



# 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. 14, 1918. 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 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 millionaires? 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 girl's school where eighteen years before he mysteriously left on the deserted his baby daughter, Florence Gray. That day Hargrave 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 her as a relative. Two huge detectives call, but their plot is foiled by Norton, a newspaper man. After failing in their first attempt, the Black Hundred tries again. 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.

Accomplices of Braine kidnap Florence and hurry her off to sea. She escapes overboard and is picked up in a deserted canoe by fishermen. 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 smuggled.

Concealed above the rendezvous of the 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. Braine endeavors to smash 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.

Following a telephone message Jones received from a mysterious person whom he addressed as "sir," Florence is again lured from her home and taken out to sea. Through Norton's daring and skill as an aviator she is rescued and returns to her home in time to confront an agent of the Black Hundred.

Through treachery in the Hargrave household Florence is delivered into the hands of an unscrupulous doctor, who is in the pay of the Black Hundred. From the faithful Susan Norton learns that the doctor has declared that Florence is stricken with smallpox and that he is preparing to spirit her away. By acting quickly the reporter, with the aid of Susan, succeeds in extricating the young woman from the danger after an encounter with members of the gang.

de, and all these weeks of warfare have not served to bring him into the circle.

"Hargrave is dead," said Vroom stolidly. "As dead as I am," snarled Braine. "Two men went away in that balloon; and I'll wager my head that one man came back. I am beginning to put a few things together that I have not thought of before. Who knows? That balloon may have been carried out to sea purposely. The captain on that tramp steamer may have lied from be-

act. He'll never summon the police unless we make a broad daylight attempt to get possession of his daughter. And even then he would make it out a plain case of kidnapping. Elimination, that's the word. All right. We'll play at that game ourselves. No. 1 shall be Mr. Norton. And if you fail I'll break you," Braine added to the reporter.

"I'll get him," said the man sullenly. Later, when he applied for a situation on the Blade, it happened that there were two strikes on hand, and two or three extra men were needed on the city staff. The man from the Black Hundred was given a temporary job and went by the name of Gregg. As his first copy showed experience, he was promised a permanent place as soon as there was a vacancy. Gregg smiled inwardly. It would be a fine thing to do away with Norton and step into his reportorial shoes.

For three days he worked faithfully, abstaining from his favorite tipples. He had never worked in New York, so his record was unknown. He had told the city editor that he had worked on a Chicago paper, now defunct.

He paid no attention whatsoever to Norton, a sign of no little acumen. On the other hand Norton never went forth on an assignment that Gregg did not know exactly where he was going. But all these stories kept Norton in town; and it would be altogether too risky to attempt to handle him anywhere but outside of town. So Gregg had to abide his time.

It came soon enough. Norton was idling at his desk when the city editor called him up to the wicket.

"Gen. Henderson has just returned to America. Get his opinion on the latest Balkan rumpus. He's out at his suburban home. Here's the address."

"How long will you hold open for me?" asked Norton, meaning how long would the city editor wait for the story.

"Till one-thirty. You ought to be back by midnight. It's only 8 now."

"All right; Henderson's approachable. I may get a good story out of him."

"Maybe," thought Gregg, who had lost nothing of this conversation.

It was his opportunity. He immediately left the zone of the city desk for a telephone booth. But as he passed the line of desks and busy reporters he did not note the keen scrutiny of a smooth faced, gray haired man who stood at the side of Norton's desk awaiting the reporter's return.

"Why, Jones," cried the surprised Norton. "What are you doing all this way from home?"

"Orders," said Jones, smiling faintly as he delivered a note to the reporter.

"Anything serious?"

"Not that I am aware of. Miss Florence was rather particular. She wanted to be sure that the note reached your hands safely."

"And do you mean to say that you came away and left her alone in that house?" Again Jones smiled. "I left her well guarded, you may be sure of that. She will never run away again." He waited for Norton to read the note.

It was nothing more than one of those

that Norton was again the object of the Black Hundred's attention. He had seen the man's face that memorable night when the balloon stopped for its passenger. Before Gregg came out of the booth Jones decided to overtake him and forewarn him, but unfortunately the reporter was nowhere in sight.

There was left for Jones nothing else but to return home or follow Gregg when he came out. As this night he knew Florence to be exceptionally well guarded, both within and without the house, he decided to wait and follow the spy.

When Braine received the message he was pleased. Norton's assignment fitted his purpose like a glove. Before midnight he would have Mr. Medding Reporter where he would bother no one for some time—if he proved tractable. If not, he would never bother any one again. Braine gave his orders tersely.

