

# The Mysterious Monogram

An Absorbing New Novel

By Howard P. Rocky

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## CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER VICTIM.

Harcourt, with the aid of his valet, was dressing when Carrington was announced. All the way home, and every moment that he was changing, Harcourt had been the prey of strange, haunting doubts. Fergus, the valet, seemed gravely upon his brain—he saw it upon every object he looked at—and the thing, too, in a sense of uneasiness and fear, he could not be rid of, try as he might. When he had first seen the dagger hit, it made but little impression upon him, yet it was sufficiently unusual to impress itself upon him when he saw it again in the rear room of the drill club, his first appearance in the Marston library had set him thinking almost impossible thoughts. How could he have gotten there, and what did it mean now of it?

The thought that she did it—knowing that the strange murder knew—should be lying there upon her ivory table completely unheeded him. If she, too, were mixed up in this horrible night, in some unexplainable way, he felt that he could trust, no matter what the whole idea seemed to be, fantastic to be credited, and he had been at the point of telephoning to Grace half a dozen times since his return home.

In evening clothes, Carrington hurried into the room, tossing his hat and stick to Fergus who disappeared retired at once.

"What?" said Harcourt, approvingly, as he pulled himself together, or with an effort. "Will you never learn not to rush in upon people like this?"

"Don't be an utter fool, Dicky," snapped Carrington irritably. "You have the emotions of a woman, I haven't! I have news, man, news!"

"Really," said Harcourt, smiling indulgently. "Why don't you get out an extra?"

Carrington gave him a glance of utter contempt. "You remember, Dicky, the doorman at the club?" he said.

"Yes," Harcourt admitted with a grin. "I can remember figures like Dodson."

"Well, he's no longer a figure—he's dead," said Carrington. "The respect-"

ors went to his house his morning but could not find him. No one there knew anything of the city failed to give any trace of him. Late this afternoon, however, he was found—in the uniform, in the arcaway at the back of the fire escape at the back of the club."

"Dead," said Carrington. "His face was horribly distorted, and there were marks upon his throat which showed clearly that he must have been held by a person of tremendous strength."

Harcourt stood stunned at Carrington spoke. The thing seemed to him the last straw, and walking over to the buffet, he poured himself a drink.

"Don't start that," Carrington warned him. "You'll need your head if you have one!"

Harcourt paused for a moment—then he said the glass. "Go on," he said.

"In Dodson's hand," Carrington continued, "they found, clutched quite tightly, a long leather case of a knife. Inspector MacBee showed it to me. The markings on it are exactly similar to—"

Harcourt started. "To the—?" Carrington nodded. "Exact," he said. And another thing has been found. Perkins, the club servant who found Towensend, says that the window directly behind the body and leading onto the fire escape, was open. He naturally thought nothing of it at last evening was warm and the windows all through the club were open. What is more, it is reported that a card bearing your name was still in the rack at the club door this morning, showing that Dodson was not there when you left the building."

"The thing grows more and more serious every minute," said Harcourt, frowning.

"But surely Jack you see that these things go a great way toward removing suspicion from you?" Carrington said enthusiastically.

"So they do that," Harcourt said. "I hadn't thought of that. Have a cigarette, Dicky."

"And there is something else," Carrington went on. "Perhaps the most important of all. I haven't mentioned it to anyone, but I think that MacBee noticed it, although one can never tell what he observes."

"Well," Harcourt said impatiently, his calmness quite gone.

"I examined the sheath Harcourt and it is undoubtedly the case of the knife Fergus found in your pocket. Burned into the leather just at the top are the initials 'K. K.' They are eddy carved, and I don't believe one person in a hundred would ever notice them, but somehow I caught them right away."

And if you should be needed I can easily reach you by wire. If Scotland Yard should require your presence for any reason it would not be a very difficult matter to locate a man so well known as your lordship," he concluded with a smile.

"You don't imagine I'm going to run away, do you?" Harcourt asked.

