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REDMOND, OREGON

The Hollow of Her Hand

By
GEORGE BARR
MCCUTCHEON

Author of "Gleanings"
"Trustin King," etc.

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

...ing she could only describe as an
...ion! . . . How she hated the
...randalls! . . . Then came the
...al awakening; when the truth came
...her as a revelation from God. Hetty
...ed not been to blame. The girl was
...ocent of the one sin that called
... vengeance so far as she was con-
...cerned. The slaying of Challis Wran-
...all was justified! All these months
...he had been harboring a woman she
...elieved to have been his mistress as
...ell as his murderess. It was not so
...uch the murderess that she would
...ave foisted upon the Wrاندalls as a
...ughter, but the mistress!
...he loved the girl, she had loved her
...rom that first night. Back of it all,
...before, lay the stern, unsuspected
...ruth; from the very beginning she in-
...tinctively had known this girl to be
...nocent of guilt. . . . Her house
...f cards fell down. There was nothing
...left of the plans on which it had
...been constructed. It had all been
...wept away, even as she strove to
...protect it against destruction, and the
...round was strewn with the ashes of
...ires burnt out. . . . She was
...hocked to find that she had even
...sult upon the evil spot! . . . Al-
...most word for word she repeated Het-
...y's own story of her meeting with
...halls Wrاندall, and how she went,
...step by step and blindly, to the last
...cene in the tragedy, when his vile-
...ness, his true nature was revealed to
...er. The girl had told her everything,
...he had thought herself to be in love
...with Wrاندall. She was carried away
...by his protestations. She was infatu-
...ated. (Sara smiled to herself as she
...poke of this. She knew Challis Wran-
...all's charm!) The girl believed in
...him implicitly. When he took her to
...Burton's inn it was to make her his
...wife, as she supposed. He had ar-
...ranged everything. Then came the
...ruth. She defended herself. . . .
...I came upon her in the road on
...that wild night, Brandon, at the place
...pointed out. Can you picture her as
...have described her? Can you pic-
...ture her despair, her hopelessness, her
...nervous? I have told you everything,
...from beginning to end. You know how
...she came to me, how I prepared her
...for the sacrifice, how she left me. I
...have not written to her. I cannot. She
...must hate me with all her soul, just as
...I have hated the Wrاندalls, but with
...greater reason, I confess. She would
...have given herself up to the law long
...ago, if it had not been for exposing
...me to the world as her defender, her

protector. She knew she was not morally guilty of the crime of murder. In the beginning she was afraid. She did not know our law, our laws. In time she came to understand that she was in no real peril, but then it was too late. A confession would have placed me in an impossible position. You see, she thought of me all this time. She loved me as no woman ever loved another. Was not I the wife of the man she had killed, and was



He Dropped Suddenly Upon the Trunk.

not I the noblest of all women in her eyes? God! And to think of what I had planned for her!"
This was the end of the story. The words died away in a sort of whimpering wail, falling in with the wind to be lost to his straining ears. Her head drooped, her arms hung limply at her side.
For a long time he sat there in silence, looking out over the darkening water, unwilling, unable indeed, to speak. His heart was full of compassion for her, mingling strangely with what was left of scorn and horror. What could he say to her?
At last she turned to him. "Now you know all that I can tell you of Hetty Castleton—of Hetty Glyn. You could not have forced this from me, Brandon. She would not tell you. It was left for me to do in my own good time. Well, I have spoken. What have you to say?"
"I can only say, Sara, that I thank God for everything," he said slowly.
"For everything?"
"I thank God for you, for her and for everything. I thank God that she found him out in time, that she killed him, that you shielded her, that you failed to carry out your devilish scheme, and that your heart is very sore today."
"You do not despise me?"
"No. I am sorry for you."
Her eyes narrowed. "I don't want you to feel sorry for me."
"You don't understand. I am sorry for you because you have found yourself out and must be despising yourself."
"You have guessed the truth. I despise myself. But what could be expected of me?" she asked ironically. "As the Wrاندalls would say, 'blood will tell.'"
"Nonsense! Don't talk like that! It is quite unworthy of you. In spite of everything, Sara, you are wonderful. The very thing you tried to do, the way you went about it, the way

you surrender, makes for greatness in you. If you had gone on with it and succeeded, that fact alone would have put you in the class with the great, strong, virile women of history. It—"

"With the Medicis, the Borgias and—" she began bitterly.
"Yes, with them. But they were great women, just the same. You are greater, for you have more than they possessed: a conscience. I wish I could tell you just what I feel. I haven't the words. I—"

"I only want you to tell me the truth. Do you despise me?"

"Again I say that I do not. I can only say that I regard you with—yes, with awe."

"As one might think of a deadly serpent."

"Hardly that," he said, smiling for the first time. He crossed over and laid his hand on her shoulder. "Don't think too meanly of yourself. I understand it all. You lived for months without a heart, that's all."

"You put it very gently."

