

The MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY

By HAROLD MAC GRATH

\$10,000 FOR 100 WORDS.

The publication of "The Million Dollar Mystery" begins today. The story will run for twenty-two consecutive weeks in this paper, for the solution of this mystery story \$10,000 will be given.

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 Chase-Norfolk Film Corporation, either at Chicago or New York, any time up to midnight of January 14. They must bear post office mark not later than that date. This allows four weeks after the last film releases, in which to submit solutions.

A board of three judges will determine which of the many solutions received is the most acceptable. 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 featured in the theatres having this presentation as it is practical to produce same. The story corresponding to these motion pictures will appear in the newspapers. With the last two reels will be shown the pictures of the winner, his or her home, and other interesting features.

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.

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CHAPTER I.

A Call in the Night.

THERE are few things darker than a country road at night, particularly if one does not know the lay of the land. It is not difficult to traverse a known path; no matter how dark it is, one is able to find the way by the aid of a mental photograph taken in the daytime. But supposing you have never been over the road in the daytime, that you know nothing whatever of its topography, where it dips or rises, where it narrows or forks. You find your self in the same unhappy state of mind as a blind man suddenly thrust into a strange house.

One black night, along a certain country road in the heart of New Jersey, in the days when the only good roads were city thoroughfares and country highways were routes to limbo, a carriage went forward cautiously. From time to time it careened like a bluntnose barge in a sea of mud. The wheels and springs voiced their anguish continually; for it was a good carriage, unaccustomed to such ruts and hummocks.

"Faster, faster!" came a muffled voice from the interior.

"Sir, I dare not drive any faster," replied the coachman. "I can't see the horses' heads, sir, let alone the road. I've blown out the lamps, but I can't see the road any better for that."

"Let the horses have their heads; they'll find the way. You can't be farther than you are." "You'll see lights."

The coachman swore in his teeth. All right. This man who was in such a hurry would probably send them all into the ditch. Save for the few stars above, he might have been driving Beelzebub's coach in the Bottomless Pit. Black velvet, everywhere black velvet. A wind was blowing, and yet the blackness was so thick that it gave to the coachman the sensation of mild suffocation.

By and by, through the trees, he saw a flicker of light. It might or might not be the destination. He cracked his whip recklessly and the carriage lurched on two wheels. The man in the carriage balanced himself carefully so that the bundle in his arms should not be unduly disturbed. His arms ached. He struck his head out of the window.

"That's the place," he said. "And when you drive up make as little noise as you can."

"Yes, sir," called down the driver. "When the carriage drew up at its journey's end the man inside jumped out and hastened toward the gates. He scrutinized the sign on one of the posts. This was the place: MISS FARLOW'S PRIVATE SCHOOL.

The bundle in his arms stirred and he hurried up the path to the door of the house. He seized the ancient knocker and struck several times. He then placed the bundle on the steps and ran back to the waiting carriage, into which he stepped.

"Off with you!"

"That's a good word, sir. Maybe we can make your train."

"Do you think you could find this place again?"

"You couldn't get me on this pike again, sir, for a thousand; not me!"

It was a quarter after 10. Miss Susan Farlow had just returned to the reception room from her nightly tour of the upper halls to see if all her charges were in bed, where the rules of the school confined them after 9:30. It was at this moment that she heard the thunderous knocking at the door. The old maid felt her heart stop beating for a moment. Who could it be at this time of night. Then she thought came swiftly that perhaps the parent of some one of her charges was ill and this was the summons. Still her fears, she went resolutely to the door and opened it.

There was no one in sight.



THE INTRODUCTIONS WERE MADE. NORTON FELT RATHER CAJOLING.

"Who is it?" she called.

No one answered. She cupped her hand to her ear. She could hear the clatter of horses dimly.

"Well!" she exclaimed, raising angrily her voice.

She was in the act of closing the door when the light from the hall disclosed to her the bundle on the steps. She stooped and touched it.

"Good heavens, it's a child!"

She picked the bundle up. A whisper came from it, a tired little whimper. Suddenly she smiled down at her doorstep! It was incredible. It was about a year old, dimpled and golden haired. A thumb was in its rosy mouth and its blue eyes looked up trustfully into her own.

"Why, you cherub!" cried the old maid, a strange turmoil in her heart. She caught the child to her breast, and then for the first time noticed the black envelope pinned to the child's cloak. She put the baby in a chair and broke open the envelope.

