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The Hollow of Her Hand

By
GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON
Author of "Grazzark"
"Truston King," etc.

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

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Call—if you don't mind waiting, it is a business conference they're having."

An ironic gleam appeared in the corner of Vivian's eye. "Oh," she said, and waited. Hetty smiled uncertainly. All at once the tall American girl was impressed by the wistful, almost humble look in the Englishwoman's eyes, an appealing look that caused her to wonder not a little. Like a flash she jumped at an obvious conclusion, and almost caught her breath. This girl loved Booth and was losing him! Vivian exulted for a moment and then, with an impulse she could not quite catalogue, laid her hand on the other's slim fingers, and murmured somewhat hazily: "Never mind, never mind!"

"Oh, you must wait," cried Hetty, not at all in touch with the other's mood. "Sara expects to see you. The men will be out in a few minutes."

"I think I will run in tomorrow morning," said Vivian hastily. She arose almost immediately and again extended her hand. "So glad to see you back again, Miss Castleton. Come and see me. Give my love to Sara."

She took her departure in some haste, and in her heart she was rejoicing that she had not succeeded in making a fool of herself by confessing to Sara that she had said unkind things about her to Brandon Booth.

Hetty resumed her seat in the broad French window and stared out over the barren treetops in the park. A frightened, pathetic droop returned to her lips. It had been there most of the day.

In Sara's boudoir, the doors of which were carefully closed, three persons were in close, even repressed conference. The young mistress of the house sat propped up in a luxurious chaise-louche, wan but intense. Confronting her were the two men, leaning forward in their chairs. Mr. Carroll held in his hand a number of papers, prominent among them being three or four telegrams. Booth's face was radiant despite the serious matter that occupied his mind. He had reached town early in the morning in response to a telephone message from Carroll announcing the sudden, unannounced appearance of Hetty Castleton at his offices on the previous afternoon. The girl's arrival had been most unexpected. She walked in on Mr. Carroll, accompanied by her maid, who had a distinctly sheepish look in her eyes and seemed eager to explain something but could not find the opportunity.

With some firmness, Miss Castleton

had asked Mr. Carroll to explain why the woman had been set to spy upon her every moment, a demand the worthy lawyer could not well meet for the good and sufficient reason that he wasn't very clear about it himself. Then Hetty broke down and cried, confessing that she was eager to go to Mrs. Wrاندall, at the same time sobbing out something about a symbolic dicky-bird, much to Mr. Carroll's wonder and perplexity.

He sent the maid from the room, and retired with Miss Castleton to the innermost of his private offices, where without much preamble he informed her that he knew everything. Moreover, Mr. Booth was in possession of all the facts and was even then on the point of starting for Europe to see her. Of course, his letter had failed to reach her in time. There was quite a tragic scene in the seclusion of that remote little office during which Mr. Carroll wiped his eyes and his nose more than once, after which he took it upon himself to dispatch a messenger to Sara with the word that he and Miss Castleton would present themselves within half an hour after his note had been delivered.

The meeting between Sara and Hetty was affecting. . . . Almost immediately the former began to show the most singular signs of improvement. She laughed and cried and joyously announced to the protesting nurse that she was feeling quite well again! And, in truth, she got up from the couch on which she reclined and insisted on being dressed for dinner. In another room the amazed nurse was frantically appealing to Mr. Carroll to let her send for the doctor, only to be confounded by his urbane announcement that Mrs. Wrاندall was as "right as a string" and, please God, she wouldn't need the services of doctor or nurse again for years to come. Then he asked the nurse if she had ever heard of a disease called "nostalgia."

She said she had heard of "homesickness."

"Well, that's what ailed Mrs. Wrاندall," he said. "Miss Castleton is the cure."

Booth came the next morning. . . . Even as she lay passive in his arms, Hetty denied him. Her arms were around his neck as she miserably whispered that she could not, would not be his wife, notwithstanding her love for him and his readiness to accept her as she was. She was obdurate, lovingly, tenderly obdurate. He would have despaired but for Sara, to whom he afterwards appealed.

"Wait," was all that Sara had said, but he took heart. He was beginning to look upon her as a sorceress. A week ago he had felt sorry for her; his heart had been touched by her transparent misery. Today he saw her in another light altogether; as the determined, resourceful, calculating woman who, having failed to attain a certain end, was now intensely, keenly interested in the development of another of a totally different nature. He could not feel sorry for her today.

