

# The SKELETON FINGER

By Leadon Hall

## CHAPTER I

WHAT THE CROW DROPTED.

Autumn splendor was ablaze in the woods of Beechwood Grange. And there was the more material spectacle of a table in the centre of the room being loaded with creature comforts by two footmen in morning dress.

The men worked rapidly, as the clatter of benches and the popping of knifes heralded the approach of the guests for whom the alfresco feast was laid. The finishing touches had just been put to the snowy napery and the sparkling crystal when three ladies, dressed in the latest fashions, entered from a side door.

"Thank goodness!" wheezed the older woman, a stout woman with purple complexion and an auburn wig. "There's a table to eat off and chairs to sit on. Knives and forks, too, and quite an array of glasses. I was afraid we were expected to get out of the ground and drink beer out of mugs."

"Oh, my dear Lady Marrables, that's a bit rough on Sir Dudley," laughed the next in point of age, a handsome woman of thirty. "You ought to know him well enough to be sure that he wouldn't treat us like that. Besides, as our hostess you probably made the arrangements and are responsible for all this arduous luxury."

"Hostess?" sniffed the plethoric dowager. "I am no hostess, only charmer to this naughty child, who's better able to take care of me than I

ground beside him and slyly choosing the end seat for that purpose. Sir Dudley sat at the head of the table with the plethoric dowager on his right, the others ranging themselves usually, all but a tall soldierly young man who was at pains to manoeuvre himself into the chair next Kathleen Glenister.

This was Norman Slater, a distant connection by marriage of Lady Marrables, and a captain in the Rifle Brigade. Sir Dudley regarded him with scant favor and had only invited him to the Grange because the old lady had frankly declined to come herself unless Norman was asked. And Lady Marrables, as Kathleen's guardian, being indispensable, the young officer had been included in the small house party. Sir Dudley was far too much of a man of the world to be rude to a guest whom he had reason to believe was his rival in love. He had indeed been extra civil to him, allotting to him the best "stands" at the shoot and treating him effusively as a kinsman, which he was not. Lady Marrables was a sister of the late Sir Philip Glenister, George and Kathleen's father, and Norman Slater was a son of one of her deceased husband's sisters.

Another male guest staying in the house was the silent, ruminative man with a sharp, hatchet-like face and cavernous eyes, who in an evident fit of abstraction sat down on the other side of Kathleen. Doctor Willoughby Melville, the nerve specialist from Harley Street, owed his invitation to



FLYING INTO THE CENTRE OF THE LUNCHEON TABLE FELL THE GRISLY OBJECT.

em of her. It's a well-paid sinecure, my job it, and I don't repine, do I, Kathleen?"

The tall girl to whom the appeal was made smiled kindly on the speaker, but before she could reply the head of a little procession appeared at the opposite side of the table, in single file as it debouched from another woodland path, but bunching into a cluster in the wider space. Discussing the morning's sport with the gravity befitting such an occasion, the "guns" of Sir Dudley Glenister's first shoot of the season advanced to the luncheon table.

Nat only was it the first big shoot of the season, but the first occasion of the kind on which Sir Dudley had played the host. He had only enjoyed the title and estates for six months, his immediate predecessor having died two years before in America under circumstances entailing delay in the succession till presumption of his cousin George Glenister's death was legally granted by the High Court. According to the evidence procured by the family solicitors, George Glenister had, without knowing it, been a baronet for no more than a week when he was shot in a bar-room brawl.

Sir Dudley, leading his guests across the glade, seemed to be basking in the smiles of the belated good fortune which had pitched him from the Stock Exchange into a baronetcy carrying a fine old mansion and a rent roll of twenty thousand a year. A fine figure of a man, in the prime of life, with a loud voice and hearty manners, he might have been a country gentleman all the time. Perhaps his clothes helped the illusion, for from the crown of his burbery hat to his natty leggings he was dressed for the part to the minutest detail.

