



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.

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 \$1,000,000 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 her as a relative. The Black Hundred then see a means of making Florence a target for their attacks. They are after the \$1,000,000, and Braine, their leader, sets traps for Florence. The Black Hundred, after a number of attempts, fail, due to the wisdom of Jones, the Hargreave butler, and Norton, a newspaper man.

Concocted at the rendezvous of the Black Hundred, a man learns of the re-

covery 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 crush the Hargreave 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 begin to fear Norton and plan to dispose of him. Again the unnoticed butler shows his hand by rescuing Norton and defeating Braine.

Florence secures a mysterious paper which is of vital importance to her father's safety. Braine loses hope of securing the \$1,000,000 and turns to revenge.

Henri Servan is given documentary evidence against the Black Hundred. They try to get it from him by a clever ruse, but again Jones beats them to it.

down the copy. He opened a drawer and took out two envelopes. The blue one he tore up and dropped into the waste basket. Norton understood and smiled. They had meant to discharge him if he fell down. The other envelope was a fat one.

"Open it," said the editor, smiling a little himself.

This envelope contained a check for \$2,500, two round trip first class tickets to

lessly, looking out of windows, imagining forms in the shadows. Her imagination had not deceived her; she had heard doors close softly.

"Susan, Susan!" she murmured; but Susan was in the hospital.

Oliver Twist! What had possessed her to start reading that old tale again? She should have read something of a light and joyous character. After half an hour's wandering about the lonely house she returned to the library, feeling that she would be safer where both telephone and revolver were.

And while she sat waiting for she knew not what, her swiftly beating heart sending the blood into her throat so that it almost suffocated her, a man turned into the street and walked resolutely toward the Hargreave place. He passed a man leaning against a lamp post, but he never turned to look at him.

"Don't you know me?" asked the stranger in a singularly pleasant voice.

Florence had been imposed upon too many times. She shook her head defiantly, though her knees shook so that she was certain that the least touch would send her over.

"I am your father, child!"

Florence slipped unsteadily behind the desk and seized the revolver which lay in the drawer. The man by the curtains smiled sadly. It was a smile that caused Florence to waver a bit. Still, she extended her arm.

"You do not believe me?" said the man, advancing slowly.

"No. I have been deceived too many times, sir. Stay where you are. You will wait here till my butler returns. O, if I were only sure!" she burst out suddenly and passionately. "What proof have you that you are what you say?"

safety. Can't you feel the truth of all this?"

"No, no! Please do not approach any nearer; stay where you are!"

At that moment the telephone rang. With the revolver still leveled she picked up the receiver.

