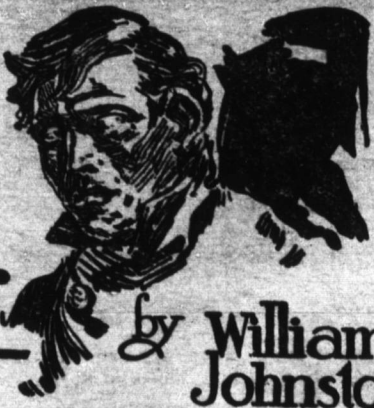


The Yellow Letter



by William Johnston

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Illustrations by V. L. Barnes

CHAPTER I.

into the Maelstrom.

They say that coming events cast their shadows before, but certainly I had no intimation when I left my office in the afternoon of April twelfth, of the maelstrom of mystery and tragedy into which I was about to plunge. I was worried and anxious, it is true, but only as every young man is who finds himself for the first time deeply in love. There was no portent of evil, no foreshadowing of the terrible chain of events that all but destroyed my belief in my fellow-man, and left its mark so deep upon my memory that I do not believe time ever can wholly efface it.

Even now that it is all ended, and the shadow which hung so heavily over the household of my sweetheart has been dispelled and the hand whose devilish ingenuity brought shame and grief and wreck to so many innocent lives is paying the penalty behind prison bars—even now I shudder at the sight of anything yellow. A scrap of yellow paper vividly recalls—and I fear always will recall—the painful events of the last few weeks.

I had been waiting ever since my return from court for a telephone message that had not come—the word from Louise which I felt would decide my fate. I had written to her the night before, asking if I might go to her in the afternoon to speak on a subject of importance. I knew she would understand the object of my letter, though all that I had asked was that she would telephone me earlier than four whether she would be at home.

From my window I had watched the great hand on the Metropolitan tower clock creep slowly to twelve. As the chimes began to sing the hour of four I felt that I could bear the suspense no longer. Message or no message, I would go to her at once. Before the vibrant note of "On-n-n-n" had died away I closed my desk with a bang. As the fourth stroke reverberated I stood with hat and overcoat on, my hand on the knob of my office door, hoping yet to hear my telephone ring. Impatiently I waited a minute and then dashed toward the elevator. The telephone, I learned afterward, rang almost the minute I was out of the room and Louise's voice called frantically for me, but I was not there to hear.

It was only a short walk up Madison avenue to the home of General Farish, the father of Louise. With the doubt that possesses every lover on such a mission as this, I walked it, now laggardly, as misgivings filled my heart, now quickening my pace as hope routed my fears. As I turned the corner into the street where the Farish home is situated my steps were leaden. What right had I to ask Louise Farish to be my wife? The daughter of a man worth many millions, a girl of exquisite beauty and of many accomplishments, one who could choose a husband where she willed—what right had I to hope that she would ever consent to become the wife of a struggling young lawyer such as I? To be sure, my family was of the best. With my earnings and the modest little fortune my father had left me I would be able to provide for her. But as yet, though my prospects were bright, I amounted to nothing in my profession. It would be years before I could hope to give my wife the luxuries to which Louise Farish had been accustomed.

On the other hand, I felt that with Louise as my wife I could do great things. I loved her with a great love. I felt that her affection and companionship would be inspiration enough for any man to conquer the world. I hoped that she loved me. I recalled the trifles which seemed to show, at least, that she found pleasure in my society. I tried to comfort myself, too, by remembering that General Farish was a self-made man, that when he married he was as poor as I, if not poorer. I knew that he liked me and had confidence in me. Was it then, after all, I asked myself, presuming in me to hope that Louise would listen to me and that her father would consent to her becoming my wife—yet, why had she not telephoned?

As I dragged my hesitating feet across the street I was aroused from my reverie by the rush of an automobile that all but knocked me over. With an angry imprecation at such reckless driving I glanced up and recognized the man who occupied it. He was standing beside his chauffeur, as if ready to leap out. It was Doctor Wilcox, a noted practitioner who attended the Farish family, and whom I had met at their home. I plunged forward in anxious dismay as I saw the machine halt before the Farish door and the doctor jump out and run up the steps.

