

The Million Dollar Mystery

BY HAROLD MacGRATH

\$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 Thankouser 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 Thankouser Film corporation.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE CONTEST.

The prize of \$10,000 will be won by the man, woman, or child who solves 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 Thankouser Film corporation at 5 South Wabash avenue, Chicago, Ill., or Thankouser Film corporation, 71 West Twenty-third street, New York City N. Y., any time up to midnight, Jan. 14, 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 Tince. The judgment of this

board will be absolute and final. Nothing of a literary nature will be considered 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 Hargreave, millionaire, after a miraculous escape from the den of the gang of brilliant thieves known as the Black Hundred, lives the life of a recluse for eighteen years. Hargreave accidentally meets Braine, leader of the Black Hundred. Knowing Braine will try to get him, he escapes from his own home by a balloon. Before escaping he writes a letter to the girls' school where eighteen years before he mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. That day Hargreave also draws \$1,000,000 from the bank, but it is reported that this dropped into the sea when the balloon he escaped in was punctured.

Florence arrives from the girls' school. Countess Olga, Braine's companion, visits and claims her as a relative. The Black Hundred then see a means of making Florence a target for their attacks. They are after the \$1,000,000, and Braine, their leader, sets traps for Florence. The Black Hundred, after a number of attempts, fail, due to the wisdom of Jones, the Hargreave balloon, and Norton, a newspaper man.

Convinced at 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. A duplicate box is planted and later secured by the band, but before its contents are examined the box mysteriously disappears.

Finding himself checkmated at every turn, Braine endeavors to enmesh the Hargreave household in the law in order to gain free access to the house. The timely discovery of the plot by Norton sets the police at the heels of the pack and results in a raid on the gang's rendezvous, which, however, proves to be barren of results.

The Black Hundred begin to fear Norton and plan to dispose of him. Again the maniacal butler shows his hand by rescuing Norton and defeating Braine.

Braine and Countess Olga plan daring attempt to capture Florence and Norton at a masked ball given by Princess Parlova. They defeat their own plan by overanxiety.

By chance Florence discovers a clue used by the Black Hundred. Being surprised by members of the band, she conceals herself and then learns of a mysterious paper which is of vital importance to her father's safety, and at great risk to herself secures the paper.

"And they will trace it back to you in a straight line," she warned. "I will not have it!"

"I can go elsewhere," he replied coldly. "You would leave me?"

"The moment you cross my will," emphatically.

It became her turn to pace. Torn between her love of the man and the danger which stared her in the face, she was for the time being distracted. All the time he watched her with malevolent curiosity, knowing that in the end she would succumb to his evil plans.

"Very well," she said finally. "But I'll

the way up to her room.

The maid passed on into the library.

"What's this?" inquired Florence, as the maid held out the basket. She selected a peach and was about to set her white teeth into it when Jim interposed.

"Wait a moment, dear," Florence lowered the peach. Jim turned to the maid.

"Who sent it?"

"I don't know, sir. A messenger brought it, saying it was for Miss Hargreave."

"Let me see if there is a card." But Jim searched in vain for the card of the donor. At once all his suspicions arose. "Don't touch them. Better let the maid throw them

Florence knelt beside her friend's bed and cried softly.

"You called me just in time. An hour later, nothing would have saved her. She would have been paralyzed for life."

Jim accompanied the doctor to the door and went in search of Jones. He found the taciturn butler eying the fruit basket, his face gray and drawn, though his eyes blazed with fury.

"Poison!"

"A pretty bad poison, too," said Jim. "We can't do anything. We've just got to sit still. But in the end we'll get them. That she devil . . ."

"No, my friend; that's the devil. The woman is mad over him and would commit any crime at his bidding. But this is his work. We want him. He wasn't without courage to send this fruit, knowing that I would instantly suspect the sender. Yet, I have no definite proof. I could not hold him in court in law. He will have bought the fruit piece by piece, the basket in a basket shop. He will have injected the poison himself when alone. Poor Susan! That messenger was without doubt some one over whom he holds the threat of the death chair. That's the way he works."

Jim tramped the room while Jones carried the fruit to the kitchen. The butler returned after a while.

"What about that blank sheet of paper?"

"It has to be dipped into a solution; after that you can read it by heating. I have already dipped it into the solution. The moment the heat leaves the sheet the writing disappears again. The ink is waterproof. I'll show you."

Jones got a candle from the mantle, lit it, and held the sheet of paper very close to the flame. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, letters began to form on the blank sheet. At length the message was complete.

