

The Million Dollar Mystery

BY HAROLD MacGRATH

\$10,000 FOR 100 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, either at Chicago or New York, any time up to midnight, Jan. 15. The solutions entered 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 Tinee. 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 names of a literary nature will be considered 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. There are some questions to be kept in mind in solving the mystery as far as possible. The questions are: 1.—What becomes of the \$1,000,000? 2.—What becomes of the \$1,000,000? 3.—What becomes of Florence marry? 4.—What becomes of the Russian counts?

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 ruthless 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 Elizabeth, Braine's companion, visits and claims to be a relative. Two bogus detectives call, but their plot is foiled by Norton, a newspaper man.

By bribing the captain of the Orient Norton lays a trap for Braine and his gang. Countess Olga also visits the girls' school and she easily falls into the trap. The plan proved abortive through Braine's good luck, and only hirings fall into the hands of the police.

After falling in their first attempt the Black Hundred trap Florence. They ask her for money, but she escapes, again spilling 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. Paraded by members of the Black Hundred, he rushes to the water front and succeeds in dropping the box into the sea.

Countess Olga, intending to break the engagement existing between Florence Hargrave and Norton, invites them both to her apartments and pretends to faint in the reporter's arms. Florence appears in the doorway just at the crucial moment, and as a result gives Norton back his ring.

Accomplices of Braine succeed in kidnapping Florence while she is shopping and hurry her off to sea. Norton receives a wireless later informing him that the girl had leaped into the sea and been drowned.

CHAPTER X. THE PAIR A FLAME.

It was perfectly true that Florence had cast herself into the sea. It had not been an act of despair, however. On the contrary, hope and courage had prompted her to leap. The night was clear, with only a moderate sea running. At the time the great ship was passing the Banks, and almost within hail she saw a fishing schooner riding gracefully at anchor. She quite readily believed that if she remained on board the George Washington she was lost. She naturally forgot the marvel of wireless telegraphy. No longer was a man made at sea.

So, with that quick thought which was a part of her inheritance, she seized the life buoy, climbed the rail, and leaped far out. As the great dark tossing sea swooped up to meet her she noted a block of wood bobbing up and down. She tried to avoid it, but could not, and struck it head on. Despite the blow and the shock of the chill water she instinctively clung to the buoy. The wash from the mighty propellers tossed her about, lither and yon, from one swirl to another, like a bit of wood. Then everything grew black.

Fortunately for her the master of the fishing schooner was at the time standing on his quarter deck by the wheel, squinting through his glass at the liner and envying the ease and comfort of those on board her. The mate, sitting on the steps and smoking his favorite pipe, saw the master lean forward suddenly, lower the glass, then raise it again. "Lord almighty!"

"What's the matter, Cap'n?"

"Take, in God's name, come 'ere an' take a peek through this glass. I'm dreamin'!" The mate jumped and took the glass. "Where away, sir?"

"A yint off th' starboard bow. See somethin' white bobbin' up?"

"Yesir! Looks like some one dropped a lobster 'r a piller overboard. . . . Cod's whiskers!" he broke off.

"Then I ain't seein' things," cried the master. "Hi, y' lubbers!" he yelled to the crew; "lower th' dory. They's a woman in th' water out there. I seen her leap th' rail. Look alive! Sharp's th' word! Mate, you go 'long."

The crew dropped their tasks and sprang for the davits, and the starboard dory was lowered in shipshape style.

It takes a good bit of seamanship to haul a body out of the sea into a dancing bob-tailed dory, when one moment it is climbing frantically heavenward and the next heading for the bottomless pit. They were very tender with her. They laid her out in the bottom of the boat, with the life buoy as a pillow, and pulled energetically for the schooner. She was alive, because she breathed; but she did not stir so much as an eyelid. It was a stiff bit of work, too, to land her aboard without adding to her injuries. The master ordered the men to put her in his own bunk, where he nearly strangled her by forcing raw brandy down her throat.

"Well, she's alive, anyhow!" When Florence finally opened her eyes the gray of dawn lay on the sea, dotted here and there by the schooner's fleet, which seemed to be plunging in solemn, as at the moment there was visible to the eye no horizon.

"Don't seem t' recognize nothin'!" "Mebbe she's got a fever," suggested the mate, rubbing his bristly chin.

