

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 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 at 5 South Wabash avenue, Chicago, Ill., or Thanhouser Film corporation, 71 West Twenty-third street, New York City, N. Y., any time up to midnight, Jan. 15, 1915. 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 Tince. 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 Hargrave, 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. Hargrave 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 girl's school where eighteen years before he mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. That day Hargrave 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 punctured.

Black Hundred, a man learns of the recovery of the box from the sea 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.

Finding himself checkmated at every turn, Braine endeavors to enmesh the Hargrave household in the law in order to gain free access to the house. The timely discovery of the plot by Norton sets the police at the heels of the pack and results in a raid on the gang's rendezvous, which, however, proves to be barren of results.

The Black Hundred begins to fear Norton and plan to dispose of him. Again the unnoticed butler shows his hand by rescuing Norton and defeating Braine.

Braine and Countess Olga plan a daring attempt to capture Florence and Norton at a masked ball given by Princess Parlova. They defeat their own plan by over-anxiety.

And still the golden tinted bank notes repose tranquilly in their hiding place!



FLORENCE RISKS HER LIBERTY TO OBTAIN THE MAGIC PAPERS.

suspicious of this sleepy-eyed reporter. She never could tell how much he knew. But of Florence she was reasonably certain; and so long as she could fool the pretty infant the suspicions of the reporter were of a negligible quantity. She greeted them effusively and offered them chairs. For half an hour they sat there, chatting inanities, all the while each mind busy with deeper concerns.

When the man in search of Florence eventually arrived and asked the manager of the garden if he knew Miss Hargrave by sight the manager pointed toward the box. The man wound his way in and out of the idlers and by the time he reached the box Jim and Florence had made their departure. The man bowed, approached, and asked if she was Miss Hargrave. For a moment the countess suspected a trap. Then it appealed to her mind that if there was no trap it might be well to pose as Florence, if only to learn what the outcome might be.

"Yes. What is wanted?" she asked. The man took a letter from his pocket and handed it to Olga, saying: "Give this to your father. He knows how to read it." Before she could reply the man had turned and was hurrying away.

Olga opened the note, her heart beating furiously. It was utterly blank. At first she thought it was a hoax. Then she happened to remember that there was such a thing as invisible ink. At last! Hargrave was alive; this letter settled all doubt in her mind on this question. Alive! And not only that, but the girl and Jones were evidently in communication with him. She summoned a waiter, made a secret sign, and he bowed and approached. She slipped the letter into his hand and whispered: "Show that at the cave tomorrow. It is in invisible ink and meant for Hargrave."

"He's alive?" "Positively." "Very well." The waiter bowed and strolled away nonchalantly.

Braine was in Boston over night, otherwise the countess would have taken the mysterious note at once to him. She remained for perhaps a quarter of an hour longer and then left the garden. She would have taken the letter to her own apartment but for the fact that the chemicals needed were hidden in the cave.

Now it happened that Florence went out for her early ride the next morning, and crossing a field she saw a man with a bundle under his arm. The sun struck his profile and limed it plainly, and Florence uttered a low cry. The man had not observed her. So, very quietly, she slipped from the horse, tethered it to a tree, and started after the man to learn what he was doing so far from the city. She would never forget that face. She had seen it that dreadful night when the note had lured her into the hands of her enemies. The face belonged to the man who had impersonated her father.

It occurred to her that she might just as well do a little detective work on her own hook. She had passed through so many terrifying episodes that she was beginning to crave for the excitement, strange as this may seem. Like a gambler who has once played for high stakes, she no longer found pleasure in thimbles and needles and pins. She followed the man with no little skill and at length saw him approach a knoll, stoop, apparently press a spring, and a hole suddenly yawned. The man vanished quickly, and the spot took on again its virginal appearance. A cave! Florence had the patience to wait. By and by the man appeared again and slunk away.

