The Yellow Letter

by William Johnston

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Illustrations by Yl. Barnes

CHAPTER I.

Into the Maelstrom.

They say that coming events cast their shadows before, but certainly I had no intimation when I left my office in the afternoon of April twelfth, of the maelstrom of mystery and tragedy into which I was about to plunge. I was worried and anxious, it is true, but only as every young man is who finds himself for the first time deeply in love. There was no portent of evil, no foreshadowing of the terrible chain of events that all but destroyed my belief in my fellow-man, and left its mark so deep upon my memory that I do not believe time ever can wholly efface it.

Even now that it is all ended, and the shadow which hung so heavily over the household of my sweetheart has been dispelled and the hand whose deathish ingenuity brought shame and grief and wreck to so many innocent lives is paying the penalty behind prison bars—even now I shudder at the sight of anything yellow. A scrap of yellow paper vividly recalls—and I fear always will recall—the painful events of the last few weeks.

I had been waiting ever since my return from court for a telephone message that had not come—the word from Louise which I felt would decide my fate. I had written to her the night before, asking if I might go to her in the afternoon to speak on a subject of importance. I knew she would understand the object of my letter, though all that I had asked was that she would telephone me earlier than four whether she would be at home.

From my window I had watched the great hand on the Metropolitan tower clock creep slowly to twelve. As the chimes began to sing the hour of four I felt that I could bear the suspense no longer. Message or no message, I would go to her at once. Before the silvery note of "One-o-two-o" had died away I closed my desk with a bang. As the fourth stroke reverberated I stood with hat and overcoat on, my hand on the knob of my office door, hoping yet to hear my telephone ring. Impatiently I waited a minute and then dashed toward the elevator. The telephone, I learned afterward, rang almost the minute I was out of the room and Louise's voice called frantically for me, but I was not there to hear.

It was only a short walk up Madison avenue to the home of General Farrish, the father of Louise. With the doubt that possesses every lover on such a mission as this, I walked it, now taggardly, as misgivings filled my heart, now quickening my pace as hope routed my fears. As I turned the corner into the street where the Farrish home is situated my steps were leaden. What right had I to ask Louise Farrish to be my wife? The daughter of a man worth many millions, a girl of exquisite beauty and of many accomplishments, one who could choose a husband where she willed—what right had I to hope that she would ever consent to become the wife of a struggling young lawyer such as I? To be sure, my family was of the best. With my earnings and the modest little fortune my father had left me I would be able to provide for her. But as yet, though my prospects were bright, I amounted to nothing in my profession. It would be years before I could hope to give my wife the luxuries to which Louise Farrish had been accustomed.

On the other hand, I felt that with Louise as my wife I could do great things. I loved her with a great love. I felt that her affection and companionship would be inspiration enough for any man to conquer the world. I hoped that she loved me. I recalled the trifles which seemed to show, at least, that she found pleasure in my society. I tried to comfort myself, too, by remembering that General Farrish was a self-made man, that when he married he was as poor as I, if not poorer. I knew that he liked me and had confidence in me. Was it then, after all, I asked myself, presuming in me to hope that Louise would listen to me and that her father would consent to her becoming my wife—yet, why had she not telephoned?

As I dragged my hesitating feet across the street I was aroused from my reverie by the rush of an automobile that all but knocked me down. With an angry imprecation at such reckless driving I glanced up and recognized the man who occupied it. He was standing beside his chauffeur, as if ready to leap out. It was Doctor Wilcox, a noted practitioner who attended the Farrish family, and whom I had met at their home. I plunged forward in anxious dismay as I saw the machine halt before the Farrish door and the doctor jump out and run up the steps.

My first, my only thought, was of Louise. What could have happened? She must be ill—desperately ill, as the doctor's haste suggested. Did not this explain her failure to telephone? Could it be that she was dead? What thoughts flashed through my mind I cannot analyze further. I only know I reached the house but a step behind the doctor. He had hardly passed through the door when I, too, flung myself into the hall and stood there swaying, with not voice enough to ask a question of the white-faced, horror-stricken maid who had answered the doctor's ring.

"Where is she?" I heard the doctor ask as he flung his coat to the maid and started up the stairs. Before she could answer him there were hurried feet steps on the upper landing and Louise peered down, the anxiety in her face lessening at the welcome sight of the doctor.

