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"That's what they scour the seas with."

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**EYE ACHES** Pettitts Eye Salve

# The Yellow Letter

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by William Johnston  
Illustrations by V.L. Barnes

### 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 investigation. He discovers that the dead woman is Sarah Barker of Bridgeport, Louisa 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 criminal, 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. Louise tells Kent that she and Crandall had come to get papers from Young which gave him a strange hold over General Farrish.

### CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

As if in corroboration of my words, the three of them, Crandall, Davis and the constable, returned just at this moment.

"Come, Miss Farrish," said Crandall, "I think it time I was starting home with you, if you feel able to travel. I have run the car up just outside the cottage. I think we can safely leave the completion of our mission to the inspector and Mr. Kent."

"I wish Mr. Kent was coming back with us," said Louise in a sweetly plaintive tone that made me long to gratify her wish.

"I need him here," said the inspector almost roughly.

"And that comes first for all of us," she said bravely.

I watched the automobile out of sight and then turned back into the cottage, where I found the constable stretched on the floor, already fast asleep. Davis, sitting on the floor before some smoldering logs that had been placed in a rudely-constructed



Nevertheless, I Seated Myself on the Floor Beside Him.

open fireplace, seemed wrapped in thought and did not even look up when I entered.

Nevertheless, I seated myself on the floor beside him and, placing my hand on his shoulder, I said once more: "And now I want to know all about it."

"Shut up," he said, savagely shaking off my hand. "Can't you see I want to think?"

Rebuffed and amazed by his rudeness, I sprang to my feet, only to get a new surprise as, in tones as courteous as his others had been rude, he said: "If I were you, Harding, I'd follow the constable's example and try to get some sleep. You and I have a hard day ahead of us tomorrow."

Seeing that he was in no mood to be questioned, I smothered back the many things I wanted to ask him and stretched myself on the floor, not to sleep, but to ponder. As I reviewed the amazing events of today, of yesterday, of the day before, it seemed as if ages and ages—grim, mystifying, terrifying ages—had passed since that hour when I left my office light-hearted to call on Louise Farrish.

And the morning—the inspector had said—was to bring a hard day for both of us.

What new terror could tomorrow hold?

### The Inspector Explains.

Thump, thump, thump!

I had not thought slumber possible for me, and yet I must have slept. My bewildered senses, dazed by a sudden recall to activity, took subconscious cognizance of a regular, persistent pounding and eventually succeeded in stirring me to attention. I suddenly sat up and looked about me. I found myself in the deserted cottage, the drug slave still motionless on his couch and the logs still smoldering in the fireplace.

That thumping—I quickly saw where it came from. Davis was standing over the sleeping form of Dods, the constable, engaged in the work of awakening him by the park policeman's method—kicking him on the soles of his shoes.

The process was successful. The constable snorted, drew up his legs, rubbed his eyes and sprang to his feet.

"It will be daylight in half an hour," I heard Davis tell him. "I want you to go and get the buckboard and drive around to where Rouser's body lies. Bring me any papers you find in his pockets. Leave his money and his watch and keys, so as not to arouse any suspicion of robbery. As soon as you have done that I want you to drive back and pick up the body before anyone else finds it. Drive with it to Millerville and leave it there. Don't talk too much. Tell everybody that you found the body at the foot of the precipice and impress on them that it must have been an accident in the dark. As soon as you can conveniently get away, come back here. Make sure, though, that nobody follows you."

As soon as the constable had gone, Davis lit a cigarette, turned up his coat collar and took a seat on a rough bench just outside the door. "Come on out here, Harding, and watch the sun rise," he called to me. I rose hastily from where I had been sitting gazing stupidly about me and joined him on the bench.

"There was something you wanted to ask me, wasn't there?" he said pleasantly.

"There were so many things I wanted to ask him I hardly knew where to begin, but the first thing I blurted out was:

"Is Hugh Crandall guilty?"

"He is guilty only of being in love with Katharine Farrish against her father's wishes," he replied.

"But surely," I said doggedly, "he has some connection with the crime of the yellow letters. He knew Young. He knew where to find him. There are many things about his actions that to my mind call for explanation."

"Did you notice his eyes?" asked Davis. It was still too dark for me to see the inspector's face, but I felt sure that he was laughing at me. He made me feel that way all too often.

"I didn't," I answered rather crossly. "But what's that got to do with it?"

"I'm afraid, Kent, as I have said before, you will never make a good detective. You are entirely too unobservant of important details. Do you recall my asking early in our investigation whether or not Crandall had blue eyes?"

"Yes," I grudgingly admitted, "I recall it."

"As soon as I discovered that Crandall had blue eyes that eliminated him as the probable criminal."

"I don't see your logic."