When she was sure that he was beyond range, she came out from the place of concealment, crept up the knoll, and searched about for the magic Tangle of this strange



WHERE HAVE THEY HIDDEN THAT MONEY?

door. Diligence rewarded her, and she soon found herself in a large, musty earth-smelling cave. Loot was scattered about, and there were boxes and chairs and a large chest. Men evidently met here, possibly after some desperate adventure against society. She found nothing to reward her hardihood, and as she was in the act of moving toward the cave's door she beheld with terror that it was moving!

She was near the chest at that moment. The cave was not a deep one. There was no tunnel, only a wall. Resolutely she raised the lid of the chest, stepped inside, and drew the lid down. She was just in time. The door opened and three men entered, talking volubly. They felt perfectly secure in talking as loudly as they pleased. To Florence it seemed almost impossible that they did not hear the thunder of her heart? Strain her ears as she might, she could gather but little of what they said, except:

"If Hargrave had this paper we might all be put on the defensive. To an outsider it is a blank paper. But the boss will be able to read it. . . ." The speaker moved away from the vicinity of the chest and she heard no more.

Very deftly Florence raised the lid just enough to peep out. The man who had been talking was putting the note in his hip pocket. As he turned toward the chest he sat down on the soapbox immediately in front of the chest. An inspiration came to the girl, an exceedingly daring one. She took her liberty in her hands as she executed the deed. But the dimness of the cave added her. When she crouched down again the magic paper was hers.

It seemed hours to her before the men left the cave. As she heard the hidden door jar in closing she raised the lid and stepped out, breathing deeply. The paper she had purloined was indeed blank, but Jones or Jim would know what to do with it. And wouldn't they be surprised when she told them what she had accomplished all alone? Her exultation was of short duration. She heard the whine of the door on its hinges. The men were returning. Why?

They were returning because they had discovered a woman's shoeprint outside. It pointed toward the cave, freshly, and there

ment that turned the reporter's gaze. He, too, now saw the woman in the water and wondered how she had come there. When Braine reached the girl and pulled her into the launch Jim saw her face plainly.

He flew from his vantage point, found a skiff, and started after Braine.

"By the Lord Harry!" murmured the rogue. "Well, they can talk of manna from heaven, but this is what I call luck. Florence Hargrave, out of nowhere, into my arms! The god of luck has cast another horseshoe and it's mine."

He had a flask in his pocket, and he forced some of the biting spirits down the girl's throat. She opened her eyes.

"Well, my beauty?"

Florence eyed him wildly, not quite understanding where he had come from.

"I don't know how you got here," he said; "and I don't care. But here we are together at last. Where is your father?"

"I—I don't know," dazedly.

"Better think quickly," he warned. "I want lucid answers to my questions, or back you go into the water. I'm about at the end of my rope. I've been beaten too many times, my girl, to have any particular love for you. Now, where is your father?"

"I don't know; I have never seen him."

Braine laughed. And Jim's boat ran afoul some rocks and into the water he went. He had not attracted Braine's attention, fortunately. He began to swim toward the drifting launch.

"Where have they hidden that money?"

"I don't know."

"Well, well; I've given you your chance. You'll have to try your luck with the water again."

Florence, weak as she was, set her lips. "You don't ask for mercy!" he said banteringly.

"I should be wasting my breath to ask for mercy from such a monster as you are," she answered quickly.

"That damned Hargrave nerve!" he snarled.

He rolled up his sleeves and stepped toward her. She braced herself but did not turn her eyes from his. Suddenly, from nowhere at all, came a pair of hands. One clutched the gunwale and the other laid hold of Braine. A quick pull followed, and Braine began to topple. But even as he fell he managed to fling himself atop his assailant; and it was only when the struggle began in the water that he recognized the reporter. All the devil in him came to the surface and he fought with the fierceness of a tiger to kill, kill, kill. In nearly every instance this meddling reporter had checkmated him. This time one or the other of them should stay in the water.

Norton recognized that he had a large order before him to disable Braine. The recognition between them was now frank and absolute; there could never again be any diplomatic sidestepping.

"You're a dead man, Norton!" panted Braine, as he reached for the reporter's throat.

