

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 of the mine, who has 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 Sacket 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 a man 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 tells 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 the postmaster jumping off a precipice and is killed. Aleck Young, the master criminal, is found in a hut in a morphia stupor. Louise tells Kent that Crandall had come to get papers from Young which gave him a strange hold over General Farrish. It is shown that Crandall's only interest in the case was to help Katharine recover her father's vapors.

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

"But are you sure Young wrote all the yellow letters?"
"Certainly," said the inspector, getting up from the bench and entering the cottage.
When he returned a few minutes later he had in his hand a bundle of yellow paper and envelopes. As I examined them I saw that they were of exactly the color and texture of all the fragments of yellow letters that I had seen.

"Where did you find them?" I asked.
"In a cupboard over there by the fireplace. I don't know whether you noticed it or not, but over there, too, is the typewriter on which Young wrote the letters that he gave Rouser to mail for him."
"What makes you think Rouser mailed them?"

"There are six different things that prove Rouser's connection with Young's fiendish plots. The stamps were put on by a left-handed man, and Rouser was left-handed. The answers were received in the Ardway post-office, where Rouser was post-master. Lock Box 17, to which they were addressed, was not entered in the list of box-holders. You yourself found a large sum of money in the post-office cash-drawer that had no business being there. Rouser himself mysteriously disappeared when he found that some one was on the trail of the yellow letters. And lastly, Rouser and Young for weeks have been together most of the time."

"How did you learn that?"
"Young, it seems," the inspector continued, "is well known in Ardway, his boyhood having been spent in the town. His father was a well-to-do lawyer who became addicted to drugs. His mother died in the state asylum for the insane. The constable, Dodds, has known him for many years. He went to Harvard and there was a classmate for a while of Crandall. He has been going from bad to worse, each time he returned to Ardway on his periodic visits seeming to be more and more addicted to morphia. His inheritance was spent long ago and it has been a mystery to every one where he got considerable sums that he has had at times. With all his faults, he has much magnetism and a plausible tongue and makes friends readily. So far as I can discover, after he had concocted his plot against General Farrish he had some difficulty in obtaining satisfaction and tried to enlist the aid of Crandall. Crandall went at once to General Farrish and was ordered out of the house. Crandall, despite his treatment by the general, was determined to solve the mystery, and for months kept track of Young, trying to worm out the secret and render him powerless. At times he gave Young small sums and for a while, as I have said, had him in his rooms. One day Young disappeared, talking with him some jewelry of Crandall's and it was only a few days ago that Crandall succeeded in finding him here in Ardway. Young, having failed to blackmail General Farrish, tried to open up negotiations for the sale of his documents through Crandall. Crandall, of course, could not communicate with General Farrish, so he called Katharine on the telephone and made an appointment with her. Evidently he explained the whole affair to her, and when the negotiations

failed it was more than she could bear."

"That all seems logical," I said, "but I fail to see yet what connection there is between General Farrish and old Andrew Elser. Nor do I see the connection between the suicide of the old woman in the hotel at Ardway and the suicide of the young woman in the park lake, yet in each of these cases there were yellow letters."
"I do not see it myself, yet," said Davis frankly, "and yet I know it exists. I know that the hellish idea that drove them all to death was planned by that distorted brain inside the cottage there."

He was silent for several minutes as he gazed at the rising sun, seemingly absorbed in the glorious spectacle.
"I'll find out!" he said explosively. "I'll make him tell."

"What are you going to do?" I asked. "How will you make him?"

For answer he took from the pocket of his coat two sets of thin steel cuffs, one for the arms and the other for the ankles, and stepped within the cottage. I followed wondering and watched him as he turned Young over on his face and, bringing his hands together behind him, snapped on the cuffs. He shackled his feet, too, and then picking up a stout rope, passed it between the two sets of shackles and around a beam in the side of the cottage wall, leaving enough slack to permit the shackled man a small amount of liberty. During the whole operation Young hung limp and apparently lifeless, still in the drug stupor, but as Davis finished his work he began to talk incoherently.

