

# The Yellow Letter



by William Johnston

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## SYNOPSIS.

Harding Kent calls on Louise Farrish to propose marriage and finds the house in great excitement over the attempted suicide of her sister Katharine. Kent starts an investigation and finds that Hugh Crandall, auditor for Katharine, who had been forbidden the house by General Farrish, had talked with Katharine over the telephone just before she shot herself. A torn piece of yellow paper is found at sight of which General Farrish is stricken with paralysis. Kent discovers that Crandall has left town hurriedly. Andrew Elser, an aged banker, commits suicide about the same time as Katharine attempted her life. A yellow envelope is found in Elser's room. Post Office Inspector Davis, Kent's friend, takes up the case. Kent is convinced that Crandall is at the bottom of the mystery. Katharine's strange outcry puzzles the detectives. Kent and Davis search Crandall's room and find an address. Lock Box 17, Ardway, N. J. Kent goes to Ardway to investigate and becomes suspicious of a "Henry Cook." A woman commits suicide at the Ardway Hotel. A yellow letter also figures in this case. Kent calls Louise on the long distance telephone and finds that she had just been called by Crandall from the same booth. "Cook" disappears. The Ardway postmaster is missing. Inspector Davis arrives at Ardway and takes up the investigation. He discovers that the dead woman is Sarah Sackett of Bridgeport. Louise telephones Kent imploring him to stop the investigation.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A New Mystery.

I was up with the dawn the next morning and down-stairs to find a train schedule. The only thought in my mind was that I must go to Louise at once. I could not understand her sudden amazing change of front. Why, after pledging me to solve the mystery, should she all at once be as insistent that I should immediately stop all inquiry? I had lain awake the whole night, pondering the situation and seeking a solution. What reason could she have? Who could have influenced her to such action?

The first train, I found, left two minutes before six. I ordered breakfast, though in no mood for eating, and went to Davis' room. I felt that I needed his advice. I found him awake, smoking a cigarette in bed. Briefly I related to him the amazing telephone conversation I had had with Louise the night before.

"What possible reason could have influenced her to make such a strange request?" I concluded.

"A woman doesn't have to have a reason," he answered—flippantly, it seemed to me.

"You don't understand!" I cried. "Louise is not the ordinary flighty girl. She has the finest, best-balanced mind of any woman I ever knew. She never acts on impulse."

Davis looked at me with that exasperating smile of his. "Kent," he replied, "when you have been married as long as I have, when you know women as well as I do, you will realize the folly of trying to find reasons for the things women do. Their minds are not governed by reason, but by impulse. Every sane woman knew that the hobble skirt was an absurdity, yet when Fashion decided in favor of the hobble skirt it was worn. I doubt very much if Miss Farrish herself could tell you why she asked you to discontinue your investigation. Probably she acted on impulse. By this time she undoubtedly is just as eager as she ever was for you to go on."

"What would you advise?"

"I'd go on," said Davis laconically, as he lighted another cigarette.

For a moment I was almost shaken in my determination to do nothing until I had seen Louise. It seemed as if Davis might be right. Perhaps she had acted only on impulse. Perhaps her love for me had made her feel that the investigation might lead me into danger. But I reconsidered. She had given me her love and trust and confidence. She surely was entitled to full confidence from me. I could not honorably continue the investigation without first seeing her.

"I am going to town on the first train," I said decisively. "I shall do nothing until I have seen her."

"And I shall go on with the investigation," said Davis with that exasperating smile of his.

Impatiently I turned and left him. I choked down a cup of coffee and hurried to the station. The journey seemed miles and miles long, though the train made few stops. As soon as the ferry landed me in New York I sprang into a taxi and ordered the driver to take me at once to the Farrish house. Not until we had turned into their street did I realize that it was still too early for me to try to see Louise, even on such an urgent mission as mine. A few doors away from the house I stopped the chauffeur and bade him drive up the avenue to the entrance of Central park.

