered a slight concussion of the brain, and this, atop of all the worry she had had for the last few weeks, was sufficient to cause this blankness of the mind.

The final cod was cleaned and packed away in salt, the mudhook raised, and the schooner Betty set her sails for the south-west. Barnes realized that to save the girl she must have a doctor who knew his business. Mrs. Barnes would know how to care for the girl, once she knew what the trouble was. There would be some news in the papers. A young and beautiful woman did not jump from a big Atlantic liner without the newspapers getting hold of the facts.

A fair wind carried the Betty into her haven; and shortly after Florence was sleeping peacefully in a feather bed, ancient, it is true, but none the less soft and inviting. In all this time she had not spoken a single word.

"The poor young thing!" murmured the motherly Mrs. Barnes. "What beautiful hair! O, John, I wish you would give up the sea. I hate it. It is terrible. I am always watching you in my mind's eye, in calm weather, in storms. Pieces of wrecks come ashore, and I always wonder over the death and terror back of them."

"Don't y' worry none about me, Betty. I never take no chances. Now I'm goin' int' th' village an' bring back th' sawbones. He'll tell us what t' do."

The village doctor shook his grizzled head gravely.

"She's been hurt and shocked at the same time. It will be many days before she comes around to herself. Just let her do as she pleases. Only keep an eye on her so that she doesn't wander off and get lost. I'll watch the newspapers, and if I come across anything which bears upon the case I'll notify you."

But he searched the newspapers in vain, for the simple fact that he did not think to glance over the old ones.

Florence was soon able to walk about. Ordinary conversation she seemed to understand; but whenever the past was broached she would shake her head with frowning eyes. Her main diversion consisted of sitting on the sand dunes and gazing out at sea.

One day a stranger came to town. He said he represented a life insurance company and was up here from Boston to take a little vacation. He sat on the hotel porch that evening, surrounded by an admiring audience. The stranger had been all over the world, so it seemed. He spoke familiarly of St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, Shanghai, as the villagers—some of them—might have spoken of Boston. There were one or two old timers among the audience. They had been to all these parts. The stranger knew what he was telling about. After telling of his many voyages he asked if there was a good bathing beach nearby. He was told that he would find the most suitable spot

at once to the apartment of the princess, where Braine declared that he himself would go to the obscure village and claim Florence as his own child. But to insure absolute success they would charter Morse's yacht and steam right up into the primitive harbor.

When Vroon left the apartment Norton saw him. He was a man of impulses, and he had found by experience that first impulses are generally the best. He did not know who Vroon was. Any man who called on the Princess Perigoff while Braine was with her would be worth following.

On the other hand, Vroon recognized the reporter instantly and with that ever ready and alert mind of his set about to lure the

Corrigan fails trip. Bannock is in port and sails tonight for Norway. That's far enough."

"Bannock? The very man. Well, Mr. Norton, reporter and amateur detective, I guess we've got you fast enough this time. You may or may not come back alive. Go and bring around a taxi; some one you can trust. I'll dope the reporter while you're gone."

Long hours afterward Norton opened his aching eyes. He could hardly move and his head buzzed abominably. What had happened? What was the meaning of this slow rise and fall of his bed? Shangaied!

"Come out o' that now, ye skulker!" roared a voice down the companionway.

"Shangaied!" the reporter murmured. He sat up and ran through his pockets. Not a sou-marke, not a match even; and a second glance told him that the clothes he wore were not his own. "They've landed me this time. Shangaied! What the devil am I going to do?"

"D' ye hear me?" bawled the strident voice again.

Norton looked about desperately for some weapon of defense. He saw an engineer's spanner on the floor by the bunk across the way, and with no small physical effort he succeeded in obtaining it. He stood up, his hand behind his back.

"All right, me bucko! I'll come down an' git ye."

A pair of enormous boots began to appear down the companionway, and there gradually rose up from them a man as wide as a church door and as deep as a well.

"Wait a moment," said Norton, gripping the spanner. "Let us have a perfect understanding right off the bat."

"We're goin' t' have it, matey. Don't ye worry none."

Norton raised the spanner and, dizzy as he was, faced this seafaring Hercules courageously.

"I've been shangaied, and you know it. Where are we bound?"

"Copenhagen."

"Well, for a month or more you'll beat me up whenever the opportunity offers. But I merely wish to warn you that if you do you'll find a heap of trouble waiting for you the next time you drop your mudhook in North river."

"Is that so?" said the giant, eying the spanner and the shaking hand that held it aloft.

"It is. I'll take your orders and do the best I can, because you've got the upper hand. But, God is witness, you'll pay for every needless blow you strike. Now what do you want me to do?"

"Lay down that spanner an' come on deck. I'll tell ye what t' do. I was gon' t' whale th' daylight out o' ye; but ye're somethin' av a man. Drop th' spanner frst."

Norton hesitated. As lithe as a tiger the bulk of a man sprang at him and crushed him to the floor, wrenching away the spanner. Then the giant took Norton by the scruff of his neck and banged him up the steps to the deck.

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"I do," said Norton, breathing hard.

"Well, like there an' start in with peelin' spuds, an' don't waste 'em, neither. That'll be all for th' present. Ye were due for a wallop, but I kinda like ye dunk."

So Jim stumbled down to the cook's galley and grimly set to work at the potatoes. It might have been far worse. But here he was, likely to be on high seas for months, and no way of notifying Jones what had happened. The outlook was anything but cheerful. But a vague hope awoke in his heart. If they were still after him, might it not signify that Florence lived?