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balloon stopped for its passenger. Before

the two men eyed each other steadily. And in his heart Braine sighed. For he saw in this young man's eyes incorruptibility.

"It is yours on one condition," said Braine, reaching out his foot stealthily toward the button which would summon Samson.

"And that is," interpolated Norton, "that I join the Black Hundred."

"Or the great beyond, my lad," took up Braine, his voice crisp and cold.

Norton could not repress a shiver. Where had he heard this voice before . . . Braine! He stiffened.

"Murder in cold blood?" he managed to say.

"Indefinite imprisonment. Choose."

"I have chosen."

"H'm!" Braine rose and went over to the sideboard for the brandy. "I'm going to offer you a drink to show you that per-

sonally there are no hard feelings. You are in the way. After you, our friend, Jones. This brandy is not poisoned, neither are the glasses. Choose either and I'll drink first.

We are all desperate men, Norton; and we stop at nothing. Your life hangs by a hair. Do you know where Hargrave is?"

Norton eyed his liquor thoughtfully.

"Do you know where the money is?"

Norton smelt of the brandy.

"I am sorry," said Braine. "I should have liked to win over a head like yours."

Norton nonchalantly took out his watch, and that bit of bravado perhaps saved his life. In the case of his watch he saw a brutal face behind him. Without a tremor, Norton took up his glass.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," he said; "but I shall neither join you nor go to by-"

Quick as a bird-shadow above grass, he flung the brandy over his shoulder into the face of the man behind. Samson yelled with pain. Almost at the same instant Norton pushed over the table, upsetting Braine with it. Next he dashed through the curtains, slammed the door, and fled to the street, very shaky about the knees, if the truth is to be told.

Gen. Henderson's views upon the latest Balkan muddle were missing from the Blade the following morning. Norton, instead of returning to the general's and fulfilling his assignment like a dutiful reporter, hurried out to Riverside to acquaint Jones with what had happened. Jones was glad to see him safe and sound.

"That new reporter started the game," he said. "I overheard a word or two while he was talking in the booth. All your telephone booths are ramshackle affairs, you use them so constantly. I tried to find you, but you were out of sight. Now, tell me what happened."

"Sh!" warned Norton as he spied Florence coming down the stairs.

"I thought you couldn't come!" she cried. "But 10 o'clock!"

"I changed my mind," he replied, laughing.

He caught her arm in his and drew her toward the library. Jones smiled after them with that enigmatical smile of his, which might have signified irony or affection. After half an hour's chat, Florence, quite aware that the two men wished to talk, retired.

At the door Norton told Jones what had taken place at 40 Elm street.

"Ah! we must not forget that number," mused Jones. "My advice is, keep an eye on this Gregg chap. We may get somewhere by watching him."

"Do you know where Hargrave is?"

Jones scratched his chin reflectively.

Norton laughed. "I can't get anything out of you."

"Much less any one else. I'm growing fond of you, my boy. You're a man."

"Thanks; and good-night."

When Olga Perigoff called the next day Jones divested himself of his livery, donned a plain coat and hat, and left the house stealthily. Today he was determined to learn something definite in regard to this suave, hand-

some Russian. When she left the house Jones rose from his hiding place and proceeded to follow her. The result of this espionage on the part of Jones will be seen presently.

Meantime Jim went down to the office and lied cheerfully about his missing the general. Whether the city editor believed him or not is of no matter. Jim went over to his desk. From the corner of his eye he could see Gregg scribbling away. He never raised his head as Jim sat down to read his mail. After awhile Gregg rose and left the office; and, of course, Jim left shortly afterward. When the new-comer saw that he was being followed, he smiled and continued on his way. This Norton chap was suspicious. All the better; his suspicions should be made the hook to land him with. By and by the man turned into a drug store and Jim lolloped about till he re-appeared. Gregg walked with bricker steps now. It was his intention to lead Norton on a wild goose chase for an hour or so, long enough to give Braine time to arrange a welcome at another house.

Norton kept perhaps half a block in the rear of his man all the while. But for this caution he would have witnessed a little pantomime that would have put him wholly upon his guard. Turning a corner, Gregg all but bumped into the countess. He was quick enough to place a finger on his lips and motion his head toward a taxicab. Olga hadn't the least idea who was coming around the corner, but she hailed the cab and was off in it before Jim swung around the corner.

Jones, who had followed the countess for something over an hour and a half, hugged a doorman. What now? he wondered. The countess knew the man. That was evidence enough for the astute butler. But what meant the pantomime and the subsequent hurry? He soon learned. The man Gregg went his way, and then Jim turned the corner. Jones cast a wistful glance at the vanishing cab of the Russian, and decided to shadow the shadow—in other words, follow the reporter, to see that nothing serious be-

fell him.

