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THE YELLOW SEVEN.
THE WISDOM OF
RABAT-PILAI

BY EDMUND SNELL.
ILLUSTRATED BY
R. W. STEENFIELD

This unusual series of stories deals 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.

Chinese Pennington stumbled up the steps of the Commissioner's bungalow and threw himself at full length in a long chair.

Captain Hewitt—immersed in the fourth attempt to bring to a successful conclusion a game of patience—swept the cards into a jumbled heap.

"That you, Penn?"

The man with the Chinese eyes moved restlessly.

"It's me all right!—I'm dead beat."

The Commissioner crossed to where a lacquered tray rested on a table and measured out what he knew to be Pennington's habitual lot.

Pennington reached out for the tumbler.

"Hewitt, old son, I've reconnoitered the complete coast-line of British North Borneo since I saw you last. The Chai-Hung affair's nearing its final stages. The bandit knows it and will probably make a desperate

attempt to quit the island altogether."

The Commissioner yawned. He had had a heavy day, and it was ten minutes short of midnight.

"He's been away before," he reminded the younger man; "but he's rolled up again with unfailing regularity."

Pennington's fingers grooved in a pocket, searching for his pouch and cigar papers.

"Things have never been so hot for our enemy as they are at this moment. The secret society of which Chai-Hung is the head has, to lie pretty low, in these days you can take it from me; the Yellow Seven's becoming a back number; it's weeks since the yellow card with the seven black dots went abroad with its message of death. It's Chai-Hung's amazing personality alone that has kept the fire smoldering that we've exerted every effort to extinguish." He blew out a long wreath of smoke. "It's been a wonderful experience, Hewitt, in spite of all our set-backs. There's something exhilarating in tackling a worthy enemy."

Hewitt smiled.

"I'm glad you think so! For my part I'm utterly fed up with our yellow friend."

Minard's Liniment for Athma.

"Of course you are. You want to place Chai-Hung in a convenient cover and pigeon-hole him for evermore. You sent for me to lay him by the heels, lord knows how many weary months ago—and I'm still at it. For sixteen solid days I've been acting as a sort of railway porter—slamming doors on Mr. Chai-Hung. Every planter owning an inch of coast is on the quiver—or says he is. After so many assurances of loyalty and devotion to duty, I had to sit down in a quiet corner and consider who was the unclean hound that was letting us down. Fortunately it appears there's only one. His place is under observation. It's sheer assumption, of course, but I'm prepared to swear I'm right."

The Commissioner leant forward in his chair.

"Who is it?" he demanded in a low voice.

"Domberg."

"The Dutch manager at Kasih-ayer?"

The other nodded.

"I arrived at my conclusion by a process of elimination. My first scrutiny left me with three possible—all situated wide apart. I spent the best part of a fortnight in the immediate vicinity of each of 'em—and the Kasih-ayer estate romped home, an easy first."

"Domberg!" murmured Hewitt—shaking his head from side to side and frowning deeply. "I'd never have thought it."

"Stranger things have happened than that. Chai-Hung himself was our most respected Chinese resident at one time, if you remember. My

esteemed chief-of-staff—one Rabat-Pilai—tells me that at certain seasons there's more cargo surreptitiously discharged at Kasih-ayer than the customs authorities ever dreamed of."

"I'll put them wise in the morning," said the Commissioner between his teeth.

Pennington's hand fell on the other's arm.

"Don't do that—or you'll spoil everything. It won't do to let either Domberg or Chai-Hung suspect we've the place under observation. Pay 'em out sufficient rope and you'll find they'll both hang themselves at Kasih-ayer."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to bed," returned Chinese Pennington, grinning inanely.

"Damn you!" retorted Hewitt politely.

"Thanks! How's Monica, by the bye?"

A voice from the other side of the partition cut into the Commissioner's reply. It was a feminine voice of an exceedingly pleasing timbre. "I was wondering when you were going to ask that! Fortynine minutes under our hospitable roof—and near a syllable of inquiry for poor Monica! For a matter of seconds your fate hung in the balance."

"I know," said Pennington. "I felt it wabbling."

The fairest widow east of Suez—as Dawson had once termed her in an effort to be poetic—sailed on to the verandah attired in a gorgeous kimono of blue and silver. She settled herself comfortably on the arm of Pennington's chair.

