

THE YELLOW SEVEN THE BRONZE JAR

BY EDWARD SHALL,
REPRESENTED BY
HAMILTON FIELD

BEGIN HERE TODAY.

Monica Viney, beautiful widow, lives with her brother, Capt. John Hewitt, Commissioner of Police at Jesselton, British North Borneo. Peter Pennington is hired by the government to apprehend Chai-Hung, leader of the Yellow Seven, a gang of Chinese bandits. Lien-Yin, former agent of Chai-Hung, comes to Captain Hewitt with a great bronze jar which he declares contains the ashes of Chai-Hung. Hewitt doubts the report of Chai-Hung's death.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

He placed the jar carefully on a corner of the desk.
"I'm sorry, Jack," she said wearily. "I didn't want to disturb you, but the sheer loneliness of the place is getting on my nerves. I just had to come in." She slipped into the chair he had pushed forward, and the kitten, freeing itself with an effort, began chasing a giant cockroach across the floor.
"You've got a touch of fever," suggested Hewitt sympathetically. "Better take a stiff dose of quinine—and turn in."

She smiled faintly.
"I don't think it's fever. It's this awful uncertainty. I'm worried about—Mr. Pennington. He's been on the island too long. The natives must be getting to know him. I haven't slept for nights. I've been picturing him wandering through the jungle on this wild-goose-chase for that creature's tomb, with the followers of Chai-Hung on his track."

The Commissioner perched himself on the table.
"He'll come back all right," he declared, aware all the time of a certain unaccountable hushiness in his throat. "Pennington always does."

Her gaze traveled to the bronze jar. "Is that the thing?" she demanded dully.

Hewitt nodded.
She left her chair and crept forward, half-fearfully, her hands outstretched in front of her. Presently she stood before the jar, looking wistfully down at it.

"And to think—that everything depends on that!—everything, at least, that matters!"

The Commissioner jerked up his head and stared hard at the wall in front of him. He did not want to discover how Monica knew, but the very fact that she did know startled him. In the silence that followed, he caught the measured tread of the sentry on duty outside, the insistent hum of nocturnal insects, the patterning of the absurd kitten across the boards. On a tray by the bookshelf there reposed a decanter and glasses. He went over to it and poured out a stiff tot.

She took it unquestionably, making a wry face as the spirit burnt her throat.

"So—Pennington does matter?" he said quietly.

The warm blood mounted to her cheeks.

"Of course."

"I'm glad of that."

He was placing the glass back on the tray when he realized that his sister had followed him across the room.

"Must we keep that wretched jar here? Can't you just look in—to make sure—and send it back to them again?"

He shook his head and laughed to dispel a certain uncomfortable inward feeling that Monica's present mood inspired.

"That's the devil of it," he told her. "I can't find out how it works."

She surveyed him for some moments, her head on one side.
"Why don't you send for a blacksmith—or somebody—and force it open?"

"I should scarcely like to do that. You see, it wouldn't be policy to provoke any further unpleasantness by deliberately committing sacrilege. Besides, it's an uncommonly fine urn." He looked down at his watch. "Time we got to bed. Lien-Yin's coming round in the morning—and then we shall know all about it."

She clutched at his sleeve.
"Jack, I can't sleep here with that thing in the house. I've been feeling perfectly horrible ever since they brought it here. You call it nerves, I know, but I've seen things at the window—"

"What sort of things?"
"I can't quite explain. Just vague, shadowy objects. That was what made me come to you. I could have sworn I heard them breathing and once for a fraction of a second two hands—like claws—rested on the sill. I should have gone mad if I had stayed."

In spite of himself, the Commissioner glanced at the wide open aperture through which the cool night air filtered. His keen gaze fell upon nothing but the rectangular patch of blackness she had expected to see. He walked deliberately to it and tossed the end of his cigar into the garden.

"There is nothing there, you see," he declared. "I tell you what it is, Monica. You're worrying too much about young Pennington, and you want a holiday. If you take my advice, you'll get married as soon as he comes back—and get him to take you for a long sea trip."

