

# The Yellow Letter



by William Johnston  
Illustrations by V.L. Barnes

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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.

## CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

I glanced quickly at Davis. I fully expected to see in his face something of the same astonishment I had felt. I was disappointed. With a casual glance at the envelope he turned to Dowd as if waiting for him to go on. "It's evidence in the Elser case," the detective went on, "turned in by the man on post who reported the suicide. He was that old party that was found dead in his room up on West Twenty-third street. To my mind, it's just a plain case of suicide—an old man tired of living. The poison bottle was there on the floor beside him. I don't see anything suspicious about it, but the chief has taken a notion that there's something behind it and wants to know where this letter came from. We searched the room, but this torn envelope, was all we could find. The postmark's torn through, but he thought maybe you could trace it anyhow."

"I'll see what I can do and I'll let you know in the morning," said the inspector calmly, dismissing the detective with a nod. From his matter-of-fact tone and apparent lack of interest I would not have been surprised if he had refused this undertaking, too, as he had done, though it seemed to me that the two bits of yellow paper connected the two suicides at the same hour as something decisively more than a mere coincidence.

As soon, however, as the detective had left the room the inspector's whole manner changed. With the glimmer of excitement in his alert eyes he turned to me and explosively said: "Quick, let me see that yellow scrap."

I had placed it carefully in my wallet after he had refused my request. As I drew it out now he almost snatched it from my hand. Putting it on his desk beside the torn envelope, he picked up a reading-glass and studied both pieces carefully. His inspection lasted for several minutes, and meanwhile, I, too, studied the torn envelope.

Both in color and texture the paper so closely resembled the scrap that I was positive that they were of the same lot. The envelope bore the address of Andrew Elser, in West Twenty-third street. Part of the postmark—most of it, in fact—had been destroyed, as if in the careless opening of the letter with the finger. All that was decipherable was a capital "A" and part of another letter that might have been either an "N" or an "R." In the lower part of the circle was a fragment of a letter that looked as if it might have been an "N." I noticed, too, that the stamp had been stuck on rather carelessly, in a lopsided manner.

My friend, his inspection completed, turned to me apologetically. "I beg your pardon, Harding Kent," he said, "you were entirely right. These two bits of paper are key-notes in an important mystery, one that it is well worth my while to try to solve."

"What made you change your mind so suddenly?" I asked, for though I quite agreed with him, his manner had puzzled me not a little. He leaned back in his chair and turned it so that he faced me. He had a sharp, explosive way of speaking, biting off his words almost before he had completely enunciated them. "Can't you see? One footprint leads nowhere. Two footprints start a path. When you brought that yellow scrap to me you were merely guessing that it might have something to do with the strange happenings in the Farrish home. There was no way in which you could have positive knowledge, nor could I. You were only guessing."

same quality and texture—to all appearances the same paper. Two persons in whose possession they were, attempt suicide on the same day. The same person, or at least the same typewriter, wrote both the address on the envelope and the contents of the letter. This envelope came from a country post-office in either New York or New Jersey within a month—some post-office the name of which begins with "Ar" or "An." There are not many rural offices that will fit in all particular. In two days or sooner, I can tell you exactly from what office they were mailed."

"Letters—you think there were two? Might not this be the envelope in which this paper came?" "That presupposes an acquaintance between Elser and Miss Farrish, at least a connection of some sort. Did she know him?" "I don't think so. Her sister and I were talking of the Elser suicide last night after we saw the evening papers. Louise surely would have known it if her sister was acquainted with him."

"Perhaps," said Davis doubtfully. "There isn't a human being over ten that has not a secret that they keep from some one. It looks to me, though, as if in all probability there were two distinct letters. That is what makes me suspect a plot. It convinces me that the mails are being used for an improper and more than likely a criminal purpose. This brings the case or both cases properly in my domain as a post-office inspector."

"And I can count on your assistance, after all," I said joyfully. "When can you begin work?" "I have begun," he said tersely, pushing over for my inspection something he had hastily scrawled on a pad lying on his desk. It was an order addressed to the superintendent of the railway mails, which read: "Have all railway clerks on New York and New Jersey routes report from what rural office within the last month they have received large quantities of letters in yellow envelopes. If letters have been discontinued, when?"