"Fever, nothin'. Not after bein' in th' water half an hour. Mebbe she hit one o' them wooden floats we left. Them dingy liners keep on crowdin' us," growled Barnes, with a fisherman's hate for the floating hotels. "Went by with never a toot. See 'er, Jes' like th' banker's wife goin' t' church on Sunday? A mile a minute; fog or no fog, it's all the same t' them. They run us down an' never stop. What in tarnation we goin' to do? She'll haff t' stay aboard till th' run is over. I can't afford t' yank up my mudhook th's time o' day."

"Guess she can stand three 'r four days in our company, smellin' ol'cloths, fish, kerosene, an' punk 'bacoo."

"If y' don't like th' kind o' 'bacoo I buy, buy your own. I ain't objectin' none."

The mate stepped over to the bunk and gingerly ran his hand over the girl's head. "Cod's whiskers, Cap'n, they's a bump as big's a cork on th' back o' her head! She's struck one o' them floats all right. Where's th' arnica?"

Barnes turned to his locker and rummaged about, finally producing an ancient bottle and some passably clean cloth used frequently for bandages. Sometimes a man grew careless with his knife or got in the way of a pulley block. With blundering kindness the two men bound up the girl's head, and then went about their duties.

For three days Florence evinced not the slightest inclination to leave the bunk. She lay on her back either asleep or with her eyes staring at the beams above her head. She ate just enough to keep her alive; and the strong black coffee did nothing more than to make her wakenful. No one knew what the matter was. There was the bump, now diminished; but that it should leave her in this comatose state vastly puzzled the men. The truth is she had suffered a slight concussion of the brain, and this, atop of all the worry she had had for the last few weeks, was sufficient to cause this blankness of the mind.

The final cod was cleaned and packed away in salt, the mudhook raised, and the schooner Betty set her sails for the south-west. Barnes realized that to save the girl she must have a doctor who knew his business. Mrs. Barnes would know how to care for the girl, once she knew what the trouble was. There would be some news in the papers. A young and beautiful woman did not jump from a big Atlantic liner without the newspapers getting hold of the facts.

A fair wind carried the Betty into her haven; and shortly after Florence was sleeping peacefully in a feather bed, ancient, it is true, but none the less soft and inviting. In all this time she had not spoken a single word.

"The poor young thing!" murmured the motherly Mrs. Barnes. "Wast beautiful hair! O, John, I wish you would give up the sea. I hate it. It is terrible. I am always watching you in my mind's eye, in calm weather, in storms. Pieces of wrecks come ashore, and I always wonder over the death and terror back of them."

"Don't y' worry none about me, Betty. I never take no chances. Now I'm goin' int' th' village an' bring back th' sawbones. He'll tell us what t' do."

The village doctor shook his grizzled head gravely.

"She's been hurt and shocked at the same time. It will be many days before she comes around to herself. Just let her do as she pleases. Only keep an eye on 'er so that she doesn't wander off and get lost. I'll watch the newspapers, and if I come across anything which bears upon the case I'll notify you."

But he searched the newspapers in vain, for the simple fact that he did not think to glance over the old ones.

The village took a good deal of interest in the affair. They gossiped about it and strolled out to the Barnes' cottage to satisfy their curiosity. One day Barnes was certain to their surprise. On some day Barnes would get a great sum of money for his kindness.

They had read about such things in the family story paper. She was a rich man's daughter; the ring on the unknown's finger would have fitted out a fleet.

Florence was soon able to walk about. Ordinary conversation she seemed to understand; but whenever the past was broached she would shake her head with frowning eyes. Her main diversion consisted of sitting on the sand dunes and gazing out at sea.

One day a stranger came to town. He said he represented a life insurance company and was up here from Boston to take a little vacation. He sat on the hotel porch that evening, surrounded by an admiring audience. The stranger had been all over the

idea of remaining in the village and accomplishing the work himself; but after deliberation he concluded that it was important enough for Braine himself to take a hand in. So the following night he departed for Boston, from there to New York. He proceeded at once to the apartment of the princess, where Braine declared that he himself would go to the obscure village and claim Florence as his own child. But to insure absolute success they would charter Morse's yacht and steam right up into the primitive harbor. When Vron left the apartment Norton saw him. He was a man of impulses, and he had found by experience that first impulses are generally the best. He did not



"GIRL, GIRL, I LOVE YOU BETTER THAN LIFE!"

world, so it seemed. He spoke familiarly of St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, Shanghai, as the villagers—some of them—might have spoken of Boston. There were one or two old timers among the audience. They had been to all these parts. The stranger knew what he was telling about. After telling of his many voyages he asked if there was a good bathing beach nearby. He was told that he would find the most suitable spot near Capt. Barnes' cottage just outside the village.

