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 night 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'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.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

The dry, matter-of-fact way in which he recited the facts he had learned added to the value of his narrative. More and more I marveled at the man's detective ability. I was overwhelmed with a sense of my own incapacity. All day long the coroner, the constable and I had been trying to ferret out the mystery of the unfortunate woman's identity with practically the same properties to draw deductions from, the inspector in a very few minutes had not only learned her identity, but many other important facts about her. Nor did it occur to me to doubt the truth of his information. The assurance with which he spoke was in itself a sufficient guarantee.

"How on earth did you learn all this so quickly?" I asked in amazement.

He smiled with that grim tantalizing smile of his that I had seen before. His cigarette had burned itself to a stub as he spoke. He turned it carefully in his fingers, inspecting it as if to see whether he could extract another puff before throwing it away. He finally decided that he could not, and drew forth his cigarette papers and tobacco, preparatory to rolling a new one. Meanwhile I awaited his answer in suspense.

"Go on," I continued. "Tell me about it. I must know how you did it."

"The principal part of a magician's art," he said as he lighted his new cigarette, "lies in what is called 'misdirection.' With a glance from his eyes, with a sudden movement of his hand he attracts your attention to his right side. Meanwhile his left is doing the trick. Now, misdirection, in my business, has just the opposite effect. Amateurs, in investigating crime, examine the evidence and see clues pointing in some direction. They follow those clues and find themselves floundering. They have the right clues, but they go in the wrong direction. You read in the evidence aright as to Miss Sackett coming from Bridgeport, but all your efforts to locate her as Mary Jane Telfer were simply a waste of time. In the clothes she left behind her was her real name."

"Look here," I said, "you can't string me in that fashion. I myself examined those garments closely. There was no name in them and there no marks by which she could be identified."

"Is that so?" There was deep sarcasm in his tone.

"And not only that, even if I overlooked any marks that might have been there, the landlord, the coroner, the constable and half a dozen others examined them closely. If there were any marks, some one of us surely would have discovered them."

For answer he got leisurely and walked across to a chair where the garments were still lying. He picked up the skirt and held it by the lower hem.

"Look closely at it," he commanded. "Do you see nothing there?"

I scanned the dusty cloth intently and shook my head. He picked up the coat and offered it gravely for my inspection, even turning it inside out, sleeves and all.

"Well, what of it?" I exclaimed impatiently. "I can't see anything there either."

"Can't you?" he asked over-pleasantly. "That's where I found the woman's name."

Again I took up both garments and studied them, but I was positive that there was no name of any sort or anything to indicate a name. I felt that he must be simply jesting with me.

"You can't fool me," I exclaimed. "I would wager you a thousand dollars to five hundred that coat and skirt do not differ any in the slightest from hundreds of other coats and skirts worn by hundreds of other women."

"You lose," he responded tersely. With one finger he began to trace an almost invisible line on the goods where there had once been a seam. "Do you see that mark?"

"Yes," I replied. "I noticed that long ago. It simply means that the skirt has been lengthened or shortened, but what of it?"

"It means more than that," he answered almost severely, as if reproaching me for my lack of observation. "It means that a thirty-eight skirt has been lengthened an inch and a half. Look at this coat. The sleeves have been lengthened two inches. It is a thirty-eight coat. Can't you see how simple the problem has become?"

"I confess I can't see it at all."

"Let me state it for you. A woman from somewhere in Connecticut buys a black suit of a rather peculiar texture from a cloak and suit house that receives a great many mail orders. She requires a thirty-eight coat with sleeves lengthened two inches and a thirty-eight skirt let down an inch and a half. That's enough to identify any person."

"I must confess I still don't see how that knowledge will help you."