"Large quantities!" I gasped. "Were there more than two?" "Of course," he snapped, in a way that showed me he did not wish to be questioned further. Then he reached for his hat and coat, and with an abrupt "Come along!" led the way to the elevator.

"Where are you going?" I asked as he rushed me hurriedly through Park place to the Sixth Avenue Elevated. "To Twenty-third street," he replied, "to find out what the police have not."

In the "L" train I told him in low tones of Crandall's apparent connection with the case and of his sudden disappearance. He sat silent, his whole bearing indicating such abstraction that I doubted if he had heard a word I was saying, but suddenly, just before we left the train, he started me by asking: "Do you know Crandall? What color are his eyes?"

I regretted that I had to say no to the first question, and that I did not, to the latter, which query amazed me greatly. What connection the color of a man's eyes could possibly have with two attempts at suicide and a lot of mysterious yellow letters from a rural post-office was entirely beyond me. Curious as I was, I hesitated to question him on the subject, for experience had taught me that he was better at asking than answering.

Instead of going directly to the boarding-house where Elser had killed himself, he took the other side of the street and turned abruptly into a house, beside the door of which was a doctor's plate. "Is Doctor Berner in?" he asked of the maid, and on being shown into the physician's office, introduced himself as "Inspector Davis" and began questioning the doctor about the Elser suicide.

The simplicity of his logic amazed me. It was like a conjurer's trick after it has been explained, or like one of those puzzle pictures with hidden faces. You work hours trying to find them, and after you have found them you wonder how you ever happened not to see them.

We now arrived at Mrs. Traak's boarding-house—one of those dingy ex-residences that proclaimed its retrogression by a white slip of paper on the door frame. I had supposed that here, too, my friend would introduce himself as "Inspector Davis" on account of the prestige it would give him in searching the rooms, but to the slattern maid who came to the door wiping her hands he merely said: "Tell your mistress a couple of gentlemen are inquiring about room and board."

Mrs. Traak was the old-school boarding-house mistress fast disappearing before the inroads of the family apartment hotel. "Better days" was written all over her, though somewhat obscured by years in boarding-house grease. Eying us sharply through her spectacles, she inquired how much we were willing to pay, meanwhile debating with herself whether it was necessary to ask for references.

"Davis" not more than twelve dollars a week each" apparently convinced her that references were unnecessary, for she at once led the way to what she described as the second floor front, the room in which Elser had killed himself only the day before. Probably she had no intention of telling us this, but garrulity overcame her caution. She had been expatiating on the advantages of the room—Heaven knows it needed an eloquent advocate!—when suddenly she lowered her voice to a mysterious whisper.

"One gentleman has occupied this room for fourteen years—ever since I've had the house, and a fine old gentleman he was, too. I wouldn't have the room vacant but what happened to him yesterday." She let her voice sink still lower. "If it was a couple of ladies looking at the room, I wouldn't be telling it, but I know you gentlemen won't mind. It was in this room yesterday Mr. Elser killed himself, not on the bed, but right here on the floor. It was poison he took—cyanide of mercury, the doctor said."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the inspector, as if he had heard the news for the first time. "Why did he do it?" "It's more than I can say," said Mrs. Traak, evidently well pleased to talk about the tragedy. "I did everything I could to keep him comfortable and happy. He spent all his time here for. Every Saturday night regular he paid his board, that is, up to last week—that's still owing."

"Did he have any visitors?" "No, I don't recollect that there was ever any one here to see him, though occasionally he used to bring the boy down here to lunch on Saturday or Sunday. He hasn't had him here, though, for the last three years."

"Did he receive any mail?" "Ain't it queer, now, that you speak of that! The first letter he had in months came only last week. The police found part of the envelope on the floor beside him. Them and me both looked through all his things, but never a trace of the letter could we find. I can't for the life of me think what he could have done with it. I know the letter must have had some sort of good news for him, for after he received it, for several days he was as bright and chipper as could be, more like himself than he had been for years. Then yesterday somebody telephoned to him—I don't know who it was, for I was out marketing—and he never had any 'phone calls before that I know of. Right after lunch he went out and was gone until after three. Soon after he came in he killed himself in this very room."