Sometimes Norton was overzealous; several times during his tilts with the Black Hundred he had gone outside the boundary of caution—and paid for it. He did this very thing today, and but for Jones he might have fared extremely ill.

Braine swore that this time Norton should suffer. He would bring the truth out of the reporter, the truth as far as he knew it. Braine was positive that Norton knew one of the other two things: Hargrave's whereabouts and whether or not the mysterious box contained the million.

The liver finally paused at a door, opened it with a key, and swung it behind him, very careful, however, not to spring the latch. Naturally Jim was mightily pleased when he found the door could be opened. When Jones, not far behind, saw him open the door, he started to call out a warning, but thought the better of it. If Norton was walking into a trap it was far better that he, Jones, should remain outside of it. If Jim did not appear after a certain length of time, he would start an investigation on his own account.

No sooner was Jim in the hallway than he was set upon and overpowered. They had in this house what was known as "the punishment room." Here traitors paid the reckoning and were never more heard of. Into this room Jim was unceremoniously dropped when Braine found that he could get no information from the resolute reporter.

The room did not look sinister, but for all that it possessed the faculty of growing smaller and smaller, slowly or swiftly, as the man above at the lever willed. When Jim was apprised of this fact, he ran madly about in search of some mode of escape, knowing full well in his heart that he should not find one.

Presently the machinery began to work, and Norton's tongue grew dry with terror. They had him this time; there was not the least doubt of it. And they had led him there by the nose into the bargain.

Twenty minutes passed, and Jones concluded it was time for him to act. He went forward to try the door, but this time it was locked. Jones, however, was not without resource. The house next door was vacant, and he found a way into this, finally reaching the roof. From this he jumped to the other roof, found the scuttle open, and crept down the stairs, flight after flight, till the whirl of a motor arrested him.

Conspirators are often overzealous, too. So intent were the rascals upon the business at hand that they did not notice the door open slowly. It did not take the butler more than a moment to realize that his friend and ally, was near certain death. With an oath he sprang into the room, gave Braine a push which sent him down to join the victim, and pitched into the other two. It was a battle royal while it lasted. Jones knocked down one of them, yelled to Norton, and kicked the rope he saw down into the pit. One end of this rope was attached to a ring in the wall. And up this rope Norton swung after he had disposed of Braine. The tide of battle then swung about in favor of the butler, and shortly the fake reporter and his companion were made to join their chief.

Jones stopped the machinery. He could not bring himself to let his enemies die so horribly. Later he knew he would regret this sentiment.

When the police came, summoned by some outsider who had heard the racket of the conflict, there was no one to be found in the pit. Nor was there any visible sign of an exit.

There was one, however, built against such an hour and known only to the chiefs of the Black Hundred.

And still the golden thread bank notes reposed tranquilly in their hiding place!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



JONES, AFTER DISPOSING OF BRAINE, HELPS NORTON UP FROM THE PUNISHMENT ROOM.



NORTON SAVES HIS OWN LIFE, BY THE USE OF HIS WATCH CASE.

gining to end. I tell you, Hargrave is

alive, and wherever he is he has his hand on

all the wires. He has agents, too, of whom

we know nothing about. Hang the million!

I want to put my hands on Hargrave just

to prove that I am the better man. He com-

municates with Jones, perhaps through the

reporter; he has had me followed; it was

he who changed the boxes, bored the hole in

the ceiling of the other quarters, and learned

Heaven knows what."

"If that's the case," said Vroom, "why

haven't he had us apprehended?"

Braine laughed heartily. "Haven't you

been able to see by this time what his game

is? Revenge. He does not want the police

to meddle only in the smaller affairs. He

wants to do away with us one by one; he

wants to put terror into the hearts of all of

us. Keep this point in your mind when you

love orders to come and call at once. And

she had made Jones venture into town with

it! The reporter smiled and put the note

away tenderly. And then he caught Jones

smiling, too.

"I'm going to marry her, Jones."

"That remains to be seen," replied the

butler, not unkindly.

"Well, anyhow, thanks for bringing the

note. But I've got to disappoint her to-

night. I'm off in a deuce of a hurry to in-

terview Gen. Henderson. I'll be out to tea

tomorrow. You can find your way out of this

old fire trap. By-by!"

The moment he turned away the smile

faded from Jones' face, and with the quick-

ness and noiselessness of a cat he reached

the side of the booth in which Gregg believed

himself to be secure from eavesdropping. The