

# 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, suitor 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 Bridgport. Louise telephoned Kent imploring him to drop the investigation. Kent returns to New York to get an explanation from Louise. He finds the body of a woman in Central Park and more yellow letters.

## CHAPTER IX—(Continued).

I was puzzled beyond expression. Why should Louise refuse to see me? I was conscious of having done nothing to offend her. If only I could see her for just a minute to find out what was the matter! I felt that I must reach her. For an instant I was tempted to brush past the maid and force my way in. Surely Louise of her own accord would not treat me thus. She must be beside herself with grief. Perhaps she was under the same malign influence that so distressed her sister. Yet even in the depths of despair we observe the conventionalities.

"Will you ask Miss Louise when she can see me?" I found myself saying in calm tones to the maid.

Again she closed the door in my face. Again I waited.

"Miss Louise says that she will see you if you will return in an hour," was the message that was brought me. I left the Farrish door and stumbled blindly up the street. The plight in which I found myself seemed inexplicable, maddening. I was sure Louise loved me. Had she not turned to me in the first hour of her distress? Had she not telephoned me when her sister shot herself? Had she not permitted me to take her in my arms? Had she not commissioned me to solve the mystery of the yellow letter? Yet why had she bade me discontinue my search? Why had she shut her door to me? What could be her motive? What could have influenced her against me?

Torn by a hundred conflicting emotions, I traversed street after street, not knowing or caring whether my feet were taking me. I must have retraced my steps, for I found myself in the block where the Farrishes lived. I looked at my watch and saw it was still half an hour before the time I had been told to return. I turned away from the house and wandered aimlessly on. There was some mystery in Louise's conduct I could not fathom. She refused to see me, yet just ahead of me some one else had been admitted to the house. A wave of jealousy swept over me. Who was this other man? I racked my brain, striving to recall his appearance, trying to remember what there was that was familiar about him.

All at once it came to me. A wild rage filled me. I knew now who he was. A picture of the office in that little hotel in New Jersey came to my mind, as it looked when I stood by the stove drying my clothes. A man had come to the desk and got his key and had walked past me as he went to his room. I knew now where I had seen that man who was admitted to the Farrish home. It was the man called Cook.

## CHAPTER X.

### Who Was the Thief?

An unbidden and unwelcome guest, jealousy came and sat by the altar of my heart, stirring the fires of my love for Louise into furious darts of flame that scorched my soul. That Crandall—for I was positive now that the visitor who had entered the Farrish home had been he—should have been admitted to the house with so many things pointed to his guilt, while I, an accepted lover, and certainly Louise's faithful servant, had been barred with such scant courtesy, filled me with dumb, unreasoning rage. I felt that all claims of friendship and of service, even disregarding the still stronger claims of honest love, entitled me to far different treatment.

Yet even in the burst of anger that overwhelmed me there was not a single thought of harshness toward Louise. I felt that if I could but see her she would explain everything satisfactorily. It was toward Crandall that all my wrath was directed. Feeling as I did, sure that he was respon-

sible for Katharine's attempted suicide and for her poor father's plight, I feared that his visit to the house boded ill for Louise. Undoubtedly his malign influence had persuaded her to bid me drop my efforts to solve the mystery. He must have realized that I was close on his trail, so dangerously close that with the effrontery of the daring criminal he had ventured to come to the house in one last effort to thwart my plans for his exposure.

As I became calmer I resolved on a course of action. Louise's strange request to me over the telephone must have been made because she was dominated by the fear of this villain who had brought disaster on her father and sister. Perhaps she feared that some evil might befall me if I persisted in trying to run him to earth. Possibly she was afraid that still greater evil might come to those she loved. I felt that for her own happiness it was necessary that I should continue my course. I would go on with my investigation and once for all free her from the crushing thrall of this hidden evil. I would wait where I was until Crandall had left the house, then I would insist on seeing her and telling her my resolve, nor would I permit her to dissuade me from it.

On the corner was a drug-store. Sheltered by its awning I took my stand to wait until Crandall left the house. I could see the Farrish door, yet my presence there under the awning would hardly be noticed. I had not long to wait. In about five minutes the door opened and the caller emerged. This time I had an opportunity to get a good look at him. I was right. His face was that of the man who had been registered in the Ardway hotel as Henry Cook, who had so abruptly left the room when the inquest was being held as I had begun to ask questions about the yellow letter, who had driven from the town behind the fastest horse obtainable.