"Roll me a cigaret, please—a nice fat one. You are rather a devil, aren't you? You spend half your days wandering in the jungle wearing all sorts of unclean disguises, chasing a fat, oily Oriental. Whenever you feel you require a rest from this absorbing occupation, you wander in here at any old hour, drink our whisky, and talk shop into the ever-receptive ears of my brother. Having exhausted every possible subject of interest, it dawns upon you that you've a fiancée knocking around somewhere. How's Monica, by the bye?" She glanced down at the cigaret, now nearing completion. "As a very special honor you may moisten the paper and stick it down."

"Duty before pleasure, you know," said Pennington, striking a match. "Besides, I thought you'd gone to bed."

"I had, but there was a mosquito in my curtains—a particularly hungry specimen—and I couldn't sleep. I say, is Domberg really in with Chai-Hung?"

The two men exchanged glances. "Monica," remonstrated Hewitt, "you've been listening!" "My poor benighted imbecile, the wooden walls of this luxurious mansion act like so many sounding boards; besides, have you ever encountered the brand of woman that's going to stuff cotton-wool in her ears and dive under the bedclothes when secret service agents are broadcasting their exploits?" Pennington screwed up his peculiar eyes.

"Brutally disillusioned. Of all the women in the world I believed you were the one who would."

"Who's Domberg, Jack. Isn't he that nice old Dutchman with the gray hair we met once in Sandakan?"

Hewitt stretched his long legs. "That's the fellow. I must confess I liked Domberg. Still, if Peter says—"

"I don't say anything. For all I know Domberg may have no active hand in the affair at all, but the trouble's been traced to the Kasih-ayer area and, theoretically, he's responsible for anything that goes on there."

The Commissioner began counting on his fingers.

"Who's up there with him? Let's see: Vance, Van Daulen and Whittaker. Fairly decent crowd, taking them all round."

Hewitt rose slowly and began pacing the verandah, his hands clasped behind him.

There came a thundering of hooves from the white road at the foot of the slope and, before Monica could reach the rail, a man had negotiated the path and clambered up the steps. He halted on the threshold as if the light dazzled him, then hurled an accusing finger at Hewitt.

"Look here, Captain Hewitt, I'm in no mood to pick my words. I want to know when you're going to put an end to this Yellow Seven business."

The Commissioner poised himself on the table.

"It would simplify matters a great deal," he said coolly, "if I knew who you were."

"I'm Van Daulen—of Kasih-ayer. I've ridden every inch of the way from there to-night."

"Did Domberg tell you to come?" demanded Pennington.

The newcomer shot a glance at the speaker.

"I came here to see the Commissioner," he returned pointedly, "but since you ask it, Domberg didn't tell me anything; he couldn't—he's dead!"

For fully a minute silence reigned on the broad verandah.

Hewitt was the first to speak. "How did he die, Van Daulen?"

The Dutchman cleared his throat. "He was poisoned. Whittaker found him in his office. A fine metal point had been placed in his penholder—just where the forefinger pressed. We assume he just picked the thing up—and the poison that had been smeared on it got into his blood."

"How do you know this was the work of the Yellow Seven?"

"There was a yellow patch painted on the side of the building, ornamented with seven black smudges."

"A large patch?" inquired the man in the chair.

"About a yard long, I should say, and roughly a foot across."

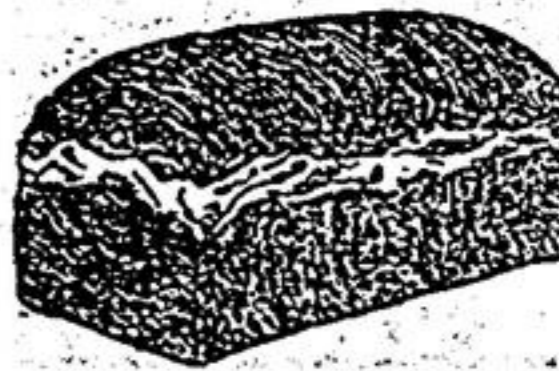
"Nobody observed wandering about the estate complete with paint-pot and brushes?"

(To be continued.)

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