To my mind things were beginning to look blacker and blacker for Crandall. The parallel between the cases of Katharine and Elser was entirely too strong for it to have been mere coincidence. We knew it was Crandall who had telephoned Katharine. It must have been he who had called Elser. There was much to be explained. What it was that had driven them both to seek death was still a mystery to me. My mind reverted to my original theory that there was a child, whose existence had been kept from the world, that was in some way connected with the Farrish family. Old Elser was the guardian of a boy. Suppose this boy was the child. It would establish a possible connection between the two suicides. It would explain why Katharine might have known old Elser yet never have mentioned the man to Louise.

I took it for granted that Davis would ask the landlady further about the child. Of course, he would want to know the boy's name and the name of the school where Elser kept him, but he made no further inquiries. Telling the landlady he would let her know in a day or two about the room, he turned to me with: "Come on, Kent, it is time we had some luncheon." "We must find Crandall," I said as we left the house.

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OUR photograph shows a characteristic scene during the western campaign trip of Woodrow Wilson. Here the governor is on the rear platform of his private car greeting the citizens of Marton, Ind.

## RANGER REAL HERO FALSE TEETH LEGAL TENDER

### Fire Fighters Face Great Danger in Forest.

### How Pulaaki, by Coolness and Bravery, Prevented the Loss of Thirty-Five of His Crew in Cour d'Alene.

New York.—Prof. Welling, tanned and toughened by his summer's work in the Cour d'Alene national forest reservation, held his eastern visitors spellbound with stories of the fight he had had to make against the fearful forest fires, says the Youth's Companion. He had gone out, with two others, under government commission, to study the forest and, coming back in August, they had met the fires and spent almost a month in fighting their way out of them.

"There are real men among those forest rangers," he went on. "In fact, there is no place for anything that is not genuine up there. The most thrilling story of heroism that I have heard in a long time is the story of Ranger Pulaaki. It did not happen in the part of the reservation where I was, but I can vouch for its truth, for I have talked with some of the men who were with him."

"Pulaaki had forty men under him, and they had been fighting a big fire for hours. Suddenly the wind rose until it blew a gale. The fire got beyond them, and it became a question of saving the lives of the men. They were many miles from a railroad or a clearing."

"Pulaaki remembered that about a mile from where they were working was an abandoned mine shaft that ran back about forty feet into the hillside. He ordered the men to snatch their blankets from the camp and run for this shaft. Once there, they packed themselves like sardines into the hole. Pulaaki placed himself at the opening and stretched a blanket across it."

"In a few minutes the fire overtook them. The blanket at the opening caught and Pulaaki jerked it away. Again and again this was done, and when the supply of blankets ran low he held the burning fragments across the mouth of the shaft with his bare hands."

"The suffering of the men from the heat and smoke was pitiful. They were fairly maddened by it, and some of them made a wild attempt to push their way out of the shaft. For a while Pulaaki held them back by sheer physical strength, for he was an unusually strong man. But he knew that he must soon be overpowered and that the men, in their frenzy, would rush out to certain death. He drew his revolver and told them that he would kill the first man who attempted to break away. The men knew that he meant it, too, and that knowledge brought them back to reason."

"It wasn't more than twenty minutes before the worst of the fire had passed the shaft. When it was safe to crawl out they found that five of the men were dead from suffocation, but his sight was partly restored. He lost five men, but he was sure, but with less courage and presence of mind he would have lost them all. I take off my hat to such a man. He is a real hero."

### Winston is Fearless.

London.—Winston Churchill, first lord of the admiralty, denounced the efforts of the suffragettes to break his meeting here as "woman's uncivilized antics."

### Tubers and Tomatoes on Same Stalk.

Red Hill, Pa.—Elmer Clemmer grafted a tomato and potato stalk, and as a result the plant bore eight potatoes and three tomatoes of excellent flavor.