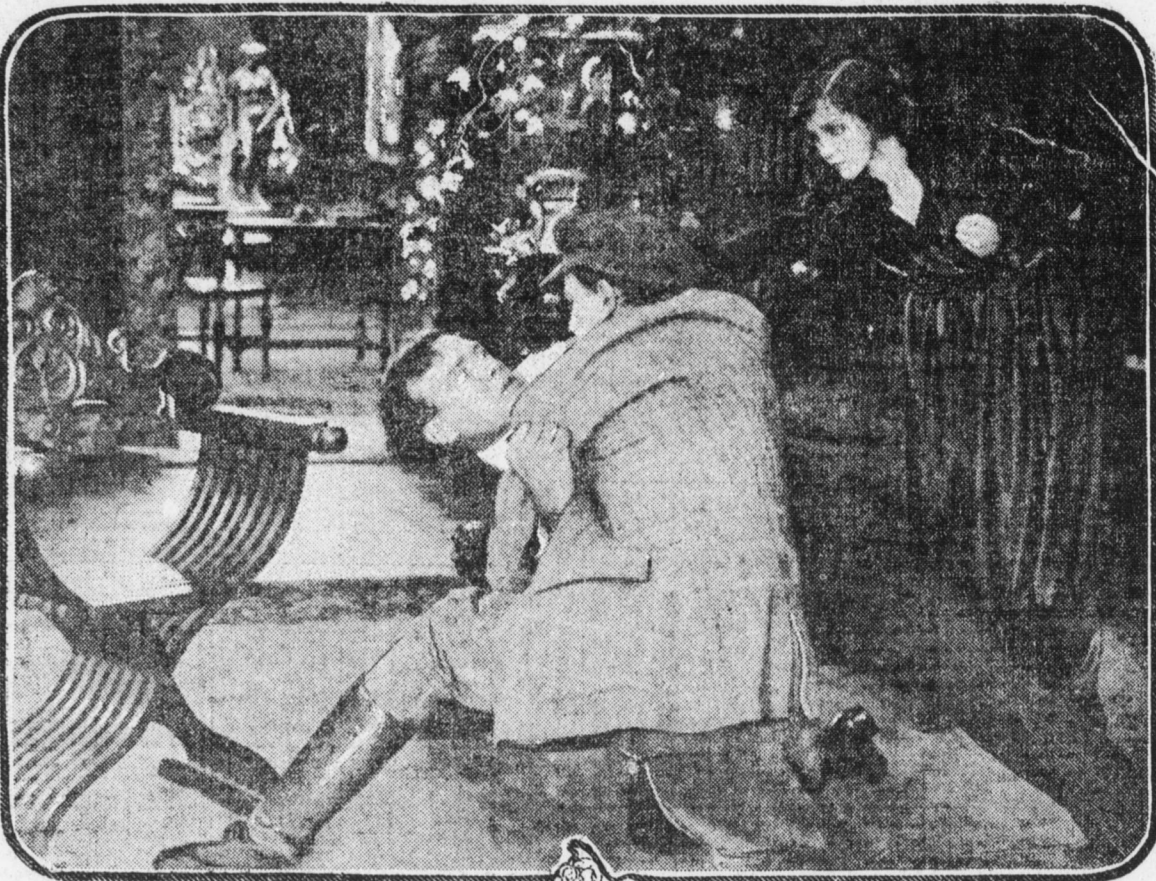
"Hello, hello! Who is it? . . . O, Jim, Jim, come at once! I am holding at bay a man who says he is my father. Hold him where he is, you say? All right, I will. Come quick!"

"Jim!" murmured the man, still advancing. He must have that revolver. The poor child might spoil the whole affair. "So what Jones tells me is true: that you are going to marry this reporter chap?"

She did not answer.

"With or without my consent?"

If only he would drop that fearless smile! she thought. "With or without anybody's consent," she said.



JIM MANAGED TO FLOOR BRAINE

"What in the world can I say to you to convince you?" he cried. "The trap is set; but if Braine and his men come and find us like this, good heaven, child, we are both lost! Come, come!"

"Stay where you are!"

At that moment she heard a sound at the door. Her gaze roved; and it was enough for the man. He reached out and caught her arm. She tried to tear herself loose.

"My child, in God's name, listen to reason! They are entering the hall and they will have us both."

Suddenly Florence knew. She could not have told you why; but there was an appeal in the man's voice that went to her heart.

"You are my father!"

"Yes, yes! But you've found it out just a trifle too late, my dear. Quick; this side of the desk!"

Braine and his men dashed into the library. Olga entered leisurely.

"Both of them!" yelled Braine exultantly. "Both of them together; what luck!"

There was a sharp, fierce struggle; and when it came to an end Hargreave was trussed to a chair.

"Ah, so we meet again, Hargreave!" said Braine.

Hargreave shrugged. What he wanted was time.

"A million! We have you. Where is it, or I'll twist your heart before your eyes."

"Father, forgive me!"

"I understand, my child."

"Where is it?" Braine seized Florence by the wrist and swung her toward him.

"Don't tell him, father; don't mind me," said the girl bravely.

Braine, smiling his old evil smile, drew the girl close. It was the last time he ever touched her.

"Look!" screamed Olga.

Every one turned, to see Jones' face peering between the curtains. There was an ironic smile on the butler's lips. The face vanished.

"After him!" cried Braine, releasing Florence.

"After him!" mimicked a voice from the hall.

The curtains were thrown back suddenly. Jones appeared, and Jim and the Russian agent and a dozen policemen. Tableau!

Braine was the only man who kept his head. He floored Norton, smashed a window, and leaped out. The blow dazed Norton, but he was on his feet almost instantly and followed Braine through the window.