"An' say, Mister, seen anythin' in th' papers about a missin' young woman?" asked some one.

"Missin' young woman? What's that?" The man told the story of Florence's leap into the sea and her subsequent arrival at the cape.

"That's funny," said the stranger. "I don't recollect reading about any young woman being lost at sea. But those big liners are always keeping such things under cover. Hoodoos the ship, they say, and turns prospective passengers to other lines. It hurts business. What's the young girl look like?"

Florence was described minutely. The stranger leetered in his chair and smoked. Finally he spoke.

"She was probably insane. That's the way generally with insane people. They can't see water or look off a tall building without wanting to jump. My business is insurance, and we've got the thing figured pretty close to the ground. They used to get the best of us on the suicide game. A man would take out a large policy today and tomorrow he'd blow his head off, and we'd have to pay his wife. But nowadays a policy is not worth the paper it's written on if a man commits suicide under two years."

"You ain't tryin' t' insure anybody in town, are you?"

"O, no. No work for me when I'm on my vacation. Well, I'm going to bed; and tomorrow morning I'll go out to Capt. Barnes' beach and have a good swim. I'm no sailor, but I like water."

He honestly enjoyed swimming. Early the next morning he was in the water, frolicking about as playfully as a boy. He had all the time in the world. Over his shoulder he saw two women wandering down toward the beach. Deeper he went, farther out. He was a bold swimmer, but that did not prevent a sudden and violent attack of cramps. And it was a rare piece of irony that the poor girl should save the life of that scoundrel who was without pity or mercy. As she saw his face a startled frown marred her brow. But she could not figure out the puzzle. Had she ever seen the man before? She did not know, she could not tell. Why could not she remember? Why must her poor head ache so when she tried to pierce the wall of darkness which surrounded her mentally?

The man thanked her feebly, but the gratitude was on his lips and not in his heart. When he had sufficiently recovered he returned to the village and sought the railway station, where the Western Union had its office.

"I want to send a code message to my firm. Do you think you can follow it?" "I can try," said the operator.

The code was really Slav; and when the long message was signed it was signed by the name Vron.

The day after the news came that Florence had jumped overboard off the Banks, Vron with a dozen other men had started out to comb all the fishing villages along the New England coast. Somewhere along the way he felt confident that he would learn whether the girl was dead or alive. If she was dead, then the game was a draw; but if she was alive there was still a fighting chance for the Black Hundred. He had had some

know who Vron was. Any man who called on the Princess Perigoff while Braine was with her would be worth following.

On the other hand, Vron recognized the reporter instantly and with that ever ready and alert mind of his set about to lure the young man into a trap out of which he might not easily come.

Norton decided to follow his man. He might be going on a wild-goose chase, he reasoned; still his first impulses had hitherto served him well. He looked carefully. He was convinced that Florence was dead, despite the assertions of Jones to the contrary. He had gone over all the mishaps which had taken place and he was now absolutely convinced that his willon friend Braine and the Princess Perigoff were directly concerned. Florence had either been going to or coming from the apartment. And that memorable day of the abduction the princess had been in the dry goods shop.

Vron took a downtown surface car, and Norton took the same. He sat huddled in a corner, never suspecting that Vron was watching him from a corner of his eye. Norton was not keen today. The thought of Florence kept running through his head.

The car stopped and Vron got off. He led Norton a winding course which at length ended at the door of a tenement building. Vron entered. Norton paused, wondering what next to do, now that his man had reached his destination. Well, since he had followed him all this distance he must make an effort to find out who he was and what he was going to do. Cautiously he entered the hallway. As he was about to lay his hand on the novel post of the dilapidated



HAD SHE EVER SEEN THE MAN BEFORE?

stairs the floor dropped from under his feet and he was precipitated into the cellar.

This tenement belonged to the Black Hundred; it concealed a thousand doors and a hundred traps. Its history was as dark as its hallways.

When Vron and his companion, who had been waiting for him, descended into the cellar they found the reporter insensible. They bound, blindfolded, and gagged him quickly.

"Saunders," said Vron, "you tell Corrigan that I've a sailor for him tonight, and that I want this sailor booked for somewhere south of the equator. Tell him to say to the master that this fellow is ugly and disobedient. A tramp freighter, whose captain is a

bully. Do you understand me?" "I get you. But there's no need to go to Corrigan this trip. Bamcock is in port and calls tonight for Norway. That's far enough."

