

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, tutor 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 is stricken with paralysis. Kent discovers a 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, Look 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 Sarah Sackett of Bridgeport. Louise telephones 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. He sees Crandall, whom he recognizes as "Cook," enter the Farrish home. Louise again implores Kent to drop the investigation and refuses to give any explanation. Later Kent sees Crandall and Louise in an automobile. Kent returns to Ardway. Davis announces that he has planned to arrest the missing postmaster and also the master criminal. While seeking the criminals, Kent comes across Louise and Crandall. Pursued by Davis the postmaster jumps off a precipice and is killed. Aleck Young, the master criminal, is found in a hut in a morphia stupor.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Strange Vigil.

Dawn found Inspector Davis and me keeping strange vigil in the deserted cottage. Louise was gone. Crandall was gone. Constable Dodds was gone. Only the two of us were there, and on a rude couch in the corner, inert, unconscious with the death-like stupor of the confirmed user of morphine, lay the wreck of a man whom Davis had termed the master criminal.

On the inspector's return from his pursuit of the postmaster he had at once assumed the position of director-general of the little group at the cottage. He had decreed that Crandall should take Louise back to town in the automobile as soon as she was able to travel.

"After she has had an hour's rest here," he said authoritatively, "her nerves will have recovered sufficiently. It is important that the wound in her arm should be dressed as quickly as possible. It will be well, too, for her to return as speedily as possible to her father and sister. Her continued absence, if it reaches their ears, will needlessly alarm them both. You, Mr. Crandall, will take her back in the machine in which you came, of course."

"Certainly," said Crandall—overeagerly, I thought—"but, if you will pardon me for asking, who are you?"

For reply Davis handed him his card which bore his official title.

"But," stammered Crandall, "I don't understand you. What are you doing out here?"

"I'm here," said the inspector, "I fancy on the same mission that brought both you and Kent here—to find the sender of the yellow letters that have been menacing the peace and happiness of the house of Farrish."

"But," protested Crandall again, "how did you know it was Aleck Young?"

"So you know him?" said the inspector, with a note of inquiry in his voice. I had been taking no part in the conversation that was carried on. I was sitting with Louise's head pillowed on my knee endeavoring with my handkerchief to staunch the slight flow of blood that was still coming from the bullet wound. I had been strongly tempted to voice a protest, when I heard Davis arrange for Louise's return in the automobile with Crandall, for while Davis seemed to think he, like ourselves, had been in pursuit of the criminals, I still believed it was for the purpose of warning them instead of capturing them. Yet, on the other hand, I knew nothing about running a car. It was clearly out of the question for me to take Louise back, much as I distrusted Crandall. Anxiously I waited for his confession of acquaintance with the man in the hut.

"Yes, I knew him—only too well," said Crandall.

"Tell me about him," said the inspector. "But wait—let us carry Miss Farrish inside the cottage where she will be sheltered from the night air until you are ready to start."

"I can walk," said Louise. "In fact, I think I was more frightened than hurt."

I helped her to her feet and assisted her into the cottage, while I piled some cushions that were lying about and made her comfortable. The noise of our entrance made no impression on the drug-stupefied man who lay on the other side of the room, but Davis and Crandall crossed to where he lay and examined him closely.

"He will not wake for several hours," said Davis after feeling his pulse. "Kent and I will stay here until then. You, Mr. Crandall, will take Miss Farrish home, and you, Dodds, as soon as it's daylight, had better go look for Rouser's body."

"I don't have to look for it," said the constable with a shudder. "I know just where it is. It's a long ways round by the road, though."

"Take the buckboard," said Davis, "and when you reach the body go through all the pockets carefully and bring me everything you find. You'd better not take the body back to Ardway yet. Is there some place else you can take it?"

"Sure," said Dobbs. "I can take it over to Millervale. It's just about as far in the other direction. But what in the land's sake I'll tell about it, gets me."

"That's easy," said the inspector. "You can explain that you were driving over there and as you came by you saw the body lying on the road. You can explain that he must have fallen over the cliff in the dark. By the time they get through talking about it and having an inquest over in Millervale we will have had a chance to finish any more investigating we want to do. You can start about dawn."