Hetty deliberately had placed herself in their hands, withdrawing from the conference shortly before Vivian's arrival to give herself over to gloomy conjectures as to the future, not only for herself, but for the man she loved and the woman she worshipped with something of the fidelity of a beaten dog.

At a later conference participated in by Sara, Booth and Mr. Carroll, the old lawyer spoke plainly.

"Now are you both willing to give serious consideration to the plan I propose? Take time to think it over. No harm will come to Miss Castleton, I am confident. There will be a nine days' sensation, but, after all, it is the best thing for everybody. You propose living abroad, Booth, so what are the odds if—"

"I shan't live abroad unless Hetty reconsiders her decision to not marry me," said the young man dismally.

"Gad, Sara, you must convince her that I love her better than—"

"I think she knows all that, Brandon. As I said before, wait! And now, Mr. Carroll, I have this to say to your suggestion: I for one am relentlessly opposed to the plan you advocate. There is no occasion for this matter to go to the public. A trial, you say, would be a mere formality. I am not so sure of that. Why put poor Hetty's head in the lion's mouth at this late stage, after I have protected her so carefully all these months? Why, take the risk? We know she is innocent. Isn't it enough that we acquit her in our hearts? No, I cannot consent, and I hold both of you to your promises."

"There is nothing more I can say, my dear Sara," said Carroll, shaking his head gloomily, "except to urge you to think it over very seriously. Remember, it may mean a great deal to her—and to our eager young friend here. Years from now, like a bolt from the sky, the truth may come out in some way. Think of what it would mean then."

Sara regarded him steadily. "There are but four people who know the truth," she said slowly. "It isn't like-



Vivian Found Herself Looking Into the Face of Hetty Castleton.

ly that Hetty or Brandon will tell the story. Professional honor forbids your doing so. That leaves me as the sole peril. Is that what you would imply, my dear friend?"

"Not at all," he cried hastily, "not at all. I—"

"That's all tommy-rot, Sara," cried Booth earnestly. "We just couldn't have anything to fear from you."

With curious inconsistency, she shook her head and remarked: "Of course, you never could be quite easy in your minds. There would always be the feeling of unrest. Am I to be trusted, after all? I have proved myself to be a vindictive schemer. What assurance can you and Hetty have that I will not turn against one or the other of you some time and crush you to satisfy a personal grievance? How do

you know, Brandon, that I am not in love with you at this very—"

"Good heavens, Sara!" he cried, "escape."

"—at this very moment?" she continued. "It would not be so very strange, would it? I am very human. The power to love is not denied me. Oh, I am merely philosophizing. Don't look so serious. We will suppose that I continued along my career as the woman scorned. You have seen how I smart under the lash. Well—"

"But all that is impossible," said Booth, his face clearing. "You're not in love with me, and never can be. That! for your philosophy!"

At the same instant he became aware of the singular gleam in her eyes; a liquid, oriental glow that seemed to reflect light on her lower lids as she sat there with her face in the shadow. Once or twice before he had been conscious of the mysterious, seductive appeal, its scared back as her, almost defensively, but her gaze did not waver. It was he who first looked away, curiously uncomfortable.

"Still," she said slowly, "I think you would be wise to consider all possible contingencies."

"I'll take chances, Sara," he said, with an odd buoyancy in his voice that, for the life of him, he could not explain, even to himself.

"Even admitting that such should turn out to be the case," said Mr. Carroll judicially, "I don't believe you'd go so far as to put your loyal friends in jeopardy, Sara. So we will dismiss the thought. Don't forget, however, that you hold them in the hollow of your hand. My original contention was based on the time-honored saying, 'murder will out.' We never can tell what may turn up. The best laid plans of men and mice oft—"

Sara settled back among the cushions with a peremptory wave of her hand. The loose, flowing sleeve fell away, revealing her white, exquisitely modeled arm almost to the shoulder. For some strange, unaccountable reason Booth's eyes fell.

"I am tired, wretchedly tired. It has been a most exhausting day," she said, with a sudden note of weariness in her voice. Both men started up apologetically. "I will think seriously of your plan, Mr. Carroll. There is no hurry, I'm sure. Please send Miss Wrاندall in to me, will you? Perhaps you would better tell Hetty to come in as soon as Vivian leaves. Come back tomorrow afternoon, Brandon. I shall be much more cheerful. By the way, have you noticed that Dicky, out in the library, has been singing all afternoon as if his little throat would split? It is very curious, but today is the first time he has uttered a note in nearly five months. Just listen to him! He is fairly riotous with song."