He came swinging down the street past where I stood. As he came closer I was amazed to note that his face was not the unnatural color of the morphine user's that I expected, but ruddy with health. His eyes, however, wore a strained expression and his brow was knotted with wrinkles. I was strongly tempted to spring out from where I stood as he passed, to seize him by the throat and to make him tell me all I wished to know about the hideous mystery. Yet better judgment withheld my hand. After all, the evidence I had against him was not of the tangible sort that would convict. Even though I knew of his telephoning Katharine just before she shot herself, even though General Farrish had learned something about him that barred him from the house, even though we had found in his rooms a hypodermic syringe and the address in New Jersey where the third suicide had taken place, even though I myself had noted his suspicious actions there, there was nothing definite enough to warrant seizing him as yet. I watched him as far down the avenue as my eye could follow and then turned toward the Farrish house. This time I was admitted without delay. Apparently the maid had new instructions.

"I'll tell Miss Louise you are here," she said as she showed me into the reception-room.

As I waited I tried to think how I should greet Louise. While there was much that I might reproach her for, I felt that surely it had not been her fault. I knew she must be acting under compulsion. I was determined, though, to let her know that I knew that Hugh Crandall had been in the house.

Suddenly I heard a smothered scream up-stairs and a second later Louise burst into the room. There was terror in her face as she ran to me.

"Oh, Harding," she gasped, "it's gone—stolen!"

you and Mr. Davis were here the other day you gave it back to me. I took it up-stairs and put it in a drawer in a little desk in my room. I locked the desk and hid the key in a vase on the mantel. I went to the desk just now to get it and it was gone."

"Was the desk locked?"

She nodded.

"Who could have taken it?" I asked. Even as I framed the question there came to me the thought of Crandall's visit. He had been in the hotel in Ardway where the woman committed suicide after reading a yellow letter and tearing it up. The scraps of that letter had disappeared. More likely he had come here just to get that scrap of yellow paper lest its evidence might bring home his crimes.

"Who has been in the house?"

"No one but the doctors and nurses and the servants," said Louise, flushing uneasily as she spoke.

I waited, expecting her to mention Crandall's visit, but though she hesitated for a second she said nothing of it.

"I wonder who could have taken it?" she said after an awkward pause.

"What motive could any one have?" I asked, determined to direct her thoughts to Crandall. "The only person who would have a reason for making away with it would be some one who feared that it might be used against him."

There was a silence while we both pondered the situation.

"You remember," said Louise suddenly, "the agitation my father showed at sight of that paper. If he were not lying, paralyzed up-stairs I think he would have tried to gain possession of it."

"How is your father, and your sister?" I asked, suddenly recalling that I had asked after neither of them.

Katharine is much better," said Louise. "She is entirely conscious, though very weak, but the doctor says that she will in all probability recover quickly. My father's condition remains the same, though he seems to have regained the use of his right hand. He wrote some brief directions to-day about his business."

"Are you sure of all the servants?" I asked.

"All of them have been with us for years; all but one, ever since before my mother's death. I would not think of distrusting any of them."

"Are you certain the house has not been entered in the night?"

I was asking these questions with a view of convincing her that it was impossible for any one but Crandall to have taken the yellow scrap—for any one else to have even a motive for taking it.

"That would be impossible," she said. "All the doors and windows are protected by burglar alarms and I

"But—but—" I protestingly began. "I asked you to do what I requested without any questions. You have told me that you loved me. If that is the case I know you will do what I ask without trying to force my confidence. Isn't it enough for you to know that I wish you to do it?"

"Louise, dear," I said firmly, "a mysterious trail of hidden evil in some way has crossed your home. It has stricken your sister and your father. You yourself asked me to try to find the secret and I vowed that I would. I don't know what your motive is in making this strange request, but I can't believe you are doing it of your own volition. I am certain that you are influenced by fear—fear lest some greater evil will befall, if my efforts to unmask the criminal are successful. Is it not so?"

"Don't ask me, Harding," she begged piteously. "I can't tell you. It is not my secret. I can tell you nothing. Please don't ask me."

