

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 Thankouser 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 Thankouser 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 Thankouser 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 Tinee. 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 incidentally, 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 \$10,000,000?
- 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 \$10,000,000 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 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 succeeds in breaking the engagement existing between Florence Hargreave and Norton.

Accomplices of Braine succeed in kidnapping Florence while she is shopping and hurry her off to sea. She leaps into the sea and is picked up in a dazed condition by a party of fishermen. The Black Hundred locate her and Braine, disguised as her father, succeeds in taking her back to sea with him. Florence sets fire to the boat and is rescued by a ship on which Norton has been shanghaied.

Norton and Florence, safely ashore and with no longer any misunderstanding between them, take the train for home. The train is wrecked and waiting members of the Black Hundred carry the injured Florence to a deserted hut. Norton, who tries to rescue her, is tied to the railroad tracks. Florence saves him and finally Jones comes to the rescue of both.

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CHAPTER XII.

A DIPSY-CHANTY, if you please; of sailormen in jerseys and tarry caps, of rolling gales, strong tobacco and diverse profanity; of cutters, and blunt-nosed schooners, and tramps, canvas and steam, some of them honest, some of them shady, and some of them pirates of the first water who did not find it necessary to hoist aloft the skull and bones. The seas are dotted with them. They remind you of the once prosperous merchant, run down at the heel, who sinks along the side streets, ashamed to meet those he knew in the past. You never hear them mentioned in the maritime news, which is the society column of the ships; you know of their existence only by the bleached bones of them, strewn along the coast.

You who crave adventures on high seas, you purchase a ticket, a steamer chair, and a couple of popular novels, go on board to the blare of a very indifferent brass band, and believe you are adventuring; when, as a matter of fact, you are about to spend a dull week or fortnight on a water hotel, where the most exciting thing is the bugle's call to meals or the discovery of a card sharp in the smoking room. Take a real ship, go as supercargo, to

the South seas; take the side streets of the ocean, and learn what it can do with hurricanes, typhoons, blistering calms, and men's souls. There will be adventure enough then. If you are a weakling, either you are made strong, or you die.

An honest ship, but run down at the heel, rode at anchor in the sound, a fourth-rater of the hooker breed; that is, her principal line of business was hauling barges up and down the coast. When she could not pick up enough barges to make it pay, why, she'd go galavanting down to Cuba for bales of tobacco or over to the Bermudas for the heaven smelling onion. Today she was an onion ship; which precludes any idea of adventure. She was about 4,000 tons, and her engines were sternward and not amidship. She carried two masts and a half dozen hoist booms, and the only visible sign of anything new on her was her bowsprit. This was new doubtless because she had poked her nose too far into her last slip.

Her crew was orderly and tractable. There were shore drunks, to be sure, because they were sailors; but they were a peaceful lot withal. At this moment they were at work. They moved about briskly, for they were on the point of sailing for the Bahamas—perhaps for more onions. Presently the windlass creaked and shrilled, and the blobby links, much in need of tar paint, red as fish gills, clattered down into the bow. Sometimes they painted the chain as it came over; but paint was costly, and this was done only when the anchor threatened to stay on the bottom.

There was a sailor among this crew, and he went by the name of Steve Blossom; and he was one of his kind. A grimy dime novel protruded rakishly from his hip pocket, and his right cheek was swollen as with the toothache, due, probably, to a generous "chaw" of Seaman's Delight. He was a real tobacco chewer, for he rarely spat. He was as peaceful as a backwater bay in summer; non-argumentative and passive, he stood his watch in fair weather and foul.

No one gave the anchor any more attention after it came to rest. The great city over the way was fairly like in its haziness and transparency. It was the poetry of angles, of shafts and spars of stone; and Steve Blossom, having a moment to himself, leaned against the rail and stared regretfully. He had been generously drunk the night before, and it was a pleasant recollection. Chance led his glance to trail down the cutwater. His neck stretched from his collar like a turtle's from its shell.

