

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 Thankyou 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 Thankyou 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 film will be made and the last two chapters of the story written by Harold MacGrath.

Solutions may be sent to the Thankyou Film corporation, either at 1279 Broadway, New York, any time up to midnight, Jan. 14. 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 Lomergan, and Miss Mae Tines. 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 incidentally, or prior to 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, as far as practicable, in printing the last two chapters of the story by Harold MacGrath, and 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 connection with the writing 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 woman?

Solutions 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 marvelous escape from the deck of the great Black Hundred, lives the life of a recluse for eighteen years. Hargreave eventually meets Braine, leader of the Black Hundred. Knowing Braine will try to get him, he escapes from his own home by a bathroom. Before escaping he writes a letter to the girls' school where thirteen years before he mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. That day Hargreave also drains \$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. Constance Gray, 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. Constance 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 Braine falls 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 leaving them.

Norton and the countess call on Florence the next day, once more make a mistake. Norton having gone, James moves 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.

Constance Gray succeeds in evading the engagement rattling between Florence Hargreave and Norton.

Accomplices of Braine succeed in kidnapping Florence while she is shopping and carry her off to sea. She leaves into the sea and is picked up in a dazed condition by a party of fishermen. The Black Hundred locate her and Braine, disguised as her father, succeeds in taking her back to sea with him. Florence also goes to the boat and is rescued by a ship on which Norton has been abandoned.

Norton and Florence safely ashore and with no longer any misunderstanding between them, take the train for Reno. The train is wrecked and waiting members of the Black Hundred carry the injured Florence to a deserted hut. Norton, who tries to rescue her, is tied to the railroad tracks. Florence saves him and finally James comes to the rescue of both.

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CHAPTER XII.

DIPSY-DANTY. If you please, of allollones in jerseys and tarry caps, of rolling galls, along tobacco and diverse profanity; of coppers, and blundering, and tramp, and some of them honest, some of them dishonest, and some of them pirates of the first water who did not find it necessary to hoist their own flag, they were dotted about the sea. They remind you of the once prosperous merchant, run down at the dock, who has been in the past. You never hear these men mentioned in the maritime news, which is the society column of the ships; you know of their existence only by the bleached bones of them, strewn along the coast.

As honest ship, but run down at the heel, she was in the sound, a fourth-rater of the harbor level; that is, her principal line of business was hauling barges up and down

the coast. When she could not pick up enough barges to make it pay, why, she'd go galavanting down to Cuba for bales of tobacco or over to the Bermudas for the heaven smelling onion. Today she was an onion ship; which precludes any idea of adventure. She was about 4,000 tons, and her engines were sternward and not amidship. She carried two masts and a half dozen holst booms, and the only visible sign of anything new on her was her bowsprit. This was new doubtless because she had poked her nose too far into her last slip.

Her crew was orderly and tractable. There were shore drunks, to be sure, because they were sailors; but they were a peaceful lot withal. At this moment they were at work.

There was a sailor among this crew, and he went by the name of Steve Blossom; and he was one of his kind. A grimy dime novel protruded rakishly from his hip pocket, and his right cheek was swollen as with the toothache, due, probably, to a generous "chaw" of Seaman's Delight. He was a real tobacco chewer, for he rarely spat. He was as peaceful as a backwater bay in summer; non-argumentative and passive, he stood his watch in fair weather and foul.

No one gave the anchor any more attention after it came to rest. The great city over the way was fairy-like in its business and transparency. It was the poetry of angles, of shafts and spars of stone; and Steve Blossom, having a moment to himself, leaned against the rail and stared regretfully. He had been generously drunk the night before, and it was a pleasant recollection. Chance led his glance to trail down the cutwater. His neck stretched from his collar like a turtle's from its shell.

"Well, I'll be hornswoggled!" he murmured, shifting his cud from starboard to port.

Caught on the fluke of the anchor was the strangest looking box he had ever hid eyes on. There was leather and steel bands and diamond-shaped ivory and mother of pearl, and it hung prominently on the point of the rusty fluke.

Treasure!