More than ever now I was convinced that that fear of Crandall dominated her. Quickly following on his telephone message he had come to the house and had cast over her the same mysterious spell as had fallen on her sister. More than ever was I determined to follow the trail of mystery to its end, no matter where it lay or what it cost. What was life to me if the woman I loved was to be for ever under a shadow, in the power of some hidden criminal who might prey on her as he had done on the other members of her family? I felt it my duty toward her to go on and, if I could, compel her to divulge something of what she was holding back from me.

"Why did you want that bit of the yellow letter? What were you going to do with it?"

"I can't tell you. Please don't ask me."

"Why do you want me to stop my inquiries?"

"I can't tell you. Please don't ask." "What was Hugh Crandall doing here this morning?"

The question, direct and blunt as I put it, had almost the same effect as if I had fired a bullet at her. She caught her breath quickly and her face turned pale. I thought that she was going to faint. With a great effort she recovered, and looking me straight in the eye, she answered softly: "Mr. Crandall was not here this morning. What made you think he was?"

I did not try to conceal the open-eyed amazement with which I stared at her as she gave me this unequivocal reply. "What could it mean? I could not, would not believe that this high principled, honorable girl would willfully deceive me, yet I was as sure as that I was standing there that



Sheltered by the Awning I Took My Stand to Wait Until Crandall Left the House.

know they are in working order or I would have heard about it."

"There is or there must have been," I said slowly, "some traitor in the house, some thief, some one who had an object in getting hold of that paper."

"There has been no one here," said Louise with a painful effort, "no one answering that description."

Hugh Crandall had been in the house that morning. Could it have been that he had entered without her knowledge? Was it possible that one of the maids in the Farrish home was in his pay and had permitted him to enter without Louise's knowledge? That might explain the rifling of the locked desk. The maid might know of Louise's habit of hiding the key in a vase. It began to look as if I had a solution of this new mystery. Yet it could hardly be possible for Crandall to have been in the house for fully half an hour without Louise knowing it. Furthermore, why had admittance been denied me when I first called?

"I wanted—" she stopped short. "Mr. Kent," she said, her entire manner toward me stiffening as she withdrew her hands from mine, "I asked you last night if you would not cease your inquiries at once."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

# IN THE WILDS of HONDURAS



Tegucigalpa, Capital of Honduras

ARMINIUS T. HAEBERLE of St. Louis, who as American consul to Honduras traveled about the mountainous country accompanied by his wife, sleeping under the stars and under forest trees, to attend to the duties of his office, has been promoted through the merit system to the office of American consul to Siberia.

Instead of sitting in his office to attend to routine duties, he set about to acquaint the natives with American ideas, and in doing this he aided them to seek better means of living, better methods of cultivating their farms, and in many ways helped to improve their condition.

Mrs. Haeberle visited the natives, made them feel that the consul's home was always open to them and many took advantage of the hospitality, some after a journey of 200 miles. In this manner the consul and his wife became acquainted with the natives.

Mr. Haeberle's efforts were recognized by the government of Honduras, and progressive articles which he wrote were circulated by the government.

Camped at Roadside. Mrs. Haeberle was Miss Ida Wiencke of California, Mo. She accompanied her husband on many arduous trips.

Sometimes the couple would accept the hospitality of the people along the road, and swing their hammocks in front of their houses, and sometimes they would camp along the road.

Speaking of his trips, Mr. Haeberle said: "A saddle mule is needed to make the journeys into the interior, as there are no railroads. In addition to the saddle mule, a traveler must have a pack mule and a 'mozo' or guide. The guide does not ride, and the traveler does not have to worry about the guide becoming tired. The only concern is to obtain a mule which will keep up with the guide."

The riding is rough, being along mountainous trails and near precipices. The usual day's journey is 37 miles.

The journey to the north coast is a trip of six days, and to the south coast requires two and one-half days. Some of the fancy mules travel 20 leagues a day.

Most of the houses are modest, and with few accommodations, but great hospitality is shown, and the natives give freely of their food, which consists principally of coffee, eggs, rice, beans, and the native corn cakes.

Eggs, by the way, cost about 20 cents a dozen in the capital, but they are fresh, as there are no cold storage plants in that country.

The name of the capital, Tegucigalpa, interpreted, means 'The Hills of Silver,' and the name is properly applied, as the hills and mountains are rich in mineral wealth, silver and gold.