"Name this child Florence Gray. I will annually send a liberal sum for her support and reclaim her on her eighteenth birthday. The other half of the enclosed bracelet will identify me. Treat the girl well, for I shall watch over her in secret."

Into the fixed routine of her humdrum life had come a mystery, a tantalizing, fascinating mystery. She had read of foundlings left on doorsteps from paper covered novels confiscated from her pupils—but that one should be placed upon her own respectable doorstep, she had never dreamed of. At the child and the child smiled back. And there was nothing more to be done except to bemoan the decrees of fate. Like all prim old maids, her heart was full of unrequited romance, and here was something she might spend its floods upon without let or hindrance. Already she was hoping that the man or woman who had left it might never come back.

The next morning she called her two assistants into her study and explained what had taken place. There should be no mystery on her part. Her tale was accepted without comment. In a few days the excitement died away, and school life went on as serenely as before.

The child grew. Regularly each year, upon a certain date, Miss Farlow received a registered letter with money. These letters came from all parts of the world; always the same sum, always the same line—"I am watching."

"This seventeen years passed; and to Susan Farlow each year seemed shorter than the one before. For she loved the child with all her heart. She had not trained young girls all these years without becoming adept in the art of reading the true sign of breeding. As the days went on the heart of Susan Farlow grew heavy.

"Never mind, aunty," said Florence; "I shall always come back to see you." She meant it, poor child; but how was she to know the terrors which lay yonder beyond the horizon?

The house of Stanley Hargrave, in Riverdale, was the house of no ordinary rich man. Outside it was simple enough, but within you learned what kind of a man Hargrave was. There were rare Iapahans and Saruks on the floors and tapestries on the walls, with here and there a fine painting. The library itself represented a fortune. Money had been laid out lavishly but never wastefully. It was the home of a scholar, a dreamer, a wide traveler.

In the library stood the master of the house, idly fingering some papers which lay on the study table. He shrugged at some unpleasant thought, settled his overcoat about his shoulders, took up his hat, and walked from the room, frowning slightly. The butler, who also acted in the capacity of valet, always within call when his master was about, stepped swiftly to the hall door and opened it.

"I may be out late, Jones," said Hargrave.

"Yes, sir."

Hargrave stared into his face keenly, as if trying to pierce the brave face to learn what was going on behind it.

"How long have you been with me?"

"Fourteen years, sir."

"Some day I shall need you."

"My life has always been yours to dispose of, sir, since that night you rescued it."

"Well, I haven't the least doubt that when you will give."

"Without question, sir. It was always so understood."

Half an hour later he got into a taxicab and directed the man to drive downtown as far as Twenty-third street and back to Columbus circle. The bewildering display of lights, however, in no wise served to life the sense of oppression that had weighed upon him all day. South of Forty-second street he dismissed the taxicab and strolled undecidedly at the brilliant sign of a famous restaurant. He was neither hungry nor thirsty; but there would be strange faces to study and music.

It was an odd whim. He had not entered a Broadway restaurant in all these years. He was unknown. He belonged to no clubs. Two months was the longest time he had ever remained in New York since the disposal of his old home in Madison Avenue, and his resignation from his club. This once, then, he would break the law he had written down for himself. Boldly he entered the restaurant.

Some time before Hargrave surrendered to the restless spirit of rebellion, bitterly to repeat for it later, there came into this restaurant a man and a woman. They were both evidently well known, for the head waiter was obsequious and hurried them to the best table he had left and took the order himself.

The man possessed a keen, intelligent face. You might have marked him for a successful lawyer, for there was an earnestness about his expression which precluded a life of idleness. His age might have been anywhere between 40 and 50. The shoulders were broad and the hands which lay clasped upon the table, were slim and muscular. Indeed, everything about him suggested hidden strength and vitality. His companion was small, handsome, and animated. Her request, gesture and mutable eyebrows betrayed her foreign birth. Her age was a matter of importance to no one but herself.

"There's a young man coming toward us. He is looking at you."

The man turned. Instantly his face lighted up with a friendly smile of recognition.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"A chap worth knowing; a reporter. Just a little out of the ordinary. I'm going to introduce him. You never can tell. We might need him someday. Ah, Norton, how are you?"

"Good evening, Mr. Braine," the reporter, catching sight of a pair of dazzling eyes, hesitated.

"The Princess Perigott, Norton. You're in no hurry, are you?"

