THE YELLOW SEVEN
THE HUT IN THE CLEARING

By Edmund Snell.
Illustrated by Fred Somerville

BEGIN HERE TODAY.

Peter Pennington, detective, is detailed by the government to capture the leader of the Yellow Seven, a gang of Chinese bandits. Captain John Hewitt, Commissioner of Police at Jesselton, British North Borneo, procures a warrant or the arrest of Hai-Chung, influenial Chinese. Hewitt is captured by the Yellow Seven and Pennington goes to hunt for him. He is accompanied by Hewit's beautiful sister, Monica Viney. Pennington learns that Hewitt's cook-boy is a member of The Yellow Seven.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

She tripped over a root that crossed the ill-marked path, and stumbled against him, gasping for breath.

"I'm so—sorry," she panted. "I—simply—can't—do it!"

Pennington steadied her with his arm, apologizing profusely.

He looked up and saw that the guide had disappeared.

This was the first serious hitch that had occurred. Swearing softly to himself, he carried her the next thirty yards, rested her against a tree, and flashed his torch like a searchlight, sweeping it in all directions. Suddenly he plunged forward and caught the delinquent cowering behind a thornbush. He drew the shivering Wong-See from his hiding-place, then kicked him with astonishing accuracy.

The remedy proved efficacious, for, throughout the final phases of the nocturnal expedition, Wong-See made no further attempt to elude his captor!

* * * * *

The guide stopped abruptly, dropping to his hands and knees, and Pennington, creeping up to him, extinguished the torch. Monica, her hands torn and bleeding, her neck and wrists and ankles so many itching zones where the thirsty blood-suckers of the jungle had taken their toll, felt herself forced from the main track by the sudden pressure of her companion's left arm. Ahead of them—scarcely twenty paces distant— a light flickered for a moment and then went out.

Pennington's lips, pressed against her ear, breathed two words:

"Chai-Hung's sentry!"

Pennington's hand had left Monica's arm and a subdued, restless, yet constant something was going on at her side. Presently she felt a solid mass press against her and found that she was gripping the torch that Pennington had thrust toward her. She groped wildly in the darkness with her free hand. For a matter of seconds her heart stood still, for in the space where she had believed Pennington to be—there was nothing. Her fingers dropped suddenly to a warm, motionless body that lay prostrate at her side.

She withdrew her hand, shuddering inwardly, and somehow the torch flashed in the blackness, sending a bar of brilliant light straight down the track that stretched before her. She saw a huddled form, seated on what might have been a fallen trunk and then, before the creature surprised by the illumination—could bestir itself, a white-clad figure had sprung like a panther from the trees—and overwhelmed it.

She saw no more, for her thumb had found the switch and pushed it into place. She knew now that the form she had touched was that of the miserable Wong-See, who was effectively gagged and bound.

"Come on," said the voice of Pennington in her ear. "I fancy I've cleared the path."

She was beginning to understand the reason for her brother's deep-rooted confidence in this amazing man, with the strength and cunning of a primeval savage—and the table-manners of a prince!

So cautious were their movements after this that Monica felt prompted to cry aloud to laugh, anything to relieve the appalling monotony. A broad, squat shadow loomed presently in front of them, a tumble-down wooden erection from which issued the sound of subdued voices. Pennington drew her along with him toward a spot where a light showed between the rotting timbers.

Crouching in the weeds that rose waist-high in the clearing, she peered through. In the centre of the apartment, around a broad stone slab, she counted seven Orientals. His back to her, clad in a gorgeous wide-sleeved jacket of dark blue silk on which was embroidered a many-headed dragon, sat an elderly Chinaman whose enormous proportions could belong to no other man she had yet seen than the arch-criminal whom Pennington sought to secure red-handed.

On the stone slab, like so many sponge-fingers, Chinese playing cards were spread face-downward, a yellow hand passing to and fro over the surface of the improvised table, sweeping the cards into a shapeless mass.

