

The Mysterious Monogram

An Absorbing New Novel

By Edward P. Royce

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With a feeling of relief they saw the door open as a servant, then in Cornish and Kandwahr, entered.

"I believe you wished to see us, gentlemen," said Cornish. His great, sturdy frame almost obscured the slender, feminine form of the Prince, and the men about the table, looking at him, compared his tremendous strength and vigor with the slight build of the Indian.

"We have sent to ask that you will join us in a proceeding which Lord Harcourt has suggested," the Duke explained.

Then he told them briefly that he had decided to do, request, their consent to the plan. "Of course," he concluded, "whatever may be said in this room is between gentlemen, and it is understood between us that nothing which takes place here shall be repeated or even mentioned outside. I cannot say that I favor this proceeding, as it seems to me to be useless; but if, by chance, my one of our number should come to make a statement other than we confidently expect, it will remain for him and not for us to repeat that statement in another place."

Slowly he arose and pushed back his chair. "Gentlemen," he said, "I wish to say to you that I feel the club should at once begin to meet here in the House which is then in session. I did not kill Captain Townsend. To each of you in turn, I shall speak by name, and you will answer me by saying simply 'yes' or 'no' to the implied question. 'Are you guilty of the death of Captain Townsend?'"

Turning to Sir Henry Farnale at his right, the Duke spoke his name.

"No," said Farnale, very clearly and distinctly.

Then passing rapidly from one to the others he strained upon each in turn, and amid a clatter of silver and glass, he gave his answer. "No," said the Duke, "I am glad to hear that you are all innocent. The silence seemed a relief, and the men who had been staring might before them, turned involuntarily to the speaker in their midst. Harcourt, leaning back carelessly in his chair, glanced keenly at the Indian as he stood up, faced the Duke, and seemingly unconscious of the attention he attracted, in a firm, quiet voice, answered "No."

Cornish's deep voice responded next, then Marston's.

The hush was deeper and more oppressive, and there was a gasp of surprise, and it was the Duke who turned to Harcourt. It was the Duke who requested the questioning and who remained to answer.

"No," said Harcourt.

Straightening up in his chair, Harcourt leaned forward and the Duke looked at him with a keen, penetrating group and his eyes met those of each man there. "Gentlemen," he said, "I don't know."

There was a murmur of astonishment and several men sprang to their feet. The Duke started him in amazement, and Marston placed his hand upon Harcourt's shoulder.

"Jack!" he exclaimed. "Do you realize what you're saying? You do know?"

"I am perfectly aware of what I am saying and what you are thinking of me," Harcourt replied, "and I am calm. As you know, I was not entirely myself last night. I have no recollection whatever of these facts. It is because of these facts that I have asked you to submit to the questioning just finished. I think you have done so. I do not think you could have done such a thing under any circumstances. George Townsend was closer to me than most men, and I had no quarrel with him, yet—in view of all the circumstances, I am obliged to say to you that I do not know. I may have killed him!"

CHAPTER II.

The Monogram Appears.

The stir that followed Harcourt's amazing announcement was tremendous. He was intensely popular among the men who had heard him, and, while they laughed at his affections and tossy mannerisms, all of them admitted the stork's qualities that behind the artificial surface of the man.

Harcourt's popularity was not that of wealth or position. He was regarded with genuine affection by every man who had opportunity to know him, and in spite of the strong evidence that seemed to point to his guilt, not one of the men who had heard him stated, and while they laughed at his affections and tossy mannerisms, all of them admitted the stork's qualities that behind the artificial surface of the man.

himself was generally known, yet they found it quite impossible to believe for a moment that he could be the guilty man.

"Jack, are you dreaming or drunk?" Sir Harry Gardale demanded.

"Neither, Harry," said Harcourt. "I'm merely paying the penalty of indulging in the great family weakness. As you know, the Harcourts have been too fond of liquor, and centuries of over-indulgence have had their effect on me."

"I don't understand," said Harry. "I simply mean that I'm afraid liquor has made me disgrace the family name."

"Lord Harcourt you are nervous—upset," said the duke kindly. "You surely do not realize what you are saying in this room of gentlemen, and I advise you to go home and rest for the remainder of the day. The thing is bound to clear itself up before long."

"I don't understand," said Harry. "I simply mean that I'm afraid liquor has made me disgrace the family name."

"Just a moment, gentlemen," said the duke warningly. "Please remember our agreement not to repeat anything that has been said in this room or to comment upon what took place here. We are all understood on this subject."

There was a murmur in the affirmative, and the duke began to rise from the room. Sir Thomas Marston was at artful side. The old soldier was pale and haggard. The duke's eyes were fixed upon him, not only because of his regard for his prospective son-in-law, but because of the effect the whole occurrence had upon him.