"Not now," smiled the reporter.

"Ah!" said the princess, interested. It was the old compliment, said in an unusual way. It pleased her.

When inactive he was rather a dreamy-eyed sort of chap. He possessed that rare accomplishment of talking upon one subject and thinking upon another at the same time. So, while he talked gaily with the young woman on varied themes, his thoughts were busy speculating upon her companion. He was quite certain that the name Braine was assumed, but he was also equally certain the man carried an extraordinary brain under his hatch of salt and pepper hair. The man had written three or four brilliant monographs on poisons and the uses of radium, and it was through and by these that the reporter had managed to pick up his acquaintance. He lived well, but inconspicuously.

Suddenly the pupils of Braine's eyes narrowed; the eyes became cold. Over the smoke of his cigarette he was looking into the wall mirror. A man had passed behind him and sat down at the next table. Still gazing into the mirror, Braine saw Norton wave his hand, saw also the open wonder on the reporter's pleasant face.

"Who is your friend, Norton?" Braine asked indifferently, his head still turned.

"Stanley Hargrave. Met him in Hongkong when I went over to handle part of the revolution. War correspondence stuff. First time I ever ran across him on Broadway at night. We've since had some powwows over some rare books. Queer old cove; brave as a lion, but as quiet as a mouse."

"Bookish, eh? My kind. Bring him over." Underneath the table Braine

maneuvered to touch the foot of the princess.

"I don't know," said the reporter dubiously. "He might say no and embarrass the whole of us. He's a bit of a hermit. I'm surprised to see him here."

"Try," urged the princess. "I like to meet men who are hermits."

"I haven't the least doubt about that," the reporter laughed. "I'll try; but don't blame me if I'm rebuffed."

He left the table with evident reluctance and approached Hargrave. The two shook hands cordially, for the older man was rather fond of the medley of information known as Jim Norton.

"Sit down, boy, sit down. You're just the kind of a man I've been wanting to talk to tonight."

"Wouldn't you rather talk to a pretty woman?"

"I'm an old man."

"Bah! That's a hypocritical bluff, and you know it. My friends at the next table have asked me to bring you over."

"I do not usually care to meet strangers."

"Make an exception this once," said the reporter, who had seen Braine's eyes change and was curious to know why the appearance of Hargrave in the mirror had brought about that mental change. Here were two unknown men; he desired to see them face to face.

"This once, my fault; I ought not to be here; I feel out of place. What a life, though, you reporters lead! To meet kings and presidents and great financiers, Socialists and anarchists, the whole scale of life, and to share these people on the back as if they were everyday friends."

"Now you're making fun of me. For twenty years there are always twenty thick brogans ready to kick me down the steps; don't forget that."

Hargrave laughed. "Come, then; let us get it over with."

"The introductions were made. Norton felt rather chagrined. So far as he could see, the two men were total strangers. Well, it was all in the game. Nine out of ten opportunities for the big story were fake alarms; but he was always willing to risk a little for the sake of the sake of the tenth."

At length Braine glanced at his watch, and the princess nodded.

"For the sake of the sake of the sake of that man we have just left. At first glance I wasn't sure; but the sound of his voice was enough. Olga, the next time you see that reporter, throw your arms around his neck and kiss him. What did I tell you? Without Norton's help I would not have been sure. I'm going to leave you at your apartment."

"The man of the Black Hundred?" she whispered.

"The man who deserted and defied the Black Hundred who, broke his rows, an never paid a kopeck for the privilege; the man who had been appointed for the supreme work and who ran away. In those days we needed men of his stamp, and to accomplish this end..."

"There was a woman," she interrupted, with a touch of bitterness.

"Always the woman. And she was as clever and handsome as you are."

"Ah, yes!" ironically. "Sometimes you wish you could settle down, marry, and have a family! Your dog's pretty well lost about a month."

She made no return because she recognized the truth of this statement.

"There's an earnest I know of," he said ruminatively. "It's quite possible that you may be wearing it within a few days."

"I mad over them. There is something in the green stone that fascinates me. I can't resist it."

"That's because, somewhere in the far past, your ancestor, were on the ale. Here we are. I'll see you tomorrow. I must hurry. Good-night."

She stood on the curb for a moment and watched the taxicab till it whirled round a corner. The man held her with a fascination more terrible than any jewel. She knew him to be a great and daring rogue, cunning, patient, fearless. Packed away in that mind over. Underneath the table Braine

plished deeds which had roused fully the police of two continents. Braine! She could have laughed. The very name he had chosen was an insolence directed at society.