"Aren't you looking rather far ahead?" said Monica demurely. "You forget—he hasn't asked me yet."

The Commissioner tapped the bronze jar with his finger nail. "No, but he will as soon as I show him that. He was only waiting for proof that our enemy was dead."

She came slowly back toward the urn.

"Proof," she echoed in a voice so low that it was scarcely audible. "I wonder if this clumsy thing proves anything. For all we know—it may be empty."

"In which case," smiled her brother, "there's nothing on earth to prevent us going to bed."

But Monica was not listening. She was passing her fingers over the metal surface.

"I fancy that band has something to do with it—the band with the four little gold studs."

She held her thumb poised over the nearest of the four gold knobs. It hovered for a second—a bare half-inch from the metal, and then—a form plunged wildly through the open window, landed in a crouching attitude on the bare boards, and extending a lean arm, thrust her bodily into a corner.

The bronze jar toppled awkwardly and rolled to the floor, where the Siamese kitten fell upon it in a frenzy of delight. Hewitt wrenched open the drawer in which his automatic lay, and Monica, her eyes wide open with terror, leant helplessly against the wall, gazing into the scarred, swart face of a Chinaman. The intruder's greasy coat was torn and weather-stained, his feet were swathed in sandals of plaited straw, and his features wore an expression that she did not altogether understand.

"Put them up!" said the Commissioner coldly, and the celestial, complying readily, bestowed on the astonished Hewitt a broad, boyish grin.

"Don't keep me like this for long," came the familiar, measured drawl of Chinese Pennington. "I've got Lien-Yin trussed like a chicken outside, and I'm as hungry as a hunter!"

The Commissioner tossed his weapon back into the drawer in disgust.

"Look here, old son," he complained. "What the deuce d'you mean by giving us shocks like this?"

The scarecrow produced a rubber pouch and began rolling himself a cigar.

"I'm sorry if I hurt you, Mrs. Viney, only I didn't like to see you fiddling about with that jar."

"I wanted to see what was inside." She had recovered from the surprise his sudden entry had given her. Her cheeks were flushed and the folds of the kimono at her bosom rose and fell in tune with her quick breathing.

Pennington ran his lower lip along the gummed edge of the paper and looked across at the Commissioner.

"What did you suppose was inside?" He flung out the words like a challenge.

"The ashes of our deeply-lamented friend—Chai-Hung."

The younger man surveyed him pityingly.

"The ashes of fiddle-sticks! Chai-Hung—of all men—starting out on a new line—and arranging to be cremated! Doesn't sound very probable, does it? And yet I suppose even I might have been deceived by the delightfully plausible story—if they hadn't chosen me to be one of the bearers!"

"Good Lord!"

Hewitt passed a clammy hand over his forehead.

Suddenly Monica uttered a little scream and pointed wildly to the floor.

The Siamese kitten that had been playing with the bronze urn was lying on its back, kicking spasmodically. The movements ceased abruptly and before the Commissioner could reach it, the wretched creature was dead.

More amazing still, the bronze jar lay open, its gaping mouth, dark and hollow like a tunnel, displaying no sign of the remains Hewitt had expected to see.

"Poisoned!" said the Commissioner hoarsely. "Poor little devil!"
"It was playing with the gold stud," declared the girl sorrowfully. "Mr. Pennington, you don't think—?"
"I do! I knew it before I came in. I've been hanging around here all evening, trying to give Lien-Yin the slip and prevent you both making fools of yourselves."

He turned the jar with his foot and all three recoiled in horror.

There fluttered out on to the floor a strip of pasteboard. By a freak of chance, it fell face, uppermost, showing seven black dots on a vivid yellow ground—the dread sign of the Yellow Seven!

The Commissioner was the first to move.

"Look here, Pennington," he shouted, "where's this fellow Lien-Yin?"

The other nodded toward the door.

"Your man's got him—out there. D'you want to see him?"

"I want to make certain he doesn't get away."

He fumbled with something in the drawer again and made for the verandah.

Monica looked up at Pennington, and there were tears in her eyes.

