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The SKELETON FINGER

by Headon Hall

BEGIN HERE TODAY.

KATHLEEN GLENISTER, sister of James Glenister, whose mysterious death has stirred the countryside, and NORMAN SLATER, her lover, are held in secret prison by Sir Dudley, who wishes to marry Kathleen to allay suspicion that he murdered Glenister, while—

JAMES WRAGGE, Scotland Yard detective, is searching for the lovers. He finds Simon Trickey, a police character, who was supposed to have died suddenly in the recent past, prowling about the Dudley home.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXI.—(Cont'd.)

"You can jump on my feelings so long as you don't shove me in quod."

"Then just one little question. You took your wife over as damaged goods to oblige a gentleman, didn't you."

Mr. Simon Trickey rasped his stubbly chin with unclean fingernails. For an instant his scowl seemed to presage revolt. He ended by solemnly winking at his interlocutor.

"She wasn't a cinema star when she did me the honor to accept my heart and hand," he replied with sly suggestion. "Quite a nice little allowance paid quarterly she had, but who paid it I haven't the remotest idea. You might ask her the next time you're strolling along Lipscombe Road."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ROOM DOWNSTAIRS.

Norman Slater did not recover his senses till the small hours of the morning, and then for a long while only in the sketchiest fashion. In his war experienced he had been gassed on one occasion and buried in a shell-hole for half a day on another, and his present sensations reminded him of both. His head was splitting, his throat was parched and his limbs were so cramped that movement was almost denied him.

Not a ray of light shone on his misery.

By degrees remembrance came back, up to the point when he had succumbed to superior numbers and a most potent anaesthetic in the keeper's cottage. From that his mind worked backwards to the events of the day before and what had led up to them. He groaned i ndespair—not for his own plight, but because he feared for Kathleen.

At first he had not the faintest notion where he was. The sound of running water gurgling close by presently gave him a clue to his whereabouts, and at last the breaking of dawn on an iron-grated aperture high up in the wall of his prison confirmed it.

His treacherous captors had carried him to the deserted mill across the stream and had fastened him to a wall in the basement. As the light grew stronger he was sure of this. That pile of rotting sacks in the corner must once have held golden grain reaped in the pleasant countryside which he would never see again.

His gloomy meditations were disturbed by the grating of a key and the opening of the door of his prison. Judith Grimes entered, bearing a basin of porridge and a jug of milk. She went out as silently as she had come, a gaunt and forbidding figure with her scanty gray locks and angular shoulders.

The food and drink restored his body and mind to something approaching the normal.

He was straining his bonds painfully when once again the door of his dungeon swung open. He sank down again in a shiver of disappointment and disgust. It was Sir Dudley Glenister who swaggered into the noisesome hole jingling coins in his pocket and exuding triumph in every pore of hs great, coarse body.

"Well, my bold hero, you've bitten off more than you can chew," the baronet jeered at the helpless man.

Norman made no answer. Where was the use? He was not going to plead to the bully for mercy.

"Sulking won't help you," the ruthless voice resumed. "The sentence of the court has been pronounced and no defence will prevail. Tonight, my dear Slater, an accident is going to happen to this ancient ruin. It is going to be utterly destroyed by fire.

"Well, my bold hero, you've bitten off more than you can chew."

But before the flames catch hold I shall call again with a hunting crop and repay with interest the dressing-down you gave me in Cadogan Garden. Makes your flesh creep, eh?"

If it did there was no sign. Norman preserved silence, gazing up at the dissipated face with weary scorn.

"There is just a chance that you may be spared the degradation of being thrashed as well as burned," the husky voice went on. "That rests with your lady-love, who is my guest on the upper floor. If she consents to become my wife she will be spared the flames and you will be spared the whipping. You will burn anyhow, as I have no other means of stopping the fuss you would make."

The threat fell flat, so far as any outward show went.

"I am now going up to present my terms to Kathleen," Sir Dudley concluded. "I hope I have made it clear that it rests with her whether you are flogged in addition to being cremated."

He went out, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE INSPECTOR'S BUSY DAY.

Inspector Wragge's explorations took him to the local post office, where he sent off a couple of reply-paid telegrams and then settled down to several longdistance talks on the telephone. Next he set out and walked by field footpaths to Colnbrook Towers.

As he plodded up the elm avenue to the statesman's country home a car passed him, also going toward the house, and stopped. Mr. Colne's dulcet voice hailed the pedestrian.

"That you, Wragge?"

"I was hoping to reach the Towers before you, sir, but I have had a very busy day," the inspector replied respectfully.

"Jump up alongside the chauffeur. It will save you half a mile," said the great man affably.

On arriving at the house Mr. Colne at once led the way to his study.

"Now, what does this mean?" he stood up and faced the detective. "I had your message in Downing Street and hastened here at once. You have found the letter written by Sir Dudley Glenister to his cousin?"

"Not the original, sir," replied Wragge. "As I told you, that was hopeless from the first. But I have got a man who took a press copy of it, which he will produce, and in the meanwhile he has informed me of the contents."

"Which were?" snapped the cabinet minister.

"Sir Dudley made an appointment with Mr. George to meet him at Beechwood on the 7th of June two years ago, the inducement being that Dudley would put up the money to run a gold mine which George had discovered near Lone Wolf City in Montana.

Mr. Colne looked hard at the inspector.

"This is genuine, Wragge?" he said after a pause. "You didn't have to write the letter yourself to save your bacon."

"Sir!" rejoined the Scotland Yard officer, and there was a world of virtuous protest in his tone.

"Then I fail to see the urgency which coused you to drag me from my public duties in London," said Mr. Colne haughtily. "Why don't you go and arrest your man? The case is complete."

