

The Hollow of Her Hand

By **GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEN**
Author of "The Doctor" and "The King," etc.

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Revised, 1912, by David A. Cook

"Oh, no, I don't believe you will find him to be the jibber you imagine. He can take defeat like a man. He is devoted to you, he is devoted



"Damn it All, Sara! She—She Turned Me Down!"

to me. Your decision no doubt wrecks his fondest hopes in life, and it doesn't make a weakening of him."

"I don't quite understand—"

"He is satisfied by the belief that he has paid you the highest honor a man can pay to a woman. There is no reason why he should turn his back on you, as a sulky boy might do. No, my dear, I think you may count on him as your best, most loyal friend from this night on. He has just said to me that his greatest pain lies in the fact that you may not be willing to accept him a simple, honest, unassuming friend since—"

"Oh, Sara, if he will only be that and nothing more!" cried the girl wonderingly.

Sara smiled confidently. "If you haven't thought to fear in that direction, my dear, it isn't in Leslie's nature to make to court a second time."

"He is all pride. The blow it tonight can't be repeated—"

"FOR by the same person."

"With a sorry it had to be Leslie," house. "Hetty."

"\$800.00, to him, Hetty. He deserves per month you, say the least. I did offer him if he found it impossible to be here on account of—"

"out for" cried the girl in distress. "St. your dearest friend. Send me—"

"Sara, if in your mind. Don't let anything stand in the way of your friendship for Leslie. You depend on me for so much, my dear. I can't bear the thought of—"

"Hush, dearest! You are first in my love. Better for me to lose all the others and still have you."

The girl looked at her in wonder for a long time. "Oh, I know you mean it, Sara, but—how can it be true?"

"That yourself in my place," said she, "I can't say in reply, and her companion had no means of translating the sentence."

"She could only remain mute and wondering, her eyes fixed on that other mystery, the cameo face in the moon that hung high above the somber forest."

IF BACK HURTS USE SALTS FOR KIDNEYS

Get less salt if kidneys feel like lead or bladder bothers you—Meat forms uric acid.

Most folks regard that the kidneys, like the bowels, get sluggish and clogged and need a flushing occasionally, else we have backache and dull misery in the kidney region, or severe headache, rheumatic twinges, torpid liver, acid stomach, sleeplessness and all sorts of bladder disorders.

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sortly, but she did not complete the sentence that started it, he tried to herself she repeated; "It is because I love you that I would scold you with Wrاندall!"

"You are very good to me, Sara," sobbed Hetty.

"You will be nice to Leslie?"

"Yes, yes! If he will only let me be his friend."

"He asks no more than that. Now, you must go to bed."

Suddenly, without warning, she held the girl tightly in her arms. Her breathing was quick, as of one moved by some sharp sensation of regret. When Hetty, in no little wonder, opened her eyes Sara's face was turned away, and she was looking over her shoulder as if cause for alarm had come from behind.

"What is it?" cried Hetty anxiously. She saw the look of dread in her companion's eyes, even as it began to fade.

"I don't know," muttered Sara. "Something, I can't tell what, came over me. I thought some one was stealing up behind me. How silly of me."

"ah," said Hetty, with an odd smile, "I can understand how you feel."

"Hetty, will you take me in with you tonight?" whispered Sara nervously. "Let me sleep with you."

"I can't explain it, but I am afraid to be alone tonight." The girl's answer was a glad smile of acquiescence.

"Come with me, then, to my bedroom tonight. I have no question of feeling that some one is in my room. I don't want to be alone. Are you afraid?"

Hetty held back, her face blanking. "No, I am not afraid," she cried at once, and started toward the door.

"There is some one in this room," said Sara a few moments later, when they were in the big bedroom down the hall.

"I—I wonder," murmured Hetty. "And yet neither of them looked about in search for an intruder!"

Far into the night Sara sat in the window of Hetty's dressing room, her chin sunk low in her hands, staring moodily into the now quiescent night, her eyes somber and unblinking, her body as motionless as death itself. The cooling wind caressed her hair and whispered warnings into her unheeding ears, but she sat there unprotected against its chill, her nightdress damp with the mist that crept up with sinister stealth from the sea.

CHAPTER XI.

In the Shadow of the Mill. The next day but one was overcast. On cloudy, bleak days Hetty Castleton always felt depressed.

"Let us to return from the wilds on the following day. Early in the morning Booth had telephoned to inquire if she did not want to go for a long walk with him before luncheon."

The portrait was finished, but he could not afford to miss the morning hour with her. He said as much to her in proving his irritation.

"Tomorrow Leslie will be here and I shan't see as much of you as I'd like," he explained, rather wistfully.

"There is a crowd of people here and I got so used to having you all to myself, it's hard to break off suddenly."

"I will be ready at eleven," she said, and was pleasantly surprised to find that her voice rang with a life, new interest. The grayness seemed to lift from the view that stretched beyond the window; she even looked for the sun in her eagerness.

It was then that she knew why the world had been bleaker than usual, even if he shook of gray.

