THE YELLOW SEVEN—THE BOX TRICK

By Edmund Snell. Illustrated by Ern Sowerbutts

BEGIN HERE TODAY

Capt. John Hewitt, Commissioner of Police at Jesselton, British North Borneo, is worried because jewels are stolen from Lady Sornaway while she is a guest at his home. Chai-Hung, influential Chinese, promises to assist in the recovery of the jewels. Peter Pennintgon, detective, is hired by the government to capture the leader of The Yellow Seven, a gang of Chinese bandits. Monica Viney, sister of Capt. Hewitt, persuades Officer Dawson to take her to a Chinese gambling den.

This unusual series of stories reals with the exploits of "Chinese" Pennington, a detective sent by his government to British North Borneo to run to earth The Yellow Seven, a gang of Chinese bandits.

* * * *

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"Chinese" Pennington lay tapping the toes of his shoes together, gazing through the wreath of smoke that hung above him at a lizard that clung to the ceiling of the veranda of Captain John Hewitt—Commissioner of Police. A hand reached down and scratched at a section of white calf that showed between the lowest extremity of a carefully creased trouser-leg and the top of a crumpled sock. The strange diagonal slits, behind which his eyes had a knack of disappearing, widened presently, and he looked across at Monica.

"Hot, isn't it?"

"Almost too hot to think. I'm glad you've decided to sit up because I've lots of things I want to ask you."

"What sort of things, Mrs. Viney?"

"There are heaps of things I don't understand," she told him. "Why don't you arrest Mr. Chai-Hung?"

"You think we ought to?"

"Why, of course. You know him to be the leader of Chinese opinion on the island; you know him to be cunning, unscrupulous, capable of anything. . . . I can't see why Jack bothers himself to scour the countryside for Chai-Hung's puppets—when the oily Oriental who actually pulls the wires is still at large."

The man with the Chinese eyes balanced a rubber pouch on his knees and began rolling a fresh cigaret. Monica watched him impatiently. She found it difficult to associate in her mind the two Penningtons—the youthful, immaculate idler who ornamented her brother's bungalow, leading an apparently purposeless existence, and the gaunt, lean scarecrow who, a master of dialects and disguise—wandered undetected from drinking-house to opium-den, from market-place to camp-fire, hounding out the spreaders of a sedition that disturbed the peace of the handful of white settlers that dwelt on these fringes of civilization.

"I'm afraid you have to blame me for that, Mrs. Viney," he said slowly. "You see, things aren't always as easy as they seem. Chai-Hung is still the most respected Chinaman in Borneo. I'm prepared to admit that there was a time when things looked black against him. It seemed incredible that he should be able to find a way out, but he did. Among a legion of worshipping followers it was by no means difficult for him to discover a scape-goat."

Monica sat up.

"But the Yellow Seven" she persisted excitedly. "Nothing can explain away that."

Pennington spread out his hands.

"I know," he agreed. "In almost every outrage committed that yellow card, with its seven black dots has been traced; but what does it go to prove, after all?—merely that the perpetrator belonged to a society or cult among which this symbol exercises a significance. It proves nothing against Chai-Hung."

"But you know—"

"Of course I know. You know—and so does your brother, but it's up to us to prove our case. It's up to me to catch Chai-Hung red-handed with the cards in his possession. Have you ever seen lalang, Mrs. Viney? It's a weed that grows high on ill-tended plantations. Once deeply-rooted, it spreads everywhere. To destroy it, you must dig it up—roots and all—and burn it until there is nothing left that can take root again. The Yellow Seven is like lalang. I've got to make certain that Chai-Hung is the root—and the only root."

"I see," said Monica thoughtfully. "And until this happens—?"

"Until then every planter who walks in lonely places—goes in peril of his life; every white man who employs a Chinese cook-boy should look closely into his credentials when he engages him, and carefully into his cooking forever thereafter!"

At that moment, Pennington, who had been looking through the doorway, raised a warning finger. Monica turned to see the face of Chai-Hung regarding her from the foot of the steps which led to the verandah. Over his head was the inevitable red umbrella, and an undersized coolie—ill-favored and hump-backed—lurked in the background. The Oriental bent himself nearly double before the English girl.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Viney. How d'you do, Mr. Pennington? Is His Excellency the Commissioner at home?"

"I'm afraid he's out, Mr. Chai-Hung," she said.

"I came in by the train this afternoon," he said, in a rasping voice. "I came to suggest that a little more police vigilance might be exerted in the district in which my estate lies. An unpleasant incident occurred there last night. Mr. Alliston—an assistant on a local plantation—was the victim of what I believe you call 'a gang murder'."

Pennington's brain reeled.

"Allison!" he gasped.

The Oriental nodded calmly.

"It appears he was the bearer of a considerable sum of money with which to pay the coolies and stayed a trifle too long at a friend's bungalow."