The men handed their guns to their leaders—all but Frank Glenister, a sixteen-year-old Eton boy who was so proud of his new weapon that he refused to part with it, laying it on the

professional services rendered to his host some years before the latter's succession to the baronetcy. Dudley Glenister, then a feverish operator in the "Kaffir Circus," had badly broken down after a week of wild speculation and was now paying a social debt to the great physician who had healed him.

The only remaining "man" of the house party was Frank Glenister, the Eton boy who would not be separated from his gun. He, also, was of the younger branch lately brought to the front by the hand of Death. As the son of a brother of Dudley, killed in an Indian frontier skirmish, he was heir presumptive to the title and estates. Since he was an engaging youngster, and Dudley intended to provide a more direct heir, the new baronet made much of him without any apprehensive jealousy.

The rest of the "guns" who gathered round the table in the glade were gentlemen from neighboring houses, brick-faced squires, a sporting parson and one other. That exception was the exception who did not fall exactly into either category. The Right Honorable Stephen Colne, as the owner of Colbrook Towers, might have been deemed a squire, but he was certainly not brick-faced. His well-bred, intellectual countenance was of an almost unhealthy pallor, due to the long hours spent as a Cabinet Minister on the Treasury Bench.

The period of liqueurs, whiskey and nicotine arrived. One of the brick-faced squires had taken advantage of the general somnolence to work off an original story culled from an ancient Pink 'Un, and he was warming to the risky climax when the words were literally jerked out of his mouth by the Eton boy, who was sitting next him.

"Mark over!" yelled the youngster, seizing his gun and leaping to his feet.

The host removed his cigar and looked skyward. "Don't be a donkey,

### Mexico May Spend Millions to Draw Tourists There

Initial Fund of \$500,000 to be Spent by Railroads Locally and in United States

Mexico City.—A half million dollars will be spent in 1928 to attract American and Canadian tourists to Mexico, according to an announcement issued from the Federal government, which is making up the budgets for the new year.

It is understood \$100,000 will be available for use of the National Railways of Mexico in advertising for tourists, with an opportunity to double this amount should it be required. The remainder will be paid American railway companies for advertising Mexico as a tourist center. The companies of the United States which are to share in this are those connecting with the National lines of Mexico.

It is understood \$500,000 will be a minimum figure and, if necessary, the amount will be increased to \$1,000,000. A bill called the "Law of Tourists" is being prepared to be submitted shortly to Congress, in which the tourist may buy a ticket into the country without going to the trouble to fill out identification or passport papers, since he would not be regarded as an immigrant.

### Interesting Early Exploration

One of the most interesting of the early explorations across Northern Canada was that made in 1712-13 by Samuel Hearne, who travelled from Fort Churchill on Hudson bay to the Arctic ocean at the mouth of the Coppermine river, and returned by a more southerly route through Great Slave lake.

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### Innocent Man Free After 15 Years' Jail

Dramatic Escape From Devil's Island Followed by Full Pardon

Paris.—A man, who has spent fifteen years of his life on Devil's Island for a crime of which he was innocent, stepped off the boat at Marseilles, and fell weeping into the arms of his wife.

It was Eugene Dieudonne, who was arrested in 1912 on a charge of having participated with the notorious Bonnot motor band gang in a series of hold-ups and murders, and in all the annals of French criminal justice there is no more dramatic and terrible story.

Bonnot himself, as he lay dying in the ruins of his home with a ring of policemen round him, added to his written confession, "Dieudonne is innocent."

The public, in spite of a mass of testimony showing that Dieudonne was at Nancy on the day on which the bank manager was held up and murdered in the Rue Ordener, cried for blood, and Dieudonne was sentenced to death. He stared the guillotine knife in the face for months, and was finally sent to Devil's Island for life. He tried to escape from this hell-hole time after time, and when he fled five other finally succeeded in March of this year they had a terrible experience.

