The MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY By HAROLD MAC GRATH

$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 mysterious 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 Thanhouser Film Corporation, either at Chicago or New York, any time up to midnight, December 14. They must bear postoffice mark 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 this paper, 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 presented in the theaters having this feature as soon as it is practical to produce same. The story corresponding to these motion pictures will appear in the newspapers coincidentally, or as soon after the appearance of the pictures as practical. 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 newspaper, so far as practical, in printing the last two chapters of the story by Harold McGrath, 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 $1,000,000?
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 his million dollars from the bank, but it is reported that this dropped into the sea when the balloon he escaped in was punctured.

Florence arrives from the girls' school. Countess Olga, Braine's companion, visits her and claims 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 Orient's captain, and she easily falls into the reporter's snare. The plan proves abortive through Braine's good luck, and only hirelings fall into the hands of the police.

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

Norton and the countess call on Florence the next day, once more safe at home. The visitors having gone, Jones removes a section of flooring, and from a cavity takes a box. Pursued by members of the Black Hundred, he rushes to the water front and succeeds in dropping the box into the sea.

Braine conceives the idea of giving a smoking party, to which Florence is invited. Jones and Norton both go along, and are fortunately, on hand to save Florence from being imprisoned in the country house to which she is lured.

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 pair make their complete escape only after Norton has exploded a tire on the fast approaching machine with a bullet.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Wiles of a Woman.

AFTER the affair of the auto bandits—three of whom were killed—a lull followed. If a sailor you know what kind of a lull I mean: blue-black clouds down the southwest horizon, the water crinkly, the boom wabbling. Suddenly a series of "accidents" began to happen to Norton. At first he did not give the matter much thought. The safe which fell almost at his feet and crashed through the sidewalk merely induced him to believe he was lucky. At another time an automobile came furiously around a corner while he was crossing the street, and only amazing agility saved him from bodily hurt. The car was out of sight when he thought to recall the number.

Then came the jolt in the subway. Only a desperate grab by one of the guards saved him from being crushed to death. Even then he thought nothing. But when a new box of cigarettes arrived and he tried one and found it strangely perfumed, and, upon further analysis, found it to contain a Javanese narcotic, a slow but sure death, he became wide awake enough. They were after him. He began to walk carefully, to keep in public places as often as he possibly could.

He was not really afraid of death, but he did abhor the thought of its coming up from behind. Except for the cigarettes they were all "accidents," he could not have proved anything before a jury of his intimate friends.

He never entered an elevator without scrupulous care. He never passed under coverings over the sidewalks where construction was going on. Still, careful as he was, death confronted him once more. It was his habit to have his coffee and rolls—he rarely ate anything more for his breakfast—set down outside his door every morning. The coffee, being in a silver thermos bottle, kept its heat for hours. When he took the stopper out and poured forth a cup it looked oddly black, discolored. It is quite probable that had there been no series of "accidents" he would have drunk a cup—and died in mortal agony. It contained bichloride of mercury.

Very quietly he set about to make inquiries. This was really becoming serious. In the kitchen downstairs nothing could be learned. The maid had set the thermos bottle before the door at 10:30. Norton had opened the door at 1:30—three hours after. The outlook was not the cheerfulest. He knew perfectly well why all these things "happened;" he had interfered with the plans of the scoundrels who were making every possible move to kidnap Florence Hargreave.

One afternoon he paid Florence a visit. Of course, he told her nothing. They had become secretly engaged the day after he had rescued her from the auto bandits. They were secretly engaged because Florence wanted it so. For once Jones suspected nothing. Why should he? He had troubles enough. As a matter of fact, Norton was afraid of Jones. He was afraid of him in the same sense as a boy is afraid of a policeman.

But on this day, when the time came, he accosted the butler and drew him into the pantry.

"Jones, they are after me now."

"You? Explain."

Norton briefly recounted the deliberate attempts against his life.

"You see, I'm not liar enough to say that I'm not worried. I am, devilishly worried. I'm not worth any ransom. I'm in the way, and they seem determined to put me out of it."

"To any other man I would say travel. But to you I say when you leave your rooms don't go where you first thought you would—that is, some usual haunt. They'll be everywhere, near your restaurants, your clubs, your office. You're a methodical young man; become erratic. Keep away from here for at least three days, but always call me up by telephone some time during the day. Never under any circumstance, unless I send for you, come here at night. Only one man now watches the house during the day, but five are prowling around after dark. They might have instructions to shoot you on sight. I can't spare you just at present, Mr. Norton. You've been a godsend; and if it seems that sometimes I did not trust you fully it was because I did not care to drag you in too deep."