"The shaking up I gave him in fastening him up," said Davis, "will bring him to. He will wake up in a few minutes and then I'll find out everything I want to know. I'll make him tell."

"What are you going to do," I gasped, "torture him?"

"No," said the inspector grimly as he dragged a stool over near the couch and placed on it a hypodermic syringe he had found in the cabin, and with it a morphia preparation.

He gaged the distance with his eye, and moved the stool so that while it would be in plain sight of the shackled man when he awoke, it would be utterly impossible for him to reach it.

"No," he said, "I'm not going to torture him. His drug-racked nerves will do it for me."

CHAPTER XV.

The Torture.

Hell is a place of unsatisfied desires, and in its lowest depths are those, who, writhing in the agony of their decaying nerves, shriek for their beloved morphia and shriek in vain. Many times in my life I have seen the souls of men, and women, too, put to hard and bitter tests.

Once I saw a motorman whose car had crushed a lovely child. Around him pressed a howling, angry mob, led by the baby's father, who would have had his life. With bold daring, he stood on his platform as on a throne, with his controller bar for his only weapon, and defied them all. Yet, even as he stood there outwardly so bold, I saw in his eyes a misery as great as man could bear and live. For days and months I doubt not that his nightly dreams brought him constant horror-pictures of the child he had killed.

Once, too, I had to be the bearer of the news when a workman's misstep on a frame of steel sent him plunging down eighteen stories to death. In the foul tenement where I told my news I saw a tired, gaunt woman walk the floor and scream and moan, three frightened little children clinging to her skirts.

Often, too, in my practice in the courts, I have seen men in dreadful misery—a ruffian bold and defiant despite the blood-guilt on his soul, face all the world courageously until the jury's foreman said the word that brought the death-chair's horror to his heart and crumpled him weeping to the floor.

Yet all the concepts that my brain had formed of the utmost in pain and shame and misery faded into insignificance before the things I saw in that rude cottage in the Jersey hills where for two long days Davis and myself kept watch on the fettered master criminal—waiting, waiting, waiting till his drug-tortured nerves should make him tell us the secret of his yellow letters.

Shackled hand and foot though he had found himself when he came out of his stupor, his self-control was at first wonderful. For a few minutes after Davis had fastened his bonds he lay there tossing and twitching, then suddenly opened his eyes—piercing, devilish, uncanny black eyes they were—and tried to sit up.

The rope through the manacles behind him stopped him short and threw him back on his couch. At the same time he caught sight of Davis sitting near the foot of his couch. In

silence they eyed each other, neither of them saying a word. Stealthily Young shifted, first his hands and then his feet as if to ascertain the extent of his bonds. Finding himself securely fastened, he let his eyes rove around the room, and discovered me. He studied my face sharply, as if to read my mission, but quickly turned his gaze to Davis again, as if recognizing in him his master captor.

Then he laughed—a hideous, chilling, defiant laugh, that ended in an unhealthy gurgle in his throat.
"Well?" he asked inquiringly.

I looked for Davis to seize on this propitious moment, when Young, just aroused from drug-slumber, would be weak and nervous, to ply him with questions about the things we wished to know, but the inspector was too much a master of his craft for that. As if he had not heard his prisoner's question, he sat there staring fixedly at the man before him.

One minute passed, two minutes—three, and still Davis sat silent and unanswering. The cumulative force of prolonged silence began to grow on my nerves. This waiting, waiting, was torture. If only one of them would speak. To Young it must have been far worse.

Still they kept at it, Davis staring straight into Young's eyes and Young trying to stare back. For a few minutes he succeeded, and then his eyes shifted and fell. With a master effort of his will he brought them back to Davis and held them steady. There the two of them sat as in a duel, the prisoner's baleful eyes shooting forth venom, hate, murder, while in the other's steady glance was pictured relentless justice.

Of course, there could be but one end to it. Powerful as was the will in the drug-racked body, the twitching of the muscles, the involuntary drawing up of the limbs and arms as far as the bonds would permit, and most of all the clapping and unclapping of the fingers told what torture the silence was bringing to Young.

