



CHAPTER XX.—Continued.

The Hollow of Her Hand

by George Barr McCutcheon

COPYRIGHT, 1912, BY GEORGE BARR MCCUTCHEON; COPYRIGHT, 1912, BY DODD, MEAD & COMPANY



"I don't know what it all means, Brandon," she said hurriedly, looking over her shoulder as she spoke. "Sara says that she has come to a decision of some sort. She wants us to hear her plan before making it final. I—I don't understand her at all tonight."

"It can't be anything serious, dearest," he said, but something cold and nameless oppressed him just the same. "She asked me if I had finally decided to—to be your wife, Brandon. I said I had asked you for two or three days more in which to decide. It seemed to depress her. She said she didn't see how she could give me up, even to you. She wants to be near me always. It is—it is really tragic, Brandon."

CHAPTER XXI.

The Jury of Four.

The Wrاندalls sat waiting and wondering. They had been sent for and they had declined to respond, much to their own surprise. Redmond Wrاندall occupied a place at the head of the library table. At his right sat his wife, Vivian and Leslie, by direction, took seats at the side of the long table, which had been cleared of its mass of books and magazines. Lawyer Carroll was at the other end of the table, perceptibly nervous and anxious. Hetty sat a little apart from the others, a rather forlorn, detached member of the conclave. Brandon Booth, pale-faced and alert, drew up a chair alongside Carroll, facing Sara who alone remained standing, directly opposite the four Wrاندalls.

"I can't very well discuss a thing I know absolutely nothing about," she said succinctly.

"Most of it is in building lots and factories in Belfast, of course. It was more in the nature of a question than a declaration. The old family castle isn't very much of an asset, I take it."

"I fancy you can trust Colonel Castleton to make the best possible deal in the premises," said Booth drily.

"I suppose so," said the other resignedly. "He is a shrewd beggar, I'm convinced of that. Strange, however, that I haven't heard a word from him since he left us in London. I've been expecting a cablegram from him every day for nearly a fortnight, letting me know when to expect him."

extraordinary words of self-indictment. A puzzled frown appeared on Hetty's brow.

"Perfidy?" interposed Mr. Wrاندall. His wife's expression changed from one of bored indifference to sharp inquiry. Leslie paused in the act of lighting a cigarette.

"It is the mildest term I can command," said Sara. "I shall be as brief as possible in stating the case, Mr. Wrاندall. You will be surprised to hear that I have taken it upon myself, as the wife of Challis Wrандall and, as I regard it, the one most vitally concerned if not interested in the discovery and punishment of the person who took his life—I say I have taken it upon myself to shield, protect and defend the unhappy young woman who accompanied him to Burton's inn on that night in March. She has had my constant, my personal protection for more than twenty months."

The Wrандalls leaned forward in their chairs. The match burned Leslie's fingers, and he dropped it without appearing to notice the pain.

"What is this you are saying?" demanded Redmond Wrандall.

"When I left the inn that night, after seeing my husband's body in the little upstairs room, I said to myself that the one who took his life had unwittingly done me a service. He was my husband; I loved him, I adored him. To the end of my days I could have gone on loving him in spite of the cruel return he gave for my love and loyalty. I shall not attempt to tell you of the countless lapses of fidelity on his part. You would not believe me. But he always came back to me with the pitiful love he had for me, and I forgave him his transgressions. These things you know. He confessed many things to you, Mr. Wrандall. He humbled himself to me. Perhaps you will recall that I never complained to you of him. What rancor I had was always directed toward you, his family, who would see me no wrong in your king but looked upon me as dirt beneath his feet. There were moments when I could have slain him with my own hands, but my heart rebelled. There were times when he said to me that I ought to kill him for the things he had done. You may now understand what I mean when I say that the girl who went to Burton's inn with him did me a service. I will not say that I considered her guiltless at the time. On the contrary, I looked upon her in quite a different way. I had no means of knowing then that she was as pure as snow and that he would have despoiled her of everything that was sweet and sacred to her. She took his life in order to save that which was dearer to her than her own life, and she was on her way to pay for her deed with her life if necessary when I came upon her and intervened."

"You—you know who she is?" said Mr. Wrандall, in a low, incredulous voice.