My first, my only thought, was of Louise. What could have happened? She must be ill—desperately ill, as the doctor's haste suggested. Did not this explain her failure to telephone? Could it be that she was dead? What

thoughts flashed through my mind I cannot analyze further. I only know I reached the house but a step behind the doctor. He had hardly passed through the door when I, too, flung myself into the hall and stood there awfully, with not voice enough to ask a question of the white-faced, horror-stricken maid who had answered the doctor's ring.

"Where is she?" I heard the doctor ask as he flung his coat to the maid and started up the stairs. Before she could answer him there were hurried foot steps on the upper landing and Louise peered down, the anxiety in her face lessening at the welcome sight of the doctor.

I gave a silly cry of joy and started up the stairs. Doctor Wilcox was ahead of me, three steps at a time, and, following Louise's silent direction, had disappeared in a room on the second floor, when I, with outstretched arms, approached her. I did not think to ask what had happened or who was ill or what the matter was. My only thought was one of joy that she was alive and well. What mattered if Louise was safe? And the emotion that filled me was still more intensified when she ran to me, and throwing herself into my arms, cried out:

"Oh, Harding, thank God, you've come!"

It was almost the first time she had called me by my name, certainly the first that she ever had given herself to my embrace, and I held her closely, thrilled through at the thought that it was to me she turned in time of trouble. Then, all at once, I was aroused by the opening of the door through which Doctor Wilcox had gone, and the appearance of a maid, who ran along the hall.

"What is it? What has happened?" I asked.

"Katharine," moaned Louise, "Katharine—she has killed herself!"

For a moment I was stunned. The first thought that came to me was the impossibility of it. What place had tragedy in this happy, quiet home? Familiar enough, though I was, with deeds of violence, with self-murder as

trying to make myself believe it must have been an accident, though from Louise's manner I feared the worst. Yet Katharine Farish was the last person in the world of whom one would think in connection with suicide. A quiet, reserved girl of great strength of character, several years older than Louise, her dignity and her well-considered actions had led me to believe her far less emotional than her younger sister.

"It was an accident, of course," I said, though doubtfully.

"No!" gasped Louise, shuddering anew at the thought of the horror she had just witnessed. "I heard the shot and found her on the divan in her room. The revolver was still in her hand—her own revolver."

For the first time it came to me with sudden vivid force that in the elder sister's life, behind the smiling mask of reserve she always wore, was hidden some secret sorrow. I understood, now, that far-away look in her eyes. I felt there may have been—there must have been—concealed the knowledge of some mystery that impelled her to this awful deed. Yet little did I suspect whether my efforts to find why Louise's sister had shot herself would lead me. Little did I imagine in what a web of criminal cunning, of baffling crime, of hidden evil, I would find myself.

As I strove to soothe Louise's agitation the doctor appeared at the doorway and imperiously beckoned me. I tried to persuade Louise to wait outside, but she clung to me like a frightened child and insisted on accompanying me into the room.

"Here," said the doctor in the curt tones of authority, "I want you to help me carry her into a quieter place before I operate."

"This way," said Louise, recovering herself as soon as she saw the opportunity to be useful, "into my rooms. They are off the street and much quieter."

I saw the look with which she tried to read the doctor's face and put the question she dared not ask.

"Will she live?"

Doctor Wilcox shook his head gravely.

"She is just alive and that is all. I can not tell yet whether or not we can save her. There must be absolute quiet. I am going to probe for the bullet and see what course it has taken. Please telephone at once for these two men. They are my hospital aides. As soon as they arrive I will operate."

As quickly as we had laid the senseless girl on Louise's bed, I telephoned for Doctor Wilcox's assistants, and was fortunate in being able to reach both immediately. Louise and the maids meanwhile were kept busy by the doctor preparing for the operation, so it fell to my lot to break the news to General Farish when he arrived. Louise had merely told him over the telephone that Katharine had met with an accident, so he entered the

house almost wholly unprepared for the shock my news gave him.