"Thanks," said Pennington drily. "I'm much obliged. It's a queer thing, Mr. Chai-Hung, but I'd always regarded your territory free from this sort of thing. I rather fancied it was because you were there!"

For a fraction of a second the eyes of Chai-Hung flashed fire.

The Chinaman produced an envelope from his tunic pocket.

"Perhaps you would be kind enough to hand this to Captain Hewitt. It was found near the scene of the tragedy."

Pennington took the envelope.

"I take it that the crime was enacted within reasonable distance of your house, Mr. Chai-Hung?"

"Unpleasantly so."

"And this—clue was discovered by one of your men?"

"It was found by me."

Pennington screwed up his eyes.

"That's interesting," he said softly. "I wonder if you could manage to pass this way again, say tomorrow morning—about ten?"

ChaiHung shook his head slowly.

"I'm afraid that would be utterly impossible."

"Going away?" inquired Pennington casually.

The corners of the Chinaman's mouth twiched.

"I may possibly be absent from my residence—for an indefinite period," he announced loftily. "I shall be obliged if you will inform His Excellency the Commissioner that one of my secretaries will attend to any correspondence he may think necessary.

He turned abruptly and made his way toward the dusty road—a hundred yards below.

"Well?" demanded Monica eagerly, as soon as the Celestial and his hunch-backed satellite were out of ear-shot.

Pennington leaned back against the wooden rail.

"It's perfectly amazing," he admitted. "I'm dashed sorry for poor Allison, of course, but it's the main issue that interests me at this moment. Look at the staff-work! He deliberately oragnizes a tragedy almost on his own doorstep, and calmly arranges things so that he will be the first to bring the news to the Commissioner. Then he presents us with one of these delightful little symbols, for all the world as if he'd never seen one in all his life before! Ye gods!"

He slid a finger under the flap of the envelope and tore it open. Monica saw him draw out a card. He held the thing with its black back before her, then twisted his fingers so that she could observe the bright yellow surface of its other side, and the seven black dots with which it was ornamented.

"The Yellow Seven!" she whispered.

Pennington left the rail and began pacing the verandah.

"His agents are everywhere," he ventured presently. "Even his visit this afternoon was carefully calculated so that he should run no risk of encountering your brother on his way. He knew that Hewitt was lunching with the governor at Sandakan. He is undoubtedly aware that the Commissioner is returning with the warrant for the arrest of our friend, Chai-Hung!"

"Then that is why—"

"That is why he is going away for an indefinite period."

Monica's forehead wrinkled.

"Oughtn't you to do something?"

Pennington smiled grimly.

"Chai-Hung is being watched—night and day."

Monica uttered a deep sigh of contentment.

"I don't see that there's much to bother about, then. You're bound to get him."

"You'd think so, wouldn't you? I used to think so——once. But that was when I allowed myself to be carried away by youthful enthusiasm. There's something about Chai-Hung

"The Yellow Seven," she whispered.

that baffles one at every turn. He's a past-master of cunning, an enthusiastic student of every diabolical crime in existence, but, beyond all that, he's gifted with an intuition— a sort of second-sight, that borders on the supernatural."

* * * *

Captain John Hewitt swung into view a bare half-hour after the fall of darkness, and found his sister waiting for him on the threshold.

"Have you got it?" she whispered.

The Commissioner looked down at her and smiled reprovingly.

"Got what?"

She reached up on tip-toe and whispered something in his ear.

"You've been hearing more state secrets than are good for you," he laughed. "Why do you ask?"

She stood looking out into the tropic darkness.

(To be continued.)

Too Soon For Increase.

"I give my wife forty dollars and she's kickin' fer sixty. What d'yuh think of that?"

"Well, why don't you give it to her?"

"Why, I've only had her one week."

Buyer—"Why, this horse is so thin I can feel his ribs." Dealer—"Well, count 'em. You'll find 'em all there."

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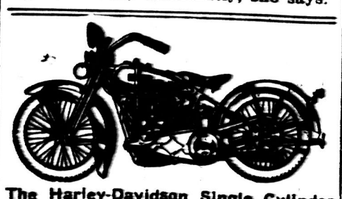
"Barbara regrets having married that Scotch fellow. How's he treating her?" Very reluctantly, she says."