"Well, I'll be hornswoggled!" he murmured, shifting his cud from starboard to port.

Caught on the fluke of the anchor was the strangest looking box he had ever laid eyes on. There was leather and steel bands and diamond-shaped ivory and mother of pearl, and it hung jauntily on the point of the rusty fluke. Anybody would be hornswoggled to glimpse such a droll jest of fate. On the fluke of the old mudhook, by a hair, you might say. In all the wild sea yarns he had ever read or heard there was nothing to match this.

Treasure! And Steve was destined never to be passive again. His first impulse was to call his companions; his second impulse was to say nothing at all, and wait for an opportunity to get the box to his bunk without being detected. Treasure! Diamonds and rubies and pearls and old Spanish gold; all hanging to the fluke of the anchor.

"Hornswoggled!" in a kind of awesome whisper this time. "An' we a-headin' for th' Bahamas!" For under his feet he could hear the rhythm of the engines. "What'll I do? If I leave it, some one else'll see it." He scratched his chin perplexedly; and the cud went back to starboard. "I got it!"

He took off his coat and carefully dropped it down over the mysterious box. It was growing darker and darker all the time, and shortly neither coat nor anchor would be visible without close scrutiny. Treasure: greed, cupidity, crime. Steve saw only the treasure and not its camp followers. What did they call them?—doubloons and pieces-of-eight?

He ate his supper with his messmates, and he ate heartily as usual. It would have taken something more vital than mere treasure to disturb Steve Blossom's appetite. He was one of those enviable individuals whose imagination and gastric juices work at the same time. And while he ate he planned. In the first place, he would buy that home at Bedford; then he would take over the Gilson house and live like a lord. If he wanted a drink, all he would have to do would be to turn the spigot or tip a bottle; and more than that, he'd have a bartender to do it. Onions! He swore he would not have an onion within a mile of the Gilson house. "Onions!" Quite unconsciously he spoke this word aloud.

"Hub? Well, if ye don't like onions, find a hooker that packs violets in her hold," was the cheerful advice of the man at Steve's elbow.

"Who's talkin' t' you?" grunted Steve.

"Wha' did I say?"

"Onions, ye lubber! Don't we know what onions is? Ain't we smelt 'em so long that ye could stick yer nose in th' starboard light an' never smell no kerosene? Onions! Pass th' cawfy."

Steve helped himself first. The man who spoke bunked over him, and they were not on the best of terms. There was no real reason for this frank antagonism; simply, they did not splice any more effectually than cotton rope and hemp splice. Sailors are moody and superstitious; at least they generally are on hookers of the "Captain Manners" breed. Steve was superstitious and Jim Dunkers was moody and had no thumb on his left hand. Steve hated the sight of that red nubbin. He was quite certain that it had been a whole thumb once, on the way to gouge out somebody's eye, and had inadvertently connected with somebody's teeth.



"YOU LEMME BY!" BREATHED STEVE.

Spanish doubloons and pearls and diamonds and rubies! It was mighty hard not to say these words out loud, too; blare them into the sullen faces grouped about the table. He was off watch till midnight; and he was wondering if he could get the box without attracting the attention of the lookout, who had a devilish keen eye for everything that stirred on deck or on water. Well, he would have to risk it; but he would wait till full darkness had fallen over the sea and the lookout would be compelled to keep his eyes off the deck. The boys wanted him to play cards.

"Not for me. Busted. How long d' y' think \$40 'll last in New York, anyhow?" And he stalked out of the fore-castle and went down into the waist to enjoy his evening pipe, all the while keeping a weather eye forward, at the matty old pilot house.