Booth leaned over and kissed the hand she lifted to him. "He is like the rest of us, Sara, inordinately happy." A slight shiver ran through her arm. He felt it.

"I am so afraid his exuberance of spirit may annoy Vivian," said she, with a rare smile. "She detests vulgarity."

The men departed. She lay back in the chaise-louche, her eyes fixed on the hand he had touched with his lips.

Watson tapped twice on the door. "Miss Wrاندall could not wait, ma'am," he said, opening the door softly. "She will call again tomorrow."

"Thank you, Watson. Will you hand me the cigarettes?"

Watson hesitated. "The cigarettes, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"But the doctor's orders, ma'am, begging your pardon for—"

"I have a new doctor, Watson."

"I beg pardon, ma'am!"

"The celebrated Doctor Folly," she said lightly.

CHAPTER XX.

Sara Wrاندall's Decision.

"Now, you see what I mean, Brandon, when I insist that it would be a mistake for you to marry me," said Hetty in a troubled voice. "I feel that Sara will not let me go."

"That's pure nonsense, Hetty," he said. "She wants you to marry me, I am positive." He may have thought his tone convincing, but something caused her to regard him rather fixedly, as if she were trying to solve an elusive puzzle.

He took her by the arm and raised her to her feet. Holding her quite close, he looked down into her questioning eyes and said very seriously:

"You are suspicious, even of me, dearest. I want you. There is but one way for you to be at peace with yourself; shift your cares over to my shoulders. I will stand between you and everything that may come up to trouble you. We love one another. Why should we sacrifice our love for the sake of a shadow? For a week, dearest, I've been pleading with you; won't you end the suspense today—end it now—and say you will be my wife?"

The appeal was so gentle, so sincere, so full of longing that she wavered. Her tender blue eyes, lately so full of dread, grew moist with the ineffable sweetness of love, and capitulation was in them. Her warm, red lips parted in a dear little smile of surrender.

"You know I love you," she said tremulously.

He kissed the lovely, appealing lips, not once but many times.

"God, how I worship you," he whispered passionately. "I can't go on without you, darling. You are life to me. I love you! I love you!"

She drew back in his arms, the shadow chasing the light out of her eyes.

"We are both living in the present, we are both thinking only of it, Brandon. What of the future? Can we foresee the future? Dear heart, I am always thinking of your future, not my

Continued on Page 7

MAN IS SLAIN BY HIS EMPLOYEE

(Continued from 1st Page)

coroner's jury returned a verdict of murder in the first degree.

Another Account

H. L. McDowell, who was accused of first degree murder for killing A. Scoggins at Paulina, is restless and uneasy in his cell at the county jail in Prineville. McDowell said that the killing was in self defense, but when questioned further stated that he shot Scoggins in the back of the head with the dead man's own gun, a .32 Special rifle, shooting an explosive ball. The entire upper half of the head was scattered over the dining room as a result of the shot, which was fired at a distance of but four feet.

McDowell, who is only 22 years of age, is a native of Gilliam county, and of good family. He has worked for Scoggins for nine months, and a week ago was hired to spend the winter on the Scoggins farm, he said, at \$35 a month, breaking horses. There has, however, been bad blood between the two for some time, caused, McDowell says, by McDowell causing Scoggins' arrest some weeks ago when the latter was insanely intoxicated and threatened to kill members of his family.

Evidence developed at the coroner's inquest indicated McDowell's

infatuation with the dead wife, which is supposed to have been the cause of the tragedy. It is said to have threatened the McDowell the day before the killing. He sent McDowell word to place last Friday morning, the first time the men met was in the dining room, when the deed was committed.

When Scoggins was shot, no weapons of any kind on his person, according to McDowell's statement. The Circuit Court of the case will come in September together with two other trials.

Wide Proviso

A successful agriculturalist carried on each year in a large scale in the south of Ireland. In the many competitions for the management of thrift and cleanliness one for the best turned out and cart. The prize for this was all won by the local doctor or local solicitor. After one year's trial the farmers and working classes tested that it was not quite to expect their hard-worked animals to compete successfully with the cared-for and well-groomed animals those who generally won the prize. In consequence of this protest a law was passed in connection with the following year's competition appeared in the placard for the following year. Legal and medical donkeys again.

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