### ROYAL SUITE FOR MANUEL.

King George of England offers to King Manuel a suite in Kensington palace. Thus another foreign royalty becomes more or less a burden on the taxpayers of Great Britain. At present Manuel occupies a house at Richmond. If he accepts the rooms in Kensington palace he will have as his

### LIBERTY BRIDE GETS WORK.

### Mrs. Washburne Gets Employment on Magazine as Part of Pre-Nuptial Arrangement.

Los Angeles, Cal.—In conformity to her part of a prenuptial contract that caused comment from all sections of the country, Mrs. Charles Washburne, until a few days ago Miss Heluis Chandler, obtained a position with the firm by which her husband is employed.

The company publishes a magazine, and Mrs. Washburne will do illustrating for it. A part of the prenuptial contract, which, as a whole, provided for the greatest personal liberty on the part of husband and wife, specified that each should earn an independent livelihood, and should share the expenses of maintaining a home and of caring for children, should any result from the marriage.

"The account of my mother being prostrated and moaning over the disgrace I have brought upon her are merely trash," said Mrs. Washburne. "I have received several telegrams of congratulation and commendation from my mother since my marriage."

### MUCH CEMENT FOR CANAL.

When Latest Million Barrels is Used Total Cost Will Have Reached \$6,500,000.

Washington.—When the latest million barrels of cement purchased have been used in construction work on the Panama canal the amount of cement employed in the building of the big ditch will have reached a total of 2,200,000,000 pounds. The cost of this item of construction reaches \$6,500,000. If the barrels which contained the cement could be placed end to end they would extend 2,300 miles.

## NO FAITH IN EGYPTIAN GODS

### "Reincarnated Daughter of Pharaoh" Says She Has Rejected Artist Ott's Faith.

St. Louis, Mo.—Mrs. Ralph Chesley Ott, "reincarnated daughter of Pharaoh," who is suing her noted artist husband for a divorce, now denies that she ever had faith in the old Egyptian gods. She adds that when her two children came she utterly lost all faith in her husband's fantastic belief, and now, if she can recover her children through the courts, she will be satisfied with realities and forget the dream-talk and theosophy of Mr. Ott.

Ott is now in Springfield, Mo., with the two young children, and is expected to file a general denial to his wife's divorce charges this week. According to her stories, she was the Princess Amnera 5,000 years ago, and he was an artist in the employ of her haughty father, Pharaoh. As in their modern romance, it was a case of love at first sight when the princess and the artist met for the first time in the queen's chamber of the Great Pyramid.

Ott's modern meeting of his 5,000-year-old ideal was at University City, after he had returned from a commission to study Egyptian architecture for E. G. Lewis. She was then Miss Jane Schaufetter, an artist's model.

In discussing her alleged erstwhile tenets, Mrs. Ott denied the authorship of the article in regard to her faith, which were published over what was claimed to be her signature and she vilified the poor old gods of Egypt.

Of her husband and children, she declared that she had heard nothing since she left them with relatives of Mr. Ott in Springfield. Among other things in her divorce

### Bartender Accepts Molars for Beer in Lieu of Nickel From Man With Thirst.

### Kansas City, Mo.—Into Tony's place at 402 Main street came the man with a permanent thirst. He sidled up to the bar and in a husky whisper announced to Jerry, the red-headed bartender:

"Say, Bo, I got to have a drink an' there's no use discussin' any compromise. I'd rather drink than eat an' my stomach craves food. Jus' to show you I'm all right, even if I ain't got no money, an' I'm sincere an' all that, here's my false teeth fer one bowl of suds man's size an' a sh' ty collar. Do I cash 'em in?"

"You do," replied the bartender, and took the man's upper and lower masticators without so much as a "bat of the eye."

"I'll be back and redeem 'em to-night," assured the jag.

"If you don't I'll fit another man to 'em," warned Jerry as he wrapped the molars in a piece of tissue paper and ran them up in the cash register as "five cents."