Each drew a card except the man whose back was toward her, who sat motionless as a carved figure, silent and watchful as the sphynx. She saw the cards turned so that they formed the nucleus of seven pack, their converging circles of black and red showing clearly in the light of a hurricane lamp that hung, askew, from a beam. The light flickered and an arm shot up from the huddled group and raised the wick. For a moment it flared to the roof, illuminating every corner of the building, and Monica gasped. Half-hidden behind a log, his arms stretched out beyond his head, the wrists secured by leathern thongs, his knees drawn up almost to his chest, lay the Commissioner of Police. The head came slowly round and the prostrate man gazed inquiringly toward the squatting circle. As if realizing that she had seen, Pennington's fingers closed on her arm and, at that instant, she realized the significance of those seven, ever-increasing piles of greasy cards. They were drawing for the Yellow Seven!

A long blade flashed in the lamp-light.

She closed her eyes to still the throbbing of her fevered brain. She opened them again, and, acting on a sudden impulse, glanced up at Pennington. He was kneeling on the soft earth, one eye to the narrower portion of the chink that served as a spy-hole, while the barrel of his automatic was thrust partly through the wider extremity of the aperture. She caught something of the infection of the calm that seemed to pervade his being, and looked back into the hut in time to see a tall Chinaman in black rise to his full length, a hideous grin illuminating his swarthy features, the Yellow Seven held aloft. The guttural chattering began again, the cards were swept into a neat pack, disappearing into the capacious sleeve of the man who had originally spread them out, and the hand of the Oriental who held the Yellow Seven slipped to his waist.

Every head was turned toward the Commissioner as a long blade flashed in the lamp-light, and the Chinamen, still gesticulating, rose one by one spreading themselves out along the walls; but the figure in the mandarin jacket, embroidered with a many-headed dragon, remained in precisely the same position as that in which Monica had first seen him.

The tall Oriental in black drew back his sleeve and tested the blade with a grimy thumb. A sudden hush fell upon the entire assembly and the girl, cramped and trembling, became aware of the ticking of the watch at her wrist. In all this ghastly nightmare, these ceaseless, regular pulsations rang out as the sole links with the normal existence she had left behind her. She tried to think of the bungalow on the hill, the long cane chairs with their many cushions, the winding path that led, ribbon-like to the road, the wooden jetty where the coasting steamers lay at anchor; but these phantom creatures refused to materialize and her eyes, sore and tingling, gazed straight before her, fixed, because she was powerless to withdraw them, upon whom the lot had fallen to destroy her brother.

Someone came forward and threw aside the log, and the hand that held the knife swung suddenly aloft.

Pennington's pistol broke upon the stillness. The man with the dagger spun round awkwardly—and collapsed in a heap. Cries of terror resounded on every side, and a hand, reaching upward, plunged the building in darkness.

Monica and Pennington rose simultaneously.

"Stop where you are," he called back to her. "Lie close up to the wall. They'll be too scared to look for you there."

He raced on toward the entrance and Monica, too dazed to catch the meaning of his words, followed in his wake. As she stumbled through the undergrowth she remembered that she still carried the torch. Vague shadowy forms slithered past her, stampeding as if surprised by a regiment of soldiers, rather than by one white man and a girl. She heard them crashing away into the distance and somewhere a man screamed in mortal terror as he ran, as if fearful that the friend who strove to keep pace with him were the avenging Englishman seeking his life.

As their footsteps died away, Monica switched on the torch. The door of the building stood wide open before her and she let the light travel from left to right, from Pennington kneeling over something on the floor to the huddled heap that sprawled awkwardly within a foot of where her brother lay. She ran forward with a little cry and fell on her knees at his side. She was reaching out for the knife the Chinaman had let fall when Pennington fired, when a voice called to her from the darkness.

"Monica!—er—Mrs. Viney!—Just switch that light over here a second. There's something I don't quite understand."

The Commissioner stirred and his eyes blinked up at her.

With shaking hands, she steered the narrow ray until it concentrated on the disgusted features of Pennington, who was slowly rising to his feet from the thing over which he had been kneeling.

She saw a preposterous effigy, a cunningly contrived figure of straw, with china mask and hands, over which a coat of blue embroidered with a many-headed dragon was still drawn!

(To be continued.)

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Landscape

A bird wings in flight
Atop an apple orchard,
Ecstatic over something. . . .