"I've told you before," said Davis, after a pause long enough to permit him to light another cigarette, "that there are classes of crime and types of criminals, each strongly marked after its own sort. I saw right at the start that this crime was of the hidden sort, of the kind that includes conspiracy, blackmail, secret plotting—the kind that requires a skillful sneak. You never in your life found a blue-eyed sneak. There are lots of blue-eyed desperadoes and burglars. Most of the notorious bad men of the west were blue-eyed, but you don't find a man with blue eyes shooting or stabbing a man in the back or kidnapping a child or writing blackmailing letters."

While I was not at all convinced by his argument, I felt that it would be useless for me to dispute it, for I would be invading comparatively unknown territory, whereas he undoubtedly had dozens of cases at his fingertips ready to illustrate his theory. I decided to change the subject.

"I recall, too," I said, "that you asked if Crandall was left-handed. So far as I saw, he is not. What of that? Is that another proof of Crandall's innocence?"

"No," said Davis, "that didn't prove Crandall's innocence. It proved Rouser's guilt. In fact, it was the left-handed clue that put me on the right track and eventually led me to this very cottage."

"For Heaven's sake," said I impatiently, "don't talk in riddles. Go on and explain it."

"You're not to blame," he continued

calmly, "for not having seen the left-handed clue. You lack the education. Only a person who had seen hundreds and hundreds of envelopes and had studied them closely would have observed it. You remember that a policeman brought me part of a yellow envelope that had been found in old Andrew Elser's room. On it was a stamp and part of the postmark. The first thing that I noticed was that the stamp was put on crooked. This might mean much or nothing. A left-handed person stamping a letter invariably gets the stamp on crooked. It ordinarily is put in the upper right-hand corner of the envelope. A right-handed person stamping a letter has the two edges of the envelope as a guide. Try putting on a stamp with your left hand and you will see that your hand comes in such a position that the edges of the envelope are hidden and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the stamp is out of plumb."

"I still fail to see," I said stubbornly, "why you did not suspect Crandall. There were many things that seemed to point to him—his telephoning to Katharine just before she shot herself, his sudden disappearance, the finding of the morphine syringe in his room, the Ardway address in his notebook, coupled with the fact that General Farrish had forbidden him the house. I do not see how you could help suspecting him."

"I'll admit that on the surface these things all did look damaging, but against this was the one important fact that he was too well-balanced—too sane, if I might put it that way. I quickly learned that he was a reputable business man, that he was one of the governors in two clubs, and you yourself informed me that Katharine Farrish had thought highly of him. No well-balanced man commits crimes of this sort."

"Do you mean to tell me," I cried angrily, "that all criminals are insane?"

"Yes," said Davis thoughtfully, "I mean exactly that. The time will come when our courts will not be punitive but curative. Men are criminals because they can not help it. The great well-balanced majority of people see that in the observance of the laws the community has made for itself lies the only hope of a happy, regular life. The unbalanced few, the unhealthy product of unfit parents, in their poor misshapen brains are unable to comprehend this. They be-

"Yes," I grudgingly admitted as I hastily reviewed them in my mind, "I suppose they could all be explained in that way."

"The question then came to me," continued Davis, "how could Crandall have known of the hidden danger that threatened General Farrish? It was highly improbable that the general would confide a thing of this sort, either to his daughter or to her fiancé. He must have come on it in some other way. I judged that when he revealed his knowledge to the general, the latter, in fear that his daughter might learn what he had been trying to keep from her, in rage ordered Crandall from the house."

"The only logical way for Crandall to be restored to favor was for him to clear up the mystery that was menacing the general. As he had been at work on it for some time, I felt sure that in his rooms we would find a clue to the address of the persons we were seeking. I was confident, too, that affairs were approaching a crisis. Crandall apparently had taken Katharine into his confidence. It looked as if some plan they might have made had failed and that this failure had driven Katharine to despair. With the lock box in Ardway as a clue, with the left-handed stamp as evidence and with Crandall's movements to watch, I felt certain that we could quickly solve the whole mystery."

"But how about the morphine syringe?" I asked again.

"I hardly gave it a second thought. For all I knew, it may have come there by accident, yet Crandall quickly explained its presence in the talk that I have just had with him. He kept this chap, Young, there in his room for two weeks, trying to worm out of him the secret with which Young had been trying to blackmail the old general. When Young disappeared he left the syringe behind him."

"So," I exclaimed in excitement, "the mystery of the yellow letter was a blackmailing plot against General Farrish?"

"No," said Davis, "I don't think the Farrish case had anything to do with the other chain of suicides, unless it was that both devilish plots originated in the drug-fevered, malevolent brain of the poor fellow in yonder. It is true that General Farrish got yellow letters. Once a week for months and months he has found one in his mail, each more threatening, more menacing than its predecessors. He has for a

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