Deep? Norton thought of Florence and smiled inwardly. Could anybody be in deeper than he was? Once it was on the tip of his tongue to confess his love for Florence, but the gravity of Jones' countenance was an obstacle to such move; it did not invite it.

To be sure, Jones had no real authority to say what Florence should or should not do with her heart. Still, from all points of view, it was better to keep the affair under the rose till there came a more propitious hour in which to make the disclosure.

Love, in the midst of all these alarms! Sharp, desperate rogues on one side, millions on the other, and yet love could enter the scene serenely, like an actor who had missed his cue and came on too soon.

Oddly enough, there was no real love-making such as you often read about. A pressure of the hand, a glance from the eye, there was seldom anything more. Only once—that memorable day on the river road—had he kissed her. No word of love had been spoken on either side. In that wild moment all conventionalities had disappeared like smoke in the wind. There had been neither past nor future, only the present in which they knew that they loved. With her he was happy, for he had no time to plan over the future. Away from her he saw the inevitable barriers providing against the marriage between a poor young man and a very rich young woman. A man who has any respect wants always to be on equal terms with his wife, financially more than in any other thing. It's the way this peculiar organization called society has written down its rules. Doubtless developed a coarseness in our methods. And now it is too late for finesse. We have tried every device we can thing of; and there they are—the girl free, Norton unharmed, and the father as secure in retreat as though he wore an invisible cloak. My head aches. I have ceased to be inventive."

"The two are in love with each other."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I have eyes. But I begin to wonder."

"About what?"

"Whether or not Jones suspects me and is giving me rope to hang myself with. Not once have the police been called in and told what has really happened. They are totally at sea. And what has become of the man over the way?"

"By the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Braine, clapping his hands. "I believe I've solved that. We shot a man coming out of Hargreave's. Since then there's been no one across the way. One and the same man!"

"But that knowledge doesn't get us anywhere."

"No. You say they are in love?"

"Secretly. I don't believe the butler has an inkling of it. It is possible, however, that Susan has caught the trend of affairs. But, being rather romantic, she will in no wise interfere."

Braine smoked in silence. Presently a smile twisted his lips.

"You have thought of something?" she asked.

"You might try it," he said. "They have accepted your friendship, whether with ulterior purpose remains to be learned. She has been to your apartments two or three times to tea and always got home safely."

"No," she said determinedly. "Nothing shall happen here. I will not take the risk."

"Wait till I'm through. Break up the romance in such a way that the girl will bar Norton from the house. That's what we've been aiming at; to get rid of that meddling reporter. We've tried poisons. Try your kind."

"What do you mean?"

"Lies."

"Ah! I understand. You want me to win him away from her. It cannot be done."

"Pshaw! You have a bag full of tickets. You can easily manage to put him into an equivocal position out of which he cannot possibly squirm so far as the girl is concerned. A little melodrama, arranged for the benefit of Florence. Fall into Norton's arms at the right moment, or something like that."

"I suppose I could. But if I failed?"

"You're too damnably clever to fail in your own particular work. Something has got to be done to keep those two apart. I've often thought of raiding the opera with me tonight. You will come to my apartment first. You will come?"

"To be sure, we will!"

"Simple little fool!" thought the Russian on the way home. "She shall see."

"I believe the countess is engaged to be married," said Florence to Jones.

"Indeed, miss?"

"Yes. I couldn't get anything definite out of her, but she had a beautiful ring on her finger. She wants Susan and me to go to the opera with her tonight. Will that be all right?"

Jones gazed abstractedly at the rug. Whenever a problem bothered him he seemed to find the solution in the delicate patterns of the Persian rugs. Finally he nodded. "I see no reason why you should not go. Only, watch out."

"Jones, there is one thing that will make me brave and happy. Will you tell me if you are in direct communication with my father?"

"Yes, Miss Florence," he answered promptly. "But do not breathe this to a single soul, neither Susan nor Norton."

"I promise that. But, ah! hasten the day when he can come to me without fear."

"That is my wish also."

"You need not call me miss. Why should you?"

"It might not be wise to have any one hear me call you thus familiarly," he objected gravely.

"Please your self about that. Now I must telephone Jim."

"Jim?" the butler murmured.

He caught the word which was not intended for his ears. But for once Jones had been startled out of himself.

"Is it wrong for me to call Mr. Norton Jim?" she asked with a bit of banter.

"It is not considered quite the proper thing, Miss Florence, to call a young man by his first name unless you are engaged to marry him, or grew up with him from childhood."

"Well, supposing I were engaged to him?" haughtily.

"That would be a very grave affair. What have you to prove that he may not wish to marry you for money?"

"Why, Jones, you know that I haven't a penny in the world I can call my own! There is nothing to prove, except your word, that I am Stanley Hargreave's daughter."