Across the lawn the two sped, with an exchange of shots which emptied both auto-



THE ESCAPE OF COUNTESS OLGA

Liverpool, together with innumerable continental tickets such as are issued to tourists.

"Why two?" asked Jim innocently.

"Forget it, my boy, forget it. You ought to know that in this office we don't employ blind men. The whole staff is on. There you are, a fat check and three months' vacation. Go and get married; and if you return before the three months are up I'll fire you myself on general principles."

Jim laughed happily and the two men shook hands. Then Jim went forth to complete the big assignment. Five minutes later Florence called him up to learn that he had gone.

What should she do? Jones had told her to stay in the house and not to leave it. But where was he? Why did he not come? What was the meaning of this desertion by the s-

This man, however, threw away his cigar and hot footed it to the nearest pay station. He knew in his soul that he had just seen the man for whom they had been hunting all these weary but strenuous weeks—Stanley Hargreave in the flesh! Half an hour after his telephone message the chief of the Black Hundred and many lesser lights were on their way to the house of mystery. Had they but known!

Now, the man who had created this tremendous agitation went serenely on. He proceeded directly and fearlessly to the front door, produced a latch key and entered. He passed through the hall and reception room to the library and paused on the threshold dramatically. Florence stepped back with a sharp cry of alarm. She had heard the hall door open and close and had taken it for granted that Jones had returned.

There was a tableau of short duration.

He came toward her, holding out his hands. "This, this you cannot shoot me. Ah, the damnable wretches! What have they done to you, my child, to make you suspicious of every one? How I have watched over you in secret! I will tell you what only Jones and the reporter know, that the aviator died, that I alone was rescued, that I gave Norton the five thousand, that I watched the windows of the Russian woman, and overheard nearly every plot that was hatched in the council chamber of the Black Hundred; that I was shot in the arm while crossing the lawn one night. And now we have the scoundrels just where we want them. They will be in this house for me within half an hour, and not one of them will leave it in freedom. I am your father, Florence; I am the lonely father who has spent the best years of his life away from you in order to secure your

matics but did no damage. Braine headed for his auto. He jumped in, only to be hauled out again by the furious reporter. A hand to hand fight followed; and the clean life of the reporter told.

"There, my angelic friend, I believe that the game is up. There is one shot left in this automatic. If you make any attempt to escape, I'll let you have it; not to kill but to disable. You and your precious countess will sail tomorrow morning for the Baltic, and from there you will go to the lead mines." He dragged his prisoner toward the house.

"Your troubles are over, my child," said Hargreave, as he pressed Florence to his heart.

"And mine have begun," murmured the countess. "But I have still one shot."

The police stood encircling her. Calmly she opened her handbag and took out her handkerchief. It was a thick and heavy silk one. Swiftly she unscrewed the top of her walking stick (it will be seen now that the carrying of it was not an affectation), extracted a vial and threw it violently to the floor. An overpowering sweet odor filled the room. Jones, knowing how deeply versed Braine was in oriental poisons and narcotics, made a desperate but futile effort to tear down a curtain to throw over the liquid; but even in the effort he felt his senses going. The last he was conscious of was a mocking laugh.

But the entrance of Jim, dragging Braine after him, shocked all the banter out of the countess. She turned and rushed madly for the stairs, without having the least idea how she was to manage an escape from the upper stories. She had thought Braine free. As she flew up the steps all the past returned, all her warnings to that stubborn man. This was the end . . . Russia! The horrors of the cold and the deadly damps of the mines . . . forever!

Jim, still holding the battered conspirator, watched her flight in amazement. He could not understand—till he pushed Braine into the library and the vanishing odor assailed his nostrils. What these fumes were he was never to know, but they proved to be transitory. Five minutes sufficed to bring all back to their senses. For the while they forgot Olga.

"This man is mine," said Servan, nodding toward Braine.

"He's yours without charge," said Jim. "I am an American citizen," said Braine, who, realizing what the future held, readily preferred a long prison term in America to the horrors of Russian exile.

"Your certificate has been destroyed," said Servan. "and the state department considers your papers void because you obtained them under false oaths. You are an undesirable citizen; and the republic is happy to learn that you will be taken off its hands."