"In these days of system every house that sells women's garments has elaborate card indexes. The greatest expense they have is in alterations. They figure that a roll of cloth that costs so much will make so many suits of a certain pattern which they will sell for so much in a certain length of time. They figure on making so much profit on the suits. If the cloth is all right, the pattern popular and the price reasonable, they can figure to a certainty on their profits, except for one factor—alterations. Alterations require the time of skilled work-people and also correspondence and frequently extra express charges. The aim of the manager is to reduce alteration to a minimum. For that reason he keeps a record of every alteration made. This particular dress happened to come from a store where I know the manager well. It is their busy season just now, and I took a chance on finding him in his office. I described the goods in the suit, gave him the size and the sort of alterations that had been made on it and asked him to have his card index looked up. I told him in all probability the woman I wanted to know about came from Bridgeport, Conn., or near there. It happened that only three of the eight suits they had made from this piece of goods—at least the only ones entered on the alteration cards—had gone to Connecticut. Of the three, two were thirty-six coats, so they could be eliminated at once. The third one had had the sleeves lengthened and also the skirt. The sizes corresponded, so there was very little doubt that it had been this woman who had bought it, Miss Sarah Sackett, the woman who committed suicide here."

"But even so," I protested, still marveling at his revelations, "how did you get the rest of your information about her so quickly?"

"The address she had given was 'in care of the express agent' at Bridgeport. Such an address in a large city would mean nothing, but in a place the size of Bridgeport the inference was plain that the agent was probably an acquaintance. If she lived in Bridgeport, she would have given street and number. I concluded at once that she lived in the suburbs near Bridgeport. I called up the express agent, and he gave me the rest of my facts."

"Did he tell you why she committed suicide?"

"He doesn't dream that she has," the inspector replied. "I put my questions in a guarded way and he happened to be a garrulous fellow, who readily followed my leads. All I asked him was where a letter would reach Miss Sarah Hackett, saying I had forgotten which rural free delivery route it was that she lived on. He told me that she and her brother were still living on the old Sackett place, Route No. 1. I explained that I wanted to make sure of an important letter reaching her at once. He told me she was away, explaining that he had seen her come down to the station with her brother, and suggested that it might be a good idea to send the letter in her brother's care, and told me the address of the bank where her brother could be reached. So you see it is all quite simple when you know how."

"I don't see, though," I objected, "how anything that you have learned in any way connects this woman with the Farrish mystery."

"I told you there would be other suicides, didn't I?"

"It looks to me like a mere coincidence."

"How about the yellow letter she was reading?"

I started. For a moment I had forgotten the strange, tinted link that seemed to bind the Farrish tragedy, the Elser case and the Sarah Sackett suicide together in the terrible chain of mystery.

"We've got to find Hugh Crandall!" I exclaimed. "It will not be content until we do. There is no doubt in my mind that he is the author of those letters. We've got to find him, Davis, and make him explain. I promised the girl I love I would not rest until I had cleared away the mystery, until I had lifted the cloud that is hanging over her father and her sister. Nothing, nothing shall stand in the way! Think what it means to me! The one I love, the one who is dearer to me than anything else in the world, is living in constant dread of an unknown terror. Heel that Crandall is responsible. I am positive that he is guilty. Help me find him, Davis! We must find him."

As I spoke Davis sat regarding me with unmoved countenance. He puffed leisurely at his cigarette two or three times, and then, with cutting asperity, without the slightest indication of sympathy for my anxiety, said slowly:

"Harding, I told you that one of the reasons for my success was that I never undertake anything that I can not accomplish. I came out here to find the man who has been using the mails illegally to terrorize people to such an extent that they are driven to suicide. I am confident that we will quickly locate him and his accomplice in crime. Rest assured that you can safely leave the plan of action to me."

"But—but," I stammered, "what is your plan of action? What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to bed," he replied, yawning as he rose from his chair. "There's nothing more that can be done tonight."

Impatient as I was, and anxious though I was to alleviate Louise's fears at the earliest moment possible, I could not but feel that he was right. There was nothing that could be done that night. I showed him where the room was that I had engaged for him—next to mine—and, feeling much depressed and perplexed, was preparing to turn in when I was startled by a sharp rap on my door.

"Come in," I called, thinking, of course, it was Davis with some new theory to suggest.

Instead it was the clerk from the office below.

"You're wanted on the telephone," he said.