## FEEL PULSE AROUND WORLD

### Harvard University Physicians With New Instrument Get "Long Distance" Heart Beats.

Cambridge, Mass.—That it is possible for a physician to note the heart beats of a patient who may be on the other side of the world is the assertion of Dr. Percy E. Brown of the Harvard Medical school. An instrument devised for that purpose has been installed in the Harvard Medical school. Doctor Brown says: "With the proper attachments the heart beats could be registered around the world. All the patient has to do is to place the hands in warm salt water and the electric current, with the hands the positive and negative poles, is carried by wires to the instrument, which shows the heart beats."

## PIANO IN WRECK SAVES LIFE

### Forms a Barrier That Fences Man in it at Time of Crash of Trains.

Sheridan, Wyo.—His piano fencing him into a small open space in his car of household goods was all that saved J. S. Doyle of McCook, Neb., from being crushed to death when a Burlington train in which he was on his way home crashed into some empty cars north of Sheridan.

One of the seven horses in the car was killed. Doyle was badly bruised and cut, but after his injuries were dressed in the Sheridan hospital he was able to continue his journey to McCook.

## NEW SEA SERPENT IN VENICE

### Looks Like a Shark and Has Face Like Gila Monster, and Every-body Sober.

Venice, Cal.—One of the queerest deep-sea creatures ever seen here was brought in by a fisherman. It is five feet in length, black and green mottled, with a tail like a shark. It has a dorsal fin and four feet shaped like those of a parrot. Its mouth resembles that of a Gila monster, while its head in a replica on a large scale of that of a California horned toad.

### KITTEN GIVES AN ALARM.

Leads Mother to Where Child Hanged Head Downward on Amusement Pier.

Venice, Cal.—A kitten saved twelve-year-old Olive Henderson, of this place, from probable death. The child and the kitten had gone for a walk and after a time the kitten returned alone. When it drew the attention of the girl's mother it started away, but returned and renewed its cry when she failed to follow. When it started again the mother followed.



Mrs. Traak Was the Old-School Boarding-House Mistress.

since he gave up his office downtown was a complaint out of him. On Saturdays he used to go up to Westchester to see a boy that he was guardian to. He read the papers every morning in the parlor. Every afternoon he took a walk. He was always on time to his meals and there never

"We must find who wrote the yellow letters," Davis responded. "It must have been Crandall," I asserted with conviction. "It may have been Crandall," the inspector replied. "Was Crandall left-handed?" (TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Tramps at Sea and Ashore

Whoever first named the wandering cargo steamer "tramp" did it in a moment of inspiration. A sea tramp and a shore tramp have more in common than the name. These steamers go everywhere in the same slouchy, aimless way, without knowing whither they will sail from the next port, and never knowing when they will get into the lane that leads home. Tramps ashore and afloat carry with them enough to cover their nakedness; the bare necessities of life suffice; they are involuntary ascetics. Tramp steamers have the pinched, hungry look of a city newsboy, for they were born in adversity, and the chill breath of economy constantly blows over them. They are the undermanned, underfed, overloaded laborers of the sea. Every seaman's tongue is against them, and the merchants of the world conspire to get their goods carried in them for nothing. It is seldom one hears anyone speak respectfully of a tramp. Men in liners, deep water vessels, and regular trades will alight with an infusion of pride to "them tramps" with a snarl of scorn that denotes interpretation. Those who go in them, especially the officers, speak in a depressing, half-apologetic way of their being on a tramp, as though

caught where they should not be—George McPherson Hunter, in Survey.

### Fewer Fogs in London.

Efforts of the Coal Smoke Abatement society, in greatly reducing the volume of smoke, have been instrumental in making black fogs rare in London. A few years ago these fogs were quite frequent in London in winter, and for several days at a time the city itself and the outlying suburbs were covered by a dark, black pall, sometimes high in the air, but more frequently descending and forming a thick, dirty and greenish-yellow substance through which the people had to travel. Fogs still occur in London, but only occasionally, and not for several years has there been an old-fashioned fog when torchbearers had to be employed to indicate the way.

### An Exaggerated Comparison.

"What makes you think that man is necessarily a great statesman?" asked Senator Sorghum. "Because he is a sturdy lawyer."

"My dear sir, to assume that a clever lawyer is necessarily a great statesman is the same as taking it for granted that a business man is a financier."

"I know there is," said Davis. "These bits of yellow paper are of the