And Steve was destined never to be possibly again. His first impulse was to call his companions, his second impulse was to say nothing at all, and wait for an opportunity to get the box to his bunk without being detected. Treasure! Diamonds and rubies and pearls and old Spanish gold; all hanging to the fluke of the anchor.



"YOU LEMME BY!" BREATHED STEVE.

the cutwater. The thought of money and the pleasures it will buy makes cunning the stupidest of dolts; and Steve was ordinarily a dolt. But tonight his brain was keen enough for all purposes. It was a hazardous job to get the box off the fluke without letting it slip back into the sea. Steve, however, accomplished the feat, climbed back on the rail and sat down, waiting. A quarter of an hour passed. No one had seen him. With his coat secretly wrapped about his precious find he made for the forecabin. His mates, save those who were doing their watch, were all in their bunks. An oil lamp dimly illuminated the forward partition. Steve's bunk was almost in darkness. Very deftly he rolled back the bedding and secreted the box under the pillows, and then stretched himself out with the pretense of snoring till the bell called him to duty.

He was rich; and the moment a man has money he has troubles; there is always some one who wants to take it away from you. His bunk was on the port side, and there was plenty of hiding space between the iron plates and the wooden partition. He intended to loosen three or four planks, and then when the time came, slip the box behind them. Some time during the morning the forecabin would be empty, and then would be his time.

But he suffered the agonies of damnation during his four hours' watch. Supposing some fool should go rummaging about his bunk and discover the box? Suppose . . . But he dared not suppose. There was nothing to do but wait. If he created any curiosity on the part of his mates he was lost. He would have to divide with them all, from the captain down to the cook's boy. It was a heart-rending thought. From being the most open and frank man aboard, he became the most cunning. From being a man without enemies, he saw an enemy even in his shadow.

At 4 o'clock he turned in and slept like a log.

In the morning he found his opportunity. For half an hour the forecabin was empty of all save himself. Feverishly he pried back the boards, found the brace beam, and gently hid the box there. It was a mighty curious looking box. Once he had stoked up the Chinese coast from the Philippines, and he judged it to be Chinese in origin. He tried to pry open the cover and feast his eyes upon the treasure; but under the leather and ivory and mother of pearl was impervious steel. It would take an ax or a crowbar to stir that lid. He sighed. He replaced the boards, and became to all appearances his stolid self again.

But all the way down to the Bahamas he was moody, and when he answered any question it was with words spoken testily and jerkily.

"I know what's th' matter," said Dunkers. "He's in love."

"Shut your mouth!"

"Didn't I tell yuh?" laughed the tattle-tale, dancing toward the companionway. "Steve's in love, 'r he didn't git drunk enough on shore 't satisfy his whale's belly!"

A boot thudded spitefully against the door jamb.

"You fellows let me alone, 'r I'll bash in a couple o' heads!"

"O, yuh will, will yuh?" cried Dunkers from the deck. "If yuh want a little exercise, yuh can begin on me, yuh mooncalf wab! What's th' matter with yuh, anyhow? Where'd yuh git this grouch? What've we done 't yuh? Huh?"

"You keep out o' my way, that's all. I'm mindin' my watches, an' don't ask no odds of you duffers. What if I have a grouch? Is it any o' your blame business? All right. When we step ashore at th' Bahamas, Mister Jim Dunkers, I'll tear the ropes out o' your pulley blocks. But till we git there, you 't th' upper bunk an' me 't mine."

"Leave th' o' grouch alone, Jim. Th' mate won't stand for no scrapperin' aboard. We'll have th' thing done right in th' custom shods. We'll have a finish fight, Queensberry rules, an' may th' best man win."

"I'm willin'," said Jim.

"So'm I," agreed Steve. But his intentions were not honorable. He proposed to desert



AND THAT IS WHY THE ORIGINAL ILK WANS ALIVE TO BE HURDLED ONCE AGAIN.

before any fight took place. Not that he was physically afraid; no; he wanted to dig his hands deep into those doubloons and pieces of eight.