"Dear Hargreave—The Russian minister of police is at the Blank hotel under the name of Henri Servan. He is investigating the work of the Black Hundred in this country and can free you from their vengeance if you supply the evidence needed."

"Now, what evidence can he want?" asked Jim.

"Such as will prove Braine an undesirable citizen."

"And then?"

"Quietly pack him off to Russia. He is badly wanted."

"Who sent this message?"

"One of our mysterious friends. We have a few, as you already know. But I'll go and make this man Servan a visit. I have seen the real minister, and if this man is the same one, something of importance may turn up. I shall want you somewhere about here. I'll let you have this letter. Remember, heat brings it out and cold air makes it vanish. Now I'll go up for a moment to see how that poor girl is getting along. We are lucky; there's no gaining saying that."

"You're a clever man, Jones," said Jim. Jones turned upon him, his face grave. The two men looked steadily into each other's eyes. Jones was first to turn aside his glance, as he had something to conceal and Jim had nothing.

When the ambulance took the tortured Susan away, Jones addressed Florence gravely.

"I am going out and so is Mr. Norton. Do not leave the house; not even if you have a telephone call from me or Norton. Both of us will return; so don't let anything bother or confuse you."

"I promise," said Florence, struggling with a sob.

Jones went downstairs again, paused by a window as if cogitating, and suddenly threw it up and looked abroad. A rattle among the lilacs caused a smile to flit across his face. So they had sent some one to learn the effect of the poison? Or to follow him should he leave the house? He retired to the kitchen and gave some explicit orders to the chef, orders which did not in any way refer to cooking. Then Jones and the reporter left the house, each quite aware that they were being followed. Near the Blank hotel they separated in order to confuse the stalker. He might wander and follow the wrong man. But it was evident that the time he had been directed to follow Jones; for he entered the hotel a minute after Jones.

Meantime a second spy, whom Jones had not seen, had observed the transfer of the invisible writing and had immediately informed Braine, who was not far away. That his poisoned fruit had struck down an outsider troubled him none at all. But that mysterious message he meant to have; it might be a life and death affair, it might be a clue to the treasure, or the whereabouts of Hargreave.

Thus, while only one man followed Jones, several kept a far eye on Jim.

Jones scribbled his name on a blank card and had it taken to the Russian's room. The page eyed that card curiously. It was different from anything he had ever seen before. In one corner were written three or four words which resembled a cross between Hebrew and Greek.

"Humph!" muttered the boy. "Whadda y' know about that? Chicken scratches; but I guess the bell rings Russian. On your way, Hortense," he cried to the hall maid, who wanted a look at the card. When the boy returned to Jones, he said: "Up 't' th' room, sir. He'll see yuh!" The boy kept the silver siver extended expectantly, but Jones went past without apparently noticing the hint.

The Russian was standing by a window.

when Jones knocked and was bidden to enter. "You are not Hargreave."

"Neither are you the Russian minister of police," urbanely.

"Wao are you?"

"I am Hargreave's confidential man, sir." The two men eyed each other cautiously. "You speak Russian?"

"No. I am able to scribble a few words; that is all."

The Russian lit a cigarette and smoked leisurely. He was in no hurry.

"No, I am not the minister; but I am his accredited agent. I am empowered to bring back to Russia a man who is known here by the name of Braine, another by the name of Vroon, and a woman who calls herself a countess and unfortunately is one. All I desire is some damaging proof against them that they are outlaws in this country. The rest will be simple."

"They have all three taken out newspaper papers."

The Russian waved his hand airily. "Once they are in Russia those documents will never come to light. This man Braine, it has been learned, has long been in the pay of Prussia, and has long been the general staff of that country many plans of our frontier fortifications. I do not know what any one of the three looks like. That is why I sought Hargreave."

"I will gladly point them out to you," said Jones, rubbing his hands together, a sign that he was greatly pleased.

"That will be very good of you, I'm sure," in a rumbling but perfectly legible English.

"And suddenly they all three will disappear?"

"Suddenly; and you may believe me that from that time on they'll be heard of never more."

"All this sounds extremely agreeable to me. Mr. Hargreave will be happy to hear that his long enforced hiding will soon come to an end."

"All you have to do, sir, is to point them out to me."

"It may take a week or ten days."

"My government has waited for ten years to gather in this delectable trio. A month, if you like."

"The sooner the better. I shall call this evening after dinner. We shall begin with Mr. Braine; and generally where he is is the woman. Vroon will be the most difficult."

"After dinner, then, since you know some of his haunts. There is a reward."

Jones laughed shortly. "Keep it yourself, sir. Mr. Hargreave would willingly double whatever this reward is to eliminate these despicable creatures from his affairs."