"No, there is nothing to prove that you are his daughter. But hasn't it ever occurred to you that there might be a purpose back of this? Might it not be of inestimable value that your father's enemies should be left in doubt? Might is not be a means of holding them on the leash? There is proof, ample proof, my child; and when the time comes these will be shown you. But meantime put all thought of marrying Mr. Norton out of your head."

"That I refuse to do," quietly. "I am at least mistress of my heart; and no one shall dictate to me whom I shall not marry. I love Mr. Norton and he loves me, knowing that I may not be an heiress after all. And some day I shall marry him."

Jones bowed. This seemed to appear final to him, and nothing more was to be said.

"I have a right to be happy," she added, in defense of her attitude.

"No one denies that. Are we not all of us striving that in the end you may be happy? Have we any other thought?"

"We are quite willing to wait till the snarl is untangled."

"I am sorry that this has happened. I do not consider it quite honorable of Mr. Norton, when he knows how really helpless you are. But of course I have no authority. I can only warn you." He bowed and walked toward the kitchens.

Florence flouted her head and rejoined Susan and forgot to telephone Norton. Had she done so she would have been saved many a heartache. At any rate, she had unburdened her conscience and she must tell Jim that the secret was out. When, eventually, she did call him up he was not to be found. She left word, however, for him to call after the opera and escort her home.

Norton did not return to his room till 7. He found the telephone call and also a note in a handwriting unfamiliar. He tore off the envelope and found the contents to be from the Countess Perigoff.

"Call at 8 tonight," he read. "I have an important news story for you. Tell no one, as I cannot be involved in the case. Cordially, Olga, Countess Perigoff."

Humph! Norton twiddled the note in his fingers and at length rolled it into a ball and threw it into the waste-basket. He, too, made a mistake; he should have kept that note. He dressed, dined, and hurried off to the apartments of the countess.

He arrived ten minutes before Florence and Susan.

And Jones did some rapid telephoning.

"How long, how long!" the butler murmured. "How long would this strange combat last?" The strain was terrific. He slept but little during the nights, for his ears were always waiting for sounds. He had cast the chest into the sea, and it would take a dozen expert divers to locate it. And now, a top of all these worries, the child must fall in love with the first comer! It was heart-breaking. Norton, so far as he had learned, was cool and brave, honest and reliable in a pinch; but as the husband of Stanley Hargreave's daughter, that was altogether a different matter. And he must devise some means of putting a stop to it, but——

But he was saved that trouble.

Mongoose and cobra, that was the game being played; the cunning of the one against the deadly venom of the other. If he forced matters he would only lay himself open to the strike of the snake. He must have patience. Gradually they were breaking the organization, lopping off a branch here and there, but the peace of the future depended upon getting a grip on the spine of the cobra himself.

The trick was simple. The countess had news; trust her for that. She exhibited a cablegram, dated at Gibraltar, in which the British authorities stated definitely that no such a person as William Orts, aviator, had arrived at Gibraltar. And then, as he rose, she rose also and gently precipitated herself into his arms, just at the moment Florence appeared in the doorway.

Very simple, indeed. When a woman falls toward a man there is nothing for him to do but extend his arms to prevent her from falling. Outwardly, however, to the eye which saw only the picture and comprehended not the cause, it had all the hallmarks of an affectionate embrace.

Florence stood perfectly still for a moment, then turned away.

"I beg your pardon!" said the countess, "but a sudden fainting spell seized me. My heart is a bit weak."

"Don't mention it," replied the gallant Norton. He was as innocent as a babe as to what had really taken place.

Florence went back home. She wrote a brief note to Norton and inclosed the ring which she had secretly worn attached to a little chain around her neck.

When Norton came the next day she refused to see him. It was all over. She never wished to see him again.

"He says there has been some cruel mistake," said Jones.

"I saw him with the countess in his arms. I do not see any cruel mistake in that. I saw him. Tell him so. And add that I never wish to see him again."

Then she ran swiftly to her room, where she broke down and cried bitterly and would not be comforted by Susan.

"In heaven's name," demanded the frantic lover, "what has happened?"

The comedy of the whole affair lay in the fact that neither of the two suspected the countess, who consoled them both.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)

FLORENCE CAME IN AT THAT INSTANT

IN LOCAL FINANCIAL CIRCLES

The initial shock to business having been safely passed, this country is now settling down to the war basis made necessary by the embroilment of practically the whole of Europe in the greatest struggle that the world has ever witnessed. Consideration and co-operation on the part of the leaders of American business and the nation's lawmakers are rapidly restoring and readjusting trade movements and a gradual resumption already has taken place in such activities as can and must be carried on in spite of the great conflict abroad.