"I have known almost from the beginning. Presently you will hear her story, from her own lips."

Involuntarily four pairs of eyes shifted. They looked blankly at Hetty Castleton.

Speaking swiftly, Sara depicted the scenes and sensations experienced during that memorable motor journey to New York city.

"I could not believe that she was a vicious creature, even then. Something told me that she was a tender, gentle thing who had fallen into evil hands and had struck because she had been unwell. I did not doubt that she had been my husband's mistress, but I could not destroy the conviction that somehow she had been justified in doing the thing she had done. My gravest mistake was in refusing to hear her story in all of its details. I only permitted her to acknowledge that she had killed him, no more. I did not want to hear the thing which I assumed to be true. Therein lies my deepest fault. For months and months I misjudged her in my heart, yet secretly loved her. Now I understand why I loved her. It was because she was innocent of the only crime I could lay at her feet. Now I come to the crime of which I stand self-accused. I must have been mad all these months. I have no other defense to offer. You may take it as you see it for yourselves. I do not ask for pardon. After I deliberately had set about to shield this unhappy girl—to cheat the law, if you please—to cheat you, perhaps—I conceived the horrible thought to avenge myself for all the indignities I had sustained at the hands of you Wrандalls, and at the same time to even my account with the one woman whom I could put my finger upon as having robbed me of my husband's love. You see I put it mildly. I have hated all of you, Mrs. Wrандall, even as you have hated me. Today—now—I do not feel as I did in other days toward you. I do not love you, still I do not hate you. I do not forgive you, and yet I think I have come to see things from your point of view. I can only repeat that I do not hate you as I once did."

"She paused. The Wrандalls were too deeply submerged in horror to speak. They merely stared at her as if stupefied; as breathless, as motionless as stones.

"There came a day when I observed that Leslie was attracted by the guest in my house. On that day the plan took root in my brain."

"Good God!" fell from Leslie's lips. "You—you had that in mind?"

"It became a fixed, inflexible purpose. Leslie. Not that I hated you as I hated the rest, for I tried to be considerate. The one grudge I held against you was that in seeking to sustain me you defamed my own brother. You came to me with stories of his misdeeds; you said that he was a scoundrel and that you would not blame me for 'showing him up.' Do you not remember? And so my plot involved you; you were the only one through whom I could strike. There were times when I faltered. I could not bear the thought of sacrificing Hetty Castleton, nor was it easy to thoroughly appease my conscience in respect to you. Still, if I could have had my way a few months ago, if coercion had been of any avail, you would now be the husband of your brother's slayer. Then I came to know that she was not what I had thought she was. She was honest. My bubble burst. I came out of the maze in which I had been living and saw clearly that what I had contemplated was the most atrocious—"

"Atrocious!" cried Mrs. Redmond Wrاندall between her set teeth. "Diabolical! Diabolical! My God, Sara, what a devil you are!" She did not complete the sentence, but sank back in her chair and stared with wide, horror-struck eyes at her rigid daughter-in-law.

Her husband, his hand shaking as if with palsy, pointed a finger at Hetty.

"And so you are the one who have been hunting for all these months, Miss Castleton? You are the one who have been smiling in our faces?"

"Stop, Mr. Wrандall!" commanded Sara, noting the ashen face of the girl.

"Don't let the fact escape you that I am the guilty person. Don't forget that she owed her freedom, if not her life to me. I alone kept her from giving herself up to the law. All that has transpired since that night in March must be placed to my account. Hetty Castleton has been my prisoner. She has rebelled a thousand times and I have conquered—not by threats but by love! Do you understand? Because of her love for me, and because she believed that I loved her, she submitted. You are not to accuse her, Mr. Wrандall. Accuse me! I am on trial here. Hetty Castleton is a witness against me. If you choose to call upon her as such. If not, I shall ask her to speak in my defense, if she can do so."

"This is lunacy!" cried Mr. Wrандall, coming to his feet. "I don't care what your motives may have been. They do not make her any less a murderer. She—"

"We must give her over to the police," began his wife, struggling to her feet. She staggered. It was Booth who stepped quickly to her side to support her. Leslie was staring at Hetty.