"Of course not," MacBee quickly assured him. "On the contrary, your assistance from the beginning has been most commendable, if I may be permitted to express my appreciation of the fact."

"Thank you," said Harcourt, looking at his watch.

"If you will excuse me, it is time Mr. Carrington and I were starting. Mr. Cornish, the American you met this afternoon, is giving a reception this evening. I am going there and when I leave his house will either come to your home or drop in at the Grill club."

"If anything transpires in the meantime, I shall not forget to advise you," MacBee promised and hurried away.

Harcourt stood silently by the table while the inspector left. He was thinking of the strange monogram and wondering if Carrington had noticed it. Once he was about to mention the uncanny device, but thought better of it when Fergus appeared to announce that the limousine was waiting below.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MONOGRAM ONCE MORE.

THE STREETS adjoining the mansion which Henry Cornish had leased for the London season were thronged with carriages and motor cars. One by one they passed before the canopy spread across the sidewalk and emptied of groups of distinguished-looking men and handsome women. Lord Dodson was but one of many cars with ancient arms emblazoned on their doors, and when he and Carrington entered the house they found themselves lost in a perfect crush of people making their way up the marble stairs.

There were many Americans there, and but few close by recognized Harcourt. Now and then someone seemed to him as if he had known him, but a detouring remark to him and he followed remarks that caused others to turn and stare with polite curiosity at the new arrival. Unpleasantly, Harcourt felt their scrutiny, but his manner was calm and collected. The eyes of those who studied his perfectly composed features, he seemed quite as carefree as any of the guests, and perhaps a little more bored than any one else present.

From the clock room, they made their way slowly to the great saloon, lavishly decorated with palms and spring flowers the magnificence of which was subordinated by the gorgeous costumes of the rapidly arriving guests. Thanks to his great wealth and the sponsorship of the American ambassador, the host and his daughter had met many well known Londoners, and being liked by the most powerful bluff Western manner of the father they had been taken up by everyone who was anyone in the capital.

In the throng were many titled persons. Cabinet officers, Members of Parliament, diplomats and scores of military men whose gorgeous dress uniforms were conspicuous amid the latest Parisian creations of many beautiful women whose throats and hair glistened with brilliant jewels.

"It's splendid of you to find time to come to us when you must have so much to occupy you," Adele Cornish said as she greeted Harcourt.

"I'm glad to see you, too," Cornish joined in laying his powerful hand upon Harcourt's shoulder. "I didn't know but what the police might have detained you. Your carriage is charming. Out in Arizona where my ranch is, the Sheriff rounds up all the loungers in the town after a row in a gambling joint. Then if he can't find the man who did the killing he hangs the fellow on the east tree."

"Rather a clever idea," said Harcourt with a smile. "In that case I'm sure to go free for they'll hang Dicky here. I'll speak to MacBee about it."

"Father!" Adele protested with a smile. "Don't you think they are both horrid, Mr. Carrington?"

"Indeed I do," Carrington said promptly. "I positively decline to be arrested unless you are the Sheriff."

"You're about it," Adele Cornish said in a quiet tone. "You'd better arrest this fellow Harcourt, too. He spoke with a quick glance full of meaning."

"It's here to-night!" Carrington said.

"He was," said Adele. "I saw him only a few moments ago, but he said he would be obliged to leave early."

"Then, as she and Carrington went to the toilet, the Cornish left Harcourt to one side. "I hope you understood my remarks," he said seriously. "This has been a particularly nasty affair, and I can appreciate what it means to you. It is a fortunate thing that you have your position to protect you—otherwise things might have been far more disagreeable. I certainly hope you will be free of all this annoyance soon, and if there is anything I can do to help, please do not hesitate to call upon me."

"You are very good, Mr. Cornish," Harcourt said. "But I hardly anticipate any further trouble. We shall go home tomorrow and it will be most pleasant for me to have you and Miss Cornish there with me. I am very glad that you are able to come."

"So are we," Cornish replied. "And now, if you will pardon my saying so, I should advise you not to make any more breaks such as you made this morning. It is well enough, perhaps, to say such things among your personal friends, but it's damned risky

declaring them openly before strangers."

