

The MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY By HAROLD MAC GRATH

\$10,000 FOR ONE HUNDRED WORDS.

"The Million Dollar Mystery" story will run for twenty-two consecutive weeks in this paper. By an agreement 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 the 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 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 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 \$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 \$1,000,000 from the bank, but it is reported that this dropped into the sea when the balloon he escaped in was captured.

Florence arrives from the girls' school. Countess Olga, Braine's companion, visits her and claims her as 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 causes an estrangement between Norton and Florence.

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

Norton and Florence, safely ashore and with no longer any misunderstanding between them, take the train for home. The train is wrecked and 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.

Concealed above the rendezvous of the Black Hundred, a man learns of the recovery from the sea of the box of jewels by a sailor and of its subsequent return to the bottom of the sea, and he quickly communicates the fact to Jones. A duplicate box is planted and later secured by the band, but before its contents are examined the box mysteriously disappears.

Owing to the falling off of contributions to the parent organization in Russia, an agent arrives and assumes the leadership of the American branch of the Black Hundred. Through the connivance of the countess, the new head is thoroughly humiliated. Braine pursues his own plans pending restoration to power.

new adage, Jones, I shouldn't mind hearing it. But I'm only just out of school, where old adages are served from soup to pudding. Good-night."

And Jones went to the rear of the house, chucking.

In the passing it might well be observed that the Hargreave house had a remarkable ménage. There was a gardener, a cook, and a maid; and the three of them reported to Jones each night before going to bed. They were all three detectives from one of the greatest organizations in America.

Finding themselves unable to lure Florence away from the environs of the Hargreave home, the Black Hundred set some new machinery in motion. They proposed to rid the house of every one in it by a perfectly logical device. But the first step in this new move was going to be extremely delicate and risky. It was no small adventure to enter the Hargreave home; and yet this must be done. So finally "Spider" Beggs was selected for the work. The man could practically walk over crockery without causing a sound; he could climb a house by the window ledges; and he could hold his breath like those professional tank swimmers.

Three or four nights after the Paroff fiasco, Jones started the rounds, putting out the lights. He left the one in the hall till the last, for it was his habit, after having turned off that light, to stand by the door for several minutes, watching. One never could tell.

On the other hand, "Spider" Beggs never approached a house till an hour after the lights went out. Persons were likely to move about for some minutes later; they might want something to eat, a drink of water. So he remained hidden behind the summer house till long after midnight. When at last he felt assured that all in the Hargreave house were asleep, he moved out cautiously. Both his future and his pocketbook depended upon the success of this venture. It took him ten minutes to crawl from the summer house to the veranda, and to have detected this approach Jones, had he been watching, would have needed a searchlight. Beggs hugged the lattice work for another ten minutes and then drew himself up and wriggled to one of the windows. Here was an operation that needed all his art and skill: to lift this window without sound. But he was an old hand and windows with ordinary locks were playthings under his deft touch. He raised the window, stepped over the sill into the library, and crouched down. He did not close the window; house thieves never do. They leave windows and doors open, because sooner or later they have got to make their escape that way.

Presently he stood up, flashed his torch, found the library shelves, and tiptoed toward them. He then selected three or four volumes, opened them at random and laid neat packages of money between the leaves. It was not real money, but only a bank clerk could have told you that. This done, he moved toward the window again.

"Stop!" said Jones quietly.

"Spider" Beggs gasped, it was so unexpected; but at the same time almost instinctively he plunged headlong through the window and the bullet which followed snapped

a lock of his hair. He threw himself off the veranda and scurried across the lawn, zig-zag fashion. But no more bullets followed.

Jones turned on the lights and investigated the room, but he could not find anything disturbed, and naturally came to the conclusion that the intruder had been interrupted before he had begun his work. He turned off the lights and sat up the major portion of the night. Nothing more happened. Florence came down, but he sent her back to bed, explaining that some one had attempted to enter the house and he had taken a shot at him.