Vivian touched her father's arm. She was very pale but vastly more composed than the others.

"Father, listen to me," she said. Her voice trembled in spite of her effort to control it. "We are condemning Miss Castleton unheard. Let us hear everything before we—"

"Good God, Vivian! Do you mean to—"

"How can we place any reliance on what she may say?" cried Mrs. Wrандall.

"Nevertheless," said Vivian firmly, "I for one shall not condemn her unheard. I mean to be as fair to her as Sara has been. It shall not be said that all the Wrандalls are smaller than Sara Gooch!"

"My child—" began her father incredulously. His jaw dropped suddenly. His daughter's shot had landed squarely in the heart of the Wrандall pride.

"If she has anything to say"—said Mrs. Wrандall, waving Booth aside and sinking stiffly into her chair. Her husband sat down. Their jaws set hard.

"Thank you, Vivian," said Sara, surprised in spite of herself. "You are nobler than I—"

"Please don't thank me, Sara," said Vivian icily. "I was speaking for Miss Castleton."

Sara flushed. "I suppose it is useless to ask you to be fair to Sara Gooch, as you choose to call me."

"Do you feel in your heart that we still owe you anything?"

"Enough of this, Vivian," spoke up her father harshly. "If Miss Castleton desires to speak we will listen to her. I must advise you, Miss Castleton, that the extraordinary disclosures made by my daughter-in-law do not lessen your culpability. We do not insist on this confession from you. You deliver it at your own risk. I want to be fair with you. If Mr. Carroll is your counsel, he may advise you now to refuse to make a statement."

Mr. Carroll bowed slightly in the general direction of the Wrандalls. "I have already advised Miss Castleton to state the case fully and completely to you, Mr. Wrандall. It was I who originally suggested this—well, what you might call a private trial for her. I am firmly convinced that when you have heard her story, you, as her judges, will acquit her of the charge of murder. Moreover, you will be content to let your own verdict end the matter, sparing yourselves the shame and ignominy of having her story told

in a criminal court for the delectation of an eager but somewhat implacable world."

"Your language is extremely unpleasant, Mr. Carroll," said Mr. Wrاندall coldly.

"I meant to speak kindly, sir."

"Do you mean, sir, that we will let the matter rest after hearing her?"

"That is precisely what I mean, Mr. Wrандall. You will not consider her guilty of a crime. Please bear in mind this fact: that for Sara and Miss Castleton you would not have known the truth. Miss Castleton could not be convicted in a court of justice. Nor will she be convicted here this evening."

"Miss Castleton is not on trial," interposed Sara calmly. "I am the offender. She has already been tried and proved innocent."

Leslie, in his impatience, tapped sharply on the table with his seal ring.

"Please let her tell the story. Permit me to say, Miss Castleton, that you will not find the Wrاندalls as harsh and vindictive as you may have been led to believe."

Mrs. Wrандall passed her hand over her eyes. "To think that we have been friendly to this girl all these—"

"Calm yourself, my dear," said her husband, after a glance at his son and daughter, a glance of unexpressed helplessness. He could not understand them.

As Hetty arose, Mrs. Wrандall senior lowered her eyes and not once did she look up during the recital that followed. Her hands were lying limply in her lap, and she breathed heavily, almost stertorously. The younger Wrандalls leaned forward with their clear, unwavering gaze fixed on the earnest face of the young Englishwoman who had slain their brother.

"You have heard Sara accuse herself," said the girl slowly, dispassionately. "The shock was no greater to you than it was to me. All that she has said is true, and yet I—I would so much rather she had left herself unarranged. We were agreed that I should throw myself on your mercy. Mr. Carroll said that you were fair and just people, that you would not condemn me under the circumstances. But that Sara should seek to take the blame is—"

"Alas, my dear, I am to blame," said Sara, shaking her head. "But for me your story would have been told months ago, the courts would have cleared you, and all the world would have exonerated my husband and your son, Mrs. Wrاندall—whom we both loved. God believe me, I think I loved him more than all of you put together."

She sat down abruptly and buried her face in her arms on the edge of the table.

"If I could only induce you to forgive her," said Hetty, throwing out her hands to the Wrاندalls, only to be met by a gesture of repugnance from the grim old man.