"And because," added Norton, "you have laid too many mines in the blackmailing business, and the government does not propose to have them made known to the public through a long and useless trial. It was a long run, old top; but right is right. And by the way, I want you to meet Mr. Jeddson, formerly of Scotland Yard."

He indicated Jones, who started.

"Yes," went on the reporter, "I recognized him long ago."

"It is true," said Hargreave, taking Jones' hand in his own. "Fifteen years ago I employed him to watch my affairs, and very well has he done so. And to you, you wretch," turning upon the haggard Braine, "listen: there is a million, and you have been within a foot of it a dozen times. It has been under your very nose. Do you remember Poe's 'Purloined Letter'? Ha! Under your very nose, within touch of your hand! Now, take him away, Mr. Servan. The police will be satisfied with the prisoners they have."

So, presently, Hargreave, Jones, Florence, and Jim were alone. That smile which had revealed to Florence her father's identity stole over his face again. He put his hand on Jim's shoulder and beckoned to Florence.

"Are you really anxious to marry this young man?"

Florence nodded.

"Well, then, do so. And go to Europe with him on your honeymoon; and as a wedding present to you both, for every dollar that he has I will add a hundred; and when you get tired of travel you will both come back here to live. The Black Hundred has ceased to exist."

"And now," said Jones, shaking his shoulders.

"Well?" said Hargreave.

"My business is done. Still—" Jones paused.

"Go on," said Hargreave soberly.

"Well, the truth is, sir, I've grown used to you. And if you'll let me play the butler till the end I shall be most happy."

"I was going to suggest it."

Norton took Florence by the hand and drew her away.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

"I'm going to take this pretty hand of yours and put it flat upon \$1,000,000. And if you don't believe it, follow me."

She followed.

[This is the last chapter of "The Million Dollar Mystery" that will appear until after the \$10,000 prize has been awarded, when the concluding chapters, written by Mr. MacGrath from the best solution offered, will be published.]

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CHAPTER XXII.

A NIGHT OF ADVENTURES.

THE federal government agreed to say nothing, to put no obstacles in the way of the Russian agent, provided he could abduct his trio without seriously clashing with the New York police authorities. It was a recognized fact that the local police force wanted the newspaper glory which would attend the crushing of the Black Hundred. It would be an exploit. But their glory was nil; nor did Servan take his trio back with him to Russia.

Many strange things happened that night, the night of the final adventure.

Florence sat in her room reading. The book was "Oliver Twist," not the pleasantest sort of book to read under the existing circumstances. Several times she had reached the place where Fagin overheard Nancy's confession—she fancied she heard doors closing softly, but credited it to her imagination. Poor Nancy, who wanted to be good but did not find time to be! Florence possessed a habit familiar to most of us; the need of apples or candy when we are reading. So she rang the bell for her maid, intending to ask her to bring up some apples. She turned to her reading, presently to break off and strike the bell again. Where was that maid? She waited perhaps five minutes, then laid down the book and began to investigate.

There was not a servant to be found in the entire house! What in the world could that mean? Used as she was to heartrending suspense, she was none the less terrified. Something had taken the servants from the house. From whence was the danger to come this time. Where was Jones? Why did he not return as he had promised? It was long past the hour when he said he would be back.

She went into the library and picked up the telephone. She was told that Mr. Norton was out on an assignment, but that he would be notified the moment he returned. She opened a drawer in the desk. She touched the automatic but did not take it up. She left the drawer open, however.

Earlier, at the newspaper office that night, Jim went into the managing editor's office and laid a bulky manuscript on that gentleman's desk.

"Is this it?"

"It is," said Jim.

"You have captured them?"

"No; but there is a net about them from which not one shall escape. There's the story of my adventures, of the adventures of Miss Hargreave and the butler, Jones. You'll find it exciting reading. You might just as well send it up to the composing room. At midnight I'll telephone the introduction. It's a scoop. Don't worry about that."

The editor rifled the pages.

"A hundred and twelve pages, 300 words to the page; man, it's a novel!"

"I'll read like one."

"Sit down for a moment and let me skim through the first story."

At the end of ten minutes the editor laid