"Bamcock? The very man. Well, Mr. Norton, reporter and amateur detective, I guess we've got you fast enough this time. You may or may not come back alive. Go and bring around a taxi; some one you can trust. I'll dope the reporter while you're gone."

Long hours afterward Norton opened his aching eyes. He could hardly move and his head buzzed abominably. What had happened? What was the meaning of this slow rise and fall of his bed? "Shanghai!"

"Come out o' that now, ye skulker!" roared a voice down the companionway.

"Shanghai!" the reporter murmured. He sat up and ran through his pockets. Not a sou-markee, not a match even; and a second glance told him that the clothes he wore were not his own. "They've landed me this time, Shanghai! What the devil am I going to do?"

"D' ye hear me?" bawled the strident voice again.

Norton looked about desperately for some weapon of defense. He saw an engineer's spanner on the floor by the bunk across the way, and with no small physical effort he succeeded in obtaining it. He stood up, his hand behind his back.

"All right, me bucko! I'll come down an' git ye."

A pair of enormous boots began to appear down the companionway, and there gradually rose up from them a man as wide as a church door and as deep as a well.

"Wait a moment," said Norton, gripping the spanner. "Let us have a perfect understanding right off the bat."

"We're goin' t' have it, mater. Don't ye worry none."

Norton raised the spanner and, dizzy as he was, faced this seafaring Hercules courageously.

"I've been shanghai'd, and you know it. Where are we bound?"

"Copenhagen."

"Well, for a month or more you'll beat me up whenever the opportunity offers. But I merely wish to warn you that if you do you'll find a heap of trouble waiting for you the next time you drop your mudhook in Norsh river."

"Is that so?" said the giant, eyeing the spanner and the shaking hand that held it aloft.

"It is. I'll take your orders and do the best I can, because you've got the upper hand. But, God is witness, you'll pay for every needless blow you strike. Now what do you want me to do?"

"Lay down that spanner an' come on deck. I'll tell ye what t' do. I was gon' t' whale th' daylight out o' ye; but ye're somethin' av a man. Drop th' spanner first."

Norton hesitated. As lithe as a tiger he bulk of a man sprang at him and crushed him to the floor, wrenching away the spanner. Then the giant took Norton by the scruff of his neck and banged him up the steps to the deck.

"I ain't gon' t' hurt ye. I had t' show ye that no spanner ever bothered Mike Bamcock. Now, d' ye know what a cook's galley is?"

"I do," said Norton, breathing hard.

"Well, like there an' start in with peelin' spuds, an' don't waste 'em, neither. That'll be all for th' present. Ye were due for a wallopin', but I kinda like yer spunk."

So Jim stumbled down to the cook's galley and grimly set to work at the potatoes. It might have been far worse. But here he was, likely to be on high seas for months, and no way of notifying Jones which had happened. The outlook was anything but cheerful. But a vague hope awoke in his heart. If they were still after him, might it not signify that Florence lived?

Meantime Braine had not been idle. According to Vron the girl's memory was in bad shape; so he had not the least doubt of bringing her back to New York without mishap. Once he had her there, the game would begin in earnest. He played his cards exceedingly well. Steaming up into the little fishing harbor with a handsome yacht in itself would allay any distrust. And he wore a capital disguise, too. Everything went well till he laid his hand on Florence's shoulder. She gave a startled cry and ran over to Barnes, clinging to him wildly.

"No, no!" she said.

"No what, my child?" asked the sailor. She shook her head. Her aversion was inexplicable.

"Come, my dear; can't you see fat it is your father?" Braine turned to the captain. "She has been like this for a year. Heaven knows if she'll ever be in her right mind again," sadly. "I was giving her an ocean voyage, with the kindest nurses possible, and yet she jumped overboard. Come Florence."

The girl wrapped her arms all the tighter around Barnes' neck.

"An idea came into the old sailor's head. Of course, sir, ye've got proof that she's your daughter?"

"Proof?" Braine was taken aback. "Yes; somethin' t' prove that you're her father. I got skinned out of a sloop once because I took a man's word at it's face value. Black an' white, an' on paper, says I hereafter."

"But I never thought of such a thing," protested Braine, beginning to lose his patience. "I can't risk sending to New York for documents. She is my daughter, and you will find it will not pay to take this peculiar stand."