A little before eleven she set out briskly to intercept him at the gates. Unknown to her, Sara sat in her window, and viewed her departure with gloomy eyes. The world also was gray for her.

They came upon each other unexpectedly at a sharp turn in the road. Hetty, colored with a sudden rush of confusion, and had all she could do to meet his eager, happy eyes as he stood over her and explained his pleasure in her, upward sentences. Then they walked on together, a strange shyness attending them. She experienced the faintness of breath that comes when the heart is filled with pleasant alarms. As for Booth, his blood sang. He thrilled with the joy of being near her, of the feel of her all about him, of the delicious feminine appeal that made her so wonderful to him. He wanted to crush her in his arms, and he had these feelings, to the end of his brute physical strength so that she might never again be herself but a part of him.

They uttered commonplace. The spell was on them. It would lift, but for the moment they were powerless to struggle against it. At length he saw the color fade from her cheeks; her eyes were able to meet his with the look to them that all men love. Then he seemed to get his feet on the ground again, and a strange, ineffably shapely foot in an American walking shoe.

"I must point you all over again," he said, suddenly breaking in on one of her remarks. "I have to go to-day—an outdoor girl, a glorious outdoor girl!"

"In muddy boots," she laughed, drawing her skirt away to reveal a shapely foot in an American walking shoe.

He smiled and gave voice to a new thought. "By Jove, how much better her eyes were than those of the kind they wear in London!"

"Sara insists on American shoes, so long as I am with her. I don't think her boots are so villainous, do you?"

"Just the same, I'm going to point you again, boots and all!"

"They are to do Sara at once. She has consented to sit to you. She will be wonderful, Mr. Booth, oh, how wonderful!"

"There was no mistaking the sincerity of this rapt opinion."

"Stunning," was his brief comment. "She was silent for a long time, so long indeed that he turned to look at her."

"A thoroughly decent, fair minded chap is Leslie Wrاندall," he pronounced, for want of some better term to say. "Still, I'm bound to say, I'm sorry he is coming home tomorrow."

"The red crept into her cheeks again. "I thought you were such pals," she said nervously.

"I expect to be his best man if he ever marries," said he, chucking a stone at the roadside with his walking stick. Then he looked up at her furiously and added, with a quizzical smile: "Unless something happens."

"What could happen?"

"He might marry the girl I'm in love with, and, in that case, I'd have to be excluded."

"Where shall we talk to this morning?" she asked abruptly. He had drawn closer to her in the roadway.

"Is it too far to the old stables mill? That's where I first saw you, if you remember."

"Yes, let us go there," she said, but her heart sank. She knew what was coming. Perhaps it were best to have it over with; to put it away with the things that were to always be her lot. It was a dream, it would mean the end of their companionship, the end of a love dream. She would have to lie to him; to tell him she did not love him.

"Coming to the fog in the broad meadow, they were striking off into the narrow road that led to the quaint old mill, long since abandoned in the forest glade beyond, when their attention was drawn to a motor car, which was slowing down for the turn into Sara's domain. A cloud of dust swam in the air far behind the machine."

A bare-headed man on the seat beside the driver waved his hand to them, and two women in the tonneau bowed gravely. Both Hetty and Booth flushed uncomfortably, and hesitated in their progress up the forest road.

The man was Leslie Wrاندall. His mother and sister were in the back seat of the touring car.

"No," she cried instantly, with something like impatience in her voice. "And spoil our walk!" she added in the next breath, adding a nervous little laugh.

"It seems rather—," he stammered dubiously.

"Oh, let us have our day," she cried sharply, and led the way into the by-road.

They came, in the course of a quarter of an hour, to the bridge over the



She Made No Response.

mill race. Beyond, in the mossy shades, stood a dilapidated, century-old structure known as Rangle's mill, a landmark with a history that included incidents of the Revolutionary war, when eager patriots held secret meetings inside its walls and plotted under the very eaves of its gables to overthrow the crown.

Pausing for a few minutes on the bridge, they leaned on the rail and looked down into the clear, mirror-like water of the race. Their own eyes looked up at them; they smiled into their own faces. And a fleshy, white cloud passed over the glittering stream and swept through their faces, off to the bank, and was gone forever.

Suddenly he looked up from the water and fixed his eyes on her face. She had seen her clear blue eyes fill with tears as he gazed into them from the rail above.

"Oh, my dear!" he cried. "What is she put her handkerchief to her eyes as she quickly turned away. In another instant she was smiling up at him, a soft, pensive smile that struck to his heart."

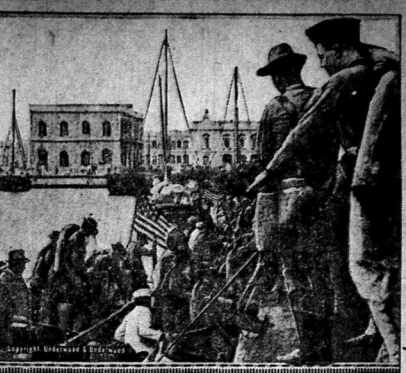
"Shall we start back?" she asked, a quaver in her voice.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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