He burst forth at last in a wild flow of profanity, cursing Davis, cursing God, and still Davis sat there as rigid and as silent as the superior of a Trappist monastery doing penance. At times the prisoner's voice was raised to a hideous shriek, at times it sank to a pitiful sob, and all the while he tugged and strained at his bonds, twisting, turning, reaching, trying always to find some position in which he could gain possession of the morphia that lay on the chair just beyond his reach.

At last—it must have been an hour later—physical exhaustion conquered him and he lay back, after one last frantic struggle, weak and panting, unresisting.

The inspector arose, and, walking over to the couch, stood there looking down at him.

"Aleck Young," he said evenly, "your whole game is up. I know all

"You haven't the slightest evidence against me for anything. Without letters or documents you can prove nothing. You have no right to keep me bound up here. I shall get free and shall make you pay for this. I don't care what Rouser has told you, you'll get nothing out of me and you have proof of nothing."

"Very well," said the inspector, "no letters, no morphia."

Turning away from the couch, he spoke to me in a tone as indifferent as if we had been camping together:
"Come on, Kent, let's see what we can dig up for breakfast."

We found the cottage well supplied with provisions, as if it had been the intention of the conspirators to make it their headquarters for some time. In a very few minutes Davis had some bacon fried and toast and coffee made, which he spread in the little lean-to that was used as a kitchen.

"So you mean to starve him, too?" I asked in an undertone, pointing to the couch.

"It won't be necessary," said Davis. "Take something in to him if you like. You'll find that the only appetite he'll have will be for morphia."

Nevertheless, I took a cup of coffee and some toast in to the prisoner. A volley of oaths was my only reward, so I returned and sat with Davis while he ate. I myself had no appetite, but the events of the night did not seem in the least to have affected him. I drank only part of a cup of coffee, though he urged me to eat something.

"It is apt to be a long siege," he said, "and you must keep your strength. Our prisoner is a man of considerable will power and is not going to confess readily. If you will keep guard on him for a couple of hours I am going to sleep."

"Of course, I will."

"Under no circumstances," said Davis, as he flung himself down on the floor of the lean-to, "loosen any of his bonds, and pay no attention to his pleas for mercy. He has a winning way about him that is dangerous."

"You need not fear," I replied. "Remember the agony he has caused to the woman I love."

"And to many others," said Davis.

"Speaking of that," said I, "I wish you would tell me before you go asleep how you learned where the five thousand came from."

"Rouser told me."

"I was not aware that you had any opportunity to talk with him."

"I didn't," said the inspector. "I just used my eyes in the postoffice."

I thought I had used mine pretty well in the post office, but certainly I had seen nothing that would lead me to identify the person who had sent the five thousand dollars I had found in the cash drawer.

"Don't talk in riddles!" I exclaimed rather petulantly. "What did you find in the post office?"

Davis grinned.



He Studied My Face Sharply as if to Read My Mission.

about General Farrish and Andrew Elser and the woman from Bridgeport. I know about Dora Hastings, who committed suicide in the park lake yesterday, and about Henry Eberle, who sent you the five thousand. I know everything that your unfortunate aide, Rouser, knew, and now I want you to surrender all the letters and papers in your possession."

"You will never get them," sneered Young, as I sat there marveling at the inspector's revelations. It was news to me that he knew the name of the Central Park suicide, and while I myself had found the five thousand dollars, I had had not the slightest intimation that Davis knew from whom it had come.

"Either I get those letters," said Davis evenly, "or you get no more morphia."

Young laughed in his face.

I nodded assent.

"Did it not strike you as peculiar that there should be over two thousand names and addresses in the forwarding list of a small post office like Ardway, where probably not more than ten families move away in ten years?"

"I did not examine it closely," I replied, "but even if I had I am afraid I would have failed to identify it as important."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Grapefruit With Figs.