I gave a silly cry of joy and started up the stairs. Doctor Wilcox was ahead of me, three steps at a time, and, following Louise's silent direction, had disappeared in a room on the second floor, when I, with outstretched arms, approached her. I did not think to ask what had happened or who was ill or what the matter was. My only thought was one of joy that she was alive and well. What mattered if Louise was safe? And the emotion that filled me was still more intensified when she ran to me, and throwing herself into my arms, cried out:

"Oh, Harding, thank God, you've come!"

It was almost the first time she had called me by my name, certainly the first that she ever had given herself to my embrace, and I held her closely, thrilled through at the thought that it was to me she turned in time of trouble. Then, all at once, I was aroused by the opening of the door through which Doctor Wilcox had gone and the appearance of a maid, who ran along the hall.

"What is it? What has happened?" I asked.

"Katharine," moaned Louise, "Katharine—she has killed herself!"

For a moment I was stunned. The first thought that came to me was the impossibility of it. What place had tragedy in this happy, quiet home? Familiar enough, though I was, with deeds of violence, with self-murder as it thrust itself forward in the courts and in the lurid headlines of the newspapers, that such a thing could intrude on the peace of this well-ordered household seemed beyond my comprehension.

"I telephoned to you, but you were not in your office," sobbed Louise, still clinging to me in the abandonment of grief."

"When did you telephone?" I asked, even under such circumstances rejoicing to learn that she had telephoned.

"Just after she did it—I don't know when it was—it seems ages ago. I couldn't—get you and—I thought—you would never come—then—then—I telephoned for the doctor and father."

"Oh, Harding, Thank God, You've Come!"

Just after she did it! I had been trying to make myself believe it must have been an accident, though from Louise's manner I feared the worst. Yet Katharine Farrish was the last person in the world of whom one would think in connection with suicide. A quiet, reserved girl of great strength of character, several years older than Louise, her dignity and her well-considered actions had led me to believe her far less emotional than her younger sister.

"It was an accident, of course," I said, though doubtfully.

"No!" gasped Louise, shuddering anew at the thought of the horror she had just witnessed. "I heard the shot and found her on the divan in her room. The revolver was still in her hand—her own revolver."

For the first time it came to me with sudden vivid force that in the elder sister's life, behind the smiling mask of reserve she always wore, was hidden some secret sorrow. I understood, now, that far-away look in her eyes. I felt there may have been—there must have been—concealed the knowledge of some mystery that impelled her to "do awful deed. Yet little did I suspect whither my efforts to find why Louise's sister had shot herself would lead me. Little did I imagine in what a web of criminal cunning, of baffling crime, of hidden evil, I would find myself.

As I strove to soothe Louise's agitation the doctor appeared at the doorway and imperiously beckoned me. I tried to persuade Louise to wait outside, but she clung to me like a frightened child and insisted on accompanying me into the room.

"Here," said the doctor in the curt tones of authority, "I want you to help me carry her into a quieter place before I operate."

"This way," said Louise, recovering herself as soon as she saw the opportunity to be useful, "into my rooms. They are off the street and much quieter."

I saw the look with which she tried to read the doctor's face and put the question she dared not ask.

"Will she live?"

Doctor Wilcox shook his head gravely.

"She is just alive and that is all. I can not tell yet whether or not we can save her. There must be absolute quiet. I am going to probe for the bullet and see what course it has taken. Please telephone at once for these two men. They are my hospital aides. As soon as they arrive I will operate."

As quickly as we had laid the senseless girl on Louise's bed, I telephoned for Doctor Wilcox's assistants, and was fortunate in being able to reach both immediately. Louise and the maids meanwhile were kept busy by the doctor preparing for the operation, so it fell to my lot to break the news to General Farrish when he arrived. Louise had merely told him over the telephone that Katharine had met with an accident, so he entered the house almost wholly unprepared for the shock my news gave him.

I had before seen strong men in grief, but never had I witnessed such a wave of heartrending agony as swept over the general. He came into his home erect, military, slightly perturbed, but still in manner and bearing the vigorous old soldier, fully master of his emotions. My words that told him as gently as was possible what had happened seemed to sap all his vitality. His face became ashen pale, his lips quivered, great tears coursed down his cheeks, his shoulders bent under the weight of his grief and he tottered as if about to fall.

While he was fond and proud of both his daughters, the elder had always been his favorite. As is often the case with fathers who have no son, Katharine had been both son and daughter to him. Since her mother's death some years ago she had been practically head of the household. It was on her that he relied for everything, and it was with her that he discussed all his business affairs. Such association between them naturally had strengthened the bonds into far more than the ordinary father-and-daughter affection.

"My poor little girl—Katharine—my little Katharine," he moaned in tones of agony that wrung my heart for him.