"Your story, Miss Castleton," he said hoarsely.

"From the beginning, if you please," added the lawyer quietly. "Leave out nothing."

Clearly, steadily and with the utmost sincerity in her voice and manner, the girl began the story of her life. She passed hastily over the earlier periods, frankly exposing the unhappy conditions attending her home life, her subsequent activities as a performer on the London stage after Colonel Castleton's defection; the few months devoted to posing for Hawkright, the painter, and later on her engagement as governess in the wealthy Budlong family. She devoted some time and definiteness to her first encounter with Challis Wrандall on board the west-bound steamer, an in-



"And So You Are the One Who Have Been Hunting for All These Months."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

cident that came to pass in a perfectly natural way. Her deck chair stood next to his, and he was not slow in making himself agreeable. It did not occur to her till long afterwards that he deliberately had traded positions with an elderly gentleman who occupied the chair on the first day out. Before the end of the voyage they were very good friends.

"When we landed in New York, he assisted me in many ways. Afterwards, on learning that I was not to go to California, I called him up on the telephone to explain my predicament. He urged me to stay in New York; he guaranteed that there would be no difficulty in securing a splendid position in the east. I had no means of knowing that he was married. I accepted him for what I thought him to be: a genuine American gentleman. They are supposed to be particularly considerate with women. His conduct toward me was beyond reproach. I have never known a man who was so courteous, so gentle. To me, he was the most fascinating man in the world. No woman could have resisted him. I am sure of that."

She shot a quick, appealing glance at Booth's hard-set face. Her lip trembled for a second.

"I fell madly in love with him," she went on resolutely. "I dreamed of him, I could hardly wait for the time to come when I was to see him. He never came to the wretched little lodging house I have told you about. I—I met him outside. One night he told me that he loved me, loved me passionately. I—I said that I would be his wife. Somehow it seemed to me that he regarded me very curiously for a moment or two. He seemed to be surprised, uncertain. I remember that he laughed rather queerly. It did not occur to me to doubt him. One day he came for me, saying that he wanted me to see the little apartment he had taken, where we were to live after we were married. I went with him. He said that if I liked it, I could move in at once, but I would not consent to such an arrangement. For the first time I began to feel that everything was not as it should be. I—I remained in the apartment but a few minutes. The next day he came to me, greatly excited and more demonstrative than ever before, to say that he had arranged for a quiet, jolly little wedding up in the country. Strangely enough, I experienced a queer feeling that all was not as it should be, but his eagerness, his persistence dispelled the small doubt that had begun even then to shape itself. I consented to go with him on the next night to an inn out in the country, where a college friend who was a minister of the gospel would meet us, driving over from his parish a few miles away. I said that I preferred to be married in a church. He laughed and said it could be arranged when we got to the inn and had talked it over with the minister. Still uneasy, I asked why it was necessary to employ secrecy. He told me that his family were in Europe and that he wanted to surprise them by giving them a daughter who was actually related to an English nobleman. The family had been urging him to marry a stupid but rich New York girl and he—oh, well, he uttered a great deal of nonsense about my beauty, my charm, and all that sort of thing."

She paused for a moment. No one spoke. Her audience of judges, with the exception of the elder Mrs. Wrандall, watched her as if fascinated. Their faces were almost expressionless. With a perceptible effort, she resumed her story, narrating events that carried it up to the hour when she walked into the little upstairs room at Burton's inn with the man who was to be her husband.

As the result of being bit on the head with a pitched ball while at bat in a baseball game at Reading, twenty-year-old Herman Babb died suddenly. The boy had apparently felt no ill effects from the blow and attended a band concert and festival at a neighboring town.

Samuel Hinkle, a Wrightsville farmer, fifty years old, was killed in death by a runaway horse. Hinkle was driving the animal in a dog cart, when it began kicking and dashed away. After running several miles, the driver was shaken from the cart and died in a few minutes from a fractured skull.

As the result of being hit on the head with a pitched ball while at bat in a baseball game at Reading, twenty-year-old Herman Babb died suddenly. The boy had apparently felt no ill effects from the blow and attended a band concert and festival at a neighboring town.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church at Steelton must go without a pastor because of the war. Rectors serving this congregation are sent by the synod of Bulgaria and word has come that under conditions improve the place will have to remain vacant.

