The SKELETON FINGER

by Headon Hall

BEGIN HERE TODAY.

Sir Dudley Glenister, suspected of the murder of his cousin, James Glenister, has a strange caller in the person of

Simon Trickey, whose bloated face culminates in one big red blob at the end of his nose. Trickey's plan to blackmail Sir Dudley is interrupted by the arrival of

Dr. Willoughby Melville, and James Wragge.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

CHAPTER IX.—(Cont'd.)

"Thank you, madam, on the whole I think I'd better not," replied the inspector in a tone of self-negation. "Trickey mightn't like it. Besides, I can find him all right—the old blighter."

"So long then." "Miss Blair" retired into the narrow entrance. "Look in any time you're passing."

Wragge promised to do so and got into the waiting taxi. And as he drove away he assured himself that he would certainly have to revisit that abode at no distant date. For Mrs. Simon Trickey had not only been revealed as "Maud Blair," the cinema actress, but without any manner of doubt she was also the original of the photograph which Kathleen Glenister, not an hour ago, had identified as that of Sally Grimes, the daughter of the head gamekeeper at Beechwood Grange.

CHAPTER X.

THE ENTRY IN THE CASE BOOK.

On the evening after his return to Harley Street Doctor Willoughby Melville, having finished his solitary dinner, retired to his consulting room.

Switching on the electrics, he unlocked an antique corner cupboard and ran his eye over several neatly piled stacks of books in a uniform binding which bespoke them as manuscript. Taking down one of the columns he carried it to a deep-seated easy chair and began to turn the pages.

"About five years ago," he murmured.

His meeting with Inspector Wragge at the lodge gates of Beechwood Grange on the previous day had struck a chord of memory awakening the liveliest curiosity. He had already become obsessed with the mystery of the skeleton finger, and when he recognized the ascetic looking clergyman loitering there as a Scotland Yard officer whom he had treated professionally years before, he at once guessed that he was engaged on the case.

Ignoring the clerical disguise, he had given Wragge the surprise of his life by addressing him by name and recalling their old relations as medical adviser and patient. Immediately afterwards he had made amends by assuming that the inspector was on duty there and informing him that a shadylooking individual had just forced himself upon Sir Dudley Glenister.

He found the entry—his system of cross-indexing was the last word in method—without any trouble and he settled down to peruse it. His first glance at the length of the entry told him that the state of Inspector Wragge's nerves five years ago had demanded careful attention.

He read his own diagnosis of the symptoms with a revived interest that recalled the examination to which he had submitted Mr. Wragge.

"James Wragge, Inspector Criminal Investigation Department," the page was headed. "Age 43, height 5 ft. 10 in., weight 12 stone. No traces of organic disease. Appearance and pulse indicate temperate habits."

The specialist paused in his reading and in his mind's eye visualized the bogus clergyman whom he had met at the lodge gates of Beechwood Grange.

"And if," he reflected, "I had to diagnose Mr. Wragge over again I should probably have to use precisely the same words I used five years ago. He looks as fit as ever, and barring a few gray hairs not a day older. But there was a look of mental strain about his eyes."

Melville read on:

"When I pressed him for the cause of what I was compelled to describe as a nervous breakdown which threatened creeping paralysis, his frank demeanor disappeared. He prevaricated and fenced with my questions till I was obliged to tell him that unless I was informed of the source of worry I could do but little to remove it."

Placing his finger between the leaves, the doctor leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. The scene in that consulting room, now so long ago, came back to him as though it were yesterday. The hard-bitten detective officer, pressed for the cause of his trouble, had burst into tears, confessing that he had been caught by a high official, holding a minor post in the government of the day, accepting a bribe for allowing a defaulting banker to escape from justice. The official accuser, whom Wragge had not named, had consented to hush the matter up, while giving him to understand that it was only held in abeyance. If at any future time the delinquent misbehaved himself the old misconduct would be brought up.

Miss Maud Blair advanced a tentative hand.

Melville read on:

"Having once broken down Wragge's guard, I found it easy to give him immediate relief by suggestion and drugs. The most potent factor used for his cure was the belief I succeeded in inspiring that he had nothing to fear so long as he did not misbehave again."

CHAPTER XI.

NUMBER 16 LIPSCOMBE ROAD.

Kathleen turned a deaf ear to Norman Slater's plea that he should accompany her to Simon Trickey's house in Brixton.

Trickey was evidently a drink-sodden reprobate, formidable possibly as a crafty rascal where money was concerned, but not the sort of ruffian who would use methods of violence.

So it was that Kathleen drove to Brixton without escort, to be set down in front of the garish little villa in the middle of the afternoon. Telling the taxi-driver to wait, she rang the bell and was admitted by the smart maid without the opposition encountered by Wragge on the previous day. She was shown into a tawdry sitting-room to the right of the narrow entrance passage, and it was not until the servant had closed the door on her that she awoke to the fact that she had neither been asked nor given her name.

The fumes of a strong cigar had assailed her nostrils on entering the house, and she concluded that Mr. Trickey had observed her arrival from the room on the other side of the passage and that he would join her presently. She only hoped that he would be sober.