They were wrecked on the Brazilian coast after a month's trip in a small sailing boat through raging storms and shark-infested waters, and one of them, named Nevan, was caught in the quicksands and the others were unable to rescue him. The five other convicts were compelled to watch him all day long as he screamed and struggled to free himself, but he sank deeper and deeper and eventually disappeared from sight. Three of the remaining men, who were too sick to go any farther, were left behind to be picked up by the natives, who sent them back to the penal settlement, but Dieudonne and another man pushed forward through the Brazilian jungle for weeks, fighting fevers, serpents, quicksands, and other dangers, until they reached a civilized district.

The French Minister of Justice at first demanded Dieudonne's extradition, but there was such an outburst of indignation that he agreed to examine the records of the trial. He then came to the conclusion that Dieudonne was completely innocent and granted him a full pardon.

Wilson Publishing Company

### Fashion

A CHIC PROCK.

The youthful frock shown here is one of the newest and smartest styles of this season, and will be found suitable for many occasions. The bodice is cut in sections, and each side of the front is slightly gathered and the scalloped lower edge is joined to the two-piece flared skirt. The convertible collar may be worn open, or fastened at the neck, and the long darted sleeves are finished with hand cuffs. No. 1696 is in sizes 16, 18 and 20 years. Size 18 (36 bust) requires 3 yards 39-inch, or 2 1/3 yards 54-inch material. Price 20c the pattern.

Our Fashion Book, illustrating the newest and most practical styles, will be of interest to every home dresser. Price of the book 10c the copy.

### HOW TO ORDER PATTERNS.

Write your name and address plainly, giving number and size of such patterns as you want. Enclose 20c in stamps or coin (coin preferred); wrap it carefully for each number and address your order to Pattern Dept., Wilson Publishing Co., 73 West Adelaide St., Toronto. Patterns sent by return mail.

Pass Along the Prescription.

WEST END RESIDENT SURVIVES FATAL ACCIDENT.

—Bergenfield (N.J.) paper.

Overdone Chops.

Wanted — Cook who can make things taste wood.—Ad in the Buffalo News.

### The Smile

The seven-thirty; one seat up—She sat across the aisle.

And gave us, as a sculptor would, The outline of a smile.

That I might note, the boy friend sent An elbow telegraph.

But I had seen and longed to chase That smile into a laugh.

We couldn't see just why that smile Was on that profile shown.

Unless, sad thought, it was some joke Exclusively her own.

For, all the while, she'd sit and view A night-filled window pane.

I made wisecracks in wiser tones, Alas, 'twas all in vain.

She hovered 'round the edge of mirth; You've seen a laugh begin.

Each moment we felt certain she Would tumble loudly in.

But now we land her self-control. For when we saw this lass We knew that she had seen her own Reflection in the glass.

—Harcourt Strange.

### Trees for Travellers

Each Christmas Day there are on an average thirty big British passenger liners at sea, some crossing the Atlantic, some the Pacific, some on their way to India or Australia. So always thousands of British subjects spend their Christmas on the water.

In most of these ships, however, and more particularly in the big transatlantic vessels, the day is kept in the true spirit. On one occasion, when the Mauretania was at sea on Christmas Day with nearly eighteen hundred passengers, five hundred puddings were cooked and eaten on Christmas Eve. There was a Christmas carnival, and on Christmas morning carols were sung. There was also a Christmas tree for the children, and one of the officers dressed as Father Christmas distributed presents.

One has even heard of Christmas trees in trains. The old trans-Continental express which ran across Europe to Constantinople invariably had a tree in the dining saloon, which was brilliantly illuminated. It must have been a curious sight as it sped across the snow-clad plains of Germany and Hungary with its tree ablaze with lights.

### King George Loses Money By Salary Arrangement

London.—King George would have a much bigger income if an agreement had not been reached between the sovereign and the government 200 years ago that the nation's ruler should surrender his life interest in the king's lands in consideration of a fixed salary.

