

The YELLOW LETTER

BY
WILLIAM JOHNSTON

Illustrations
BY
V. L. BARNES

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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 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.

CHAPTER V.

Two Discoveries.

"Where are we going now?" I asked sarcastically.

I was thoroughly indignant at the levity with which the inspector had received my theory of Crandall's guilt. Firmly convinced of my sound logic, the thought of Davis laughing at me before Louise rankled. As I began to expound, as forcefully as I could, the reasons for my belief, he cut me short.

"Come along, Harding," he said in authoritative tones, "we've no time to lose."

Almost before I knew it I found myself by his side in the taxicab he had hailed. In my indignation I had failed to hear the direction he gave the chauffeur.

"According to your theory, Mr. Detective Kent," he said with assumed gravity, for he was still in a chaffing mood, "where would be the best place for us to go next?"

"To Hugh Crandall's apartments," I cried, determined to convince him of my view of the case.

"That is exactly where we are bound," he replied to my amazement. "But," I stammered, "I thought from your manner that you disagreed with me as to Crandall's guilt."

"I do. I doubt every man's guilt until it is definitely proved. I admit there is plenty of evidence of Crandall's connection with the case. I do not admit that any of the evidence yet shows it to be a guilty connection."

Again I started to explain my reasons for thinking Crandall guilty, but again he refused to listen.

"My dear fellow," he said, "in my years of investigating crimes I have thoroughly learned one lesson, and that is the unwisdom of jumping at conclusions. There is only one rule that never fails. Collect all the evidence, possible first and then see to whom it points. Most detectives, both professional and amateur, make the fatal mistake of deciding on a theory and then setting out to prove it. That is the reason so many innocent men are convicted and so many guilty ones escape. You can prove almost anything about anybody if you work hard enough. Starting out with the theory that no such man as Napoleon ever lived, I could gather many convincing proofs—"

He stopped the taxicab at the corner long enough to gather in an armful of afternoon papers from a newsboy, and began scanning their first pages and throwing them aside. From the disappointment in his face I judged he had not found what he was looking for.

"What did you expect to find?" I asked wonderingly.

"Other suicides," he said tersely, keeping on with his hasty reading.

Though I have known Miller Davis for years I must confess that I constantly find myself almost dazed by the seeming rapidity of his mental processes and their apparently erratic course. Here he was rejecting my theory of Crandall's guilt, yet jumping wildly to the conclusion that there would be other suicides, possibly connected with Katharine Farrish's act and Andrew Elser's death. It was entirely beyond my comprehension, and the next tack of his mind seemed even more puzzling.

"Do you know anything about art?" he asked as calmly as if we were having an after-dinner chat at the club.

"A little, not much."

"If any one asked you to define technique I doubt if you could do it. I do not believe there is a painter or an art critic who could give a satisfactory definition. Yet any one who knows even a little about painting knows something of technique. We know that every painter has his own technique. Show me paintings by Henri, Lawson and Glackens and you do not have to label them for me to tell them apart. I recognize the work

of each man by his technique. Even if Lawson painted a portrait and Henri a landscape, the individuality of the artist would make his work recognizable, though masked by a subject unusual for him. Crime is like art in one respect at least—technique. Every criminal brain has its own technique. Any one who has investigated crime, who has studied evil-doers under all conditions, who has matched his wits against theirs, inevitably comes to recognize types of crimes. Given any particular crime to trace, from the very nature of it he is able to say at once, "This is the work of So-and-so." Now in the Farrish case I am confident that a crime of some kind has been committed or is even now being committed. I may not know what particular thing it was that drove Katharine Farrish and old Elser to seek death—in fact I do not know as yet—but that makes no difference. I know the type of crime. I recognize in the case certain indefinable things which convince me that behind it all is a cunning criminal brain that has planned some far-reaching plot. If it was devilishly ingenious enough to drive two people to suicide, in all probability it will have the same effect on others. There may be no other suicides, but I believe there will be. I shall watch every report of a suicide for the next few days with particular interest. Who the criminal is, and who his associate is—for I am convinced it is a crime of the pair—I have no idea. Investigation of mail thefts and stamp counterfeiting never has brought me in touch with this particular sort of crime, so that as yet I am entirely at sea as regards the identity of the criminals."

"All you have said," I told him, "only convinces me that I am right about Hugh Crandall. An intelligent, educated man gone wrong, a respectable broker with a secret propensity for crime, would fit your theory, wouldn't it?"

"You saw Crandall's janitor last night, didn't you?" was all the response he chose to make to my question. "What kind of a chap is he?"

"If you can get him to admit you to Crandall's rooms you are a wonder," I replied, repeating word for word my interview with the janitor the night before.

"I generally go prepared for such fellows," he answered, smilingly drawing from his pocket a blank legal document on which the word "attachment" was printed boldly across the back. Taking out a fountain pen, he rapidly filled in Hugh Crandall's name, on the outside only.

Of course I saw through his ruse. He would represent himself as an officer come to attach Crandall's furniture and thus gain access to the rooms.