But five minutes passed and neither drunk nor sober, did Mr. Simon Trickey or anyone else appear. Another five minutes passed and the door opened to admit the tinted lady who had parleyed with Wragge from the doorstep the previous day. Recognition was mutual and instantaneous.

"Sally Grimes!" exclaimed Kathleen.

"Miss Maud Blair" advanced a tentative hand ready, but dropped when no responsive sign of it being grasped was shown.

"Do sit down, Miss Glenister," she simpered. "My husband told me he was expecting a lady on business, but who would have dreamed that it would be you!"

Bewildered, and with a sense of physical nausea she could not account for, Kathleen sank into a gaudy, plush-covered chair.

"Mr. Trickey is your husband?" she gasped.

"Yes. I am quite an old married woman," was the giggled reply. "Though I daresay they have another tale to tell of me at Beechwood, Miss Glenister."

Kathleen ignored the brazen suggestion. "Nothing but the local gossip that you were married reached me," she replied coldly. "I have not been much at Beechwood lately."

"But you were there when the crow flew over the shooting lunch," the lady of the house insinuated slyly.

"That is a matter I cannot discuss with you," said Kathleen. "Is it likely to be long before I can see your husband?"

"He will be in directly. I left him in the dining room with—with a man who's rather difficult to get rid of. You don't show much interest, Miss Glenister, in my present circumstances. You would be surprised to hear that I am the chief breadwinner in this humble abode—'Miss Maud Blair,' if you please, of the films.

Kathleen had the haziest idea of what the woman was talking about, but she made a few polite inquiries which more than enlightened her as to the nature of "Miss Blair's" occupation and the fame she had won thereby. And then a sudden intuition told her that her hostess was not only talking from vanity but to gain time—and that all the time she was listening intently.

Kathleen listened, too, and she was almost instantly rewarded by two sounds in quick succession. The first was the swish of a silk petticoat in the passage and the second was the furtive opening and shutting of the front door. Kathleen was sitting too far back in the room to obtain a full view of the person leaving the house, but she caught a glimpse of a purple aigrette—a singular ornament if worn by "the man" with whom, according to his wife, Mr. Simon Trickey had been engaged on the other side of the passage.

(To be continued.)

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ISSUE No. 6—'28

Improving Home Conditions

Parents Are Reasoned With and Instructed in Better Methods by Children's Aid Officer

Where children are neglected, it is not our custom, says J. J. Kelso, Superintendent of the Children's Department, to order prosecution. That is only resorted to when milder methods fail. Ossasionally however, neglectful parents are brought before the Court and warning given of the danger of losing their children. In one case, with a family of six children, ranging in age from eleven down to one year, the conditions in the house were deplorable. The children were found to be in an extreme state of dirt, and all looked miserable and ill nourished. Their clothing was described as being nothing but rags. The house itself was in a filthy condition, infested with vermin the natural result of unclean living. This state of matters was not due to poverty, as the parents were quite able to do better. It was simply laziness and indifference. It is pleasing to report that bringing them before the magistrate proved a salutary lesson, and conditions are now decidedly better.

The modern woman is considered too delicate to shoulder a gun, but nobody questions her ability to bare arms.

Minard's Liniment relieves pain.

Quick Thinking Is Big Factor In Car Driving

Not Only Must Operator Watch Own Affairs, But It Is Necessary to Look Out for the Errors of Others

Vigilance Brings Safety

Children in Streets Have Become added Responsibility for Automobilists

The modern motorist, that is, the automobilist of these days of excessive traffic, must have an ample supply of gray mater under his hat. He must do the thinking for two people. He must think for himself and for the other fellow. The time is gone when the driver of a motor vehicle can expect to be a safe operator and do only his own thinking. He must develop a much larger mental capacity than that.

And who is the other fellow for whom the motorist must have thought? The child playing in the street, going to and from school is one other fellow. A very thoughtless creature. It is estimated that about 20 per cent. of all those who are fatally injured are children. Probably a larger number of the accidents which do not result in death involve children.

Protection for Children

It is reported on reliable authority that some fathers who take a great interest in their children to see that they are sent to some first-class camping place for the summer, primarily for the benefit of a better physical development will during the same perlod drive their own automobiles at high speed past playgrounds and camping sites where the children of other parents are getting their chance for recreation and health. Such a father would not break any speed where his own son might be located, but will be less thoughtless in the vicinity of other camping properties.

Another mature automobile operator who takes it for granted that his own children have little capacity for looking after themselves will nevertheless expect other children of the same age to be perfectly capable of dodging in front of his car. He will frequently sound his automobile horn as warning, which requires quick and intelligent action on the part of those warned. It should be taken for granted that children under such circumstances do not readily think clearly for themselves and the motorist must d osome of this kind of thinking for them.

In general, it might be said that any pedestrian is one of those other fellows for whim the motorist must think There are many adults about on foot who are highly excitable. Some are ignorant, some stupid, probably a few mentally unbalanced. Most of these people can hardly be expected to act rationally in any kind of emergency such as obtains in an automobile crisis. Even the most intelligent of grown-ups are often so thoroughly absorbed in various thoughts that they cannot be depended upon by motorists to act in any specific fashion.