I dismissed him there and strolled aimlessly into the park. I would wait until ten o'clock before I tried to see Louise. Still pondering the situation, I strolled along one of the park walls and flung myself on a bench by the little lake where the swan boats are. There was no one about at that early hour and I was glad of it. I wanted to be alone and think.

How long? said there I do not know.

I was so deep in thought that there was neither sight in my eyes nor hearing in my ears. Yet the eyes will not be denied their rights. A feeling came over me that some part of my brain was trying to tell me something. It came more and more forcefully. My eyes were seeing something which they were trying to compel me to notice.

What was it?

I pulled myself together with a start and looked about me.

With an exclamation of horror I sprang from the bench and gazed into the lake just in front of me. Floating on the surface, not fifty feet from where I had been sitting, was the body of a woman.

"Other suicides, other suicides!"—Davis' remark of two days before kept jiggling through my brain. Other suicides!—Katharine, Elser, the woman at Ardway—his prophecy had been right—and was this another in the terrible chain?

I ran like a madman toward the park entrance, where I remembered I had passed a policeman. It was with relief that I found him still there.

"There's a woman—drowned—in the lake!" I gasped, pointing over my shoulder.

He ran back to the lake with me and together we waded out in the shallow water where the body lay. In my horror at the unexpected sight I had not stopped to note her appearance, nor could I have told whether she was young or old, dark or fair.

I looked at her now with more than interest—with a feeling of sorrow, of understanding. The deed of Katharine Farrish had brought me to a closer sympathy with unfortunate persons influenced to seek death. As I saw that this poor girl was young and fair I sadly wondered what tragedy had driven her to drowning.

Never shall I forget the impression the picture of this suicide made on me! She lay on her back, with long blonde tresses of well-kept hair floating out on either side of her shapely head. Her eyes were closed, but her shapely brows and long dark lashes made her face comely even in death. Her clothing, I observed, was well-made, and though wet and soiled as it was by the water it still gave the impression of neatness.

We grasped the body gently by the arms and drew it in to the bank, where we lifted it to the park bench on which I had been sitting.

"I wonder if there is anything about her to identify her by?" said the policeman, and together we looked.

Apparently there was nothing. There were no rings on her hands, though the fingers were those of a woman of refinement. The officer turned back the collar of her coat, but the name of the maker had been cut away.

"She didn't want nobody to know who she was, I guess," he said after a hasty examination. "They generally try to hide their names."

"Yes, I suppose they do," I said apathetically.

"I've got to go over to the arsenal and report this and send for the wagon. Will you wait till I come back? I won't be long."

"I'll wait," I said.

He disappeared up the path and I was left alone with the body. As I sat there, meditating on the mystery that had caused so many other tragedies, I became conscious of the fact that one of this girl's hands was closed, as if, even in death, she was striving to conceal something.

Stooping over, I gently pressed back the stiffening fingers.

An exclamation of horror came to my lips as I saw what had been concealed there.

It was a little scrap of yellow paper. I could hardly believe my eyes. It must be that this poor girl here was another of the victims in the baffling chain of crime I was seeking to unravel. I held the water-soaked fragment up to the light, but there was nothing on it—not a word. Yet there was no mistaking the color and texture of the paper. It was undoubtedly the same that Louise and I had found in Katharine's room after she had tried to kill herself. It was the same that the police had discovered in Andrew Elser's room. There was no question in my mind but that it was the same that the woman in Ardway had torn up before she hanged herself in the little hotel. But what was the tie between them? What could be the mysterious import of this yellow letter that drove its recipients to death?

Here was one fragment. Perhaps I could find other scraps—perhaps the whole letter. I ran down to the bank of the lake and began a systematic search of the water along shore. Foot by foot I studied it carefully. For ten minutes I searched unavailingly and then I caught a glimpse of something yellow half hidden by an overhanging tree. Carefully I parted the branches. Sure enough, submerged in six inches of water, were more of the yellow scraps. I waded in and, scooping them up carefully in my hands, laid

them on the grass to dry, for they were all but falling apart and I hardly dared handle them. Meanwhile I continued my search for other yellow scraps—this time without avail. If she had carried a torn-up letter with her as she sprang to death, the other pieces had floated away.