It was 10 o'clock, land time, when he ramm'd his cutty into a pocket and resolutely walked forward. If any one watched him they would think he was only looking down the cutwater. The thought of money and the pleasures it will buy makes cunning the stupidest of dolts; and Steve was ordinarily a dolt. But tonight his brain was keen enough for all purposes. It was a hazardous job to get the box off the fluke without letting it slip back into the sea. Steve, however, accomplished the feat, climbed back on the rail and sat down, waiting. A quarter of an hour passed. No one had seen him. With his coat securely wrapped about his precious find he made for the fore-castle. His mates, save those who were doing their watch, were all in their bunks. An oil lamp dimly illuminated the forward partition. Steve's bunk was almost in darkness. Very deftly he rolled back the bedding and secreted the box under his pillows, and then stretched himself out with the pretense of snoozing till the bell called him to duty.

He was rich; and the moment a man has money he has troubles; there is always some one who wants to take it away from you. His bunk was on the port side, and there was plenty of hiding space between the iron plates and the wooden partition. He intended to loosen three or four planks, and then when the time came, slip the box behind them. Some time during the morning the fore-castle would be empty, and then would be his time.

But he suffered the agonies of damnation during his four hours' watch. Supposing some fool should go rummaging about his bunk and discover the box? Suppose . . . But he dared not suppose. There was nothing to do but wait. If he created any curiosity on the part of his mates he was lost. He would have to divide with them all, from the captain down to the cook's boy. It was a heart-rending thought. From being the most open and frank man aboard, he became the most cunning. From being a man without enemies, he saw an enemy even in his shadow.

At 4 o'clock he turned in and slept like a log.

In the morning he found his opportunity. For half an hour the fore-castle was empty of all save himself. Feverishly he pried back the boards, found the brace beam, and gently hid the box there. It was a mighty curious looking box. Once he had stoked up the Chinese coast from the Philippines, and he judged it to be Chinese in origin. He tried to pry open the cover and feast his eyes upon the treasure; but under the leather and ivory and mother of pearl was impervious steel. It would take an ax or a crowbar to stir that lid. He sighed. He replaced the boards, and became to all appearances his stolid self again.

But all the way down to the Bahamas he was moody, and when he answered any question it was with words spoken testily and jerkily.

"I know whut's th' matter," said Dunkers.

"He's in love."

"Shut your mouth!"

"Didn't I tell yuh?" laughed the tanzler, dancing toward the companionway. "Steve's in love, 'r he didn't git drunk enough on shore t' satisfy his whale's belly!"

A boot thudded spitefully against the door jamb.

"You fellahs let me alone, 'r I'll bash in a couple o' heads!"

"O, yuh will, will yuh?" cried Dunkers from the deck. "If yuh want a little exercise, yuh can begin on me, yuh moon-sick swab! Whut's th' matter with yuh, anyhow? Whare'd yuh git this grouch? Whut've we



AND THAT IS WHY THE ORIGINAL BOX WAS ABLE TO BE HIDDEN ONCE AGAIN.

done t' yuh? Huh?"

"You keep out o' my way, that's all. I'm mindin' my watches, an' don't ask no odds of you duffers. What if I have a grouch? Is it any o' your blame business? All right. When we step ashore at th' Bahams, Mister Jim Dunkers, I'll tear the ropes out o' your pulley blocks, an' may th' best man win."

"Leave th' ol' grouch alone, Jim. Th' mate won't stand for no scrapper aboard. We'll have th' thing done right in th' custom sheds. We'll have a finish fight, Queensberry rules, an' may th' best man win."

"I'm willin'," said Jim.

"So'm I," agreed Steve. But his intentions were not honorable. He proposed to desert before any fight took place. Not that he was physically afraid; no; he wanted to dig his hands deep into those doubloons and pieces-of-eight.

So the four days down passed otherwise uneventfully, amid paint pots and iron rust and three meals a day of pork, onion soup, potatoes, and strong, bitter coffee. The winds became light and balmy and the sea blue and gentle. The men went about in their undershirts and dungarees, barefooted. Of course the coming fight was the main topic of conversation. It promised to be a rattling good scrap, for both men were evenly matched, and both had a "kick" in either hand. Even the captain took a mild interest in the affair. He was an old sailor. He knew that there was no such word as arbitration in a sailor's vocabulary; his disputes could be settled only in one manner, by his caloused fists.