The past week has been notable primarily for the demonstration of intense desire on the part of both the Government and business to render mutual co-operation in solving the questions of commerce and exchange growing out of the European entanglement, as evidenced in the several important conferences that have taken place between representatives of various branches of the Government and the leaders in diverse fields of commerce and industry.

The carping criticism of lawmakers that emanated only a few weeks ago from financial and business centers, to be met in turn with charges from Administration leaders of efforts on the part of the critics to warp public opinion by false means have been hushed. The critics and the criticised are now working hand in glove for the advancement of American commerce, the protection of this country's credit, and the avoidance of missteps that might cause a violation of the nation's neutrality.

Atlantic Open, But Ships Few.

The most important impetus to a resumption of commercial activity is the announcement that Great Britain has cleared the lanes of trans-Atlantic communication, making possible the shipment of American products to foreign shores. The most baffling subject now is the securing of means of transportation for these products.

Both houses of Congress, recognizing the handicap under which this country labored with its foreign markets closed, turned attention immediately to the enactment of legislation that would lower the barriers erected by ancient navigation laws. The registry measure to which Congress gave consideration is said to have the approval of President Wilson, and the general belief is that such a measure would bring under the American flag at least 100 ships that now fly foreign colors.

To further encourage the shipment of American goods, the prominent bankers, shippers, and representatives of other lines of industry who met Friday with Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo to devise means not only to preserve, but also to increase American commerce, advocated the assumption by the Government of the war risk of American shipping and cargoes.

The conferees contended that were commerce restored and American grain and cotton shipped abroad, in the near future there would be practically an immediate relief of the demand for gold for exchange through the provision of an exchange in natural products.

The need for an exchange is a pressing one. America owes a comparatively large foreign debt, and many of the international bankers of this country are contending that unless the United States ships its gold to the warring countries to meet its indebtedness, its credit will suffer severely.

To make possible the exportation of gold in amounts sufficient to meet the debt claim, some of the large bankers went so far as to advocate the releasing of the gold reserves of the national banks and the substitution therefore of national bank notes as a reserve medium. The advocacy of legislation that would permit such a step, however, not only met with strong opposition by a majority of banking interests, but was discountenanced by the Federal reserve board at its first formal meeting Thursday.

How Trade is Strangled.

To gain a comprehensive idea of the strangulation of American trade by the European disturbance, one has merely to glance at statistics on this nation's exports and imports to and from Europe as compared with all other countries. In 1913 the exports to Europe totaled $1,461,000,000 as compared with $2,428,500,000 to all other countries, while the imports from Europe amounted to $892,800,000 against $1,813,000,000 for all other countries.

Only one-seventh of the seaport clearings on this trade, however, went under the American flag. The ships flying the Stars and Stripes in 1913 carried 5,300,000 tons, whereas foreign bottoms carried 32,200,000 of the total clearings of 37,600,000 tons.

The reduction in foreign trade has caused a sharp decline in revenues from imports, to meet which the Government is now endeavoring to devise means. Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo, Chairman Simmons, of the Senate Finance Committee, and Chairman Underwood, of the House Ways and Means Committee, held a conference Thursday, at which the Secretary presented figures prepared by his department which showed an estimated decrease of $100,000,000 in revenues incident to the war. Mr. Underwood and Mr. Simmons determined to draft a bill which will provide extra revenue, presumably by an extra tax on tobacco and intoxicating liquors. Within the past few days, however, the sentiment against a war tax at present has been growing among the national lawmakers.

Wheat and cotton are the two great export crops of this country, and, at present, it appears as though the Southern crop would be the principal sufferer. Great Britain has undertaken to insure cargoes of foodstuffs, so long as they are shipped in foreign bottoms, and Belgium has followed suit, without making the latter limitation. Thus it would appear that there will be opportunity for the shipment of wheat, but the cotton crop prospects are not so bright.

Aid Sought for Cotton Growers.

Realizing their handicap, which has resolved itself into practically an elimination of all foreign markets for the staple at present, Southern cotton growers came to Washington last week and endeavored to secure the enactment of protective measures. As a result Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia, and Congressman Lever of South Carolina, introduced in their respective branches of Congress bills to establish bonded warehouses where cotton might be stored and made the basis of a currency issue.

The South, with the opening of the Panama canal yesterday, recognizes the great opportunity that is presented to it for the development of a South American trade, now that Germany, Great Britain and France are drawn away from that field. To encourage a striving after this trade the Southern Railway Company and its affiliated lines has offered to furnish to all Southern manufacturers broad information as to Latin-American opportunities through its South American commercial agent, Charles Lyon Chandler.

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FREE!

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