

THE MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY

By Harold MacGrath

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The Million Dollar Mystery will run for twenty-two consecutive weeks in this paper. By an arrangement with the Thalhouser 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 theatres. 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 the motion picture drama will be made and the last two chapters of the story written by Harold MacGrath.

Solutions may be sent to the Thalhouser Film Corporation, either at Chicago or New York, any time up to midnight, Dec. 15. They must bear postoffice marks not later than that date. This allows four weeks after the first appearance of the last film releases and three weeks after the last chapter is published in the paper in which to submit the 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 presented in the theatres 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 picture 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 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 does she become 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.

Janet Hargreave, millionaire after a marvellous escape from the clutches of the Black Hundred, lives in a refuge for eighteen years. Hargreave one night enters a Broadway restaurant and there comes face to face with the gang's leader, Braine.

After the meeting, during which neither man apparently recognizes the other, Hargreave hurries to his magnificent Riverside home and lays plans for making his escape from the country. He writes a letter to the girls' school in New Jersey where 18 years before he mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. He also pays a visit to the jail of a daredevil aviator, Braine and members of his band surround Hargreave's home at night, but as they enter the house the watchers outside see a balloon leave the roof. The safe is found empty—the million which Hargreave was known to have drawn that day was gone. Then some one announced the balloon had been punctured and dropped into the sea.

Florence arrives from the girls' school—Braine's companion, Braine, visits her and claims to be a relative. Two detectives follow her, 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. Princess Olga also visits the Orient's captain and she easily falls into the reporter's snare. The plan proves abortive through Braine's good luck and only headlines fall into the hands of the police.

Later, Florence is lured from home by the band, but succeeds in freeing herself from their clutches. The next day Jones removes a box from his hiding place and, nursed by Braine's sick mother, rushes to the water tank. A row in motor boats ensues. Jones drops the box into the sea and with his automatic sets fire to the burning boat.

Florence goes horseback riding and is captured by one of Braine's men along the roadside. Norton rescues her. They are pursued, however, and the pale make their complete escape only after Norton has exploded a tire of the fast approaching machine with a bullet.

After failing in their first attempt, the Black Hundred trap Florence. They ask her for money, but she escapes again by fleeing them.

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

Recollections of Braine succeed in kidnapping Florence while she is shopping and hurry her off to sea. Norton returns a witness later in a way which shows the girl had leaped from the ship and been rescued.

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CHAPTER X.
The Past a Blank.

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, an almost within hail she saw a fishing schooner riding gracefully at anchor. She quite readily believed that if she reminded on board the George Washington she was lost. She naturally forgot the marvel of wireless telegraphy. No longer may a man hide 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 bobbling 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, hither and yon, from one swift to another, like a chip of wood. Then everything grew blank.

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 turning-in pipe, saw the master lean forward suddenly, lower the glass, then raise it again.

"Lord a'mighty!"

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

"Take in a peek through this glass, I'm dreamin'!"

The mate jumped and took the class "Where away, sir?"

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

"Yessir! Looks like some one 'dropped a bolster' 'o pillar overboard."

"Cod's whiskers!" he broke off.

"Then I ain't seen' 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 dancin' bod-tailed dory, when one moment it is climbing frantically toward heaven and the next heading for the bottom cess 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 a wind. It was a stiff bit of work too to land her—aboard without wading 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 on the sea, dotted here and there by the schooner's fleet, which seemed to be hanging in midair, as at the moment there was visible to the eye an 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 lugged liners keep on crowdin' us," growled Barnes, with a fisherman's hate for the floating hotels. "Went by this never a toot. See 'er, jes' like th' sailor's wife got 't church on Sunday? A mile a minute; fog or no fog, it's all the same 't them. They run us down a never stop. What'll th' tar-nation we goin' to do? She'll kin'ly stay aboard till th' run is over. I can't afford 't yank up my mudbook this time o' day."

"Guess she can stand three 'r four days in our company, smellin' oil-cloths, fish, kerosene, an' punk 't'acco."

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

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

For three days Florence existed not the slightest inclination to leave the bunk. She lay on her back, motionless as with her eyes staring at the ceiling above her head. She did just enough to keep her alive; and the strong black coffee did nothing more than to make her waker. No one knew what the matter was. There was the bump, now diminished, but that it should leave her in this comatose state really 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 day, few weeks, was sufficient to cause this blankness of the mind.

The final coil was reeled and packed away in salt, the mackerel, raised, and the schooner Betty set her sails for the southwest. 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 ice-bays and shortly after Florence was sleeping peacefully in a feather bed, as quiet as in a grave, but one day she awoke and lying in all this time she had not spoken a single word.