I had already taken off my coat and waistcoat and I did not wait to put them on. Just as I was I sped through the hall to the telephone booth. Who could it be that was calling me at this hour? It must be long after ten. I could think of only two persons who know of my being in this hotel, Louise and Hugh Crandall. I felt that it must be Louise. Why should Crandall call me up? True, he could have learned my name from the hotel register, and from my question about the yellow letter he must know that I was on his trail, but having escaped from the village, why should he communicate with me? No, it could not be he. It must be Louise. She would not call me at this time unless some thing had happened. That was it. Something terrible had happened! Katharine was dead, or perhaps her father. Perhaps both of them. Or maybe Katharine had spoken again. Perhaps she had given some information that Louise felt would aid me in the investigation that meant so much for both of us.

Isn't it strange how fast we can think? It could not have taken me more than thirty seconds to race from my room to the telephone booth in the hall below, yet in that brief period all these thoughts and a hundred other queries and fears pursued each other in mad tumult through my brain.

Breathlessly I rushed into the booth and grabbed the receiver. It was the voice of Louise that I heard. Faint though it was, I recognized it at once, and was overjoyed to note that there was nothing in it of the sadness there would have been if the worst had come to her father or Katharine.

"Is that you, Mr. Kent?" she asked.

"Yes, yes," I cried. "What is it?"

"This is Louise Farrish speaking. I want you to promise me that you will drop your investigation at once and return to the city."

"What's that?" I cried, not believing my ears.

"If you love me"—she was speaking slowly and enunciating with labored distinctness that there might be no mistake—"you will drop all investigation at once without any questions. Do you hear me? Repeat what I have said so I can be sure you understand."

Word for word I repeated her message, amazed beyond thought at its import. As I finished repeating it, I cried, "Why, tell me why—" but I heard the thud of the broken connection.

Frantically I called central. I pleaded, urged, demanded that she get the person at the other end of the wire again. It was no use. I called for the Farrishs' number. Central reported, "Don't answer." I said that I had been called just now from there. After weary, impatient minutes of waiting and wrangling, she told me the call had come from another number, from a pay station. I demanded that number at once and finally she got it for me. It was a drug store near the Farrish home. The druggist's clerk said that the young lady who had been telephoning had left the store. I tried to get him to send a messenger around to the Farrishs' to ask Miss Louise Farrish to come to the telephone. He refused. It was useless. I was forced to give it up.

I emerged from the telephone booth perspiring, frantic, puzzled beyond measure at the sudden and startling turn in affairs.

What could have induced Louise to send me such a message? What could have happened?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Look Closely at It," He Commanded.

Breathlessly I Rushed Into the Booth and Grabbed the Receiver.

End of His Masquerade.

A wedding is about to take place in the German capital between a nursing sister and a young man who has been living the life of a beautiful and accomplished "lady" assistant in a leading wholesale coal firm. The assistant, who was given power of attorney by "her" employers as a reward for "her" several years of faithful service, recently had to go to the hospital on account of an accident. The physicians were astonished to discover that their patient was a man instead of a woman. It was only a day or two before he fell violently in love with the nurse who was attending him, and a marriage was arranged. A few days ago, the office assistant resumed "her" duties but clad in a fashionable morning coat and trousers instead of in a tight skirt and blouse.

Serious Misquotation.

A remark by the late Lord Lister led to his being wrongly identified with the "no bath" faddists, who avoid soap and water because they believe in the protective value of an unwashed skin. In a lecture Lord Lister said: "I never wash my hands"—the rhetorical pause was accompanied with laughter—"immediately before an operation, but soak them in a solution of carbolic acid." The idea was that if soap, an alkali, were used, it would interfere with the antiseptic action of the acid. But only the first part of the sentence got into the papers.

Build Tiger Proof Houses

Malay Natives Perch Their Houses High Up in Trees to Escape Beasts.

The ordinary Malay house is built on posts from five to seven feet high; but one which I, cause across was perched high up in a tree. It was the home of a man, his wife and family, and they informed me that it was placed in this unusual situation so as to be out of the way of the numerous tigers which then infested the neighborhood.