Have some fine figs and cut them into small pieces; put them in a glass jar and cover with brandy. Let them stand in this for 24 hours. Cut the grapefruit in halves, scoop out the little cavity in the middle of each half, as usual, fill this with figs and let the grapefruit stand on ice three or four hours before serving.

FIRST MESSAGE IN

WILSON WASTES FEW WORDS IN TELLING CONGRESS WHAT IT SHOULD DO.

TARIFF REVISION HIS TOPIC

President Says the Schedules Must Be Radically Changed to Square With Present Conditions, but Work Requires Careful Consideration.

Washington, April 8.—President Wilson's first message to the Sixty-third congress, assembled in extraordinary session, was read in the senate and house today. It was surprisingly short, being in full as follows: To the Senate and House of Representatives:

I have called the congress together in extraordinary session because a duty was laid upon the party now in power at the recent elections which it ought to perform promptly, in order that the burden carried by the people under existing law may be lightened as soon as possible and in order, also, that the business interests of the country may not be kept too long in suspense as to what the fiscal changes are to be to which they will be required to adjust themselves. It is clear to the whole country that the tariff duties must be altered. They must be changed to meet the radical alteration in the conditions of our economic life which the country has witnessed within the last generation.

While the whole face and method of our industrial and commercial life were being changed beyond recognition the tariff schedules have remained what they were, before the change began, or have moved in the direction they were given when no large circumstance of our industrial development was what it is today. Our task is to square them with the actual facts. The sooner that is done the sooner we shall escape from suffering from the facts and the sooner our men of business will be free to thrive by the law of nature (the nature of free business) instead of by the law of legislation and artificial arrangement.

Business Not Normal.

We have seen tariff legislation wander very far afield in our day—very far indeed from the field in which our prosperity might have had a normal growth and stimulation. No one who looks the facts squarely in the face or knows anything that lies beneath the surface of action can fail to perceive the principles upon which recent tariff legislation has been based. We long ago passed beyond the modest notion of "protecting" the industries of the country and moved boldly forward to the idea that they were entitled to the direct patronage of the government. For a long time—a time so long that the men now active in public policy hardly remember the conditions that preceded it—we have sought in our tariff schedules to give each group of manufacturers or producers what they themselves thought that they needed in order to maintain a practically exclusive market as against the rest of the world. Consciously or unconsciously, we have built up a set of privileges and exemptions from competition behind which it was easy by any, even the crudest, forms of combination to organize monopoly; until at last nothing is normal, nothing is obliged to stand the tests of efficiency and economy, in our world of big business, but everything thrives by concerted arrangement. Only new principles of action will save us from a final hard crystallization of monopoly and a complete loss of the influences that quicken enterprise and keep independent energy alive.

It is plain that those principles must be. We must abolish everything that bears even the semblance of privilege or of any kind of artificial advantage, and put our business men and producers under the stimulation of a constant necessity to be efficient, economical, and enterprising, masters of competitive supremacy, better workers and merchants than any in the world. Aside from the duties laid upon articles which we do not, and probably cannot, produce, therefore, and the duties laid upon luxuries and merely for the sake of the revenues they yield, the object of the tariff duties henceforth laid must be effective competition, the whetting of American wits by contest with the wits of the rest of the world.

Development, Not Revolution.

It would be unwise to move toward this end headlong, with reckless haste, or with strokes that cut at the very roots of what has grown up amongst us by long process and at our own invitation. It does not alter a thing to upset it and break it and deprive it of a chance to change. It destroys it. We must make changes in our fiscal laws, in our fiscal system, whose object is development, a more free and wholesome development, not revolution or upset or confusion. We

Woman in New Sphere.

Oporto is the only city in Portugal that can boast of having a feminine health inspector, a woman having been appointed by the government to a subsuperintendency in the department of public health. Another striking appointment by the government comes with the selection of a well-known woman scholar to a professorship in ordinary at the Universities of Coimbra and Lisbon. The lady professor in question has been appointed to fill the chair in Germanic philology.

most build up trade, especially foreign trade. We need the outlet and the enlarged field of energy more than we ever did before. We must build up industry as well and must adopt freedom in the place of artificial stimulation only so far as it will build, not pull down. In dealing with the tariff the method by which this may be done will be a matter of judgment, exercised item by item.