Of recent years the income from crown property has increased marvellously. Since 1920 the income from crown lands has almost doubled and is now £1,134,255 annually.

The block adjoining Piccadilly Circus in which the Plaza, the new American-owned picture theatre, is located, now yields £16,126, as against £5,825 in 1920.

Leaseholds on the new building development along Regent Street between Piccadilly and Oxford Circuses now yield £215,229 annually, as against £44,070 in 1913, when old buildings occupied the space now filled by uniform stone buildings which form the most beautiful business section of London.

Queen Victoria and Edward VII received more through their civil lists than they would have received had their ancestors kept the income from crown lands in lieu of salaries, but the Commissioners of Crown Lands have been so successful in developing property of recent years that George V would be a very rich man were he receiving the earnings of the crown lands.

### "Man proposes and woman inposes."

Peter Pan Candidate.

Thus it will be seen that in the Republican race, Mr. Hoover is the youngest of the group mentioned, and even at the end of the next Presidential term, which begins in March, 1929, he ends in March, 1932, Mr. Hoover, still the successful candidate, would be younger than Messrs. Lowden, Hughes or Dawes, respectively.—Washington Correspondence in the Raleigh News and Observer.

"What became of the old-fashioned women who stuck a broom straw into the bread in the oven to see if it was done?" Probably sticking the measuring stick into the tank of the car to see how much gasoline she needs.

### Australia Now Empire Leader In Civil Flying

Observer Ascribes Place to Federal Action and Determined Aviators

Perth, W. Aus.—The British Air Mission recently passed through Western Australia on their return to England. On the voyage to Colombo the members of the mission proceeded along one of the air lanes through which the air liners will travel to Australia. The mail boat Nahera, on which they traveled, was fitted with special instruments to enable data to be collected in relation to air currents and cloud formations in the Indian Ocean. The members of the mission were enthusiastic regarding the results of their investigations, and unstinted in their praise of Australia's civil aviation achievements.

Asked for his opinion of civil aviation in Australia, Group-Captain Pelletier said that, without any question, civil aviation in Australia was ahead of that in any other part of the Empire. He attributed this to the following circumstances: the way the problem had been tackled by the Commonwealth Government; the fact that Australia had been fortunate to get first-class men to run the commercial side; and the favorable natural conditions. Amplifying the second point, the captain said that post-war aviation in Australia had been in the hands of men who were not only sound from the standpoint of aviation, but were of a type who accomplished what they set out to do.

Mr. Gilbert, superintendent of the British Meteorological Office, as well as member of the mission, expressed the opinion that everything would be in readiness for the much-discussed project for an England-Australia line of huge airships in 1930, provided the necessary extensions of the meteorological services in Australia were made. He said that a first-order meteorological observing station would undoubtedly be established at an early date on the site chosen for the first strip base and early action would be taken in regard to planning the reporting organization for the demonstration flight. That would enable a chain of wireless stations which would send and receive air weather signals.

### French Wine Men Are Discouraged

Champagne Sales Smaller Throughout the World

Epernay, France.—The champagne appetite throughout the world has diminished so greatly in 1927, especially in France, that shippers of this region have become alarmed. They are planning an intensive campaign to advertise the bubbling vintage in 1928, in conjunction with a reduction of prices.

The diminution in domestic shipments for the first six months of the year was nearly 68 per cent, and the total diminution on domestic and foreign shipments was 48 per cent, under the figures for the similar period last year.

Hard times in the champagne consuming countries and high prices are blamed largely for the diminution in purchases. But there are other contributing reasons, say some dealers who point out that the sale of all kinds of wine in France has dropped considerably in the last year or so, while that of beer and cider and other inexpensive drinks of the "habitué" variety has increased. Beer, particularly, has gained enormously in public favor.

### "MUTT AND JEANS"

"YOU MEAN TO SAY CRUDE MACHINA CAN DO JUSTICE MEASURING?"

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