As tigers have been known to jump 18 feet in vertical height somewhere above 20 feet is considered to be the limit of safety. The Malayan house is a frail and flimsy structure of sticks tied together with rattan thatched with palm leaves and walled with plaited bamboos, or, as in this case, with the bark of a tree.

It is therefore an easy matter for a tiger with its great strength to break into a house and attack the inhabitants. Many instances of this have been recorded in Malaya. In one well known case a whole family were killed except one man, who climbed up into the roof, and thus escaping the notice of the tiger, was a horrified observer of the cruel mauling and ultimate slaughter and devouring of his relatives.—Strand.

ROYALTY WELCOMES THE AMERICAN SETTLER

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT, WELCOMES AMERICANS TO CANADA.

It was a happy speech, that on that beautiful October day, the Duke of Connaught, Governor-General of Canada, made at Macleod, Alberta. It was an opportune speech, heartful and resonant with good fellowship. And, as it was specially intended for American ears, the audience, comprised largely of so many American settlers in Canada, the time and place could not have been better chosen.

It was in reply to an address of welcome tendered to him at the pretty city of Macleod, with the foothills of the Rockies as a setting, and the great wheat fields between, and in fact all around the place as the foreground, that His Highness, true to the best interests of the country and to those of the Americans who choose to make Canada their home, said in part:

"I am well aware that among those whom I am now addressing, there are a very great proportion who were not born under the British flag. Most of these still have retained by now that residence under that flag implies no disabilities. All we ask is that the laws of Canada should be obeyed.

"With this provision every one is free to come and go, to marry, to live and to die as seems best to him, and as it pleases Providence.

"We bring no pressure to bear on anyone to adopt the Canadian nationality, for we do not value citizenship which is obtained under compulsion.

"Our American cousins are welcome from over the border. Thrice welcome our Canadian and British brothers, who return to the Union Jack, after living under the Stars and Stripes.

"History is repeating itself. For many years hundreds of young Britishers have sought fortune in the western States. Time has brought about a change, and the tide has set in the other direction, bringing across the frontier numbers of our neighbors to whom we are glad to return hospitalities.

"One of the chief dispensers of such hospitality in proportion to its population has, as we have said, changed its character from an important cattle town to a thriving wheat producing area.

"What it has lost from the picturesque point of view, it has gained in the material side, and I wish, in conclusion, to express the hope that the prosperity which has evinced itself here for the past ten years, may continue unabated in the future."

There is no reason why at a hundred places on this educative, instructive and interesting trip of His Royal Highness he might not have expressed himself in the same terms, and on each occasion, addressed large gatherings of Americans who are now settled on the prairies of Western Canada.—Advertisement.

Stretching It Some.

The men were boasting about their rich kin. Said one: "My father has a big farm in Connecticut. It is so big that when he goes to the barn on Monday morning to milk the cows he kisses us all goodby, and he doesn't get back till the following Saturday."

"Why does it take him so long?" the other asked.

"Because the barn is so far away from the house."

"Well, that may be a pretty big farm, but compared to my father's farm in Pennsylvania your father's farm ain't no bigger than a city lot!"

"Why, how big is your father's farm?"

"Well, it's so big that my father sends young married couples out to the barn to milk the cows, and the milk is brought back by their grandchildren."

Her Name Was Not Polly Ticks.

During the late campaign an Illinois candidate for the legislature was driving through the country, seeking votes among the farmers, when he met a young man in farmer's garb, walking by the roadside.

Having in mind a prospective vote, he stopped his horse, and saluting him in a familiar manner, inquired:

"Are you paying any attention to politics nowadays?"

The young man stopped, looked at his suspiciously, and drawled out:

"No, stranger; that don't happen to be my gal's name; but if it was, I wouldn't think it was any of your durned business."

This ended the interview as well as the prospect.

In New York.

First Prison Official—Well have to stop giving permits to people to go in and see the prisoners.

Second Prison Official—Why so?

First Prison Official—Too much confusion. They keep getting in the way of the fellows who are escaping.—Puck.

Equivocal.

"Thrifty habits are your friends."

"Yes, I suppose a man nowadays is known by the bank accounts he keeps."