"I'm heart-broken about Peter," she said softly, "but I'm awfully grateful to you for what you did."

"My dear Mrs. Viney," protested Pennington, screwing up his eyes.

"For the love of heaven, call her 'Monica'!" bawled the Commissioner over his shoulder. He went out, slamming the door after him.

(To be continued.)

WITHOUT A NET

By KENNETH F. LEE

The Missus and I had enjoyed a hair-raising downhill ride on a railroad "gas-buggy" that morning, the Section Crew from Kennebec taking us down to the trail that led in to John's Pond, a distance of three miles, in much less than the same number of minutes.

We had supplies for a couple of days in our light packs, and both carried flyrods, for John's Pond has a reputation in that part of the country for harboring large and succulent trout with fierce appetites, and we were bound to investigate the reports.

The trail, after it left the railroad right-of-way, led up through a dense alder run, and before we got fairly started, a heavy thunderstorm came up and the alder leaves displayed a very unpleasant capability for catching and holding water. That is, they held it until we brushed against them, and then showed a decided tendency to freely baptize both of us. We were soaked to our hides long before we came out into the little clearing at the foot of the pond.

I found an old "tin" rowboat partly hidden in the underbrush, and a pair of oars that had quite obviously been serving as a lunch for the porcupines. The handles were chewed nearly through, but we decided that maybe they could be used, so we stowed our packs in the bow of the craft and started up toward the head of the pond, where I had been told we should find a log camp.

Didja ever row a "tin" boat that has been in use for upwards of thirty years? A tin boat with collapsible ribs that have been "collapsed" ever since the Spanish-American War? If you haven't, it is of very little use to try and convey any real idea of what this experience was like.

Every time I so much as wiggled an oar, that cockeyed boat let out a series of wails that reminded me of the time "Square-Head Oleson" went on a drunk accompanied by an accordion that he swiped from the cook at the lumber-camp where he was employed.

I would take a little pull at the oars. "Ee-onk! Ee-awnk! EE-Onk!" would go the blessed boat. . . . and the Missus would glare at me just as tho' she plum' knew I was doin' it a-purpose.

Our trip up the pond was a sort of triumphal march, the boat furnishing the music, and by the time we got to the landing in front of the camp we both knew that "Ee-onk" tune by heart. I have no doubt all the wild things within five miles of the pond were in a state of nervous prostration. I nearly was, anyway. But the little log cabin, with its shingled porch and rustic furniture, did much to dispel the gathering gloom. After we had started a crackling blaze in the rusted stove and ascertained that there was plenty of dry bedding for one of the bunks, we began to feel comfortable.

"If the trout are here, we're all set!" I announced, hastily stringing up my light flyrod and selecting a Silver Doctor, a Royal Coachman and a Brown Hackle, with which formidable trio it was my intention to pry the lid off that pond immediately. Listen, Brother Fisherman: When an Ontario trout refuses to do business with at least one of the three flies mentioned, it's time to get busy with worms if you wanta eat fish.

We climbed aboard the "Hallelujah Ferry" and "Ee-onked" our way across a little cove over to where a big stream entered the lake. Here lily-pads dotted the surface of the calm water, and now and again we would see a quick splash, followed by slow-widening circles, that told a tale of feeding trout. It sure looked promising!

About the second cast, my flies droppingly into a clear space amongst the pads, a big trout surged Sunburn? Use Minard's Liniment.

up at the dropper and came clear of the water, the little barbless hook biting deep into his jaw as he fell back with a splash. Then we had a circus which lasted maybe three busy minutes, after which the Big Boy was ready for the net. But, Dammit! There was no net. In our hurry to get started that morning we had come away without it. So I tried lifting the trout into the boat by the delicate, tapered leader. He gave a couple swift shimmy'n' wriggles which lifted his weight of the barbless. . . . probably put a derisive sn to his nose, an' went away from there silently and swiftly. Not so good! We mourned.

To make a bad matter even more so I lost three big fat trout, one after the other. . . . and we were getting hungrier all the time. Of course, we had bacon and beans and similar fodder in our packs, but we had come to John's Pond to eat trout. . . . and trout we were going to eat.