"Thanks."

While this conversation was taking place Norton idled about; and feeling the cravings for a cigarette, prepared to roll one, only to find that he hadn't the "makings." So fate urged him to step into the nearest tobacconist's. He asked for his favorite brand and passed over the siliver.

Braine and his companions saw Norton enter the shop. It agreed with their plans perfectly. The tobacconist happened to be affiliated with the order. So they hurried into the shop. Jim instantly realized that he was in a trap.

"How can I get out of here?" he whispered to the tobacconist.

The latter smiled. "I have to obey these gentlemen. I don't know what they want you for; but if I made a move to help you I should find my own throat cut without saving yours."

"The devil!"

Jim made a dash for the rear door, to find it locked. Even as he fumbled with the key, Braine and his companions lunged themselves upon the reporter and overpowered him.

"Ah, my friend Braine!" he said.

"My friend Norton!" jeered the victor. "And what do you want; some peaches?"

"A paper, my friend, a little sheet of paper with invisible writing on it. We promise to give you something in exchange for it."

"What?" asked Jim with as much nonchalance as he could assume.

"Life."

"Search," said Jim. "You won't object to my smoking?" He began to roll a cigarette while they passed over him. He struck a match; the pleasant aroma of tobacco floated about his head.

"He's got it on him somewhere. I saw him take it. He's got his nerve with him." The cigarette glowed. Jim smoked hurriedly.

"Through every pocket they went. The contents of his wallet lay scattered at his feet; his watch dangled from the chain. The cigarette grew shorter and shorter. Suddenly one of the men stretched out a hand and whisked the cigarette from Jim's lips. He threw it to the floor and stamped out the coal.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed, holding out the scrap of burnt paper towards Braine. The words "Dear Hargreave" were all that remained of the message. With a snarl of rage Braine whipped out his revolver. "I will give you one minute to tell me what that paper contained."

"And after that minute is up?"

"A bullet in your stomach."

Quick as a flash Jim's hand went out, caught the loosely held revolver, gave it a wrench, and brought it down savagely upon Braine's head. Then he reversed it and backed toward the front entrance.

"An revolver, till we meet again, good-bye!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]



JONES AND HENRI SERVAN, RUSSIAN MINISTER OF POLICE, CONSPIRING TO TRAP BRAINE AND HIS ACCOMPLICES.

ten; we shall be found out. Never doubt that. Your revenge will cost us both our lives. I feel it."

"Bah! The law will have no hand in my end. I always carry a pellet; and that ring of yours would suffice a regiment. She will not die. She will merely become a kind of paralytic; the kind that can move a little but not enough; always wheeled about in a chair. I'll bring in the peaches; rosy and downy. One bite, after a given time, will do the trick. If they suspect and throw them out we have lost nothing but the peaches. A trusted messenger will carry them to the Hargreave house. And then we'll sit down and wait."

Meantime, in the library of the Hargreave house, Florence and Jim were puzzling over

the blank sheet of paper.

"I'll wager," said Jim, "the water washed all the writing away. The fire does not seem to do any good. We'll turn it over to Jones. Jones'll find a way to solve it. Trust him!"

"What are you two chattering about?" asked Susan, who was arranging some flowers on the table.

"Secrets," said Jim, smiling.

"Humph!"

Susan pattered about for a few minutes longer, then crossed to the reception room, intending to go upstairs. At that moment the maid was admitting a messenger with a basket of fruit.

"For Miss Hargreave," said he. He gave the basket to the maid, touched his cap awkwardly, and swung on his heel, closing the door behind him. He was in a hurry to deliver another message.

"O, what lovely fruit!" cried Susan, pausing. "I'm going to steal one," she laughed. She selected a peach and began eating it on



JONES READS THE BLANK SHEET OF PAPER.

terror stricken as she recalled Susan's act. "Miss Susan took a peach from the basket and was eating it on the way to her room!"

"Good heavens!" gasped Jim. "I was right. The fruit was poisoned."

Jim had heard enough to send for a specialist he knew. The specialist arrived about twenty minutes after Susan's first cry. To his keen eye it looked like a certain poison which had for its basis the venom of the cobra.

"Will she live?"

"O, yes. But she'll be a wreck for some months. Send her to the hospital where I can visit her frequently. And I'll take that peach along for analysis. No police affair?"

"No. We dare not call them in," said Jim.

"That's your affair. I'll send down the ambulance. Keep her quiet. She'll have a species of paralysis; but that'll work off under the treatment. A strange business."