"The poor young thing," murmured the miserly Mrs. Barnes. "What'll she do? John, I wish you would give up the sea. I hate it. It's terrible. I am always watching you in

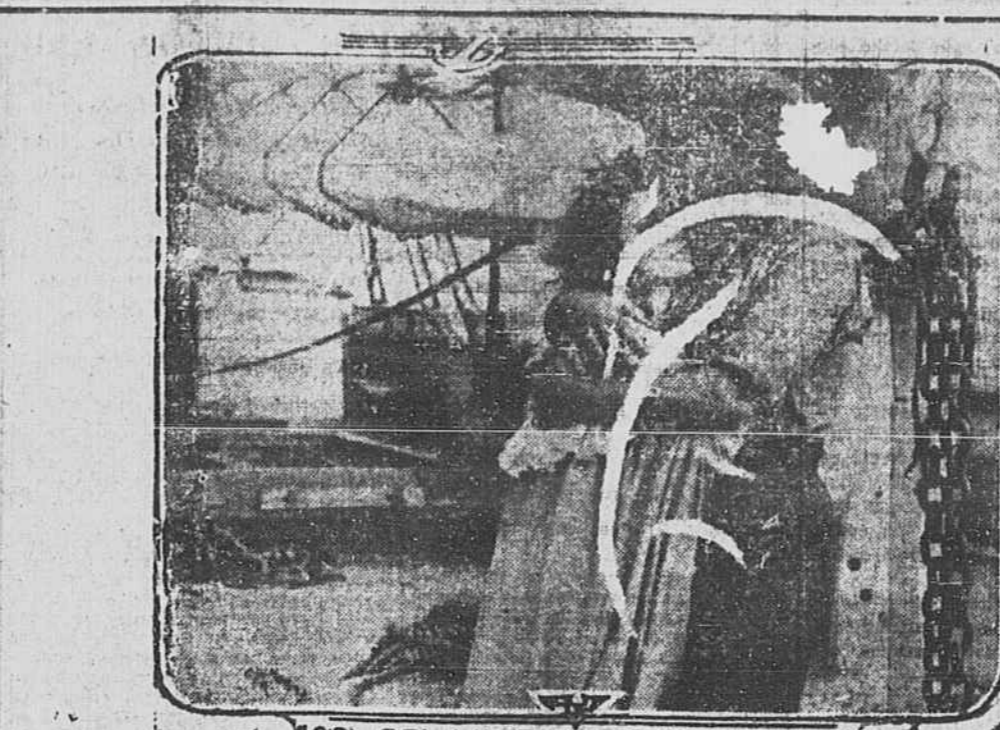
my mind's eye, in calm weather, in storms. Pieces of wrecks come ashore, and I always wonder over the death and terror back of them."

"Don't you worry none about me, Betty. I never take no chances. Now I'm goin' in 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 her 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 local ones. Florence was soon able to walk about. Ordinarily 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.



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

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 Vroon.

The dry after the news came that Florence had jumped overboard off the trunk Vroon with a dozen other men and 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 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 Vroon 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 know who Vroon was. Any man who called on the Princess Perigoff while Braine was with her would be worth following.

On the other hand, Vroon 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 impulse had hitherto served him well. He looked careworn. 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 white-haired 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 princes had been in the dry goods shop.

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

The car stopped and Vroon got off. He led Norton a winding course which at length ended at the door of a tenement building. Vroon entered Norton paused, wondering what next to do, how that his man had reached his destination. Well, since he had followed him all this distance he might make an effort to find out who he was and what he was going to do. Cautionally he entered the hallway, as he knew about the unoccupied 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. His history was as dark as its hallways.

When Vroon and his companion, who had been waiting for him, stepped into the cellar they found the reporter. Invisible. They bowed, stiffly, and gazed him quickly.

"Stand!" said Vroon. "You tell Corriana that I've a sailor for him to-night, and that I want th' sailor brother for some other month of th' year. Tell him to say to the master that this fellow is ugly and dishonest. A tramp-fighter, whose captain is a bully. Do you understand?"

"I got you, but there's no need to go to Corriana with this. Bannock is in port and sailing tonight for Norway. That's far enough."

"Bannock? The very man. Well, Mr. Norton, reporter and amateur detective, I guess you've got yourself caught all right. You may or may not come back alive. Go and bring around a taxi; some one you can trust. I'll

show 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? Shaghaid? "Come out of that now, ye skulker!" roared a voice down the companionway.

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

"I've 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 these 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 gone! I have it, matey. Don't ye worry none."

Norton raised the spanner and, diz-

ered Mike Bannock. Now, if ye know what a cook's galley is?"

"I do," said Norton, breathing hard. "Well, like there ain' 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 from here he was, likely to be on high seas for months, and no way of notifying Jones what 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 Vroon 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 ally any distrust. And he wore a capital disguise too. Everything went well till he had 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 that 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."

"I was giving her an ocean voyage, with the kindest nurses possible, and yet she jumped overboard!"

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

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"They shaghaided 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."

Braine offered Bannock a thousand dollars to turn back as far as Boston; and as Bannock had all the time in the world to carry him, he, however, 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.

"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 hustled him out of the house.

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

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. Instead, he made it in broad daylight, with Barnes not a hundred yards away, calling a dory whose name had sprung a leak. Braine had Florence upon the chartered yacht, but 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 the 'ole in and guard th' door; at least keep an eye on it."

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 recoiled 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 distorted 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 bang goes your 'tshop, or your knight, or your king; or she lets you almost win a game, and then check mates you. But there is one thing to be said in her favor—rail at her how we will, she is always giving odds to the innocent.

Mike Bannock was in the pilot-house, looking over his charts, when the lookout in the crow's nest sang out: "A boat—a boat off the port bow, sir!" And Bannock, 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 counterhook which reawakens memory. They may write treatises about treatise and expound, but they never succeed in truly getting beyond that 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 rush across her eyes, and when the after-pained 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."

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

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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 the 'ole in and guard th' door; at least keep an eye on it."

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 recoiled 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 distorted 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 bang goes your 'tshop, or your knight, or your king; or she lets you almost win a game, and then check mates you. But there is one thing to be said in her favor—rail at her how we will, she is always giving odds to the innocent.

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