I had before seen strong men in grief, but never had I witnessed such a wave of heartrending agony as swept over the general. He came into his home erect, military, slightly perturbed, but still in manner and bearing the vigorous old soldier, fully master of his emotions. My words that told him as gently as was possible what had happened seemed to sap all his vitality. His face became ashen pale, his lips quivered, great tears coursed down his cheeks, his shoulders bent under the weight of his grief and he tottered as if about to fall.

Just after she did it! I had been

While he was fond and proud of

both his daughters, the elder had always been his favorite. As is often the case with fathers who have no son, Katharine had been both son and daughter to him. Since her mother's death some years ago she had been practically head of the household. It was on her that he relied for everything, and it was with her that he discussed all his business affairs. Such association between them naturally had strengthened the bonds into far more than the ordinary father-and-daughter affection.

"My poor little girl—Katharine—my little Katharine," he moaned in tones of agony that wrung my heart for him.

His first thought was to go to her, but the doctor forbade his presence in the room. I persuaded him to go to his own apartments, leaving him in the hands of his valet and promising to keep him informed as to Katharine's condition.

Deeply as I felt for him, it was of Louise I thought most. I wanted to be with her constantly, to give her the

succor of my presence. As soon as Doctor Wilcox's assistants arrived, bringing with them a nurse, Louise and I were both banished from the room. Gently I drew her into a little sitting-room, where, with the door ajar, we waited to see if our aid might be needed. Tearless sorrow now weighed heavily on her.

"Tell me everything," I said, with my arm about her. "Why did she do it?"

"I don't know," she cried out. "I can't understand it at all! There is some mystery, some terrible mystery that I cannot fathom."

"When did you see your sister last?"

"We had luncheon together. She was sweet and kind, as she always was, but I could see that something was worrying her. We were to have gone shopping together this afternoon but she told me that she had an errand that would make it impossible for her to go with me. I had received your note, so I told her that it would suit me much better to put the shopping off until tomorrow. Right after luncheon she went out—where, I do not know. She did not use the car or call a taxi. All I know is that she was gone about two hours. When she came in I was arranging the flowers in the dining-room. I heard her enter and came out into the hall. She walked right past me without a word and went up-stairs to her own room. I ran up after her, thinking she might be ill, but just as I got to the door I heard her turn the key. I understood that she wished to be alone. About half an hour later I heard a sound like a shot and rushed up-stairs, calling to the servants. We found the door still locked and we could hear her groaning. I had the butler burst open the door and there we found her, just where she was when you saw her, still as death, with her own little revolver clutched in her hand."

"What do you suppose made her change her mind about going shopping with you?" I asked. "Did she receive any letters or telegrams today?"

Louise thought for a moment before answering, her slender form still shaken with silent sobbing. Gently I brushed away the tears that gathered in her eyes and drew her to me until her head was pillowed on my shoulder. I doubt that if in her distress she noticed my action, save in the sense of comfort that it brought her. How terrible it is to see the woman that you love suffer so much and to feel powerless to do anything to help her!

"No," said Louise, "I am positive Katharine received no letter or telegram today except an invitation or two that we read at breakfast. We were together practically all the time until after luncheon."

"Perhaps some one telephoned to her," I suggested.

Louise did not recall any message. We summoned her sister's maid, who was crouching outside the door like a faithful animal, and put the question to her. She was in such a hysterical state that it was difficult to make her understand what we wanted, but finally she remembered that there had been a telephone call just before twelve.

"Who wanted her?" asked Louise and I together.

"The girl shook her head as if bewildered.

"Think, think," I commanded. "What was the name? Who was it? If you answered the telephone, whoever it was must have given his name."

Stupidly she shook her head again.

"Was it Mr. Crandall?" asked Louise.

Light came into Hilda's face at once.

"Now I remember," she exclaimed. "Dot was him. It was Mr. Crandall."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE CONFERENCE AT HIGH POINT CLOSES

THE APPOINTMENTS TO VARIOUS CHARGES FOR COMING YEAR ANNOUNCED.

MANY CHANGES ARE MADE

Methodist Session Adjourned After Much Important Work Had Been Done—Church Paper Takes Up Good Part of Time of Closing Day.