When the old mudhook (and some day Steve was going to buy it and hang it over the entrance of the Gilson house) slid down into the smiling waters of the bay, Steve concluded that discretion was the better part of valor. He would steal ashore on the quarantine tug which lay alongside. He was willing to fight under ordinary circumstances, but he must get his treasure in safety first. They could call him a welscher if they wanted to; devil a bit did he care. So he pried back the boards of his bunk wall, took out the box, eyed it fondly, and noted for the first time the lettering on it:

STANLEY HARGREAVE.

He wrinkled his brow in the effort to recall a pirate by this name, but was unsuccessful. No matter. He hugged the box under his coat and made for the gangway, and inadvertently ran into his enemy.

Dunkers caught a bit of the box peeping out from under the coat.

"What 'a' yuh got there?" he demanded truculently.

"None o' your damn business! You lemme by; hear me?"

"Ain't none o' my business, huh? Whare'd yuh git a box like that? Steal it? By cripes, I'm goin' t' have a look at that box, my hearty. It don't smell like honest onions."

"You lemme by!" breathed Steve, with murder in his heart.

Suddenly the two men closed, surged back and forth, one determined to take and the other to hold this mysterious box. Dunkers struggled to uphold his word: not that he really wanted the box but to prove that he was strong enough to take it if he wanted to. The name on the box flashed and disappeared. It was a kind of shock to him. He and Blossom went battering against the rail. Dunkers' grip slipped and so did Blossom's. The result was that the box was catapulted into the sea. With an agonizing cry, Blossom leaped far over. He saw the box oscillate for a moment, then sink gracefully in a zigzag course, down through the blue waters. Fainter and fainter it grew, and at last vanished.

"I'm sorry, Steve; but yuh wouldn't let me look at it," said Dunkers, contritely.

"Damn you; I'm goin' t' kill y' for that!"

It became a real fight this time, fist and foot, tooth and nail; one mad with the lust to kill and the other desperately intent on living. It was one of those contests in which honor and fair play have no part. But for the timely arrival of the captain and some of the crew Dunkers would have been badly injured, perhaps fatally. They hauled back Blossom, roaring out his oaths at the top of his lungs. It took half an hour's arguing to calm him down. Then the captain demanded to know what it was all about. And blubbering, Steve told him.

"Six hundred feet of water, if I've got my reckoning right. The anchor lies in sixty feet, but the starboard side drops sheer six hundred. You swab! Why didn't you bring the box to me? A man has a right to what he finds. I'd have taken care of it for you till we got back to port. I know; you were greedy; you thought I might want to stick my fist into your treasure. And you'll never find it in 600 feet of water and tangled, porous coral. That's what you get for being a blamed hog. As for you," and the captain turned to Dunkers, "get your dunnage and your pay and hunt for another boat back. I won't have no murder on board 'Captain Manners.' And the sooner you go, the better."

"I'll go, sir," said Dunkers, readily enough. Had the misfortune happened to him and had Blossom been the aggressor, he would want his life. He understood. Like the valet in "Olivette," it was the time for disappearing.

"An' keep out o' my way. I'll git y' yet," growled Blossom.

"Keep your mouth shut," said the mate, "or I'll have you put in irons, you pig!"

"All right, sir. I've said all I'm goin' t' say t'day"; and Blossom strode off.

"What was the box like?" asked the captain of Dunkers.

"Chinese contraption, sir; leastwise it looked that way to me. Didn't look as if it'd been in th' water long, sir. Somethin' lost overboard by some private yacht, t' my thinkin'. I'll keep out o' Steve's way. I'll lay low on shore, sir."

And though Steve made a perfect range of the spot, he never came back to find the mysterious box, never saw the Gilson house back home, nor did he ever see Dunkers again. On the voyage home he brooded continually, and was frequently found blubbering; and one night he skipped his watch and went to Davy Jones' locker.