More Reckless Operator

Not all the extra thinking of the motorist can be directed toward pedestrians. There are many motorists driving automobiles, but not doing a very good job of it. In other words, it becomes essential for the safe driver to do considerable thinking for the more reckless operator. While this kind of mental exercise is not always enjoyable to the motorist and certainly does not give him any great opportunity from the standpoint of observing the scenic beauty along the road and some of the points of interest, nevertheless it seems to be his fate.

The manufacturers of automobiles are contributing their share toward helping to improve this situation. They are perfecting the braking facilites on cars and making other improvements in the interest of safe driving and easier manipulation of a car. Those improvements go far in relieving the strain in handling a modern motor vehicle.

With the stage all set by the makers of cars in the interest of safety, it is now up to the drivers to sharpen their wits, exercise their gray matter and cut down the actual number of accidents. It is safe to say that motorists are doing this with increasingly satsfactory results.

It was the young advocate's first case in Court, and he was very nervous. "My lord," he begun, "I appear in this matter to—er—to—er—" "Yes, yes," interrupted the Judge, "but it's not your business to err, Mr. Smith. That is my privilege."

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Lanterns on Floor Serious Menace

Should Be Hung On Hook Out of Way—Electric Light Safest

A nervous brindle cow, being milked for the first time, kicked over the lantern set on a box behind her, and a great city was wiped out. That was in Chicago, back in the last century, but the same thing has been going on in a minor way ever since. Each year, several good barns in Ontario go up in smoke, as a result of a lantern being knocked over, and while a city is not wiped out, the loss to the individual, especially when mows and stalls are full of valuable stock and equipment, is disastrously high. And the tragedy of the thing is that it is all due to carelessness.

Firm hooks, fixed in the ceiling of the stable at convenient intervales will cost but a few cents, and yet when the lantern ise swung from these, not only is the light better distributed, but a nervous heifer, a spirited horse, or a hurrying man cannot knock it over and set fire to the place. The Ontario Fire Marshal suggests that it would be good business if the country insurance companies would buy several thousand of these hooks and present half a dozen to each policy holder. Even if one fire was prevented as a result, the saving effected would pay for the hooks for all time to come.

Where possible, Ontario fire fighting officials urge the installation of electric lights, which they mantain make the safest illuminaton. Where the wring is done by a competent electrician, and the work inspected by a government official, fire risk is reduced to the minimum. Where it is impossible to put in electric light, and unfortunately, this is often the case in the country, good safety lanters should be procured and the hooks provided.

Importance of Our Water-Power

Canada's water-power resources form one of her most striking and important natural assets. Their nature, extent, and location combine to give them a special value in relation to the chief centres of industry and population. Water-power is available in every province, and it is not too much to say that, apart from the human factor, water-power is the most vital force behind Canadian industrial development.

Give a small boy a watch and he will have the time of his life.

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Hostess: Willy, won't you have some more Christmas pudding? Willy: No, thanks; mother says I don't want any more.

Minard's Liniment for asthma.

Royal Bank Annual Meeting

The annual General Meeting of shareholders of The Royal Bank of Canada marked the close of the most successful year in the history of the Bank.

Sir Herbert Holt, President, in his address, dealt more particularly with general conditions throughout the country, but touched on many developments of great importance, more especially from the standpoint of trade and industry.

C. E. Neill, General Manager, reviewed the growth of the Bank to the foremost position it now occupies and gave to the shareholders an interesting insight into the part the bank is playing in all centres in which it is now doing business.

Outlook Favorable.

Sir Herbert referred to the year's developments in industry, trade and finance as generally satisfactory. The foundation for the development which has taken place is sound. Sir Herbert declared that as yet there are no indications of industrial and commercial inflation. Production is not expanding to a point unwarranted by growth and demand and it is a noteworthy fact that the whole expansion has taken place during a period characterized by moderately declining prices. On the whole the financial situation in agriculture, industry and commerce is more settled than at the beginning of the period. Summing up the business situation, Sir Herbert stated that the "outlook was never more favorable for prolonged prosperity in Canada."

Necessity For Curbing Unwise Speculation.

In commenting on the annual statement, Mr. Neill referred at length to the importance of call loans, which represent loans against stock exchange collateral, not only of the Royal Bank, but of all banks. He pointed out that this was indicative of three things:

"1. Increase in the number of securities available to investors.

"2. Increase in the market value of securities.

"3. Increase in speculation.

"In a growing country the development of its resources produces new securities. Prosperous times result in the enhancement in value of securities and for these reasons it is clear that the two first mentioned causes for the increase in Call Loans are at least to some extent justified. As to the third, it is obvious that speculation has reached a dangerous stage. The best-informed financial and brokerage firms are already operating on an unusually conservative basis by calling for increased margins, by declining to open new accounts and by restricting the liability of their customers to reasonable amounts. In times of excessive speculation, the lure of easy profits cannot be denied, but speculation can be checked and held within reasonable bounds by the financial interests, particularly the banks, and bond and brokerage houses."

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