"Every man there was an intimate friend with the exception of yourself and—"

"Exactly," Cornish interrupted. "And that is the man I particularly commend to the attention of the police. I don't like these Indians. They are uncanny—like the half breeds we find in Arizona only more mysterious."

"Yet it seems impossible that he could have been the man," said Harcourt, in the hope that Cornish would express a further opinion upon the subject.

"If you will excuse me," the American objected. "Not half so impossible as your having done it," the American objected. "Thank you," said Harcourt, turning to watch Carrington as he talked with the host's daughter. She was a particularly attractive girl, and seemed quite unable to conceal his infatuation for her. Thoroughly American, she had the charm and ease of manner that most of his own countrywomen lacked. Tall and straight of figure, as well built as Harcourt, and yet carrying her height with the most graceful, she made a stunning figure in her low-cut evening gown. Her wealth of golden hair was splendidly coiffured, and her deep blue eyes sparkled as she laughingly replied to some compliment of Carrington.

"It's going to be awfully jolly out at Harcourt's place with you," Carrington said. "It will only be a small party—Grace and Sir Thomas Marston, Sir Harry Farnside, your father, and you and little me."

"Dear me!" Adele exclaimed. "No, I didn't mean you Mr. Carrington. I almost forgot to tell Lord Harcourt that Miss Marston is in the conservatory."

"Surely the conservatory is sufficiently large to enable us to leave them alone there without returning here ourselves."

"But Carrington's hopes of a tete-a-tete were dashed, for as Harcourt joined them, Sir Harry Farnside, imposing looking in his magnificent red and white uniform of the Horse Guards, came up.

"What nonsense has Dicky been talking to you, Miss Marston?" he asked.

"He's been telling me that he will have a little more and much to my surprise, doesn't seem to elish the fact at all," Adele answered.

"Of course I don't see why you wouldn't either if you knew how much it takes to keep one up!" Carrington exclaimed.

"But you inherit vast property with it, don't you?" Adele asked.

"Yes but it's all entailed," Carrington said miserably. "I'm poor once he dies, but then I'll be stone broke! Besides I'll have to work when I'm a Lord!"

"Work? Are the duties of a nobleman so arduous?"

"Certainly. One has to go to the House and listen to all sorts of silly speeches."

"I can't imagine Dicky making a speech," said Farnside, "although Harcourt did once."

"Oh what was it about?" Adele asked eagerly.

"I really don't remember," said Harcourt. "Something extremely unimportant."

"That's the funny part of it," Farnside explained. "One who is supposed to have the faintest idea what he was trying to get at, so they all voted it a master piece."

The soft strains of a popular Viennese waltz reached them and before Carrington could speak, Farnside claimed Adele and hurried her away.

"Uniforms are worth more than prospective titles, Dicky," said Harcourt banteringly, and was sworn at for his pains, so he left them to their own devices and sauntered away towards the conservatory.

In a distant corner he found Grace seated behind a bank of palms. She smiled as he approached, and made room for him on the bench beside her.

"Quite quite forgiven me," Harcourt asked anxiously. "Really I must be out of my mind to have behaved so this afternoon."

"I understand, Jack," she said indulgently. "Am I can't blame you. Now, please, let's say no more about it—"

"I'd like to forget all about it as well," said Harcourt earnestly. "Have you seen Kandwar tonight?"

"No," said Grace. "Is he here?"

"Yes, but no one has seen him for the last half hour."

"I didn't notice him anywhere," Grace said. "I was in the salon until a few minutes before you came and—"

She stopped abruptly and followed Harcourt's gaze. He was staring at the box of the great palm at his elbow. She looked up quickly and saw his eyes stopped her and she could only stare at him in wonder.

"Grace," he said. "I don't know why you are trying to deceive me, but you are telling the truth."

She grew pale and her body trembled. "Jack!" she exclaimed. "What on earth—"

"If you won't tell me I have nothing more to say," he went on rapidly. "But we might as well understand each other now. Our engagement must be broken. If you won't do it I will here tonight—publicly."