"All right," said the constable, "but what will I do with them warrants?"

"Leave them with me. After you have disposed of Rouser's body you can stop on your way back and we'll take this one in with us. Come on outside, Dodds, and you, too, Crandall, I want to ask you some questions about our friend over there. You, Kent, stay here with Miss Farrish."

The three of them went out, leaving Louise and me alone together, a circumstance that I couldn't doubt that Davis had planned, realizing that there was much we would say to each other. Hardly were they out of the door before Louise turned to me, with suppliant arms, and cried out, with a sob in her voice: "Harding, forgive me for having deceived you."

"It is you," I cried, "you, who must forgive me for having disobeyed your wish, for having come out here after you had asked me not to, for having almost put a bullet through your dear heart."

"You didn't know—you couldn't know that I was here," she sobbed. "But how can you ever pardon the lies I told you?"

"Lies," I protested. "Dear girl, you never lied to me. Whatever these dear lips have said, I knew, I always knew your heart was true."

"Katharine asked it and I had to promise her."

"You mean about Hugh Crandall?"

"Yes," she breathed. "I don't know yet what it is that is between them. It's something about—about my father. Crandall knew it and Katharine found it out. Whatever it is, they determined to keep it secret between them. Katharine made me promise that I would tell no one, not even you. She swore me not to reveal to anyone that I had even seen Hugh Crandall. I had to promise her, you understand, don't you?"

My answer was a kiss full on her lips, while my arms went about her and held her tight to me.

"Of course, dear girl," I breathed, "I understand. I understood all the while."

"I was so afraid," she murmured, "afraid you would think I was deceiving you, that I didn't love you."

As our lips met in a long, sweet kiss, a wave of joy swept over me that all but obliterated thoughts of the dreadful yellow letter. I forgot for the moment the drug-sodden creature lying in the corner, not twenty feet away from us.

The spell was broken by a slight twitching of the man across the room. We came to ourselves with a start as from a dream. I went over to his side and looked at him. He was still dead to all around him.

"You understand, Harding, dear, don't you?" said Louise, as I resumed my place beside her. "Why I asked you to drop your search? As soon as Katharine became conscious and I told her that you were on the trail of the yellow letter, she became greatly excited. She insisted that I should make you withdraw at once. She was determined to know all about what you had done, and I told her of your being here in Ardway. She, weak and ill as she was, made me swear that I would recall you by telephone. She wanted me to telephone to Hugh Crandall, too, but I did not know how to reach him. I had to promise her everything she asked."

"Of course you did," I said. "But, dear, I loved you so that I could not rest while this terrible mystery that hung over your dear ones was unsolved. I felt that it was my duty to disregard your wish. I realized that you were being compelled by some influence you could not withstand to act as you did. You are not angry with me, are you, dearest?"

"Of course I'm not," she said with a wan smile, patting my hand gently.

"But tell me," I asked, "what of Hugh Crandall? What is his connection with this dreadful mystery?"

"I don't know," she answered thoughtfully. "I have thought all along that he had something to do with it, and you saw just now that he admitted knowing this man here whom the inspector insists is at the root of everything."

"Katharine trusts him, yet I know my father for some reason forbade him the house."

"I'm sure he is guilty," I cried. "Katharine's eyes have been blinded by love to his real character."

"I think you must be mistaken," said Louise. "He knows about the existence of a paper that gave some man a strange hold on my father. Katharine knew it, too. He may have told her. She insisted on my accompanying him out here to try to help recover it."

"Didn't he tell you about it on the way out?"

"No, I asked him what it was. He told me that too many people knew its contents now. The more I think about it the more perplexed I am about the mysterious manner in which both he and Katharine acted about this document."

"Tell me everything," I insisted, all my suspicion against Crandall returning anew.