The subject of her thoughts soon arrived at his destination. A flight of stairs carried him into a dimly lighted hall, smelling evilly of escap- ing gas. He donned a black mask and struck the door with a series of light blows; two, then one, then three, and again one. The door opened and he slipped inside. Round a table sat several men, also masked. They were all tried and trusted rogues; but not one of them knew what Braine looked like. He alone remained unknown save to the man designated as the chief, who was only Braine's lieutenant. The mask was the insignia of the Black Hundred, an organization with all the ramifications of the Camorra without their abiding stupidity. From the assassination of a king, down to the robbery of a country post-office, nothing was too great or too small for their nets. Their god dwells in the hearts of all men and is called Greed.

The ordinary business over, the chief dismissed the men, and he and Braine alone remained.

"I have found him," said Braine.

"There are but few; which one?"

"Eighteen years ago, in St. Petersburg."

"I remember. The millionaire's son. Did he recognize you?"

"I don't know. Probably he did. But he always had good nerves. He's being followed at this moment. We shall strike quick; for if he recognizes me he will act quick. He is cool and brave. You remember how he braved

her. He tried in vain to conjure up a picture of her; he always saw the mother whom he had loved and hated with all the ardor of his youth. Many things happened the next day. There was a visit to the hangar of one William Orts, the aviator, famous for his daredevil exploits. There were two visits, in fact, and the second visitor was knocked down for his pains. He had tried to bribe Orts.

There were several excited bankers, who protested against such large withdrawals without the usual formal announcement. But a check was a check, and they had to pay.

Hargrave covered a good deal of ground, but during all this time his right hand never left the automatic in his overcoat pocket, except at those moments he was obliged to sign his checks. He would shoot and make enquiries afterward.

Far away a young girl and her companion got on the train which was to carry her to New York, the great dream city she was always longing to see.

And the spider wove his web.

Hargrave reached home at night. He put the money in the safe, and was telephoning when Jones entered and handed his master an unstamped note.

"Where did you get this?"

"At the door, sir. I judge that the house is surrounded."

"They'll wait till midnight and then force their way in."

Hargrave saw a dozen shadows in the front yard.

"Men all about the back yard," whispered Jones down the hall.

The master eyed the man.

"Very well, sir," replied the latter, with understanding. "I am ready."

The master went to the safe, emptied it of its contents, crossed the hall to the bedroom, and closed the door softly behind him. Jones having entered the same room through another door to befool and possible watcher. After a long while, perhaps an hour, the two men emerged from the room from the same doors they had entered. So whispered the watcher to his friends below.

"Hargrave is going upstairs."

"Let him go. Let him take a look at us from the upper windows. He will understand that nothing but wiles will save him."

Silence. By and by a watcher reported that he heard the scuttle of the roof rattle.

"Look!" another cried, startled.

A bluish glare came from the roof. "He's shooting off a Roman candle!"

They never saw the man-made bird till it alighted upon the roof. They never thought of shooting at it till it had taken wing. Then they rushed the doors of the house. They made short work of Jones, whom they tied up like a Christmas fowl and plumped roughly into a chair. They broke open the safe, to find it empty. And while the rogues were rummaging about the room, venting their spite upon many a treasure, they could neither appreciate nor understand, a man from the outside burst in.

"The old man is dead and the money is at the bottom of the ocean! We punctured her. She's gone!"

A thin inscrutable smile stirred the lips of the man bound in the chair. (Continued next Monday.)



HE SCRUTINIZED THE SIGN ON ONE OF THE POSTS. THIS WAS THE PLACE.

The Pictures Accompanying THE MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY

will be shown at the UNIQUE Theatre, St. John, commencing this afternoon and continuing until Tuesday night. On Wednesday and Thursday they will appear in Amherst, on Friday and Saturday in Truro, and thereafter in Halifax, Sydney, Moncton, Dartmouth, Fredericton, Campbellton and elsewhere.

On Monday of each week, THE STANDARD will publish one chapter of this thrilling story, such chapters covering the pictures to be shown during those same weeks.

Out of town readers who desire to follow the story should at once send their orders to The Standard for copies of this paper covering the entire series. The story and pictures will run for twenty-two weeks and The Standard containing these chapters will be mailed to any address for the sum of forty cents, payable in advance.