He saw her eyes begin to glisten as she fell limp and unconscious into his arms. Sick at heart, he laid her tenderly back upon the bench and for a moment stepped away. Quickly he looked about, as making sure that no one observed him, he bent down and picked something from the palm box. It was the tiny blackened end of a cigarette. The ash was half an inch long, but in it showed quite plainly the mysterious monogram.

It was an easy matter to crumble it beyond recognition, and not until he had done so did Harcourt turn his attention to the unconscious girl. Then he began to chafe her wrists, just as Sir Harry Farnside and Adele appeared behind him.

"With a cry of alarm, Adele hurried forward, inquiring anxiously what had happened."

"Miss Marston's nerves have given way," I am afraid, Harcourt said. "She is overwrought, and our conversation brought the strain of the day back to her. It has proved too much."

"Poor dear!" Adele exclaimed. "We must get her to my boudoir at once. Sir Harry, would you mind sending a servant to fetch my maid?"

Farnside turned to go, but Harcourt put a restraining hand upon his arm. "Be careful, Harry. Not a word to anyone—even that she is ill. There is gossip enough now and this will only start more tongues wagging if it becomes known."

"Right!" Farnside agreed, and hurried off at once.

"She will be all right in a few moments—as soon as I can get some smelling salts," Adele said to Harcourt. "We'll explain to her father, and I'll keep her with me for the night."

"That will be splendid," Harcourt assented, shifting uneasily as he spoke. "I'll wait about within call—unless I can do something now or I think it best that she does not see me again tonight."

Adele glanced at him. Woman's intuition told her that something unusual had occurred, but she made no comment. "Are you sure she will not ask for you when she revives?" she inquired.

"Perhaps she will," Harcourt agreed, "but nevertheless I think I had better not be there."

Then, as he saw Farnside approaching with Adele's maid, he slipped quietly away, his head in a whirl, divided between anguish and suspicion that he could not put aside.

Making his way out as quickly as he could, he stepped into his car and directed the chauffeur home, swearing silently to himself as he banged the door. "If she is in this plot, where it may be," he muttered, "there's nothing I might as well give in now, and let myself be trapped properly. At any rate I'll be a raving maniac if this infernal insinuation with its horrible suggestion, keeps looming up before me!"

(To Be Continued.)

## WIT AND HUMOR

### A New Buttoning Plan.

They were sitting on a North Pennsylvania street porch discussing the fall and winter fashions.

"I hear we're not going to have to worry ourselves to death with these button-in-the-back gowns for a while. One of the married women remarked, 'They're gone out, every time he has to button any of mine.'"

"I can button mine all the way," said a miss. "That is all the way but one button. There's just one I can't reach."

"Well what do you do about that one?" was asked.

"Oh, that's no trouble at all. When I get on the street car I always sit down in front of some woman whom I figure it makes nervous to see a button unbuttoned. I nearly always find the right one. As soon as she sees it she leans forward and whispers—"

"I beg pardon, but one of the buttons of your dress is not buttoned. Shall I attend to it for you?"

"And, of course, I always thank her profusely for buttoning it for me. I'd have felt like killing her if she hadn't."

### Apparently Unfortunate.

Krompton—I have a farmer friend whose crops for the last four years have gone up in smoke.

"Kingsback—He must feel discouraged."

Krompton—Not at all; he raises tobacco.

### A Change Impending.

He—if you accept me it will make another man of me, but if you refuse me I shall never be the same man again.—Punch.

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BENDING OVER THE FILING CABINET WAS A MAN IN EVENING DRESS

Quietly Harcourt closed the door behind him and then stepped slowly forward.

"Good evening, your highness," he said with mock courtesy.

The Indian saluted, and his white teeth gleamed beneath his alighted moustache.

"Good evening, milord," he returned with a little bow.

"You pay unexpected visits," Harcourt observed. "May I ask how you reached this room?"

With a wave of his hand, Kandwar