"To begin with, he insisted on our leaving the chauffeur in Newark, though it had been my intention to have him come with us. Crandall would not hear of it. Katharine put me in my charge, he said, and it is her wish as well as my own that we take every precaution for secrecy. It is better that only you and I go on this mission. We want no servant gossiping about this matter. But where are we going, and why? I asked him. 'Surely I have a right to know that.' 'We are going to try to recover from the hands of the wickedest blackguard on earth a certain document that has come into his possession. It is a question whether or not we shall succeed. If we do, I shall put this document in your hands and you must promise that it shall not go out of your possession until you have placed it in your sister's hands. You must promise me, too, that you will ask no questions about it and that you will not read it. When Katharine has seen it, do with it whatever she tells you. She probably will say that you are to burn it without reading.'

"Can't you see, Harding, what a dilemma I was in? I felt that what Mr. Crandall asked me to do was Katharine's wish. They had talked together for nearly half an hour just before you came to the house. I had to promise what he asked, though I protested first. It seemed to me that carrying back the document to Katharine would excite her and retard her recovery, and I told him so."

"The sight of that document safe in her own hands will do more to cure

ment there for nine o'clock tonight."

"Why," I asked Louise, "do you suppose that he and Katharine insisted on your coming out here? Why could not Crandall himself have recovered the document and restored it to Katharine?"

"I asked him that. He told me that the man who held it had made the condition that it should be received by either my father or Katharine. They did not wish it known that my father had happened, and as they were certain this man knew neither Katharine nor me, I was to go with him and impersonate my sister."

"Did you get the document?"

"No, we failed," said Louise, "and I do not know what in the world I am to tell Katharine. We came out here in the afternoon. Crandall thought it advisable to find the place by daylight. We ran the automobile up the lane that leads to this place and crept through the thicket until we came in sight of the cottage. There were two men moving about in the cottage. Young and another man whom Mr. Crandall told me was the postmaster at Ardway. He seemed surprised at the presence of the postmaster. We watched for half an hour and then took the automobile back to a little hotel about three miles away from Ardway. For some reason, Mr. Crandall did not want to stop in Ardway."

"I guess I was the reason," I replied. "But when did you return here?"

"We had dinner at the little hotel, and as soon as it was dark, started back for the cottage. When we arrived we found a light in the window and saw Young there in a stupor just as you see him. The other man was nowhere around. After trying to awaken Young, without success, Mr. Crandall searched his clothes, but there was nothing in any of his pockets. He even felt all the seams, and took off his shoes in search of the paper we wanted, but it was nowhere on him. He ransacked the cottage as well as was possible in this dim light, but could not find any suggestion of a hiding-place. Out in the little shed that serves as a kitchen he found a slip on which was written a list of eatables—bread, milk, eggs and such things. We decided from this that the other man—Rouser, I think Mr. Crandall had said his name—had gone to some neighboring farm-house or store to lay in supplies and probably would soon return. Mr. Crandall suggested our hiding in the bushes until his arrival, and we did so. We had hardly taken our place behind the bushes before we heard him coming. Mr. Crandall stepped out, and the rest is so mixed up I don't know just what happened. I heard shots and felt a pain in my arm and I think I screamed and then I don't remember any more until I found you bending over me."

"To think that it was my bullet that hit you!" I cried. "I might have killed you."



"Lies," I protested. "Dear Girl, You Never Lied to Me."

her speedily than all the doctors in the world," he answered.

"Did he mean the yellow letter?" I queried.

"I don't know. I asked him if that was what he meant and he would not answer me. The only thing he did tell me was that there had been strange developments in the case since he had undertaken to get this paper for Katharine. They seemed to puzzle him greatly. He said that something with which he had nothing to do had alarmed the man we were going to see and that he had disappeared, gone into hiding."

"How will we find him?" I asked.

"He is as anxious to see me as he is not to see some one else," Crandall told me. "He wrote me plain directions how to reach a place he calls the deserted cottage, and made an appoint-

"It's only the lightest sort of scratch," she protested. "It doesn't even hurt any more. It does not bother me half so much as to know how to tell Katharine that we failed in our mission."