"Spider" Beggs had a letter to write. He was in high feathers. He had tackled a difficult job and had come away without a scratch. But he had the misfortune to write his letter to the secret service officials in a hotel often frequented by Norton. And

"Yes, Mr. Hargreave had it built several years ago. I don't know what his idea was; possibly he anticipated an event like this. You and your men will find entrance by fair method. It can be done without exciting the suspicions of the watchers."

"Looks as if my yarn wasn't going to be delayed so long after all. Jones, you ought to have been in the secret service yourself," admiringly.

Jones smiled and shrugged. "I am perfectly satisfied with my lot—or would be if the Black Hundred could be wiped out of existence."

"I'll see the secret service people at once. I stand in well with them all."

"And good luck to you. We'll need good luck."

Norton was welcomed cordially by the chief. The secret service men trusted him

"Then I pass. I know you well enough. If you've made up your mind not to talk a man couldn't get anything out of you with a can-opener. And that's why we trust you, my boy. Don't forget the telephone."

"I shan't. So long."

That same night Braine paid the Russian woman a brief visit. The secret service will raid the house tomorrow and then for a few days we'll roam about as we bally please. I'm hanged if I don't have every plank torn up and all the walls pulled down. More and more I'm convinced that the money is in fast house."

"Don't be too confident," warned Olga. "So many times have we been tripped up when everything seemed in our hands. The house should be guarded but not entered for a day or two; at least not till after the raid

"H'm. Complimentary?"

"No; just ordinary everyday love."

"Ah, Olga, why the deuce must you go and fall in love with a bundle of ashes like myself? Ashes and bitter ashes, too. Sometimes I regret. But the regretting only seems to make me all the more savage. What opium and dope are to other men, danger and excitement are to me. It is not written that I shall die in bed. I have told you that already. There is no other woman—now. And I do love you after a fashion, as a man loves a comrade. Wait till this dancing bout is over and I may talk otherwise. And now I am going to a reception. I am going to shake hands and noobnob with the elite—beautiful word! And while I bow and smirk and crack witticisms, I and the devil will be chucking in our sleeves. But this I'll tell you, while there's a drop of blood in my veins, a breath in my body, I'll stick to this fight if only to prove that I'm not a quitter."

He caught her suddenly in his arms, kissed her, ran lightly to the door, and was gone before she could recover from her astonishment.

The affair went smoothly, without a hitch. Norton and his men gained the house through the tunnel without attracting the least attention. The Black Hundred, watching the front and rear of the house, never dreamed that there existed another mode of entrance or that there was a secret cabinet room.

Half an hour later the head of the secret service, accompanied by his men, together with "Spider" Beggs, who was in high feather over his success, arrived, demanded admittance, and went at the fount of the business at once.

"Your name is Jones," began the chief. The butler nodded, though his face evinced no little bewilderment at the appearance of these men.

"What is it you wish, sir?"

"I am from the secret service and I have it from a pretty good source that there is counterfeit money hidden in this house. More than that, I can put my hand on the very place it is hidden."

"That is impossible, sir," declared Jones indignantly.

"I'm an old hand, Mr. Jones. It will not do you a bit of good to put on that bold front."

Beggs smiled. How was he to know that this was a comedy act especially for his benefit.

"I should like to see that money," said Jones, not quite so bravely.

"Come with me," said the secret service man. "Where's the library?"

"Beyond that door, sir."

The chief, beckoning to his men, entered the library, went directly to a certain shelf, extracted three volumes, and there lay the money in three neat packages.

"Good heavens!" gasped Jones.

"I shall have to request you and the family to accompany me to the station."

"But it is all utterly impossible, sir! I know nothing of that money, nor how it got there. It's a plot. I declare on my oath, sir, that I am innocent, that Miss Florence and her companion know nothing about it."

"You will have to tell all that to the federal judge, sir. My duty is to take you all to the station. It would be just as well not to say anything more, sir."

"Very well; but some one shall smart for this outrage."

"That remains to be seen," was the terse comment of the secret service man.

He led his prisoners away directly.