"So it is," agreed Jim grimly.

thought some joke had been played on me, then I chanced to remember the invisible ink letters you always wrote me. Understanding that you were to visit the cave in the morning, I had one man at the garden take the note. And you never got it!"

"Some one shall pay for this carelessness. I'll call up Vroon and Jackson at once. Wait just a moment."

He went to the telephone. A low muttering conversation took place. Olga could hear little or none of it. When Braine put the receiver back on the hook his face was not pleasant to see.

"That girl!"

"What now?"

"It seems she had been out horseback riding that morning. She had seen one of the boys cross the field and suddenly disappear; and she was curious to learn what had become of him. With her usual luck she stumbled on to the method of opening the door of the cave and went in. She must have been nosing about. She didn't have much time, though, as the boys came up to await me. Evidently she crawled into that old chest and in some inexplicable manner pruned the letter from Jackson's pocket. They left to reconnoiter; and it was then that Jackson discovered his loss. When Florence heard them returning she jumped into the well. And lived through that tunnel! The devil is in it!"

"Or out of it, since we consider him our friend."

"And I had her in my hands, note and all!"

"But with all that water there will not be any writing left on the letter."

"Invisible ink is generally indelible and impervious to the action of water; at least the kind I use is. I'd give a thousand for a sight of that letter."

"And it might be worth a million," Olga suggested.

"Not the least doubt of it in my mind. Olga, old girl, it does look as if my star was growing dim. We'll never get our hands on that million. I feel it in my bones. So let's settle down to a campaign of revenge, without any furbelows. I want to twist Hargreave's heart before the game winds up."

"You wish really to injure her?"

"I do not wish to injure her. Far from it," he replied, smiling evilly.

"You want her . . . dead?" whispered Olga, paling.

"Exactly. I want her dead. And so if all my efforts here come to nothing, so shall Hargreave's. His millions will become waste paper to him. That's revenge. The Persian peach method."

"Poison? You shall not! You s—! not kill her!" vehemently.

"Tender hearted?"

"No. If I must in the end go to prison, so be it; but I refuse to die in the chair."

"Very well, then. We shall. But her, but we'll make her wish she was dead. I was only trying to see how far you would go. The basket of peaches is in the hall-way. Every peach is poisoned. No man in the country knows more about subtle poisons than I do. Have I not written books on the subject?" Ironically.

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CHAPTER XX.

BRAINE TRIES ANOTHER WEAPON.

"WHAT I want now," said Braine, as he paced the living room of the apartment of the countess, "is revenge. I've been checked enough, Olga; they're playing with us."

"That is nothing new," she replied, shrugging. "At the beginning I warned you. I never liked this affair after the first two or three failures. But you would have your way. You wanted revenge at that early date; but I cannot see that you've gone forward. Has it ever occurred to you that the organization may be getting tired, too? They depend solely upon your invention, and each time your invention has resulted in touching nothing but zero."

"Thanks!"

"O, I'm not chiding you. I've failed, too."

"Are you turning against me?" he demanded bitterly.

"Do my actions point that way?" she countered. "No. But the more I view what has passed the more disheartened I grow. It has been a series of blind alleys, and all we have succeeded in doing is knocking our heads. I can see now that all our failures are due to one mistake."

"And what the devil is that?" he asked, irritably.

"We were in too much of a hurry at the beginning. Hargreave prepared himself for quick action on your part."

"And if I had not acted quickly he would have started successfully on one of his wild tours again, and that would have been the last of him, and we should never have learned of the girl's existence. So there's your argument."

"Perhaps you are right. But for all that we have not played the game with any degree of finesse."

"Bah!" Braine lit a cigarette and smoked nervously. "I can't even get rid of that meddling reporter. He has been as much to blame for our failures as either Jones or Hargreave. I admit that in his case I judged hastily. I believed him to be just an ordinary newspaper man, and he was clever enough to lull my suspicions. But I'm going to get him, Olga, even if I have to resort to ordinary gunman tricks. If there's any deal remaining, by the Lord Harry, he shan't get a chance to be the witness stand."

"And I begin to think that that little chit of a girl has been meddling, not at all. By the way, did you find out what that letter said?" she asked after a pause.

"Letter? What letter?"

"She sprang from her chair. "Do you mean to say that they have not told you about that?" Olga became greatly excited.

"Explain," he said.

"Why, I was at the garden day before yesterday, and a man approached and asked if I was Miss Hargreave. Booming at once suspicious that something very important was about to happen, I signified that I was Miss Hargreave. The man slipped a paper into my hand and hurried off. I took a quick glance at it and was dumfounded to find it utterly blank of writing. At first I

SEE THESE PICTURES AT THE PEOPLES' THEATRE