His first thought was to go to her, but the doctor forbade his presence in the room. I persuaded him to go to his own apartments, leaving him in the hands of his valet and promising to keep him informed as to Katharine's condition.

Deeply as I felt for him, it was of Louise I thought most. I wanted to be with her constantly, to give her the succor of my presence. As soon as Doctor Wilcox's assistants arrived, bringing with them a nurse, Louise and I were both banished from the room. Gently I drew her into a little

"Was it Mr. Crandall?" Asked Louise.

sitting-room, where, with the door ajar, we waited to see if our aid might be needed. Tearless sorrow now weighed heavily on her.

"Tell me everything," I said, with my arm about her. "Why did she do it?"

"I don't know," she cried out. "I can't understand it at all! There is some mystery, some terrible mystery that I cannot fathom."

"When did you see your sister last?" "We had luncheon together. She was sweet and kind, as she always was, but I could see that something was worrying her. We were to have gone shopping together this afternoon but she told me that she had an errand that would make it impossible for her to go with me. I had received your note, so I told her that it would suit me much better to put the shopping off until tomorrow. Right after luncheon she went out—where, I do not know. She did not use the car or call a taxi. All I know is that she was gone about two hours. When she came in I was arranging the flowers in the dining-room. I heard her enter and came out into the hall. She walked right past me without a word and went up-stairs to her own room. I ran up after her, thinking she might be ill, but just as I got to the door I heard her turn the key. I understood that she wished to be alone. About half an hour later I heard a sound like a shot and rushed up-stairs, calling to the servants. We found the door still locked and we could hear her groaning. I had the butler burst open the door and there we found her, just where she was when you saw her, still as death, with her own little revolver clutched in her hand."

"What do you suppose made her change her mind about going shopping with you?" I asked. "Did she receive any letters or telegrams today?"

Louise thought for a moment before answering, her slender form still shaken with silent sobbing. Gently I brushed away the tears that gathered in her eyes and drew her to me until her head was pillowed on my shoulder. I doubt that if in her distress she noticed my action, save in the sense of comfort that it brought her. How terrible it is to see the woman that you love suffer so much and to feel powerless to do anything to help her!

"No," said Louise, "I am positive Katharine received no letter or telegram today except an invitation or two that we read at breakfast. We were together practically all the time until after luncheon."

"Perhaps some one telephoned to her," I suggested.

Louise did not recall any message. We summoned her sister's maid, who was crouching outside the door like a faithful animal, and put the question to her. She was in such a hysterical state that it was difficult to make her understand what we wanted, but finally she remembered that there had been a telephone call just before twelve.

"Who wanted her?" asked Louise and I together.

The girl shook her head as if bewildered.

"Think, think," I commanded. "What was the name? Who was it? If you answered the telephone, whoever it was must have given his name."

Stupidly she shook her head again.

"Was it Mr. Crandall?" asked Louise.

Light came into Hilda's face at once. "Now I remember," she exclaimed. "Dot was him. It was Mr. Crandall."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

That Wooing Ham

Ham, it has always seemed to us, varied more than any other article over which blessings are mumbled in degree to palatableness, fragrance and invitation. The variation is due to the manner of approach. If a person is off his appetite, ham does the best when served as an Arizona breakfast—something else for the man and the ham for the dog.

But supposing you have been hunting, rising early and staying late. You have lost your lunch. You have to trudge home over a hard road. You pass a farmhouse, and from the open door there comes the sound of sizzling ham and the heaven's breath of its perfume. It matters not if that ham sprang from a razorback hog in the wilds of Arkansas, you recognize that the ham is the most glorious flower that grows, the world's desire, the inner fountain of Eden, the pillar of fire by night, the sweet influences of the Pleiades and the deliverance from envy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness. For the next three miles you can't say a word to your companion because of a watering mouth.—Lockport Journal.

Believes in Work.

Anne Morgan, daughter of the financier, who does much work among poor girls and others who earn considerable money through their own efforts, advises the girls constantly to save something. Her advice to them always is: "In times of prosperity, prepare for adversity." Miss Morgan, in fact, is a firm believer that every wealthy girl should be equipped to earn her own living should anything occur to take her fortune away.

A Boston Baby.

"What's the baby crying about?"

"The nurse thoughtlessly told him that Shakespeare's plays are supposed by many to have been written by Bacon. Get him his Sanskrit blocks. They may divert his attention."

POULTRY

CARE OF THE POULTRY HOUSE

Lice and Mites Cause More Losses Than All Other Things Combined—Spray Is Urged.

(By J. S. JEFFREY.)