"Tell her," said I, "that one of the conspirators is dead and that the other is safe in the hands of Inspector Davis and myself. Tell her that any document either of us finds that in any way relates to her father will be placed in her hands at once. Tell her that I will not leave the prisoner's side until I have it safe and that my honor is pledged both for Davis and myself that no word affecting her father will ever become public. Crandall is out there now talking with Davis, and I think you will find that he, too, will tell her the same thing."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

TO START WORK ON AMENDMENTS

ISSUES CALL FOR EIGHTEEN MEMBERS OF COMMISSION TO MEET IN RALEIGH.

SETS DATE FOR APRIL 21

Date Fixed After Governor Corresponded With the Eighteen Members For Some Time—Will Talk Over Bills.

Raleigh.—Governor Craig has issued a call for the members of the Legislative Commission on Constitutional Amendments to meet at Raleigh April 21 for organization. This date has been selected after correspondence with the 18 members, it appearing to be the most generally convenient date. The commission is to elect a secretary at that time, and agree upon a program for sessions and hearing.

It will take over the bills for amending the Constitution that were introduced during the recent session of the Legislature, will hear any citizen and interests as to these and formulate recommendations, to be presented to the Governor 60 days before he issues a call for the Legislature to meet in special session. Also the commission will recommend any other amendments that it may consider advisable.

The Legislature, in turn, will act upon these recommendations and consider any other amendments that members propose at the extra session, the province the Legislature being to provide for the people to vote on the several amendments proposed.

The commission is composed of 18 members, five named by the Governor, five by the Senate and eight by the House. They follow:

A. M. Scales, Greensboro; J. W. Bailey, Raleigh; D. Y. Cooper, Henderson; H. Q. Alexander, Charlotte; N. J. Rouse, Kingston; Lieutenant Governor Daughtridge, Rocky Mount; H. W. Stubb, Williamston; A. T. Grant, Mocksville; A. D. Ward, Newbern; A. D. Ivie, Spray; F. M. Washington, Wilson; Speaker Connor, Wilson; E. J. Justice, Greensboro; R. A. Doughton, Sparta; W. A. Devin, Oxford; E. R. Wooten, Kingston; C. S. Wallace, Morehead City; H. A. Page, Aberdeen; R. R. Williams, Asheville.

Stokely Is Adjudged "Not Guilty."

The jury in the Murden Stokely trial announced that it had reached an agreement and was ready to render a verdict. The news quickly spread and before the court could be assembled every inch of space available in the court room was packed by eager spectators. The prisoner entered in custody of an officer and the jury filed in. Amid intense silence the formalities were gone through with, and the jury rendered a verdict of "not guilty." No trial in Elizabeth City has ever created so keen an interest. Young Stokely and his family quickly left the city for their home in Okisko.

North Carolina New Enterprises.

A charter is issued for the Richardson-James Company (Incorporated) of Star, Montgomery county, capital \$10,000 authorized, and \$2,500 subscribed. \$1,000 by Noah Richardson and \$500 each by W. H. James, L. L. Richardson and W. L. James. Another charter is for the Southern Crown Milling Company, Asheboro, capital \$50,000 authorized, and \$25,000 subscribed by W. F. Redding and others.

Union County Commencement.

The biggest educational rally that ever took place at Monroe was held several days ago in the form of a county commencement. The immense crowd gathered was a striking proof of the interest the people are taking in education and the advancement made. There were 3,000 school children here and the line of march was more than a mile long.

Change County Commencement Date.

The date of the Wayne County School Commencement has been changed from April 11th to April 4th. Additional prizes have also been offered. A prize of \$10 will be given to the school bringing the largest crowd of students and patrons, and a prize of \$5 to the one bringing the second largest. The Wayne county club will give a silver loving cup to the school winning the greatest number of points in field events. A team must win three years in succession to establish permanent ownership.

Prizes For Guilford Farmers.

The Greensboro Merchants' Association has made announcement of prize awards to farmers in Guilford county marketing the most tobacco in Greensboro during February. The first prize, \$15 coat suit, went to Mr. W. R. Moore; the second prize went to W. O. Doggett, a \$5 razor, and \$7.50 worth of paint; and the third to W. H. Trexler, \$10 worth of drugs. H. C. Rudd won the first prize for making average for all tobacco; second prize was won by T. C. Smith and third went to Fred N. Taylor.