"In black an' white, t' y' can't have her." Braine thereupon rushed forward to seize Florence. Barnes swung Florence behind him.

"I guess she'll stay here a leetle longer, sir."

Time was vital, and this obstinacy made Braine furious. He reached again for Florence.

"Clear out o' here, 'r show your authority," growled Barnes.

"She goes with me, or you'll regret it."

"All right. But I guess th' law won't hurt me none. I'm in my rights. There's the door, Mister."

"I refuse to go without her!"

Barnes sighed. He was on land a man of peace, but there was a limit to his patience. He seized Braine by the shoulders and hauled him out of the house.

"Bring your proofs, Mister, an' nothin' more'll be said; but till y' bring 'em, keep away from this cottage."

And, simple minded sailor that he was, he thought this settled the matter.

That night he kept his ears open for unusual sounds, but he merely wasted his night's rest. Quite naturally, he reckoned that the stranger would make his attempt at night. Indeed, he made it in broad daylight, with Barnes not a hundred yards away, calling a dory whose scams had sprung a leak. Braine had Florence upon the chartered yacht before the old man realized what had happened. He never saw Florence again; but one day, months later, he read all about her in a newspaper.

Florence fought; but she was weak, and so the conquest was easy. Braine was kind enough, now that he had her safe. He talked to her, but she merely stared at the receding coast.

"All right; don't talk if you don't want to. Here," to one of the men, "take her to the cabin and keep her there. But don't you touch her. I'll break you if you do. Put her in her cabin and guard the door; at least keep an eye on it. She may take it into her head to jump overboard."

Even the temporarily demented are not without a species of cunning. Florence had never seen Braine till he appeared at the Barnes cottage. Yet she revolted at the touch of his hand; hated him with a violence which would have stirred the scientific interest of an alienist. She wanted to hurt him, torture him, beat him down and trample on him. But as this was a physical impossibility, she did the next most agreeable thing to her disordered mind. On the second day out toward New York, she found a box of matches and blithely set fire to her cabin, walked out into the corridor and thence to the deck. When the fire was discovered it had gained too much headway to be stopped. The yacht was doomed. They put off in the boats and for half a day drifted helplessly.

Fate has everything mapped out like a game of chess. You move a pawn, and bug goes your bishop, or your knight, or your king; or she lets you slumber with a gun, and then checkmates you. But there is one thing to be said in her favor—all at her how we will, she is always giving odds to the innocent.

Mike Bamcock was in the galleyhouse, looking over his charts, when the lookout in the crow's nest sang out: "Two boats adrift off the port bow, sir." And Bamcock, who was a first class sailor, although a rough one, shouted down the tube to the engine room. The freighter came to a halt in about ten minutes. The castaways saw that they had been noted, and pulled gallantly at the oars.

There are some things which science, well advanced as it is, cannot explain. Among them is the shock which cuts off the past and the countershock which reawakens memory. They may write treatise after treatise and expound, but they never succeed in truly getting beyond that dark wall of mystery.

At the sound of Jim Norton's voice and at the sight of his face—for subconsciously she must have been thinking of him all the while—a great blinding heat-wave seemed to burn across her eyes, and when the effect passed away she was herself again. A wild glance at her surroundings convinced her that both she and her lover were in danger.

"Keep back," whispered Jim. "Don't recognize me."

"They believe that I've lost my mind, and I'll keep that idea in their heads. Sometime tonight I'll find a chance to talk to you."

Jim kept in the background. It is doubtful if Braine would have recognized him. He was grimy with coal dust, for he had been put in the bottomless pit as a stoker; and there was three days' growth of beard on his face.

It took a good deal of cautious maneuvering to bring about the meeting.

"They shanghai'd me. And I thought you dead! It was all wrong. It was a trick of that Perigoff woman, and it succeeded. Girl, girl, I love you better than life!"

"I know it now," she said; and she kissed him. "Has my father appeared yet?"

"No."

"Do you know anything at all about him?"

"I thought I did. It's all a jumble to me. But beware of the man who brought you here. He is the head of all our troubles; and if he knew I was on board he'd kill me out of hand. He'd have to."

Bramble offered Bamcock a thousand dollars to turn back as far as Boston; and as Bamcock had all the time in the world, carrying no perishable goods, he consented. But he never could quite understand what followed. He had put Florence and Braine in the boat and landed them; but when he went down to see if Braine had left anything behind, he found that individual bound and gagged in his bunk.

TO BE CONTINUED.