



# 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 Thankhouse 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 Thankhouse 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 Thankhouse Film corporation at 5 South Wabash avenue, Chicago, Ill., or Thankhouse 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 Fines. 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 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 girls' school where eighteen years before he mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. That day Hargrave also donates \$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 Hargrave butler, and Norton, a newspaper man.

Conceded at the rendezvous of the

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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 Riverside 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 had 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 idea. They will not bother me so long as I do not bother them. It has dwindled into a game of tricks."

"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 sending a message 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 stround 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 a day at the Rose 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.

"Do you know where I can find her?"

The maid eyed him with covert keenness; then, remembering that the reporter was with Florence, said: "I believe she is at the Rose Garden this afternoon."

"That is in town?"

"Yes."

"Thanks." The man turned abruptly and ran down the steps.

The maid ran back to Jones.

"Why didn't you call me?" he demanded impatiently.

"There wasn't time."

"Did you tell him where she was?"

"Yes. But I shouldn't have told him if Mr. Norton had not been with Miss Florence."

Jones ran to the front, dashed out, eyed the back of the man hastening down the street, smiled, and returned to his work, or, rather, to the maid. He took her by the shoulder, whirled her about, and shot a look into her eyes that quailed her.

"Always call me hereafter, no matter what I'm doing. That man has never laid eyes on Florence and has no idea what she looks like. Why did you drug my coffee the night of that ball?"

She stepped back.

"And how much did they pay you for letting that doctor send Florence to Atlantic City? I know everything. Hereafter, walk straight. If you play another trick I'll kill you with these two hands. And listen and tell this to your confederates: I always know every move they make; that is why no one is missing from this house. There is a traitor. Let them find him if they can. Will you walk straight, or will you leave?"

"I—I will walk straight," she faltered.

"The money was too big a temptation."

"Did they give it to you?"

"Yes. And more to stay here. But this is the first bit of dishonest work I ever did."

"Well, remember what I have said. Another misstep and I'll make an end to you. Don't think I'm trying to scare you. You've witnessed enough to know that it's life and death in this house. Now run along."

At the Garden Jim and Florence sauntered among the crowd, not having any particular objective point in view.

"Sh!" whispered Jim.

"What is it?"

"Olga Perigoff is yonder in a box."

"Very well; let us go and sit with her. Is she alone?"

"Apparently. But don't you think we'd better go elsewhere?"

"My dear young man," said Florence with mock loftiness, "Olga Perigoff has written me down as a simple young fool, and that is why, sooner or later, I'm going to put the shoe on the other foot. You and Jones have coddled me long enough. Inasmuch as I am the stake they are playing for, I intend to have something more than a speaking part in the play."

"All right; you're the admiral," he said with pretended lightness.

So the two of them joined their subtle enemy, conscience of a tingle of zest as they did so. On her part, the countess was always



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 innocently, 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 pillars 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 hesitated 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."

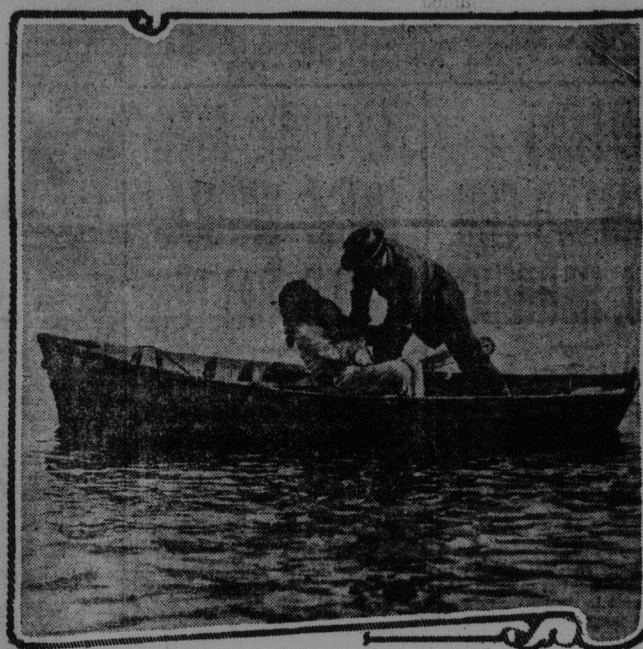
"Very well." The waiter bowed and strode away nonchalantly.

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 slipped the letter into the left 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 flamed 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 to 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 original 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 handle 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 offensive. 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 spongy 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 aided 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 purchased 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

was none coming away. To reenter the chest would be foolhardy. It would be the first place the men would look. She glanced about desperately. She saw but one chance, the well. And even while the door was swinging inward, letting the brilliant sunshine enter, she summoned up the courage and let herself down into the well, which proved to be nothing more nor less than an underground river!

The men came in with a rush. They upset boxes, looked into the chest, and the man who was evidently in command gazed down the well, shaking his head. Their search was thorough, but they found no one. And at length they began to reason that perhaps a woman had got as far as the door and then turned away, walking on the turf.

Meantime Florence was borne along by the swift current of the river, which gained in swiftness every moment. From time to time she bumped along the rocky walls, but she clung to life valiantly. In ten minutes she was swept to the other side of the hill, into the rapids; but the blue sky was overhead, she was out in the familiar world again. On, on she was carried. Even though she was half dead, she could hear the roar of a falls somewhere in advance.

Braine thought he really had a clue to the treasure, and with his usual promptness he set about to learn if it was worth anything. He procured a ladder and began to prowl about, using a pole as a feeler. All the while he was being closely watched by Norton, who had been concluding to hang onto Braine's trail till he found something worthy of note. Braine was disguised, but this time Jim was not to be fooled. But what was he looking for, wondered the reporter? Braine continued to pole along, sometimes pausing to look over the gunwale down into the water. In raising his head after the last investigation he discerned something struggling in the water, about three hundred yards away. The current leisurely brought the object into full view. It was a young woman with just power enough to keep herself afloat. Her golden head roused something in him stronger than curiosity. It might be!

Braine proceeded to move the launch in the direction of the girl. It was this move-

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 checked him. This time—no 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 he 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 piling into the water.

"Jim," she cried.

Norton suddenly flung off Braine and began to swim madly for 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 muddle? 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.]