"Will you come home with me now?" he asked, slipping his arm around the duke's. "Grace is very anxious to see you."

"Not yet," Harcourt answered slowly. "Come upstairs with me. I have a little talk with you before I go to her. I promised to come at 5 if I could arrange it."

"I am just looking for your service," said Harcourt, pausing beside the detective.

"I was also on my way to look at the smoke room where—the affair of last night occurred. I was wondering if it would interest you to accompany me."

"Harcourt was conscious of the keen scrutiny of the inspector. He thought, too, that he understood the man's purpose, and he had heard of the famous 'third degree,' through which prisoners are often put by the police, and he was rmy convinced that MacBee had hoped to bring out some sign of guilt if brought to the scene of the crime."

"I consented quickly. His tone betrayed none of the repugnance he felt at entering the room, nor did his manner of speech betray any hesitancy. He was sure that you have no objection to Mr. Marston's accompanying us."

"I shall be glad to have him. Often an old soldier sees things that escape even to Scotland Yard men."

"I don't think of that side of it, Harcourt," said the duke, "but it is a great strain for her to bear, but it does not affect our regard for you in any way, and I am sure you will be glad to be all the harder for her."

"The engagement must be broken," Harcourt said firmly. "Impossible!"

"Why impossible?" asked Harcourt. "Because the duke's looks are so good we were giving you up—as if you had lost faith in you. Jack, if you were needed the friendship and support of those who are so good to you now. You have worked yourself up needlessly over this. We were all fond of Townsend—he was a good soldier and a lovable fellow. I don't know why we should lose our heads."

"I only wish I hadn't lost mine last night," said Harcourt.

"Nonsense!" Sir Thomas broke in. "You take a foolish view of it. Suppose you were intoxicated—is that any reason why you should do anything like this?"

"I don't believe it is—yes—impossible!"

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ever learned—when it is too late—stood him good luck of emotion."

It was a curious monogram that suggested to him none of its possible significance—a strange device unlike anything Harcourt had ever seen.

"But do you realize that until this is cleared up—if it continues much longer—the suspense, the uncertainty, all will make a mental wreck of me?"

"It will if you persist in entertaining such absurd notions," Sir Thomas said.

"You don't understand," Harcourt objected. "If only I knew the truth I could stand it. Knowing my great reason—I might even attempt to free myself of suspicion. As it is there is no one to whom I can go. I must be the center of it. I don't think I am a coward, but I don't know how long I can stand it, and I certainly do not wish to drag the woman I love into the mire of such publicity."

"Jack," said Sir Thomas, and there were traces of tears in the old man's eyes. "I don't think that I can appreciate the spirit that prompts you to say all this. I admire and honor you. But the more you say the more obviously—even though you cannot believe yourself. Grace feels as I do. Go to her and talk the whole thing over. I don't think that you will insist upon anything she does not wish."

Harcourt stood undecided for a time. Then he looked up and smiled. "I'll do it," he said. And the two men clasped hands.

In the doorway, Jack, he said quietly. "I have just thought of something that should have occurred to me before."

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trouble if you are to be subjected to an ordeal, it is the time that you most need those who love you. I will not release you, and I want to be by your side. If it were possible, I would marry you tomorrow, just to show the world my confidence in you."

"You splendid little girl!" he exclaimed. "I might not know you, but I would take it this way, but I can't let you do it. You must not insist on being dragged through all that is bound to come the next few weeks."

"You are going through it," she said. "And you cannot prevent my doing so. I will never consent to the breaking of our engagement, and I know you will not do it against my wishes. Why, Jack, I've everything packed to go to Harcourt Manor tomorrow and I've been counting so much upon the week-end there. Don't you see now it would injure you if I were to release you now? No, Jack, we must go on as before, and I am sure that everything will turn out as we wish it."

For a long time he sat silently, then he smiled and turned to her. "I shall be as you wish then," he said. "And if it were possible, this would make me love you more than ever."

"You're certainly a very ardent lover," she teased. "Did you realize that you haven't kissed me once since you came in?"

"I know I'm not very romantic," he admitted, toying with his monocle. "I often wonder how I ever managed to win you. No, Dick Carrington always was a tremendous flirt with women. He recites poetry to them, and tells them they have eyes like stars and all that sort of nonsense. I couldn't recite poetry to save my life and I don't have a woman with my eyes like a star."

"But don't you want you to recite poetry to me?" she prodded him. "I thought every woman liked that sort of thing," he said.

"There are things she likes better," said Grace with a smile, and she moved close to him, and the cushions of the chair took her hand in his and his arm slipped about her waist. Then, with a quick, eager movement, he held her close to his chest and she tenderly kissed him. For a moment she sat silent, then, with a returning realization of his position, she drew away from him.