"But suppose the janitor insists on reading the document and sees that it is blank inside?"

"No one ever reads legal documents unless necessary. Besides, a man of the janitor type generally has considerable respect for the arm of the law. He is probably more or less familiar with its workings in dispossessions and such things, and realizes how futile opposition would be, supposing that we really were sheriff's deputies, as he will undoubtedly take us to be."

We reached the place, and, dismissing the taxicab half a block away, marched boldly up the steps and rang the bell. As the janitor answered, Da-

vis, carelessly flipping back his coat to show a badge of some sort, demanded admittance to Crandall's apartments.

"I've got an attachment, see?" he said, flashing the back of the document before the janitor's eyes.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the janitor. "That's why he beat it so quick yesterday and told me not to let any one into his rooms?"

"So he has gone," exclaimed Davis in mock surprise. "I don't wonder at that. Has he paid you the rent?"

"Come to think of it, he is a month behind," said the janitor, "though often it's been that way and he always made good."

Even as he was talking he began to

lead the way upstairs. Respect for the law, coupled with the insidious doubt of his tenant that Davis' remark had implanted, removed all obstacles to our purpose.

As he flung open the door to Crandall's apartment after unlocking it with his pass key, Davis turned, and handing him a coin, said:

"Can you get me a hammer and a couple of tacks till I put up a notice?"

"Sure," said the janitor, as he tucked the coin in his pocket. "I'll go down stairs and get one right away."

The apartment into which he had admitted us was a two-room-and-bath suite, with furnishings indicating that its occupant was a man of comfortable means and good taste. There were some well-chosen pictures on the wall and a fine lot of books. There was none of the display of stage favorites and sporting pictures found in bachelor dens; but two framed photographs of Katharine Farrish, one with an inscription, smiled down from the walls, almost the only touch of femininity about the place.

As soon as the janitor disappeared Davis made a bee-line for a desk that stood open and began a hasty search of the papers. I stepped into the bedroom and glanced about. Something on the dresser caught my eye and I crossed and picked it up. I started as I realized what it was. The small object in my hand was to me more and more convincing proof of Crandall's guilt.

"Come on, Kent," called Davis from the adjoining room; "I've got what I came for."

Still clutching the object I had picked up, I returned to the sitting-room to find Davis impatiently waiting for me at the head of the stairs.

"Quick," he said, "let's get out before the janitor returns. There is no use waiting to make explanations, as long as we have all we need."

As we reached the front door we heard the janitor shuffling up the stairs, but we were around the corner and safely seated in a hotel cafe almost before he could have discovered our absence from the rooms.

"See what I found," I exclaimed in triumph, drawing a silver hypodermic syringe from my pocket and laying it on the table. "Crandall's a morphine fiend."

"It does look like it," said Davis unconcernedly. "See what I found!"

Tearing off a corner of a menu card he wrote something on it and then tore it up quickly after showing it to me.

"Lock Box No. 17, Ardway, N. J.," I repeated after reading the words. "What does that mean?"

"That," said Davis positively, "is where the yellow letter came from—or the yellow letters."

"How do you know?" I asked in astonishment. I had supposed that the one thing of importance we would be likely to find in Crandall's apartments would be a bundle of Katharine Farrish's letters. In fact I took it for granted that they were what Davis had been searching for in the desk. It seemed to me such an obvious thing I had not suggested it to him, yet here we were after our visit to the rooms with only two things—the hypodermic syringe and a post-office address. Surely there must have been in those rooms something more definite, something more damaging to Crandall than the things we had obtained, and of the two I believed that my discovery was the more significant. How could Davis possibly know that this was the address from which the yellow letters emanated?

"It is a simple problem in addition and subtraction," said Davis. "The yellow letter connects the Farrish and Elser cases. Many things connect Crandall with the Farrish case. A criminal using the mails for illegal purposes naturally locates, if possible, in another state from the scene of his operations, foreseeing the better chance of legal delays and possible escape. A criminal working in New York naturally seeks New Jersey as headquarters. If Crandall was cognizant of the yellow letters, whether his connection was innocent or guilty, he

naturally would have known or would have tried to find out whence they came. I went into his rooms with one question in my mind and I soon found the answer. In Crandall's address book will there not be some address in New Jersey that may give a clue? Almost the first thing I turned to was this one of Lock Box 17. Now in the postal business one of the first things we learn is that the criminal always tries to get a post-office box. For that reason two references are always required. In spite of that precaution, many of the boxes are constantly being used for fraudulent purposes. When we find out who rented Lock Box 17 at Ardway, we shall be close on the trail of the yellow letter."

"Were there any letters of Katharine Farrish's in the desk?" I asked.

"I guess so," said Davis unconcernedly. "I saw a bundle of letters in a woman's handwriting, but I didn't even look to see whose they were."

I was disappointed thus far with the inspector's handling of the case. His disregard of what appeared to me to be vital evidence and the decision he had made about this address being

that of the sender of the yellow letters seemed to me wholly illogical.

"You'll grant, of course, that Crandall is a morphine user," I ventured.