Norton and his men had to wait far into the night. The Black Hundred did not intend to make any mistake this time by a hasty move. At quarter after 10 they descended. Braine was not with them. This was due to the urgent request of Olga, who still had her doubts. The men rioted about the house, searching nooks and corners, examining floors and walls, opening books, pulling out drawers, but they found nothing. They talked freely, however, and the dictagraph registered every word. The printing plant, which had so long defied discovery, was in the cellar of the house occupied by the Black Hundred. Norton and his men determined to follow and raid the building. And the reporter promised himself a good front page story without in any way conflicting with his promises to Jones.

Events came to pass as they expected. The trailing was not the easiest thing. Norton knew about where the building was, but he could not go to it directly. He was quite confident that its entrance was identical with that which had the trap door through which he had been flung that memorable day when he had been shipwrecked.

When they reached the building he warned the men to hug the wall to the stairs. The trap yawned, but no one was hurt. They scampered up the stairs like a lot of eager boys; broke the door in—to find the weird executive chamber dark and empty and an acrid smoke in their nostrils. This latter grew stifling as they blundered about in the dark. By luck Norton found the exit and called to the men to follow. They saw Beggs at the top of the stairway and called out to him to surrender. He held up his hands and the stairs collapsed. Real fire burst out and Norton and his companion had a desperate battle with flame and smoke to gain the street.

The fire was put out finally, but there was nothing in the ruins to prove that there had been a counterfeiting den there. There was, however, at least one consoling feature: in the future the Black Hundred would have to hold their star-chambers elsewhere.

It was checkmate; or, rather, it was a draw.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



I SHALL HAVE TO REQUEST YOU AND THE FAMILY TO ACCOMPANY ME TO THE STATION

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CHAPTER XIV.

NORTON MAKES A DISCOVERY.

PERHAPS the most amusing phase of the secret agent's discomfiture was the fact that neither Jones nor Florence had the least idea what had happened in the summer house nor that anything had happened. Florence regretted a hundred times during the evening that she had not gone out to the summer house. It might really have been her father. Her regret grew so deep in her that just before going to bed she confessed to Jones.

"You received a letter of that sort and did not show it to me?" said Jones, astonished.

"You warned me never to pay any attention to them."

"No; I warned you never to act upon them without first consulting me. And we might have made a capture! My child, always show me these things. I will advise you whether to tear them up or not."

"Jones, I believe you are going a little too far," said Florence laughingly. "It might have been from my father."

"Never in this wide world, Miss Florence. Still, I beg your pardon for raising my voice. What I do and have done is only for your own sake. There are two things I wish to impress upon your mind before I go. This can be made a comedy or a terrible tragedy. You have already had a taste of the latter; and each time you escaped because God was good to us. But He is rarely kind to thoughtless people. They have to look out for themselves. I am acting under orders; always remember that."

"Forgive me; I acted wrongly. But I'm so weary and tired of this eternal suspicion of everybody and everything. Can't I go somewhere, some place where I can have rest?"

"If I thought for a single moment it was possible to take you thousands of miles from this spot, it would be done this very night. But this is our fortress. So far it has been impregnable. The police are watching it; and that prevents a general assault by the scoundrels. If we tried to leave we would be followed; and they play that game exceedingly well. Now, good-night. We'll have you out of all this doubt and suspicion one of these days. There will not be any past; that will be lopped off as you'd lop a limb from a tree."

"Please let it be quick. I want to see my father."

Jones's eyes sparkled. "And you have my word that he wants to see you. But more I dare not tell you."

"Do you think he would object to Mr. Norton?" she asked, studying the rug.

"In what capacity?" he countered, forcing her hand.

"As—as a husband?" bravely.

Jones in his turn studied the patterns in the rug. "It is only natural for a father to look high for his daughter's husband. But, after all, an honest man is worth as much as anything I know of. And Norton is honest and loyal and brave."

"Thank you, Jones. I intend to marry him when the time comes; so you may as well prepare father for this eventuality."

"There is an old adage—"

But she interrupted him. "If you have a

so Jim, on finishing his own letter, blotted it and casually glanced at the blotter. A single word caught his eye. Being an alert newspaper man, always on the hunt for stories, he examined the blotter with care. It was an easy matter for him to read writing backward, having fooled away many an hour in the composing rooms. The word which had awakened the reportorial sense in him was "counterfeit." He held the blotter toward the mirror and read enough to satisfy himself that the Black Hundred had become active once more. And this was one of the best ideas they had yet conceived.