It is quite possible to have the best poultry kept in well-built houses, well fed, and still not get any profit or pleasure from them. In too many cases where a good start has been made the house is neglected and allowed to become filthy and infested with mites. It may be said that filth and mites generally go together, for while a house that is kept fairly clean

Side Elevation of Poultry House.

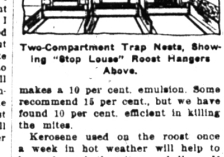
may be infested with mites, it is very seldom that a dirty house will be found to be free from these pests.

Lice and mites cause more losses among poultry than all other things combined.

Poultry houses should be so arranged inside that the poultryman can keep down the mites without an undue expenditure of time and energy. Mites live in a house and must be killed there. Dusting the hens will never get rid of them.

The best means of getting rid of mites in the houses is to spray thoroughly with kerosene emulsion. This should be done twice with an interval of from five to seven days between the sprayings.

The emulsion is made as follows: Cut up one pound of soap and dissolve it in hot water; while the water is hot, stir in two gallons of kerosene and continue stirring for fifteen to twenty minutes. It is important to have the kerosene, soap and water well mixed, especially if it is not to be used at once. To this mixture add seventeen gallons of water. This



Two-Compartment Trap Nests, Showing "Stop Louse" Roost Hangers Above.

makes a 10 per cent. emulsion. Some recommend 15 per cent., but we have found 10 per cent. efficient in killing the mites.

Kerosene used on the roost once a week in hot weather will help to keep down both mites and lice. If put on a short time before the hens go to roost, some of it will get on the feathers and will kill and drive away lice. Care must be taken not to get too much on the fowls, or it will blister them and this will stop the hens from laying just as much as the lice will.

KEEP TAB ON AGE OF FOWLS

Enables Poultryman to Cull Out Hens That are Unprofitable—One Method Favored.

It is mere guess work to tell the age of a hen after she has passed the pullet stage. To the good poultryman it is important that the exact age of every fowl on his premises be known. Hens that are past the age for profit should be culled out and their places taken by the younger stock. Legbands with numbers may be used when the pullets arrive at maturity, and, if records are kept, the identity of each fowl is easily established. A less elaborate method, and one which no poultrykeeper can afford not to follow, is to punch a hole in one of the four webs of the feet, each web representing a certain year. Special punches for this purpose may be purchased from any poultry supply house, but a small sized leather belt punch can be used to good advantage. The hole is punched very easily when the newly hatched chick is first taken from the nest or incubator. All of one season's chicks may be marked on the same web, although if special hatchings are to be kept separately as high as fifteen combinations can be used. If properly done the hole or traces of the scar will always remain and the identity of the fowl cannot be lost.

Size of Poultry House.

As to the proportionate size of the house to the number of fowls kept, only be remembers that "there is more profit in a house half full than in a house twice full," is safe from blundering at this point. The most level-headed practical poultrymen insist upon ten square feet per fowl. Contrast this with the room afforded 100 fowls in a 12x20 house, less than 2 1-3 feet of space to each (which is a common sight) and judge as to the chances for eggs in the latter case and take warning.

Protect the Youngsters.

Chickens that run with the hens should have a place to eat where they will not be molested by the large ones. Make a low shed and put the feed troughs in the center. They will soon learn to go into it and will there be protected from the sun and rain. It can be made of old boards and narrow strips with spaces between for light. The posts may be driven into the ground and the bottom strips nailed on two inches or more from the ground. Cover the roof with paper or felt roofing.

THESE SIX LETTERS

From New England Women

Prove that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Does Restore the Health of Ailing Women.

Boston, Mass.—"I was passing through the Change of Life and suffered from hemorrhages (sometimes lasting for weeks), and could get nothing to check them. I began taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound (tablet form) on Tuesday, and the following Saturday morning the hemorrhages stopped. I have taken them regularly ever since and am steadily gaining.

"I certainly think that every one who is troubled as I was should give your Compound Tablets a faithful trial, and they will find relief."—Mrs. GEORGE JURY, 302 Fifth Street, South Boston, Mass.

Letter from Mrs. Julia King, Phœnix, R.I.

Phœnix, R.I.—"I worked steady in the mill from the time I was 13 years old until I had been married a year, and I think that caused my bad feelings. I had soreness in my side near my left hip that went around to my back, and sometimes I would have to lie in bed for two or three days. I was not able to do my housework.

"Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has helped me wonderfully in every way. You know me by letter for the good of others. I am only too glad to do anything within my power to recommend your medicine."—Mrs. JULIA KING, Box 283, Phœnix, R.I.