"A pair of swords in a man's room don't make him a fencer. Excuse me for a minute while I telephone my office."

While he was telephoning I reviewed the case in my mind. I was strongly tempted to break with him and continue the investigation my own way, and yet what had I to gain by it? After all, we had learned very little except that Crandall was connected with the mystery. Where were we likely to find Crandall? Davis had had much more experience in tracing men. He was resourceful, as the method in which he had affected entrance into Crandall's apartments showed. Just as I made up my mind that I would be wise to continue to follow his lead, lacking one of my own, Davis returned, an expression of annoyance on his face.

"Kent," he said, abruptly, "you've got to start at once for Ardway. I had planned to go out there, but as I have to appear in court to-morrow there is no use in my going to-night."

"I'll go first thing in the morning," said I, determined to see Louise again and have a talk with her.

"There's a train out there at four o'clock this afternoon," he said, looking up from a schedule he had picked up in the lobby. "It takes nearly three hours to get there. Never let a trail get cold if you can help it."

"But—" I protested.

"You can telephone her," he said. "It is for her sake that you will be going, and she will appreciate your energy in the matter more than anything else."

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Fashion Note.
Lady Duff Gordon, at a tea at the Ritz-Carlton, praised the pannier skirt.
"Everybody likes it, it is so graceful," she said, smiling. "Everybody likes it except crusty old fellows."
She turned to a crusty old fellow upon a Louis Seize chair beside her and continued:
"I know a woman whose husband growled at her when she tried on a new pannier gown for him:
"I don't see why you wear those ridiculous big panniers. You haven't got the hips to fill them."
"The woman blushed and bit her lip. Then she said quietly:
"But do you fill your silk hat, George?"

Was Fun to Choose.
A number of drivers of racing cars who were in Louisville to participate in the motor races were present at a luncheon in honor of one of the leading contestants, who told several automobile stories.

"But my best story," said the racer, "is about a taxicab chauffeur. This man was discharged for reckless driving and so became a motorman on a trolley car.

"As he was grumbling over his fallen fortunes a friend said:
"Oh, what's the matter with you? Can't you run over people just as much as ever?"

"Yes," the ex-chauffeur replied, "but formerly I could pick, and choose."

Hard to See Under Water.
There is no scientific instrument of the "scope" character which enables one to see down to 50 or 60 feet under water. When the sun shines vertically over water, a box or bucket with a glass bottom is often used to look into the water. A cloth covering to exclude light from the box or bucket is sometimes employed. But without electric or some other light in the water these devices are not very satisfactory.

Important to Mothers
Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, a safe and sure remedy for infants and children, and see that it Bears the Signature of *Dr. J. C. Fletcher* In Use For Over 30 Years. Children Cry for Fletcher's Castoria

His Business.
"I see where Smith went to the wall."
"How did that happen?"
"He's a bill poster."

Quite So.
"What is the latest thing in fashionable weddings?"
"Very often it is the bride."

Constipation causes and aggravates many serious diseases. It is thoroughly cured by Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets. The favorite family laxative. Adv.

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Since Time of Grandma

Remarkable Changes Effected in Dress and Social Activities in Feminine World.

The modern society woman has a multitude of expenses that her grandmother never even dreamed of; her visits to the masseuse, the hairdresser, the chiropodist, are a necessary part of her grooming today. While grandma tucked her switch guiltily away in the drawer of her dressing table and could not be bullied into the admission that she used powder, today her granddaughter unhesitatingly admits that she wears false braids and curls and that the soft glow of health on her rounded cheek was skillfully applied by a "perfect wonder" of a beauty doctor.

Social affairs have increased in number as well as in variety, and this has brought about a great change in my lady's wardrobe. Our grandmothers talked about their "best dress" and "best hat," the up-to-date lady speaks of her bridge gown, her dinner

gown and her dancing frock. She has not one gown for dress up affairs, but 12 or 15. She has an appropriate outfit for each occasion. Not only must the gown be suitable, but all the accessories, including hat, wrap, gloves, shoes, veil, jewelry and even lingerie must be in absolute harmony.

When one stops to consider that the woman who is "in society" does remarkably well if she keeps within \$100 for a year's supply of gloves, some idea may be formed as to the amount which she spends for such items as tailored suits, ball gowns and furnished evening wraps.

One Family of 20,000,000.
The rapidity with which rats multiply is the main reason why man appears to make so little headway in their destruction. It is calculated that a single pair of rats and their progeny, breeding without interruption and suffering no losses, would in three years increase to more than 20,000,000. —Baker's Weekly.

The Army of Constipation

Is Growing Smaller Every Day.

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W. D. Wood

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Thirty-five farms of the late Jerome B. Simpson's estate and his sons, situated in Linn County, Mo., 25 mi. east of Kansas City, to be sold to clear the estate. Nearly all improved with houses, barns, out-buildings, wells, cisterns, fruit trees, hedges and high-light fencing, etc. All in good neighborhood. Liberal terms. VAL BURT GIBSON, 308 Gladstone Boulevard, Kansas City, Mo.