At last, convinced that there was no possibility of recovering more of them, I gave up my search and returned to where I had spread the recovered scraps on the grass. One by one I studied them. They were evidently a part of a type-written letter, but the ink had run so that it was impossible to read a single word on them. From their shape, too, it appeared that they were not consecutive, so there was little hope of learning anything from them.

Just two of the inky smears seemed to have a possible meaning.

On one of them I was almost positive that I could trace the word "youth." On another scrap was a word that a little stretch of the imagination might decipher as "her."

"Youth" and "her."

They might mean much or nothing. They might have some bearing on the great mystery I was trying to solve. They might have none. Perhaps they were, after all, merely phrases from a letter that had brought disappointment to a loving woman. In all likelihood this suicide had no connection with the others. But why, then, the yellow paper?

So intent was I on my thoughts that I did not observe the return of the policeman until I heard his voice.

"What have you got there?"

There was suspicion in his tone—the natural suspicion of the representative of the law. It was on the tip of my tongue to say: "Another yellow letter."

For once prudence restrained me. I recalled how my too hasty speech at the coroner's inquest had led me into trouble. I could hardly expect a twelve-hundred-dollar policeman to assist in solving the mystery that was still perplexing Davis.

"Just some scraps of paper," I said carelessly. "After you had gone I noticed that she was clutching a bit of paper in one hand. I searched around the lake to see if I could find more. I found these. It is evidently part of a letter, but the ink has run so you can make nothing out of them."

"Let's see them."

I handed him all of them.

"This," I explained, "I found in her hand and the others were over there under those bushes."

One by one the policeman examined them, turning them carefully over and over.

"There's nothing to them," he finally announced. "The wagon will be here in a minute. I don't suppose you'll want to be claiming any credit for finding the body?"

you, though, for coming and telling me about it. There's a lot of fools would have gone and telephoned the arsenal and then I'd been on the carpet for not covering my post properly."

I was glad indeed of the opportunity to get away. It was nearing ten o'clock. My trousers and shoes were in such condition that I wanted to get to my apartments for a change before seeing Louise. I hastened to the park entrance and hailed a taxi. By the time I left my rooms and reached the Farrish home it was ten minutes after ten.

As my taxi turned into the street I saw another one stop before the Farrish door. At first I thought it must be the doctor or one of his assistants, but as the front door closed behind the tall figure of a man who had been admitted to the house I realized that it was some one I had seen before. There was something reminiscent in the broad shoulders, in the walk. It was some one I knew, or ought to have recognized, yet who it was or where I had seen him I could not at the moment recall.

I was not three minutes behind him in reaching the door. Though the other visitor had been admitted at once, there was no immediate response to my ring. I waited a while and rang again. It seemed minutes before any one answered, then one of the maids opened the door a trifle and peered out.

"Mr. Kent to see Miss Louise," I said.

To my great amazement she did not open the door to me, but still holding it just barely enough to enable her to talk to me, said: "I'm sorry, but I have orders to admit no one to the house."

"Of course, I understand that you have your orders, but please tell Miss Louise that Mr. Kent is here."

"I'll tell her, if you wish," she said doubtfully, carefully closing the door before she went on the mission.

The shutting of the door in my face gave me an odd sense of desolation. It seemed as if I were being shut out of the life of the woman I loved. Yet on second thought I smiled at my perturbation. The maid was only carrying out a necessary order. As soon as Louise knew I was there she would come running to the door herself. In a minute she would be folded in my arms and all misunderstanding would be cleared away. Undoubtedly she would have a good explanation for her telephone message of the night before. I told myself that it was only lack of sleep and the incident in the park that had upset my nerves. My misgivings were utterly foolish.

At length the door opened slowly. I had expected to see Louise herself behind it, but it was the same maid. This time she held the door hardly as wide as before.