Letter from Mrs. Etta Donovan, Willimantic, Conn.

Willimantic, Conn.—"For five years I suffered untold agony from female troubles causing backache, irregularities, dizziness, and nervous prostration. It was impossible for me to walk up stairs without stopping on the way. I was all run down in every way.

"I tried different doctors and each told me something different. I received no benefit from any of them but seemed to suffer more. The last doctor said it was no use for me to take anything as nothing would restore me to health again. So I began taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to see what it would do, and by taking seven bottles of the Compound and other treatment you advised, I am restored to my natural health."—Mrs. ETTA DONOVAN, 769 Main Street, Willimantic, Conn.

Letter from Mrs. Winfield Dana, Augusta, Me.

Augusta, Me.—"Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has cured the backache, headache, and the bad pain I had in my right side, and I am perfectly well."—Mrs. WINFIELD DANA, R.F.D. No. 2, Augusta, Me.

Letter from Mrs. J. A. Thompson, Newport, Vt.

Newport, Vt.—"I thank you for the great benefit Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done me. I took eight bottles and it did wonders for me, as I was a nervous wreck when I began taking it. I shall always speak a good word for it to my friends."—Mrs. JOHN A. THOMPSON, Box 3, Newport Center, Vermont.

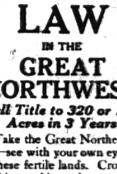
Letter from Miss Grace Dodds, Bethlehem, N.H.

Bethlehem, N.H.—"By working very hard, sweeping carpets, washing, ironing, lifting heavy baskets of clothes, etc., I got all run down. I was sick in bed every month.

"This last Spring my mother got Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for me, and already I feel like another girl. I am regular and do not have the pains that I did, and do not have to go to bed. I will tell all my friends what the Compound is doing for me."—Miss GRACIE B. DODDS, Box 133, Bethlehem, N.H.

For 30 years Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has been the standard remedy for female ills. No one sick with woman's ailments does justice to herself who will not try this famous medicine, made from roots and herbs, it has restored so many suffering women to health.

Write to LYDIA E. PINKHAM MEDICINE CO. (CONFIDENTIAL) LYNN, MASS., for advice. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman and held in strict confidence.



MEANING OF "AT HALF MAST"

At First Universal Symbol Was Taken of Submission and Respect For Enemy.

Perhaps you have noticed that whenever a prominent person dies, especially if he is connected with the government, the flags on public buildings are hoisted only part of the way up, remarks the Toronto Mail and Express. This is called "half mast." Did you ever stop to think what connection there could be between a flag that was not properly hoisted and the death of a great man?

Ever since flags were used in war it has been the custom to have the flag of the superior or conquering nation above that of the inferior or vanquished. When an army found itself hopelessly beaten it hauled its flag down far enough for the flag of the victors to be placed above it on the same pole. This was a token not only of submission, but of respect.

In those days when a famous soldier died flags were lowered out of respect to his memory. The custom long ago passed from purely military usage to public life of all kinds, the flag flying at half mast being a sign that the dead man as worthy of universal respect. The space left above it is for the flag of the great conqueror of all—the angel of death.

Child's Popularity Explained.

A winning lottery ticket of $100,000, in connection with the Nobles Bank was recently presented for payment at the State Bank in St. Petersburg, and it now transpires that the owner is an eight-year-old orphan, an inmate of the orphanage at Pskoff. The lottery ticket was her sole possession. Her relatives have hitherto done nothing for the child, but when the news of her good fortune became known they were one and all eager to adopt her. The authorities have placed her in the charge of an archpriest, a distant connection of her father.

Best Books for Children.

Eugene Field, asked for the best ten books for young people under sixteen years of age, is said to have given this list: "Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," Andersen's Fairy Tales, Grimm's Fairy Tales, "Scottish Chiefs," "Black Beauty," "The Arabian Nights," "Swiss Family Robinson," "Little Lord Fauntleroy," "Tom Brown's School Days," for boys, or for girls, "Little Women."

Subtle Admonition.

"Why do you always ask that regular customer if the razor hurts him?" asked one barber.

"Just as a gentle reminder," replied the other, "that if he forgot the tip it's liable to hurt him next time."

YOU CAN CURE CATARRH

By using Cole's Catarrhal Cure. It is a most effective remedy. All druggists. 25 and 50c.

Triumph of Machine Building.

English engineers have succeeded in building a paper making machine that will turn out 650 feet of newspaper, 175 inches wide, a minute.

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

Cuba Market for Canada Stone.

Cuba imports most of its stone from Canada.

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