Well, we tried slipping a hand over the trout's heads and clutching 'em around the neck, but that proved to be a lot like trying to catch the greased pig at the county fair. Next we tried tipping the tin boat over until its gunwale was nearly in the water and sliding the trout in over the side, but about the first crack out of the box a big "lunker" changed his mind at the crucial moment and dived under the boat, twisting the tip of my pet Cross rod until I had mysteries for fear it would break.

Right there I quit. "We'll eat bacon!" I declared. "There isn't a trout in this part of liberty-lovin' Canada that I'd bust that rod for." My heart-felt sentiments didn't make the least bit of a hit with the Missus, and she said so right out loud. "We'll go back and make a net. . . . or a gaff, or something. . . . but we're going to have trout for supper. I didn't walk 'way in here, and get nearly drowned, just to eat bacon," she declared firmly.

It has not taken me ten years to learn that arguing with one's Better Three-fourths is lost motion. . . . so back we went. "Ee. . . onk!" to beat the band, all the way to camp. There we rummaged around for upwards of half an hour in search of materials from which to improvise a net. Just as I was about to quit cold, the Missus got her eye on one o those wire broilers with two handles, the kind that are used to scorch steak with over open coals. "That's just what we want!" she piped up enthusiastically, waving the broiler triumphantly over her head.

I couldn't see that her discovery had made much difference in our chances for a trout supper. . . . not then. But we got into the tin muslin box and went back to the trout pool and started in casting all over again. It was nearly dark, and the big trout were coming up into the shallows from the cool depths of the pond; the lily-pads bobbed with them. They had their reputed appetites right along, too.

My first rise was a daisy, an active, heavy fish that slashed out of the water with my dropper fly solidly in his jaw. No fish was ever handled more painstakingly than that gentleman, for I could anticipate the way he

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would smell in a sizzling pan of bacon-fat.

He put up a gallant fight, but at length came rolling his pink sides toward the boat, where the Missus awaited him, holding the wire broiler down into the water, its sides gaping, and both her hands gripping the handles firmly. I slid the big trout carefully along the surface, holding hard on the rod-butt to keep his head out of water, and the lady brought that blessed broiler up ever so gently, clamped the handles together. . . . and boosted Mr. Trout right up into the boat in one smooth swoop. Hot Diggety Dawg! We both let out Comanche whoops and nearly upset the boat in our joy.

After we had recovered our usual pose I whacked the big trout over the head with the hilt of my belt-knife, and then settled down to fish in earnest. We got all the trout we needed in short order, and after I had a dozen or so the Missus took her turn. . . . and let me assure you, brothers, she slings a mean fly, and can handle a big fish as well, or maybe a little better, than the nominal Boss of the Lee family.

We quit at dark, and that night we sat by the little stove and glozed over the string of trout, and listened to a pair of Bobcats cussin' each other out in the swamp behind the cabin. After we had turned in for the night a big porcupine climbed up on the porch and started gnawing the wooden box that held our catch, and I had to take the flashlight and a chunk of stove-wood and go out and argue with him briefly, after which I chased him into the brush at the end of the porch and went back to bed. In about twenty minutes, or perhaps half an hour, two more "porkys" made their appearance on the porch, and took up the good work where their dear departed had left off. I chased that pair, too, and, after that, we went to sleep and slept like a pair of wooden Injuns till dawn.

The Laborer and His Hire

Manitoba Free Press (Lib.): There are indications that the Government is learning, albeit with great reluctance, that the glory of holding a Government job is not sufficient compensation for men whose talents command good salaries in the industrial world. When an indispensable scientific worker is lost by the Government to a business concern—usually in the United States, so that the loss is both governmental and national—it is ridiculous that the defence should be made that the Government was powerless in the matter because, under the civil service classification, this indispensable worker was in receipt of the maximum salary permitted. Research is more necessary to the Government of Canada than to any business concern inside or outside the country. The Government has far more money than the business and educational institutions that are constantly raiding the service and carrying off its best men; and it can stop this practice at will.

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