Trees in white blossoms
Thrill with expectations.—

Roving winds gently suggest—
To a few collected cloud-strips:
"Move ahead—
You obstruct the Sun."
—Joachim Aviron, in "Dear Earth."

Minard's Liniment for falling hair.

A Scottish Reel at a French Court

When I was seventeen, and before I had been presented, my father suddenly announced that I was to accompany my parents to Compiegne on a visit to the Emperor Napoleon III.

The Emeperor when a fugitive in England had accepted my father's kindness and hospitality, and the Prince, as he was then, in taking leave of him said: "I shall greet you next time at the Tuilleries." People smiled at the idea, but the penniless adventurer of those days was now the all-powerful Emperor and had not forgotten his old friends. I was overjoyed at the idea, but very shy at the prospect of my debut in a palace at a court reputed to be very magnificent.

On arrival at Compiegne, carriages with postillions and a pair of gray horses called "Percherons" awaited us. These Normandy horses are very neat, sturdy, and handsome, and capable of a great deal of work. The grand chamberlain received us, and ushered us to our rooms. Mine was splendidly decorted, hung with yellow satin, and furnished with Empire tables and chairs. I had never seen anything so grand, and wondered how I should sleep in that gorgeous yellow satin bed with its fat inviting pillows and soft mattresses. . . .

My mother had thoughtfully provided me with some lovely dresses from Worth, the great dressmaker, and with the confidence born of youth I experienced a great satisfaction in my appearance. At the appointed time we all assembled in a big drawing-room hung with many chandeliers, whose light was soft and becoming, the room blazed with pretty, well-dressed, bejewelled women, and men in various uniforms wearing glittering stars and orders. After a slight pause, the Emperor and Empress were announced. Into this galaxy of beautiful women stepped the Empress like a star, overshadowing all present with her graciousness, her brilliance, her dazzling presence. In that court one could only look at her. She was the Queen of Beauty, and as gracious and kindly as she was lovely. We proceeded in to dinner, down the corridor lined with the motionless "Cent Gardes," splendid specimens of men in their magnificent helmets and uniforms. The table was long, there might be fifty guests present. The Emperor and Empress sat opposite each other in the middle, while priceless silver and gold dishes glittered on the table. The meal did not last long, though the food was perfect, the supreme effort of the best French chef. . . .

The Empress said she would like to see a reel danced, and as by a strange coincidence Lord Dunmore, another guest, and myself were both Scotch, would we kindly dance one? So to the music of the barrel organ we danced. It was certainly not imperial music, but it served, and I hope rate everybody professed themselves delighted. The women stared, the men applauded, even the saturnine Emperor smiled, especially at the strange whoops and cries emitted by Lord Dunmore, who was a firstrate reel dancer, and whose intricate steps were faultless. The French ladies opened their eyes wide at the sight of our vivacious dancing. "C'est tres sauvage," they said. "Mais c'est tres interessant," as we halted breathless, and I believe they enjoyed it thoroughly.—Lady Violet Greville, in "Vignettes of Memory."

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By the Far Indus

Prehistoric Cities, 6000 Years Old, Have Been Discovered in Basin of the Indus

Bombay—Remains of prehistoric cities, which flourished in the basin of the Indus in the third and fourth millennium before Christ, have been discovered at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. The work which is in progress at these sites will, it is anticipated by archaeologist, add a fresh chapter to the knowledge of the history of a civilization of almost unsuspected antiquity.

In this connection much importance is attached to the recent opening of the Archaeological Museum at Taxila, on the northwest frontier, by Sir Muhammad Habibullah, member of the Viceroy's cabinet. This museum occupies a unique place as a representative storehouse of the relics of an ancient center of learning, wealth and power.

The museum owes its existence to certain improvements in the methods of excavation initiated by Sir John Marshall. Previous archaeologists, after sinking some scanty pits and trenches upon ancient sites in Taxila, concluded that further excavations would yield no results.

When, however, Sir John Marshall assumed charge of the archaeological department in 1902, he introduced new methods, and his success is enshrined not only in the Museum, as Sir Muhammad Habibullah pointed out, but in the fine collections of relics of many fascinating phases of India's history.