So the four days down passed otherwise uneventfully, amid paint pots and iron rust and three meals a day of pork, onion soup, potatoes, and strong, bitter coffee. The winds became light and balmy and the sea blue and gentle. The men went about in their undershirts and dungarees, barefooted. Of course the coming fight was the main topic of conversation. It promised to be a rattling good scrap, for both men were evenly matched, and both had a "kick" in either hand. Even the captain took a mild interest in the affair. He was an old sailor. He knew that there was no such word as arbitration in a sailor's vocabulary; his disputes could be settled only in one manner, by his calloused fists.

When the old mudhook (and some day Steve was going to buy it and hang it over the entrance of the Gilson house) slithered down into the smiling waters of the bay, Steve concluded that discretion was the better part of valor. He would steal ashore on the quarantine tug which lay alongside. He was willing to fight under ordinary circumstances, but he must get his treasure in safety first. They could call him a wolverine if they wanted to; devil a bit did he care. So he pried back the boards of his bunk wall, took out the box, eyed it fondly, and noted for the first time the lettering on it:

STANLEY HARGREAVE

He wrinkled his brow in the effort to recall a pirate by this name, but was unsuccessful. No matter. He hugged the box under his coat and made for the gangway, and inadvertently ran into his enemy.

Dunkers caught a bit of the box peering out from under the coat.

"What 'a' yuh got there?" he demanded truculently.

"None o' your damn business! You lemme by; hear me?"

"Ain't none o' my business, huh? Where'd yuh git a box like that? Steal it? By cripe, I'm goin' 't have a look at that box, my hearty. It don't smell like honest oleona."

"You lemme by!" breathed Steve, with murder in his heart.

Suddenly the two men closed, surged back and forth, one determined to take and the other to hold this mysterious box. Dunkers struggled to speak his word; not that he really wanted the box but to prove that he was strong en' gh to take it if he wanted to.

the box flashed and disappeared. It was a kind of shock to him. He and Blossom went battering against the rail. Dunkers' trip slipped and so did Blossom's. The result was that the box was catapulted into the sea. With an agonizing cry, Blossom leaped for cover. He saw the box oscillate for a moment, then sink gracefully in a slanting column down through the blue waters. Fainter and fainter it grew, and at last vanished.

"I'm sorry, Steve; but yuh wouldn't let me look at it," said Dunkers, contritely.

"Damn you; I'm goin' 't kill y' for that!"

It became a real fight this time, fist and foot, tooth and nail; one mad with the lust to kill and the other desperately intent on living. It was one of those contests in which honor and fair play have no part. But for the timely arrival of the captain and some of the crew Dunkers would have been badly injured, perhaps fatally. They hauled back Blossom, roaring out his entreaties at the top of his lungs. It took half an hour's arguing to calm him down. Then the captain demanded to know what it was all about. And blubbering, Steve told him.

"Six hundred feet of water, if I've got my reckoning right. The anchor lies in sixty feet, but the starboard side drops sheer six hundred. You wab! Why didn't you bring the box to me? A man has a right to what he finds. I'd have taken care of it for you till we got back to port. I know; you were greedy; you thought I might want to stick my fist into your treasure. And you'll never find it in 600 feet of water and tangled, porous coral. That's what you get for being a blamed hog. As for you," and the captain turned to Dunkers, "get your dunnage and your puy and hunt for another boat back. I won't have no murder on board 'Captain Manners'. And the sooner you go, the better."

"I'll go, sir," said Dunkers, readily enough. Had the misfortune happened to him and had Blossom been the aggressor, he would want his life. He understood. Like the valet in "Olivette," it was the time for disappearing.

"An' keep out o' my way. I'll git y' yet," growled Blossom.

"Keep your mouth shut," said the mate, "or I'll have you put in irons, you pig!"

"All right, sir. I've said all I'm goin' 't say 't day"; and Blossom strode off.

"What was the box like?" asked the captain of Dunkers.

"Chinese contraption, sir; leastwise it looked that way to me. Didn't look as if it'd

been in th' water long, etc. Somethin' lost overboard by some private yacht, 't my thinkin'. I'll keep out o' Steve's way. I'll lay low on shore, sir."