Wragge dropped his eyes under the rebuke and raised them again at the grudging compliment.

"I am sorry to have disturbed you, sir, but in the chief commissioner's opinion the case is not quite ripe for an arrest," he replied suavely. "I have been in communication with Sir Donald at the Yard this afternoon. It is a question of the date—the 7th of June two years ago. We shall have to prove that Sir Dudley Glenister was at the Granage on that day and was therefore in a position to have killed his cousin if the latter kept the appointment made in the letter. As a neighbor and friend of the Glenister family we thought that you might be able to help us—if you were spending the week-end covering that date at the Towers. It was Sir Donald who made the suggestion."

The Right Honorable Stephen Colne was very angry now.

"Sir Donald is an idiot," he blustered. "And you, too, Wragge, for acting on such folly. How can I remember where I was on a certain day more than two years ago?"

"Of course you couldn't, sir," replied Wragge humbly. "But your secretaries or someone might have a record."

Mr. Colne's wrath was blazing to white heat, for nearly a minute rendering him speechless.

"What would that avail?" he hectored. "It is Sir Dudley Glenister you have to pin down for that date—not me. Supposing I was at the Towers on the 7th of June that year it wouldn't be evidence against him unless I had seen him, and I cannot recall that. The chances are that I was not here that week-end."

"Quite so, sir," said Wragge soothingly. "I expect the chief commissioner only suggested asking you as a sort of forlorn hope."

Mr. Colne spluttered and muttered, but seemed to be partly pacified by the reply.

"I can see that I shall have to teach you your business," he laughed. "Why don't you ask Miss Kathleen Glenister? She was living at the Grange then. She didn't clear out till over a year later, when the present upstart took possession."

It was Wragge's turn to laugh, but there was no good humor in his effort. It rasped like a rusty file.

(To be continued.)

A SMART SUIT.

The smart two-piece suit shown here is a practical and easily fashioned style. The tunic has a V neck with shaped collar and shield, a useful patch pocket and long set-in sleeves finished with cuffs. No. 1499 is in sizes 2, 4 and 6 years. Size 4 requires 1⅞ yards 36-inch, or 1¼ yards 54-inch material, and ⅝ yard 86-inch contrasting. Price 20c the pattern.

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Hudson Bay Basin Rich in Resources

Timber and Mineral Wealth Described by Dr. R. B. Stewart

GOLD YIELD EXPECTED

Additional Pulp and Paper Mills Probable in Near Future

Picturing the future of the Hudson Bay Basin as a producttive section of the Dominion, the Hon. Charles McCrea, Ontario Minister of Mines, spoke briefly recently before the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, Toronto Branch.

Mr. McCrea introduced Dr. R. B. Stewart, chief medical adviser of the Hudson's Bay Company, who gave an illustrated lecture on "The Natural Resources of the Hudson Bay Basin." Mr. McCrea referred to the railway builders pushing two different lines up to Hudson Bay and James Bay, as modern pioneers, following the example set by Hudson. the explorer, in 1611.

Noting the immense area of the Hudson Bay Basin, more than 3,000,000 square miles, Dr. Stewart referred to the vast range of itts climatic conditions extending from sub-Arctic to temperate.

Geological Make-up.

Referring to the geological make-up of the basin, the speaker tuoched upon the granite to be found along the northern rims of the bay, the lignite on the Salmon River which supplies the stoves of many of the northern stations of the company, the mica being produced in small quantities at Lake Harbor, the nickel deposits at Cape Smith, lead at Mayfair River, gypsum and china clay in the Moose Factory section, and quantities of iron ore to be found in the Belcher Islands district, but noted that so far no gold deposits of any consequence have been located, although prospecting is being carried still further northward, and a fair probabilitty exists of this precious metatl being found in paying quantities.

Furs, the product of the district for 250 years, are still being sent out in large quantities, Dr. Stewart stated.

Fish of Two Varieties.

"Hudson Bay is not teeming with fish, as some people imagine," Dr. Stewart said, referring to the scarcity of any variety except rock cod and white fish. In time, the fisheries of the basin may attain large production, but not for some years. Pulp and paper production is already going ahead, with prospect of additional mills in the near future. Black and white spruce, tamarac, balsam, poplar, white birch and balsom pine are among the principal species of timber found in the area. Fall wheat, growing at Moose Factory, had shown as high a yield as that in the Western provinces, and a good future in agriculture was predicted by Dr. Stewart.

"I believe the Hudson Bay area route will prove a boon to Western Canada for general commodities, but it will not be for some years—possibly never—that wheat will be shipped to any great extentt. The straits are open longer than people imagine, but the difficulty will be to keep Fort Churchill's port open long enough to be of value to navigation by the new routte."

Princes Didn't Get "Promised' Giraffe

Owner, in 1489, Refused to Give Animal to King's Daughter

Chicago.—The pining of a princess for a giraffe 400 years ago is preserved in a history of that elongated animal published by the Field Museum of Natural History. Lorenzo de Medici had a giraffe in his menagerie at Florence, which aroused the interest of Anne de Beaujeu, daughter of Louis XI. of France. She had dreams of owning a giraffe of her own and finally alleged Lorenzo had promised her his.

Finally she wrote him on April 14, 1489. Her plea was of no avail. Lorenzo kept his giraffe.

Giraffes have been popular in regal circles since the time of remote Egyptian kings. Julius Caesar showed Rome its first giraffe in a triumphal procession in 46 B.C.

Although it hardly seems possible, giraffes have gone up. They used to cost between $1500 and $2000, but now run from $5000 to $7500.

Brimful of Foolishness.

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Wifis—"Because on your head that hat's brimful of foolishness."

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