"I'm sorry, sir, she said, "but Miss



I Gently Pressed Back the Stiffening Fingers.

I had feared that he would insist on my accompanying him to testify to its finding. It was quite a relief to hear him take this view of it.

"Of course not," I answered hastily.

"Then," said he with utmost candor, "you might as well beat it. It don't do a cop no good to have other people finding things on his post. If you ain't here when the wagon comes, there ain't nobody to say it wasn't me that found the body. I want to thank

Louise says she can not see you now."

"What?" I gasped.

She repeated her message while I stood there dazed. There must be some mistake. Louise must have misunderstood the name.

"Did you tell her it was Mr. Kent?"

"Yes, sir, I told her."

"What did she say?"

"She said she could not see you any one else now."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Social Forms and Entertainments



### Picture Gallery for Church Bazaar.

Will you kindly give me suggestions for a picture gallery to have a church bazaar; also a list of subjects, as Bonaparte crossing the Rhine, etc.?  
M. O.

I think you can compile a very interesting gallery from the suggestions below; the refreshment limit may also aid you:

"The Foreigner"—A little Japanese doll.

"Pick-Wick Papers"—A toothpick, a lamp wick and some paper, wrapped up in a shoe box.

"Along the Line"—Two clothes pins in a candy box.

"When Knighthood Was in Flower"—A nightcap wrapped in a flowered napkin.

"A Pleasant Reflection"—A small looking glass in a pill box.

"A Place for Reflection"—A small mirror.

"Darkest Africa"—A negro doll.

"Sweet Sixteen"—Sixteen bon bons.

"In Silk Attire"—A small doll dressed in silk.

"Nothing But Leaves"—A tablet of writing paper.

"Lovers"—Two spoons.

"An Absorbing Subject"—A blotter.

"The Home of Burns"—A toy flat-iron.

"Common Sense"—A few pennies.

"A Woman's Weapon"—A toy broom.

"Things That End in Smoke"—Cigars.

This way of serving refreshments will cause much merriment. Have a paper bag for each one which contains two sandwiches, a cookie, a sugared doughnut done up in waxed paper, and a banana; coffee to be passed on a tray in tin cups.

### Entertainment for Bachelor Girls.

I am to be married in April and must pay the penalty by giving some sort of a party to ten girls who belong to our "Single Blessedness" club. Tell me what to do. I have received already many wedding gifts and am in the house "we" are to occupy. SUB.

I should conduct the affair with the idea that your former club fellows were "green" with envy and consumed with jealousy; therefore, keep the color scheme yellow and green. Decorate the table with steel knitting needles stacked like bayonets, tied with green and yellow baby ribbon. If you can get black cat candy boxes use them for favors with the name card tied around the neck. Appropriate lamp shades may be made of transparent paper with cats cut out and pasted on. For the table centerpiece have a pretty brass teakettle filled with flowers. Offer your guests a cup of tea for consolation as soon as they arrive. Then

Personally, I think it is a fine thing to ask young men to a Sunday evening meal, especially if they are not fortunate enough to be in homes of their families, and I am sure it would add interest to ask the girls. How would you like asking two couples for Sunday nights until you have them all invited? Sunday evening teas or suppers may be very informal and enjoyable.

### Rose's Queries.

Please tell me the name of a good book of etiquette. I'm placed in an awkward position and will greatly appreciate your help. I met a young lady this summer who afterwards called on me. I returned the call, then received an invitation to her wedding. Of course, I will send a present, but shall I call again before this takes place? ROSE.

In answer to your first question, I must ask you to send me a self-addressed stamped envelope, as I cannot give names or addresses in the department. You need make no call until after the wedding, when a call will be due her mother or whoever issued the invitation, and a call upon the bride on her at-home day.

MADAME MERRI.

## Evening Gown of Embroidered Ivory Satin Richly Adorned



A gown of embroidered ivory satin with chiffon corsage and tunic of royal blue velvet. The girdle is laced with broad velvet ribbon ending in tassels.