The old Spanish mine of Santa Lucia, near the capital, is still worked in a small way. In the seventeenth century more than \$1,000,000 was sent to the king of Spain as one-fifth of one mine's output for the year. The king sent a wooden image of Christ to the city, as a token of his appreciation, and this wooden image occupies a place in the church at the present time.

In the southern part of Honduras was the largest Spanish gold mine in Central America, located at Clavari-co. Nuggets have been taken out so large and the virgin gold was so coarse that King Philip called them 'My Royal Tamarinds,' tamarinds being a tropical fruit.

As American consul I always received the co-operation of the Honduras authorities, which made it possible to obtain interesting data on the country. I always received great attention from those in authority, having early demonstrated that I sought to aid them wherever and whenever possible.

Used Old-Style Plow. I was not trying to teach them anything, simply showing how they could benefit by making use of modern appliances.

"When I first went there the old Spanish plow, made of a wooden beam, on the end of which was a piece of iron, with which the ground was only scraped to a shallow depth, was in general use.

I told them of the modern plow, which would greatly benefit crops. I wrote articles setting forth the advantages of modern machinery for the

benefit of the small farmer. There are many agriculturists in Honduras well acquainted with the most modern farming methods, and it is also their desire to see improved machinery introduced among the poorer class.

"These articles were translated into the Spanish language and printed and sent out by the government in its official paper. The Honduras gladly read and commented on the articles.

"The government co-operated, and a farmer in the interior, who had purchased an American plow in some manner or other, confirmed my statements of the depth that it would cultivate the ground, and of the benefit such cultivation was to the crops. Finally, a consignment of plows was received and distributed to the farmers. Many were anxious to receive them and they are now reaping the benefit of large crops.

"This is simply an instance of how a consul may create a demand for the products of his country, while at the same time aiding the natives.

"Mrs. Haeberle accompanied me and made many friends. I believe we enjoyed the confidence of all with whom we came in contact. Mrs. Haeberle has served as a judge in needle and art work at the schools, and has otherwise mingled with the Honduras."

## BRITISH MUSEUM'S TREASURE

Arabic Book, of Which There is No Other Copy in the World, Acquired by That Institution.

The trustees of the British museum have just acquired a manuscript of the Fadali al-batiniyah, an account of the doctrines of the Karmathians, Ismailis and other esoteric and unorthodox sects of Mohammedanism, by the famous theologian, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzali. This is apparently a unique Arabic MS., as no other copy is on record. In it the author systematically sets forth the doctrines of the various sects and refutes them. The work is of great significance, as it supplies a very early account of these sects, some of which are very important. Ghazzali was born in A. D. 1059, and spent his early years in Tus, Khoreasan. He studied under the great Imam al-Harmani at Nishapur. In A. D. 1091 he became a professor at the Nizamiya college, in Bagdad, where he worked for four years. He then resigned in order to continue his own studies and effect a satisfactory concordat of orthodoxy, reason and mysticism. He died in Tus in A. D. 1111. His influence upon the later developments of Islam has been enormous. Suyuti, a famous author, says: "If there could be another prophet after Mahomet, it would certainly be Al-Ghazzali." The present MS. was copied in A. D. 1266, and is perfect except for a few pages at the beginning.

"Justice" Openly Bought. Removal of an unjust judge from the United States bench reminds the London Chronicle that centuries ago justice was not administered nearly so impartially as it is now. There were the "basket justices" who received their nicknames from the presents openly handed up to them in court by suitors. And in more recent times there were the "trading justices" satirized by Fielding in "Amelia." Townsend, the celebrated Bow street runner, in his evidence before a parliamentary committee in 1816, described how these justices used to issue batches of warrants every day "to take up all the poor devils on the streets, so as to charge them two shillings four pence each as bail. Only the penniless offenders were sent to jail, and a morning's work would sometimes produce £10 (\$50)." After which the worthy magistrate and his clerk would adjourn to a neighboring hostelry for refreshment.

Hint Was Wasted. Mother (at 11:30 p. m.)—What's the matter, John? You look disturbed. Father—I thought I'd give that young man calling on our daughter a vigorous hint it was time to go, so I walked right into the parlor and deliberately turned out the gas.

Mother—Oh, my! And did he get angry? Father—Angry? The young jack-napes said "Thank you."

A politician no sooner climbs aboard the band wagon than he begins to toot his own horn.