High Point.—The Western North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which has been in session here several days adjourned Monday. The reading of the appointments answers the forty-ninth and last of the minute questions, "Where are the preachers stationed this year?" and immediately after Bishop Collins Denny concluded the reading of the appointments, he pronounced the benediction and the Conference adjourned.

The appointments for this year are as follows:

Charlotte District.—J. R. Scroggs, presiding elder; Ansonville, L. L. Smith; Charlotte, Belmont, J. H. Bradley; Charlotte, Brevard Street, L. A. Falls; Charlotte, Calvary, R. S. Howie; Charlotte, Chadwick and Seversville, N. R. Richardson; Charlotte, Dilworth and Big Spring, J. O. Irwin; Charlotte, Duncan Memorial, to be supplied; North Charlotte, W. B. Davis; Trinity, T. F. Marr; Tryon Street, E. K. McLarty, W. L. Nicholson, supernumerary; Lilesville, T. C. Jordan; Marshville, A. L. Aycock; Matthews, S. T. Barber; Monroe, Central, J. H. Weaver; North Monroe, R. H. Kennington; Morven Circuit, J. E. Wooley; Mount Zion, Z. Paris; Pineville, W. L. Sherrill; Polkton, G. C. Brinckman; Prospect, S. E. Richardson; Unionville, M. T. Steele; Wadesboro, G. D. Herman; Waxhaw, W. F. Sandford; Weddington, Seymour Taylor; Principal Southern Industrial Institute, J. A. Baldwin; Missionary to Japan, S. A. Stewart; Missionary to Japan, N. S. Ogburn; Derita, P. L. Terrell.

Asheville District.—C. A. Wood, presiding elder; Asheville, Bethel, J. W. Ingle; Asheville, Central, J. C. Rowe; Asheville, Haywood Street, W. A. Newell; Asheville, North, W. E. Poovey; Biltmore and Mt. Pleasant, J. W. Campbell; Black Mountain, R. E. Hunt; Brevard, L. D. Thompson; Brevard Circuit, C. M. Carpenter, supply; Fairview, T. A. Groce; Elk Mountain, to be supplied; Flat Rock and Tuxedo, W. R. Shelton; Hendersonville, A. L. Stanford; Hendersonville Circuit, A. L. Latham; Hot Springs, R. N. Haasy; Leicester, J. H. Green; Marshall, E. B. Stabler; Mars Hill, L. H. Griffith; Mills River, J. C. Postell; Spring Creek, R. E. Wellons, supply; Sulphur Springs, J. P. Bross; Swannanoa, R. F. Huneycutt; Tryon and Saluda, R. L. Ferguson; Walnut Circuit, A. C. Gibbs; Weaverville, F. A. Hawley; Weaverville Circuit, J. R. Warren; West Asheville, Z. E. Barnhardt; vice president Weaverville College, W. B. West; Missionary to Cuba, R. J. Parker.

Greensboro District.—G. T. Rowe, presiding elder; Asheboro Station, J. E. Thompson; Asheboro Circuit, L. T. Hendren, supply; Coleridge Circuit, R. L. Melton; Deep River, J. D. Gibson; Denton, J. A. Holmes, supply; Greensboro Circuit, F. L. Townsend; Greensboro, Centenary, R. D. Sherrill; Greensboro, Spring Garden, W. E. Abernethy; Greensboro, Walnut Street and Caraway Memorial, G. H. Christenberry; Greensboro, West Market Street, C. W. Byrd; West Greensboro Circuit, W. L. Dawson; High Point, South Main Street, H. C. Byrum; High Point, Washington Street, J. H. Barnhardt; Gibsonville, W. S. Hales; Pleasant Garden, J. A. Sharp; Rameur and Franklinville, O. P. Ader; Randleman and Naomi, R. A. Taylor; Randolph, A. S. Raper; Reidsville, W. F. Worble; Ruffin, L. P. Bogle; Uwharrie, A. T. Bell; Wentworth, A. J. Burrus; Editor North Carolina Christian Advocate, H. M. Blair; secretary and treasurer Greensboro Female College, W. M. Curtis; Missionary to Korea, J. R. Moore; State Sunday school secretary J. W. Long.