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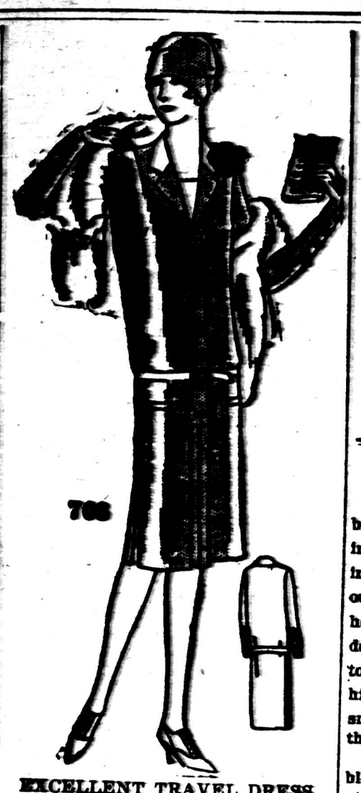

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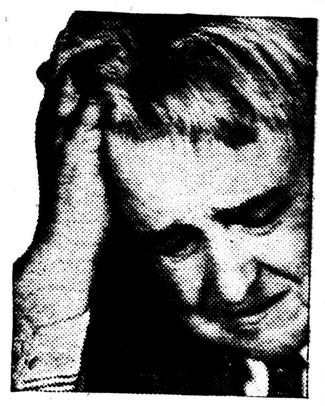

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The Mockingbird in Cuba

That most delightful of all song birds in the known world, the mockingbird of America, is quite common in Cuba and remains with us throughout the entire year. Fortunately, too, he is by nature probably the most domestic of all wild birds and seems to like the society of human beings, his nest being found usually within small groves or shade trees close to the house.

Of all known birds, this little warbler with his wonderful imitation of other birds and of many animals, gives morep leasure to those within range of his voice than other members of the feathered tribe. To the farmer, too, he is of great benefit, since, like the robin, he feeds largely on insects.

In Cuba we have a vine of fine, delicate leaves and small yellow flowers that will quickly cover a wire fence with a mantle of green. The vine is called the "Cundeamor" (the cradle or giver of love), while its fruit is of an odd shape, the size of a French walnut, and in color a vivid orange. The seed of this fruit is to the mockingbird the most tempting of all food, so that if one cares for the company of these makers of sweet music, it is well to plant "Cundeamor" alongside his fences.

Not only does this wonderful little songster of the tropics and semi-tropics fill the air by day with sweet notes but, like the nightingale, with the rising of the moon his voice rings out clear and melodious in the night air—an enchanting solo given to the world free—without price. Near relatives of the polygolts are scattered over most of the Southern States and are found also in Mexico and Central America. Unlike most wild birds, the mocker, if caught when little, seems really to enjoy life in captivity, his range of imitation increasing when caged.—Cuba Review.

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Those who say that Prohibition is a failure have never tried it, says Pussyfoot Johnson. The same can be said of capital punishment.

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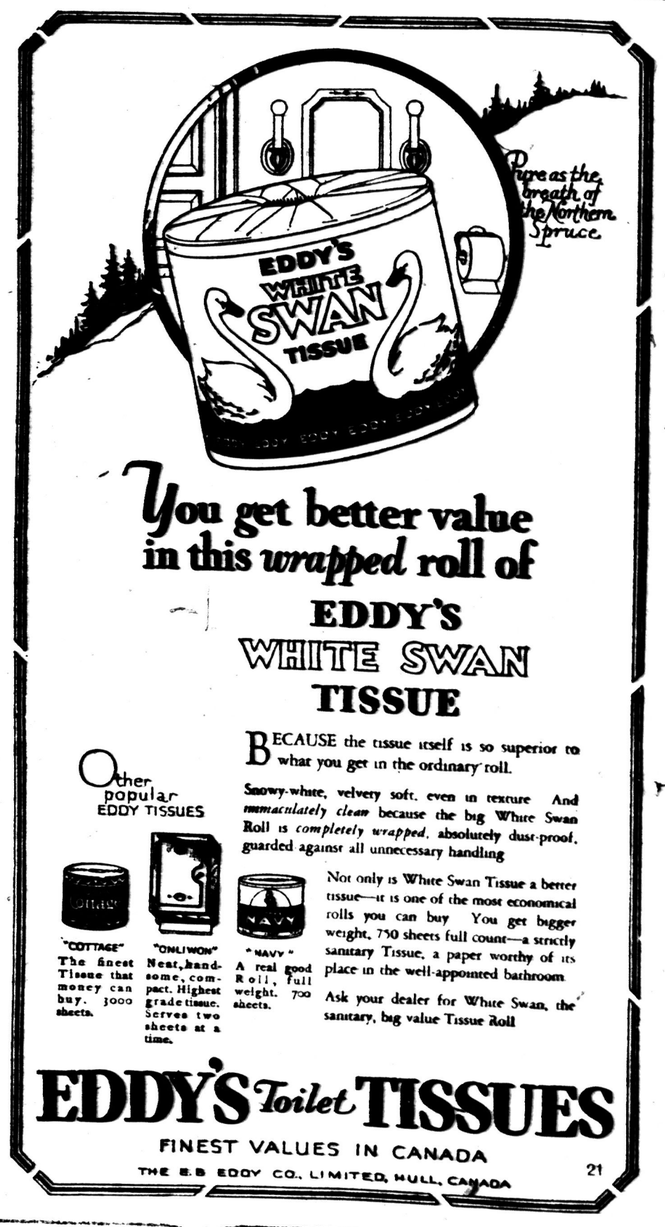

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