And though Steve made a perfect range of the spot, he never came back to find the mysterious box, never saw the Gilson house back home, nor did he ever see Dunkers again. On the voyage home he brooded continually, and was frequently found blubbering; and one night he skipped his watch and went to Davy Jones' locker.

Dunkers had not told about the same he had seen on the box; and Blossom had not thought to. The name Hargreave had instantly brought back to Dunkers' mind the newspaper stories he had recently read. There was no doubt in the world that this box belonged to the missing millionaire, who had drawn a million from his banks and vanished; and, moreover, there was no doubt in Dunkers' mind that this million lay in the Bahaman waters. It had been drawn up from the bottom of the wound, under the path of the balloon. He proceeded, then, to take a most minute survey. It would require money and partners; but half a loaf would be far better than no loaf at all; and he was determined to return to New York to find backing. Finding is keeping on land or sea.

Now it happened that his favorite grog shop was a cheap saloon across the way from the headquarters of The Black Hundred; and Vroom occasionally dropped in, for he often picked up a valuable bit of maritime news. Dunkers was an old friend of the barkeeper, and he proceeded to pour and gnaw down his throat a very poor substitute for whiskey. He became communicative. He bragged. He knew where there was a million, and all he needed was a first class diving bell. A year from now he would not be drinking cheap whiskey; he'd be steering a course up and down Broadway and buying wine when he was thirsty. He was no miser. But he had to have a diving bell; and where 'th' blue devil could he get one with \$12 and an Ingersoll watch in his pocket?

From his table Vroom made a sign which the bartender understood. Then he rose and approached Dunkers.

"I own a pretty good diving apparatus," he said. "If you've got the goods, I'll take a chance on a fifty-fifty basis." Vroom did not believe there was anything back of this talk; but it always paid to dig deep enough to find out. "Have a drink; and, Bill, give us a real whiskey and none of your mope-ye. Now, let's hear your yarn."

"I don't know yuh," said Dunkers, with drunken caution. "How is it, Bill?" turning to the bartender.

"It's the goods, Jim. You've heard of Wyant & Co.?"

"Sure I've heard o' them. Best divin' apparatus they is."

"Well, this gent here is Mr. Brooks, general manager for Wyant & Co. I can O. K. him."

Vroom threw an appreciative glance at the bartender. He was not affiliated with The Black Hundred, but he had often aided Vroom in minor affairs.

"All right, if yuh say so, Bill. Well, here's th' yarn."

And when he had done, Vroom smoked quietly without speaking.

"Don't yuh believe it?" demanded Dunkers, truculently.

"But 600 feet of water, in a coral bottom, and no way of telling just where it fell overboard. That's a tough proposition."

"O, it is in it? I'm a sailor. I can lay my hand right over th' spot. Do yuh think I'd be fool enough 't hunt for it without a perfect range?" Dunkers tapped his coat pocket suggestively.

And Vroom knew that the one thing he wanted was there, a plan or a drawing of the range. So there was another man shaggleed that night, and his destination was Cape Town, twenty-two days' voyage by the calendar.

Vroom carried his information to the organization that same night. They would start the expedition at once, and till this was accomplished, Hargreave's daughter was to be immune from attacks. Besides, it would give Hargreave (wherever he was) and the others the idea that The Black Hundred had concluded to give up the chase.

Above, with his ear to a small hole, skillfully bored through the ceiling without permitting the plaster to fall, knelt a man with a bandaged arm. He could never see any faces; no one ever took off a mask in this sinister chamber. But there were voices, and he was never going to forget some of them. After the meeting came to an end, he waited an hour after, and then stole down into the street by the aid of the fire escape. Later, he entered a telephone booth and called up Jones.

Then, one leather and steel box, dotted with bits of ivory and mother-of-pearl, became two; and the second one was snaked in mud and salt water for two weeks till you could not have told it from the original. And that is why Jones was able, some weeks later, to hide once more the original box. As for the substitute, just as Braine was about to use a mallet and chisel upon it, the lights went out. There was a wild scramble, a chair or two was overturned.

"The door, the door!" shouted Braine, furious.

It slammed the moment the words left his lips. And as suddenly as they had gone out the lights sprung up. The box was gone. There were evidently traitors among The Black Hundred.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]