"Now, don't talk any more about this horrible murder!" she pleaded. "I want you to myself for a little while at least. You've never been like this, Jack, and sometimes I've wondered if you really loved me, whether you are not marrying me simply because you are afraid to let me go because you believe there ought to be a Lady Harcourt."

"Please don't talk that way!" he pleaded in confusion. "Surely you know that you are my wife, and I forgive me for I'd never had the courage to ask you if you hadn't helped me."

"You're perfectly horrible!" she cried indignantly, but a little smile came into her eyes in spite of it, for she knew that well that he had spoken the truth. Harcourt would never have had the courage to propose to any woman unless the way had been made easy for him.

He misread her mood, however, and took her words seriously. "Then why don't you tell me?" he asked. "Really, I think it is better that you should tell me now, let's not go into that again, said Grace decidedly. "My mind is completely in confusion. Surely you know that you are my wife, and I forgive me for I'd never had the courage to ask you if you hadn't helped me."

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is an answer to my question." "And you have had that!" she retorted hotly.

"Then there is nothing more to say," he snapped. "Good afternoon." She caught his arm restrainingly. "Surely after all that I have said—when I have believed in you in spite of all that might make me doubt—you are not going to let a little thing like this make you doubt me?"

"You have at least been frank," said Harcourt. "I have admitted my fault. You refuse to let me what you must know is a thing of importance. If you did not know what hangs upon it, you could have no reason for concealing the name of the man who left the thing here."

"Suppose I have been smoking myself?" she suggested.

"He looked at her keenly. "YOU—smoking that cigarette?" he exclaimed. "Impossible—if you were smoking."

"Without finishing he went out and leaving the house hurriedly entered his brougham.

(To Be Continued.)

TETRAZZINI STOPS PANIC.

When the crowd in a moving picture theater at Canton, Ohio, started to stampede and trample its way to death because of fire, Mme. Tetrazzini, the famous singer, worked her way to the stage and commenced to sing. As soon as her clear notes were heard the audience quieted down.

TO WEAR FRUIT ON HATS.

It seems rather odd to decorate the hats with apples, but it is no doubt in as good taste as decorating them with flowers. In other blouses there are deep yoke accorion plaid that extends from back to front.

NET AND LACE BLOUSES.

There are some attractive net and lace blouses that make use of accorion plaits. The sleeves, set into low armholes, are made of accorion plait. In other blouses there are deep yoke accorion plaid that extends from back to front.

"Mummy" Store Not Patronized.

Chicago's municipal store, where the needy were to purchase at cost, has done a fairly average business of \$9.11 since it opened, February 19, according to a statement by the city comptroller. Advocates of the enterprise admit it has not filled an unmet want. The store makes no deliveries and a rigid investigation is made of each prospective customer. These are the reasons advanced by Joseph Meyer, county agent, for the lack of patronage.

The German's Individual Liberty.

Springfield Republican: "His majesty, the kaiser, has decided that no dinner hereafter will be fashionable. It lasts more than 45 minutes from the time the guests sit down until they finish. This cuts the average German dinner to two and reduces many to two-thirds. The kaiser may decree what is fashionable, but the average German will continue to eat and drink as usual and as often as he pleases. He would die in defense of this form of individual liberty.

PASSION PLAY DEFERRED.

At a meeting of the village authorities of Oberammergau, it was decided to postpone the production of the Passion Play for performances of five years. The next production will be in 1920 and thereafter in five-year periods. Since 1910 the hamlet has almost been deserted, the tourists having made sufficient of the play which was once popular and had been given to the natives to building up their woodcarving business.

Bread Line Besuget Declined.

The vestry of Trinity church, New York, has decided to decline the bequest of Henry M. Geschiedt, who died January 1, leaving among other bequests about \$150,000 to Trinity to establish and maintain a bread-line. He stipulated that his name must be retained on every loaf of bread given away. Rev. Dr. William T. Manning, the rector, and the vestry explained that they have declined the gift because they thought the money would be more good if it reverted to the institutions provided for by Geschiedt's will, in case Trinity did not establish the bread-line.

WOULD REGULATE DIVORCE.

Dolor J. Petit, chief justice of the circuit court of Chicago, says no divorce should be granted any person who has a minor child unless satisfactory provision has been made for the care of the child. Statistics show that in the juvenile court of Chicago, since July, 1899, there have been 50,568 children for the care of children, of which 33,750 were the direct result of divorce.

DISEASE THREATENS POTATOES.

Officials of the agricultural department of the government say that despite stringent regulations regarding the importation of diseased potatoes, the crop in the United States is menaced by powdery scab. The scab attacks young tubers as they mature in the ground.

CONGRESS CUTS DOWN MILEAGE.

By a vote of 237 to 95 congress voted to cut the mileage from 20 cents a mile each way to "actual traveling expenses for senators and members of the independent members of their families."

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