Extremes.

"Ought these two articles to go under the same heading?"

"No; they are not on the same footing."

The more the trusts want the less the common people get.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic. 25c a bottle.

Truth is stranger than fiction and equally dangerous.

If a man and wife are one it is because they are tied for first place.

Don't buy water for bluing. Liquid blue is almost all water. Buy Red Cross Ball Blue, the blue that's all blue. Adv.

Marriage may either form one's character or reform it.

JUST WHAT THEY EXPECTED

Committee Made No Mistake When They Looked for Almost Inevitable Comment.

A committee of investigating scientists approached a lady.

"Madam," said Professor Prewins, the spokesman, offering her a magnificent chrysanthemum of rare and lovely hue. "Madam, permit me to present this flower to you as a token of our high regard."

She clasped the splendid blossom in her lily white hand.

Breathlessly the committee waited her reply.

"How beautiful it is!" she answered. "What an exquisite shade of purple! I should love to have a dress of that color."

Mr. Prewins nodded knowingly to the committee, as if to say, "I told you so."

The committee winked to the professor and whispered, "You win."

AN ARTISTIC DEVOTEE.

Dunn—How pale and careworn Mrs. Brown looks!

Gunn—Yes, she has on her Lenten complexion.

Calumet Ends "Bad Luck."

Remember when you were a youngster, what a trial baking day was? If Mother was lucky, everything went finely—but if she had "bad luck" her cakes and her pies and her bread were failures. Her success in baking seemed to depend almost altogether on "luck."

Nowadays there's no such thing as "baking luck." At least, not in the kitchens of the up-to-date cooks. Simply because Calumet Baking Powder has smashed that old time idea. It has made baking sure of success. It has made inexperienced cooks able to bake perfectly, and day after day it is saving hundreds of dollars' worth of time and materials by doing away with cooks' failures.

Calumet Baking Powder is the purest baking powder made—and guaranteed not only to BE pure, but to stay pure in the CAN and in the BAKING. Calumet has twice been officially judged the BEST baking powder made—receiving the highest awards at the World's Pure Food Expositions in Chicago (1907) and in Paris (1908).—Adv.

Brain Fag.

"Poor Dickey has nervous prostration."

"What caused it?"

"He designed all the menu cards for his cousin's pink tea."

Explained.

"Why do epitaphs always begin, 'Here lies—'?"

"Because the majority of them do."

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets first put up 40 years ago. They regulate and invigorate stomach, liver and bowels. Sugar-coated tiny granules. Adv.

Parched.

"He says she made his life a Sahara."

"Maybe that's why he has such a terrible thirst."

Water in bluing is adulteration. Glass and water makes liquid blue costly. Buy Red Cross Ball Blue, makes clothes whiter than snow. Adv.

Reverse Proceeding.

"Did you find Mabel in, after all, when you called?"

"Yes; that's how I found her out."

Important to Mothers

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Bears the Signature of *Chas. H. Fletcher*

In Use For Over 30 Years.

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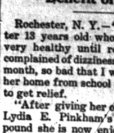
The Experience of Two Girls Here Related For The Benefit of Others.

Rochester, N. Y.—"I have a daughter 13 years old who has always been very healthy until recently when she complained of dizziness and cramps every month, so bad that I would have to keep her home from school and put her to bed to get relief.

"After giving her only two bottles of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound she is now enjoying the best of health. I cannot praise your Compound too highly. I want every good mother to read what your medicine has done for my child."—Mrs. Richard N. Dunham, 311 Exchange St., Rochester, N.Y.

Stoutsville, Ohio.—"I suffered from headaches, backache and was very irregular. A friend advised me to take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and before I had taken the whole of two bottles I found relief. I am only sixteen years old, but I have better health than for two or three years. I cannot express my thanks for what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me. I had taken other medicines but did not find relief."—Miss Cora B. Fosnaugh, Stoutsville, Ohio, R.F.D., No. 1.



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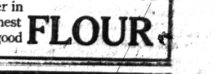

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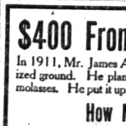

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