Empire Settlement

London Sunday Times (Cons.): (An act amending the Empire Settlement, 1922, provides that, on suitable schemes for emigration, the whole of the money required may be charged to the Imperial exchequer, not, as in the past, evenly divided between the different governments.) We are now spending out of national and local taxation vast sums of money on maintaining persons who cannot find employment in this country. Many of them, particularly in the mining districts, are healthy, vigorous men, perfectly suited to work overseas and probably capable of very quickly picking up the essential requirements of agricultural work. Indeed, it has to be remembered that during the war many agricultural laborers drifted into the mining industry and among these are many who are now unable to find employment in the coal areas. Therefore it would be worth while from the financial point of view alone for the Government to devote very large sums of money to assisting emigration, provided that sound schemes can be arranged.

Ontario Watches Flooded Districts

Toronto.—Hon. Forbes Godfrey, Minister of Health, has sent an official of his department to the northern flood area, to confer with Dr. W. E. George, district officer of health at North Bay, with a view to taking such steps as may appear necessary to prevent any epidemic that might otherwise follow the abatement of high water, through pollution of drinking water or other causes.

Canada and the United States

Calcutta Englishman: Anglo-American relations are on a wholly satisfactory basis; but, however satisfactory they may be, the additional binding influence of the amity between Canada and the United States will always be welcomed. Why one of the Empire's assets in international dealings should be regarded as a potential source of weakness is a point that is difficult to understand. Still more incomprehensible is the need for any discussion of the possibility of Canada and the United States amalgamating. At the best the suggestion of such an event can do no good; at the worst it might prove a source of irritation to the Canadian people.

A reliable antiseptic—Minard's.

An Irishman just before committing suicide, left a note so people would not dishonor him. It read: "My death is the result of an accident—the pistol went off as I was cleaning it."

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TORONTO CANADA

Light Fiction Waning in Britain Is Report of Public Librarians

Shaw, Barrie and Masefield Brought Into "Lighter Serious" Category, Whlie Technical Works Such as Engineering Are Found to Be in Increasing Demand

London—Is the reading of light fiction on the wane in England? There are growing indications that it is and that, in place of the light novel, the public is showing an increasing demand for more serious books.

Public librarians in London, Hampstead, Hackney, Chelsea, Shoreditch, and Middlesbrough agree that book-borrowers are evincing a higher taste in literature and that best sellers do not pull so strongly as they did right after the war. Thus at Middlesbrough, for instance, the percentage of fiction issued from the library in 1927 declined from 71.5 to 61. Moreover of 7447 new borrowers, 1309 took out tickets for serious or non-fiction works

Guy W. Keeling, honorary secretary of the Library Associatin, said: "There is no doubt that the public is reading more and more serious books. This applies particularly to technical and educational works. Improved education is doubtless responsible."

M. Marsion, secretary of the National Book Council, said: "This desire on the part of the reading public for more serious works has arisen since the war. Educational and travel books are more commonly asked for. Works on engineering and like subjects are much in demand."

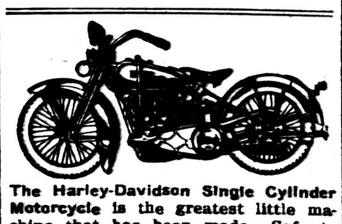
W. H. Parker, chief public librarian for Hackney, said: "Young people particularly are showing a tendency toward more serious works. George Bernard Shaw, Sir James Barrie, and John Masefield are the authors they prefer in the 'lighter serious' category."

"Last year's figures," said the Hampstead public librarian, "showed that only 10 per cent. more fiction books were issued than non-fiction. The figures speak for themselves."

"I agree with the Middlesbrough librarian's statement," said T. Green of the Shoreditch Public Library. "There is a general increase in the issue of books from public libraries and the non-fiction works are more than holding their own."

"The demand for serious books is not attributable to the fact that people are growing more serious," said H. H. Quinn, public librarian of Chelsea. "Their improved education is responsible."

The current report of the public libraries committee in England and Wales shows that the average percentage of non-fiction volumes read, of the total number issued from city public libraries, was 22, and for rural libraries 25 per cent.



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