Meantime Braine had not been idle. According to Vroon the girl's memory was in bad shape; so he had not the least doubt of bringing her back to New York without mishap. Once he had her there, the game would begin in earnest. He played his cards exceedingly well. Steaming up into the little fishing harbor with a handsome yacht in itself would allay any distrust. And he wore a capital disguise, too. Everything went well till he laid his hand on Florence's shoulder. She gave a startled cry and ran over to Barnes, clinging to him wildly.

"No, no!" she said.

"No what, my child?" asked the sailor.

She shook her head. Her aversion was inexplicable.

"Come, my dear; can't you see that it is your father?" Braine turned to the captain. "She has been like this for a year. Heaven knows if she'll ever be in her right mind again," sadly. "I was giving her an ocean voyage, with the kindest nurses possible, and yet she jumped overboard. Come Florence."

The girl wrapped her arms all the tighter around Barnes' neck.

An idea came into the old sailor's head. "Of course, sir, y've got proof that she's your daughter?"

"Proof?" Braine was taken aback.

"Yes; somethin' t' prove that you're her father. I got skinned out of a sloop once because I took a man's word at it's face value. Black an' white, an' on paper, says I herafter."

"But I never thought of such a thing," protested Braine, beginning to lose his patience. "I can't risk sending to New York for documents. She is my daughter, and you will find it will not pay to take this peculiar stand."

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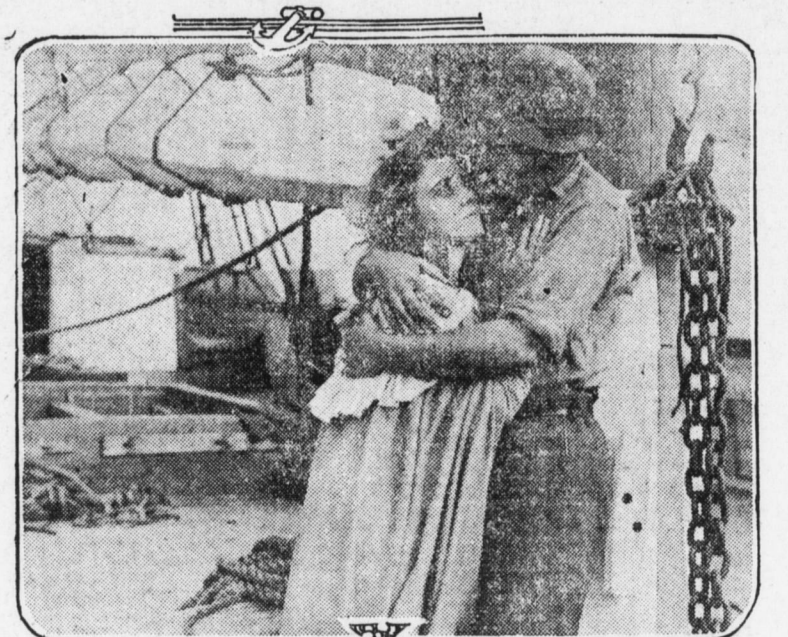
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"GIRL, GIRL, I LOVE YOU BETTER THAN LIFE!"

near Capt. Barnes' cottage just outside the village.

"An' say, Mister, seen anythin' in th' papers about a missin' young woman?" asked some one.

"Missin' young woman? What's that?"

The man told the story of Florence's leap into the sea and her subsequent arrival at the cape.

"That's funny," said the stranger. "I don't recollect reading about any young woman being lost at sea. But those big liners are always keepin' such things under cover. Hoodooes the ship, they say, and turns prospective passengers to other lines. It hurts business. What's the young girl look like?"

Florence was described minutely. The stranger teetered in his chair and smoked. Finally he spoke.

"She was probably insane. That's the way generally with insane people. They can't see water or look off a tall building without wanting to jump. My business is insurance, and we've got the thing figured pretty close to the ground. They used to get the best of us on the suicide game. A man would take out a large policy today and tomorrow he'd blow his head off, and we'd have to pay his wife. But nowadays a policy is not worth the paper it's written on if a man commits suicide under two years."

"You ain't tryin' t' insure anybody in town, are you?"

"O, no. No work for me when I'm on my vacation. Well, I'm going to bed; and tomorrow morning I'll go out to Capt. Barnes' beach and have a good swim. I'm no sailor, but I like water."

He honestly enjoyed swimming. Early the next morning he was in the water, frolicking about as playfully as a boy. He had all the time in the world. Over his shoulder he saw two women wandering down toward the beach. Deeper he went, farther out. He was a bold swimmer, but that did not prevent a sudden and violent attack of cramps. And it was a rare piece of irony that the poor girl should save the life of that scoundrel who was without pity or mercy. As she saw his face a startled frown marred her brow. But she could not figure out the puzzle. Had she ever seen the man before? She did not know, she could not tell. Why could not she remember? Why must her poor head ache so when she tried to pierce the wall of darkness which surrounded her mentally?

The man thanked her feebly, but the gratitude was on his lips and not in his heart. When he had sufficiently recovered he returned to the village and sought the railway station, where the Western Union had its office.

"I want to send a code message to my firm. Do you think you can follow it?"

"I can try," said the operator.

The code was really Slav; and when the long message was signed it was signed by the name Vroon.

Two days after the news came that Florence had jumped overboard off the Banks. Vroon with a dozen other men had started out to comb all the fishing villages along the New England coast. Somewhere along the way he felt confident that he would learn whether the girl was dead or alive. If she was dead, then the game was a draw; but if she was alive there was still a fighting chance for the Black Hundred. He had had some idea of remaining in the village and accomplishing the work himself; but after deliberation he concluded that it was important enough for Braine himself to take a hand in. So the following night he departed for Boston, from there to New York. He proceeded

at once to the apartment of the princess, where Braine declared that he himself would go to the obscure village and claim Florence as his own child. But to insure absolute success they would charter Morse's yacht and steam right up into the primitive harbor.

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