Norton said nothing, but struck the hand aside. For a moment they both went under. They came up sputtering, each trying for a hold. It was a terribly enervating struggle.

Florence could do nothing. The boat in which she sat continued to drift away from the fighting men. Once she tried to reach Braine with the pole she had been using, but failed.

From the shore came another boat. For awhile she could not tell whether it contained friends or enemies. It was terrible to be forced to wait, absolutely helpless. When she heard the newcomers call encouragingly to Braine she knew then that the brave fight of her sweetheart was going to come to naught. She knew a little about motors. She threw on the power and headed straight toward the rowboat. The men shouted at her, but she did not alter her course. The rowboat had its sides crushed in and the men went pling into the water.

"Jim," she cried.

Norton suddenly flung off Braine and began to swim toward the motorboat, which Florence had brought about. Even then it was only by the barest luck in the world that Norton managed to catch the gunwale. The rest of it was simple. When they finally reached a haven, Florence, oddly enough, thought of the horse she had left tethered nine miles from the stables. She laughed hysterically.

"I guess he won't die. We can send some one out for him. Now, for heaven's sake, how did you get into this? Where were you? What have you been up to?" with tender brusqueness.

"I wanted to do a little detective work of my own," she faltered.

"It looks as if you had done it. You infant! Will you never learn to keep outside this middle? It's a man's work."

Florence, thoroughly weakened by her long immersion in the water, began to weep silently.

"You poor child. I'm a brute!" And he comforted her.

Later that day, at home, she remembered the blank paper.

"I stole this from one of the men in the cave. He said this blank paper would probably save father."

Jim took it. "Hm! Invisible ink, and it's had a fine washing."

"But maybe it is waterproof."

"Maybe it is. Anyhow, Miss Sherlock, we'll show it to Jones and see what he says."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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CHAPTER XIX

A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER.

FLORENCE was a fortnight in recovering from the shock of her experience at the masked ball of the Princess Parlova, who, by the way, disappeared from New York shortly after the fire, no doubt because of her fear of the Black Hundred. The fire did not destroy the house, but most of the furnishings were so thoroughly drenched by water that they were practically ruined. Her coming and going were a nine days' wonder, and then the public found something else to talk about.

Norton was a constant visitor at the Hargrave place. There was to him a new interest in that mysterious house, with its hidden panels, its false floors, its secret tunnels; but he treated Jones upon the same basis as hitherto. One thing, however: He felt a sense of security in regard to Florence such as he had not felt before. So, between assignments, he ran out to Riverdale and did what he could to amuse his sweetheart. Later, they took short rides in the runabout, and at length she became as lively as she has ever been.

But often she would catch Norton brooding.

"What makes you frown like that?"

"Was I frowning?" innocently enough.

"I find you this way a dozen times in an afternoon. What is the matter? Are they after you again?"

"Heavens, no! I'm only a vague issue. They will not bother me so long as I do not bother them. It has dwindled into a game of truce."

"Do you think so?" eying him curiously.

"Why, yes."

"What's the use of trying to fool me, Jim? If they haven't been after you, you are sensing a presage of evil. I'm not a child any longer. Haven't I been through enough to make me a woman? Sometimes I feel very old."

"To me you are the most charming in all this wide world. No, you're not a child any longer. You are a woman, brave and patient; and I know that I could trust you with any secret I have or own. But sometimes a person may have a secret which is not his and which he hasn't any right to disclose."

She became silent for awhile. "I hate money," she said. "I hate it, hate it!"

"It's mighty comfortable to have it around sometimes," he countered.

"As in my case, for instance. If I were poor and had to work no one would bother me."

"I would!" he declared, laughing. "Come; let's throw off moods and go into town for tea at the Rosa Garden; and if you feel strong enough we'll trip the light fantastic."

They had been gone from the house less than an hour when a man ran up the steps of the veranda and rang the bell. Jones being busy at the rear of the house, the maid came to the door.

"Is Miss Hargrave in?" the stranger asked.

"No," abruptly. The door began to close ever so slowly.