"I think I am right. Now, you've got it back, and it's hungry for the sweet, good things of life. You want to be happy. You want to love again and to be loved. You don't want to be pitied. I understand. It's the return of a heart that went away long months ago and left an empty place that you filled with gall. The bitterness is gone. There is something sweet in its place. Am I not right?"

She hesitated. "If you mean that I want to be loved by my enemies, Brandon, you are wrong," she said clearly. "I have not been chastened in that particular."

"You mean the Wrاندalls?"

"It is not in my nature to love my enemies. We stand on the same footing as before, and always shall. They understand me, I understand them. I am glad that my project failed, not for their sake, but for my own."

He was silent. This woman was beyond him. He could not understand a nature like this.

"You say nothing. Well, I can't ask you to understand. We will not discuss my enemies, but my friends. What do you intend to do in respect to Hetty?"

"I am going to make her my wife," he said levelly.

She turned away. It was now quite dark. He could not see the expression on her face.

"What you have heard does not weaken your love for her?"

"No. It strengthens it."

"You know what she has done. She has taken a life with her own hands. Can you take her to your bosom, can you make her the mother of your own children? Remember, there is blood on her hands."

"Ah, but her heart is clean!"

"True," she said moodily, "her heart is clean."

"No cleaner than yours is now, Sara."

She uttered a short, mocking laugh. "It isn't necessary to say a thing like that to me."

"I beg your pardon."

Her manner changed abruptly. She turned to him, intense and serious.

"She is so far away, Brandon. On the other side of the world, and she is full of loathing for me. How am I to regain what I have lost? How am I to make her understand? She went away with that last ugly thought of me, with the thought of me as I appeared to her on that last, enlightening day. All these months it has been

growing more horrible to her. It has been beside her all the time. All these months she has known that I pretended to love her—"

"I don't believe you know Hetty as well as you think you do," he broke in. "You forget that she loved you with all her soul. You can't kill love so easily as all that. It will be all right, Sara. You must write and ask her to come back. It—"

"Ah, but you don't know!" Then she related the story of the liberated canary bird. "Hetty understands. The cage door is open. She may return when she chooses, but—don't you see?—she must come of her own free will."

"You will not ask her to come?"

"No. It is the test. She will know that I have told you everything. You will go to her. Then she may understand. If she forgives she will come back. There is nothing else to say, nothing else to consider."

"I shall go to her at once," he said resolutely.

She gave him a quick, searching glance.

"She may refuse to marry you, even now, Brandon."

"She can't!" he cried. An instant later his face fell. "By Jove, I— I suppose the law will have to be considered now. She will at least have to go through the form of a trial."

She whirled on him angrily. "The law? What has the law to do with it? Don't be a fool!"

"She ought to be legally exonerated," he said.

Her fingers gripped his arm fiercely. "I want you to understand one thing, Brandon. The story I have told you was for your ears alone. The secret lives with us and dies with us."

He looked his relief. "Right! It must go no farther. It is not a matter for the law to decide. You may rust me."

"I am cold," she said. He heard her teeth chatter distinctly as she pulled her thick mantle closer about her throat and shoulders. "It is very raw and wet down here. Come!"

As she started off along the long, narrow pier, he sprang after her, grasping her arm. She leaned rather heavily against him for a few steps and then drew herself up. Her teeth still chattered, her arm trembled in his clasp.

"By Jove, Sara, this is bad," he cried, in distress. "You're chilled to the marrow."

"Nerves," she retorted, and he somehow felt that her lips were set and drawn.

"You must get to bed right away. Hot bath, mustard, and all that. I'll



This Woman Was Beyond Him.

not stop for dinner. Thanks just the same. I will be over in the morning."

"When will you sail?" she asked, after a moment.

"I can't go for ten days, at least. My mother goes into the hospital next week for an operation, as I've told you. I can't leave until after that's over. Nothing serious, but—well, I can't go away. I shall write to Hetty tonight, and cable her tomorrow. By the way, I—I don't know just where to find her. You see, we were not to write to each other. It was in the bargain. I suppose you don't know how I can—"

"Yes, I can tell you precisely where she is. She is in Venice, but leaves there for Rome, by the Express."

"Then you have been hearing from her?" he cried sharply.

"Not directly. But I will say this much: there has not been a day since she landed in England that I have not received news of her. I have not been out of touch with her, Brandon, not even for an hour."

"Good heaven, Sara! You don't mean to say you've had her shadowed by—by detectives," he exclaimed, aghast.

"Her maid is a very faithful servant," was her ambiguous rejoinder.

(To be continued.)

Curious Custom.

The custom known as "Whuppitty Scorie" was celebrated by the youth of Lanark, Scotland, recently, when the bell in the town's steeple rang out for the first time at 6 o'clock after a five months' silence. From March 1 to September 30 of each year the bell rings for some minutes at 6 p. m., but during the remainder of the year it remains silent. On the occasion of the ringing of the bell for the first time the young people gather at the cross, each carrying a stringed cap in his hand. When the bell tolls the boys run in procession round the parish church. They do this three times and then a rush is made for New Lanark, for the purpose of meeting the boys of that village to engage in combat, the weapons used being the stringed caps.

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