Mount Airy District.—R. M. Taylor, presiding elder; Danbury, T. J. Folger; Dobson, J. M. Price; Elkin Station, R. G. Tuttle; Jonesville, Z. V. Johnston; Leaksville, J. H. West; Madison and Stoneville, A. R. Surratt; Mount Airy Station, W. H. Willis; Mount Airy Circuit, C. R. Allison; Lamsburg, J. W. Combs, supply; Pilot Mountain, J. H. Vestal, supply; Rural Hall, J. M. Folger; Spray and Draper, J. P. Hipps; Stokesdale, G. W. Williams; Summersfield, T. B. Johnson; Walnut Cove, J. H. Brendell; Yadkinville, J. T. Stover.

Morganton District.—J. E. Gay, presiding elder; Bald Creek, W. L. Edwards; Broad River, J. E. Womack; Burnsville, W. M. Smith; Cliffsides, A. C. Swafford; Connelly Springs, E. J. Poe; Forest City, J. F. Moser; Green River, J. C. Richardson; Henrietta, J. F. Armstrong; Hunt Dale, R. F. Mock; Marion, Ira Ervin; McDowell, O. P. Routh; Micaville, H. H. Mitchell, supply; Morganton Station, D. Atkins; Morganton Circuit, H. L. Powell; North Catawba, J. L. Smith, supply; Old Fort, R. L. Doggett; Rutherford-

ton, Albert Sherrill; Spruce Pine and Bakersville, J. P. Morris, supply; Table Rock, Elmer Simpson; Thermal City, F. W. Dibble; Professor Rutherford College, E. K. Creel.

North Wilkesboro District.—M. H. Vestal, presiding elder; Avery, J. W. Hall, supply; Boone, J. F. Starnes, J. M. Downum, junior preacher; Creston, D. C. Ballard; Elk Park, to be supplied, W. M. Bagby, supernumerary; Helton, E. E. Yates; Jefferson, H. V. Clark; Laurel Springs, S. W. Brown; North Wilkesboro Station, Parker Holmes; North Wilkesboro Circuit, J. E. McSwain; Sparta, T. J. Muck; Watauga, I. Hickman; Wilkesboro Station, A. P. Ratledge; Wilkes Circuit, J. G. W. Holloway; Missionary to Japan, W. A. Wilson.

Salisbury District.—W. R. Ware, presiding elder; Albemarle, J. P. Rogers, C. M. Gentry, supernumerary; Albemarle Circuit, P. W. Tucker; Bethel and Big Lick, R. K. Brady; China Grove, H. H. Robbins; Concord, Central, Harold Turner; Concord, Forest Hill, W. M. Robbins; Concord, Epworth, G. G. Harley; Concord, West Ford, J. M. Ridenhour, supply; West Concord, G. A. B. Holderby; Concord Circuit, W. T. Albright; Cottonville, S. S. Higgins; Gold Hill, R. L. Forbis, supply; Kannapolis, W. B. Shinn; Mr. Pleasant, C. F. Sherrill; New London, S. L. Owen, supply; Norwood, J. W. Clegg; Salem, T. S. Ellington; Salisbury, First Church, J. W. Moore; Salisbury, Holmes New Memorial, J. P. Lanning; Salisbury, South Main, G. A. Stapper and A. H. Whisner, supernumerary; Salisbury Circuit, E. M. Avett; Spencer Station, H. C. Sprinkle; East Spencer and North Main, C. E. Steadman; Woodleaf, James Wilson.

Shelby District.—S. B. Turrentine, presiding elder; Belwood, W. V. Huneycutt; H. G. Stamey, supernumerary; Bessemer City, R. H. Rhinehart; Cherryville, T. W. Usery; J. F. Harrelson, junior preacher; Crouse, W. M. Boring; Gastonia, Main Street, J. E. Abernethy; Gastonia, Ozark and West Gastonia, N. C. Williams, supply; King's Mountain and El Bethel, M. B. Clegg; Lincolnton Station, T. J. Rodgers; Lincoln Circuit, J. H. Robertson; Lowell and Dallas, N. M. Modlin; Lowesville, J. W. Strider; McAdenville, B. F. Fincher; Mountain Island, D. W. Brown; Mount Holly and Belmont, J. A. Bowles; Fallston, J. P. Davis; Shelby, Central, E. E. Williamson, R. M. Hoyle, supernumerary; Shelby Circuit, L. E. Stacy; South Shelby and Sharon, L. F. Brothers; South Fork, W. S. Cherry; Stanley Creek, E. N. Crowder.