Hargreave had always been something of a mystery to his neighbors. Where he had lived in other days was unknown; neither had any one the remotest idea from what source his riches had been obtained. And nothing was known of Jones or the daughter. It was a very shrewd method of clearing every one out of the house and leaving it to be examined at leisure. And he had fallen upon this thing; he, Norton, all because his tailor had written him a sharp note about his bill and he had been provoked to reply in kind! Counterfeit money. There was quite a flurry these days over certain issues of spurious paper. It was so good that only experts could detect it. There were two plates, one for ten and another for twenty. For a while he was pulled between duty and love. Well, it would only add another interesting chapter to the general story when he published it. He started out to Riverdale to acquaint Jones with the discovery.

"Humph!" said Jones; "not a bad idea, fnis. So that's what the sneak was doing here last night. I've been wondering and wondering. Let's have a look."

He went through the books and at length came across the three volumes. These held a thousand in excellent counterfeit.

"Mighty good work that. What are you going to do?" asked the reporter.

Jones rubbed his chin reflectively. "How long may a counterfeiter be sent up?"

"Anywhere from ten to twenty years."

"That will serve. My boy, this time we'll go and take Mr. Black Hundred right in his cubby hole."

"You know where it is?"

"Every nook and corner of it. Now you go at once to the chief of the local branch of the secret service and put the matter to him frankly. I, Florence, Susan, and the rest of us must be arrested. The wretches must believe that the house is empty. They'll rove about fruitlessly and will return to their den to report the success of the coup. All the while you and some detectives will be in hiding upstairs, dictagraph and all that. When the time comes you will follow. This will not reach the heads, perhaps, but it will demoralize the organization in such a way as to make it helpless for several months to come. There is a tunnel from the stables to this house."

"What a tunnel?"

and told him lots of tales that never saw light on the printed page. The reporter went directly to the point of his story, without elaboration, and the chief smiled and handed him the original letter.

"Norton, I've been after this gang of counterfeiters for months and they are clever beyond words. I've never been able to get anywhere near their presses. And for a moment I thought this note was from a squealer. I've a dozen men scouring the country. They find the bogus notes, but never the men who pass them. You see, it's new stuff. I know what all the old timers are at; but none of them has had a hand in this issue. Some foreigners, I take it, under the leadership of a man I'd very much like to know. Now, what's your scheme?"

Jim outlined it briefly.

"It all depends," said the chief, "upon the fact that they will be impatient. If they have the ability to wait, we lose. But we can afford to risk the chance. The man who wrote this letter is not a counterfeiter. He's an old yeggman. We haven't heard anything of him lately. We tried to corner him on a postoffice job, but he slipped by. He may be a stool. Anyhow, I'll draw him in somehow."

"There'll be some excitement."

"We're used to that; you, too. All we've got to do is to locate this man Beggs. There are signs of spite in this letter. Very well played, if you want my opinion. What's this Black Hundred?"

"I'm not at liberty to tell just yet. It's a strange game; half political, half blackmail. It's a pretty strong organization. But if they're back of this counterfeiting, there's a fine chance of landing them all."

Here the chief's assistant came in. "Got Beggs on the wire. Says he'll conduct you to the home if you'll promise him immunity for some other offenses."

"Tell him he shall have immunity on the word of the chief. But also say that he must come to see me in person."

"All right, sir."

"I don't believe it would be wise for Beggs to see me here. I gave him a good send-off—Sing Sing—five years ago. He may recollect," said Norton.

"Suit yourself about that. Only, keep into communication with me by telephone and I'll tip you off as to when the raid shall take place. Lucky you came in. I should have honestly gone there and arrested innocent people, and they would have had a devil of a time explaining. It would have taken them at least a week to clear themselves. That would leave the house empty all that time."

Norton did not reply, but he put the blotter away carefully. There was no getting away from the fact, but the god of luck was with him.

"Do you know what's back of it all?"

"I can't tell you any more than I have," said Norton.

"You."