WOULD RECLAIM MUCH LAND

Government Engineers Have Recommended the Organization of a Drainage District in Burke.

Raleigh.—A special from Washington states that the organization of a drainage district under the state law with the co-operation of all the landowners along the bottom lands of the creek, each to pay his proportionate part of the cost, is recommended in the report of an examination of Silver Creek, Burke County, by Agricultural Department Engineers Yarnell and Lynde, made at the request of Representative Webb.

The engineers recommend that the channel be widened to 35 feet and brought to a depth of eight feet, at an estimated cost of \$18,084. In the opinion of the engineers, if the work recommended is done, the land along the banks of Silver Creek will increase from 400 to 500 per cent.

There is about 1,000 acres of bottom land in the proposed drainage district now worth approximately \$35 an acre but if properly drained it would be worth at least \$100 an acre.

The report of the engineers says in part:

"The examination was made afoot, in company with W. A. Walton, one of the land owners along the creek. Starting at a point just above McElrath's dam about six miles above its outlet, the creek was traversed to its mouth. The watersheds of Silver Creek are naturally rolling and hilly, and the run-off is very rapid. It is estimated that there is about 1,000 acres of bottom lands in the proposed district. The soil is rich and needs little if any fertilizer. It possesses a much greater fertility than do the upland soils, but there is always the possibility of the complete loss of the crop by overflow. Almost any rainfall of consequence causes the creek to overflow, not only damaging the land and crops but also depositing sand.

"Almost all the bottom land was once in cultivation, but in recent years owing to the uncertainty of getting a crop, it has been abandoned to a great extent. Owing to lack of drainage the uplands are now practically useless.

To Improve Lenoir Roads.

Property owners on one road running out of Kinston, the Hill highway, have subscribed a fund to supplement an appropriation by the County Commissioners for the improvement of the road. This in Lenoir county, and \$600 was raised by the farmers living within six miles of the city. The road will be sand-clay top-surfaced for a half dozen miles. Other communities in the county are discussing the venture, and private donations to district funds will probably be considerable when Lenoir begins the general improvement of its highways shortly, the first money for which was made available by the recent sale by the county of its stock in the Atlantic & North Carolina Railroad Co.

T. P. A. State Convention.

National Chairman B. H. Marsh, of the Traveler's Protective Association, at Raleigh for a day or two from Winston-Salem, says there is a gratifying good outlook for the T. P. A. State Convention to assemble in Greensboro in May. At the last state convention it was determined to have 1,200 members by the next annual session and the enrollment now is just 1,120, lacking just 80 members of the coveted number. Mr. Marsh thinks the goal in membership will be reached before the Greensboro convention. The Raleigh post now has nearly 100 members and is quite active under the presidency of Jno. W. Cross with Mr. Clem Wilder as secretary.

Growth of Rural Libraries.

There is a steady growth in the number of rural libraries in the public schools of the state under the state aid system in vogue for several years past whereby the state gives \$10 toward each library in cases where the local people raise at least that amount in addition. Also there are supplemental allowances of \$5 each under certain conditions that are very generally taken advantage of. State treasury warrants were issued recently for the appropriations for 34 new libraries and for nine supplemental libraries.

New Act Transfers Duty.

Through all the years past it has been the duty of the State Auditor to get out and distribute to the counties the abstract blanks for listing taxes throughout the state and the county tax lists, but under the new machinery act this duty is transferred to the Corporation Commission as State Tax Commission, a change that it is not believed the Legislature intended after the establishment of a separate tax commission was voted down and the conclusion reached to retain largely the old machinery.

For Power Development.

The first steps looking to immense power developments in Henderson county, as well as the construction of an interurban line from Hendersonville through Flat Creek and Saluda to a point on Green River, were taken when petitions were filed in the clerk's office, of the United States District Court by the Blue Ridge Interurban Railway Company for the condemnation of certain lands and boundaries on the river. The petitions were first filed with the clerk of the court of Henderson County.