To some not accustomed to the excitements and responsibilities of greater freedom our methods may in some respects and at some points seem heroic; but remedies may be heroic and yet be remedies. It is our business to make sure that they are genuine remedies. Our object is clear. If our motive is above just challenge and only an occasional error of judgment is chargeable against us, we shall be fortunate.

We are called upon to render the country a great service in more matters than one. Our responsibility should be met and our methods should be thorough, as thorough as moderate and well considered, based upon the facts as they are, and not worked out as if we were beginners. We are to deal with the facts of our own day, with the facts of no other, and to make laws which square with those facts. It is best, indeed it is necessary, to begin with the tariff. I will urge nothing upon you now at the opening of your session which can obscure that first object or divert our energies from that clearly defined duty. At a later time I may take the liberty of calling your attention to reforms which should press close upon the heels of the tariff changes, if not accompany them, of which the chief is the reform of our banking and currency laws; but just now I refrain. For the present, I put these matters on one side and think only of this one thing—the changes in our fiscal system which may best serve to open once more the free channels of prosperity to a great people whom we would serve to the utmost and throughout both rank and file.

WOODROW WILSON.

The White House, April 8, 1913.

FAMILY NAMES OF ROYALTY

Royal Personages Descended Mostly From Counts, Existing Long Before Surnames Came Into Use.

The royal families of Europe have not generally a surname because mostly (unlike the English houses of Stuart and Tudor, which were the respective surnames of the first king of each house before he ascended the throne) they are descended in the male line from some territorial counts existing long previous to the period in which the somewhat modern custom of surnames prevailed. King George V derives in the male line from the ancient counts of Welfen (flourishing in the tenth century), afterwards electors of Saxony, dukes of Saxe-Coburg, Gotha, etc. His ancestors in the male line were of the house of Este, one of whom, Azo of Este, married early in the thirteenth century the daughter and heiress of Guelph, duke of Bavaria, from which match sprang in the male line the dukes of Brunswick-Lunenbourg, afterwards electors of Hanover, and kings of Great Britain. The members of the royal family are described by their princely titles in proceedings in the house of lords, and no allusion is made to any surname—for instance, they sign the roll merely by their personal or Christian name, and we know nothing of any surname which appertained by right or by usage, to her late majesty, Queen Victoria, or to his majesty King George V.

Bermuda Fish.

At the market during a recent week many handsome fish were to be seen, several of them taken by American tourists, and afterward presented to the fisherman who "took them out." Large amber-jacks and bonitos, splendid game fish and chubs, as plucky and "frighty" a fish as ever took bait, were well represented.

Among the others seen on the market hooks and elsewhere were blue-fish, yellowtails, red snappers, gray snappers, butterfish, gags, hamlets, "hines," salmon and black rockfish, porgies and red rockfish. "Nigger fish," the long ago despised flny midget, has been metamorphosed to the now much sought after "choicest of the choicest" of sea delicacies, the "butter fish"—Bermuda Colonists.

"Soft" Job for Constable.

Pension is not the only things commanded and forgotten. An inquisitive member of the British house of commons was struck one day by the presence of a policeman in one of the lobbies. He wondered why this particular lobby should always have a guardian strolling up and down, and made inquiries. The records of the house were searched and it was found that 50 years previously, when the lobby was being decorated, a policeman had been stationed there to keep members from soiling their clothes. The order never having been countermanded, the constable had kept his beat for half a century.

Keeping Mind in Condition.

No mind is first class that is not continually reading books and conversing with men that require an effort to be understood. The novel-soaked intellect, gormandizing upon easy reading, grows flabby.

Of the "Bacchae" of Euripides.

A thing never to be done again, scarcely to be understood, recognized as the last witness to a beauty of which the secret was lost and the ancient mold broken—Gilbert Murray.