Dunkers had not told about the name he had seen on the box; and Blossom had not thought to. The name Hargreave had instantly brought back to Dunkers' mind the newspaper stories he had recently read. There was no doubt in the world that this box belonged to the missing millionaire, who had drawn a million from his banks and vanished; and, moreover, there was no doubt in Dunkers' mind that this million lay in the Bahaman waters. It had been drawn up from the bottom of the sound, under the path of the balloon. He proceeded, then, to take a most minute range. It would require money and partners; but half a loaf would be far better than no loaf at all; and he was determined to return to New York to find backing. Finding is keeping, on land or sea.

Now it happened that his favorite grog shop was a cheap saloon across the way from the headquarters of The Black Hundred; and Vroon occasionally dropped in, for he often picked up a valuable bit of maritime news. Dunkers was an old friend of the barkeeper, and he proceeded to pour and guzzle down his throat a very poor substitute for whisky. He became communicative. He bragged. He knew where there was a million, and all he needed was a first class diving bell. A year from now he would not be drinking cheap whisky; he'd be steering a course up and down Broadway and buying wine when he was thirsty. He was no miser. But he had to have a diving bell; and where the blue devil could he get one with \$12 and an Ingersoll watch in his pocket?

From his table Vroon made a sign which the bartender understood. Then he rose and approached Dunkers.

"I own a pretty good diving apparatus," he said. "If you've got the goods, I'll take a chance on a fifty-fifty basis." Vroon did not believe there was anything back of this talk; but it always paid to dig deep enough to find out. "Have a drink; and, Bill, give us a real whisky and none of your soap-ye. Now, let's hear your yarn."

"I don't know yuh," said Dunkers, with drunken caution. "How is it, Bill?" turning to the bartender.

"He's the goods, Jim. You've heard of Wyant & Co.?"

"Sure I've heard o' them. Best divin' apparatus they is."

"Well, this gent here is Mr. Brooks, general manager for Wyant & Co. I can O. K. him."

Vroon threw an appreciative glance at the bartender. He was not affiliated with The Black Hundred, but he had often aided Vroon in minor affairs.

"All right, if yuh say so, BILL. Well, here's th' yarn."

And when he had done, Vroon smoked quietly without speaking.

"Don't yuh believe it?" demanded Dunkers, truculently.

"But 600 feet of water, in a coral bottom, and no way of telling just where it fell onto board. That's a tough proposition."

"O, it is, is it? I'm a sailor. I can lug my hand right over th' spot. Do yuh think I'd be fool enough t' hunt for it without a perfect range?" Dunkers tapped his coat pocket suggestively.

And Vroon knew that the one thing he wanted was there, a plan or a drawing of the range. So there was another man shanghaied that night, and his destination was Cape Town, twenty-two days' voyage by the calendar.

Vroon carried his information to the organization that same night. They would start the expedition at once, and till this was accomplished, Hargreave's daughter was to be immune from attacks. Besides, it would give Hargreave (wherever he was) and the others the idea that The Black Hundred had concluded to give up the chase.

Above, with his ear to a small hole, skillfully bored through the ceiling without permitting the plaster to fall, knelt a man with a bandaged arm. He could never see any faces; no one ever took off a mask in this sinister chamber. But there were voices, and he was never going to forget some of them. After the meeting came to an end, he waited an hour after, and then stole down into the street by the aid of the fire escape. Later, he entered a telephone booth and called up Jones.

Then, one leathern and steel box, dotted with bits of ivory and mother-of-pearl, became two; and the second one was soaked in mud and salt water for two weeks till you could not have told it from the original. And that is why Jones was able, some weeks later, to hide once more the original box. As for the substitute, just as Braine was about to use a mallet and chisel upon it, the lights went out. There was a wild scramble, a chair or two was overturned.

"The door, the door!" shouted Braine, furious.

It slammed the moment the words left his lips. And as suddenly as they had gone out the lights sprang up. The box was gone. There were evidently traitors among The Black Hundred.