Statesville District.—L. T. Mann, presiding elder; Alexander, M. T. Smathers; Catawba, Beverly Wilson; Cool Spring, J. J. Edwards; Davidson, C. M. Campbell; Granite Falls and Hudson, D. F. Carr; Hickory Station, D. M. M. Baker; Hickory Circuit, J. P. Hornbuckle; Iredell, P. H. Brittain; Lenoir Station, C. M. Picken; Lenoir Circuit, C. H. Curtis; Maiden, J. W. Kennedy; Mooresville Station, C. S. Kirkpatrick; Mooresville Circuit, E. Myers, J. W. Jones; Newton Station, W. M. Biles; North Lenoir, J. C. Keever; Rhodhiss, G. W. Fink, supply; Rock Springs, T. E. Waggs; South Lenoir and Valmead, C. E. Dupont; Statesville, Broad Street, J. F. Kirk; Statesville, Race Street, J. J. Eads; Statesville Circuit, J. C. Mock; Stony Point, D. S. Richardson; Troutman, C. L. McCalin; President Davenport College, J. H. Craven; Missionary secretary, H. K. Boyer; Conference missionary evangelist, D. H. Coman.

Waynesville District.—L. T. Cordell, presiding elder; Andrews, J. J. Barker; Bryson City and Whittier, J. W. Williams; James Occumma, supply; Bethel Circuit, T. S. Coble; Canton, B. F. Hargett; Clyde, W. C. Jones; Dillsboro and Sylva, W. O. Davis; C. H. Neal, supply; Fines Creek, J. A. Marr; Franklin Station, M. H. Tuttle; Franklin Circuit, D. P. Walters; Glenville, F. O. Dryman; Hayesville, B. M. Jackson; Haywood, R. C. Kirk; Judson, J. F. Usry; Jonathan, J. A. Fry; Macon Circuit, J. L. Teague; Murphy Station, H. H. Jordan; Murphy Circuit, W. I. Hughes; Waynesville Station, M. F. Moore; Wester, D. R. Proff, L. B. Abernethy, junior preacher; Missionary to Cuba, M. B. Stokes.

Winston District.—P. T. Durham, presiding elder; Advance, J. A. J. Farrington; Cooleemee, C. M. Short; Davidson Circuit, J. T. Ratledge; Davie Circuit, B. A. York; Farmington, J. B. Taber; Forsyth, T. W. Vick; Jackson Hill, P. L. Shore; Kernersville, C. P. Goode; Lewisville, A. G. Loftin; Lexington, A. W. Plyler; Linwood, W. F. Elliott; Mocksville, E. W. Fox; Thomasville, Main Street, R. M. Courtney; Thomasville Circuit, P. E. Parker; Walkertown, O. J. Hutchins; Winston, Burkhead, W. L. Hutchins; Winston, Centenary, E. L. Bain; Winston, Salem Grace and Liberty, R. E. Atkinson; Winston, Southside and Salem, J. S. Hyatt; Winston, West End, W. A. Lambeth; Field agent Children's Home, W. O. Goode; Missionary to Cuba, H. W. Baker; Student Vanderbilt University, J. C. Harmon.

Transferred.—L. W. Collins to North Georgia Conference; L. A. Palmer and O. I. Hinson to Southwest Missouri Conference; T. E. Weaver to Florida Conference; B. Margeson to Arkansas Conference; E. C. Glenn to North Carolina Conference.

E. A. Cole of Charlotte was elected Conference lay reader for the coming year.

The trains leaving High Point Monday evening were crowded with members of the Conference and visitors who were returning to their homes. The preachers who have received new appointments will begin their work within the next two weeks.



"Oh, Harding, Thank God, You've Come!"