In three Pen Argyll slate quarries there was a fatality and two serious accidents. Barnett Sobers, fifty-nine years old, was struck on the head by a stone and killed. Wilbert Dood, accidentally cut off his right forefinger and E. Bonney nearly severed his hand in machinery.

Falling on the pavement, Mrs. Jesse Sharpe, of Coatesville, has entered suit to recover \$10,000 damages for the injuries sustained. It is alleged that the pavement needed repairing and that the borough was negligent for its condition.

Mike Ross, a prisoner in the Indiana county jail, dismembered Luther Blose, a fellow-prisoner, with an spoon he had sharpened on the concrete floor of the jail. Blose is in a critical condition in the Indiana Hospital.

In York street paving operations have been suspended because of a strike of thirty laborers. The laborers' claim they were promised \$2 a day when they left New York city, but only received \$1.60.

More than five thousand persons attended the Northernumberland, Monticome and Columbia counties' farmers' picnic at South Danville.

O. L. Reichert, eighteen years old, fell down a forty-foot elevator shaft at the Home Brewery Company plant at Shenandoah, and was fatally injured.

Thieves entered and robbed the houses at Macungie, taking valuable jewelry and some money.

Lightning burned the barn on the farms of Mrs. Jacob Hoffman, near Washingtonville, and Wilson Colburn, near Berwick, Wednesday night.

Falling from an electric crane at the Worth Brothers' mills, Coatesville, Fred Griest, twenty-eight years old, suffered serious injuries.

John M. Miller, a drayman, at the Bradford Hotel, was killed by the falling of a barrel in his mouth and discharged a bullet into his brain. He has been ill.

The George Jacobs farm of 145 acres, a short distance west of York, was selected by the County Poor Directors as the site for the new almshouse. It was decided to buy the farm at a consideration of \$25,000. Less than two years ago Jacobs bought the farm for \$13,000. The action of the Poor Directors must be approved by the County Commissioners and the Court.

James McCafferty, eighteen, and Thomas Keating, seventeen, both of Norristown, are alleged to have attempted suicide by jumping into deep water at McGinn's quarries, near Bridgeport. A passerby rescued the two young men, but when he pulled Keating out of the water he was unconscious. Keating was rushed to the hospital and a pulmonologist saved his life.

The fifty-fifth annual convention of the Grand Chamber of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Order Knights of Friendship, closed at Reading. Reading was selected as the next place of meeting, and nominations to be voted on next year were made. H. H. Hoffmeyer, of South Bethlehem, was nominated for grand scribe knight marshal.

Announcement was made of the wedding, August 16, at Terryville, Center of Miss Gladys H. Davis, only daughter of W. H. Davis, of Bethlehem, and Henry K. Mettler, Jr., a baseball pitcher at Bethlehem Preparatory School. The ceremony was performed by the bridegroom's father, Rev. H. K. Mettler, of the German Lutheran Church.

The Charlestown earthquake and those which have several times wrecked Kingston, Jamaica, were of a wholly different sort, the moving

THE NEWS TOLD IN PARAGRAPHS

Latest Happenings Gleaned From All Over the State.

LIVE NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Two Boys Rescued From Water
Horse Kicks Man To Death—Sick Man Shoots Himself—Boy Hit By Ball Dies.

During the height of the recent electrical storm at Shenandoah the electric light wires became so heavily charged that Benjamin Tonofsky, ninety years old, a merchant with a wife and one child, fearing fire, attempted to chop the electric wires in his store with a hatchet and was shocked to death. Dominick Kuchanski, twenty-five years old, single, and a relative of the victim, ran out in the storm in quest of assistance to Tonofsky, when he ran into a live wire and was slowly electrocuted, to the horror of many spectators.

The George Jacobs farm of 145 acres, a short distance west of York, was selected by the County Poor Directors as the site for the new almshouse. It was decided to buy the farm at a consideration of \$25,000. Less than two years ago Jacobs bought the farm for \$13,000. The action of the Poor Directors must be approved by the County Commissioners and the Court.

James McCafferty, eighteen, and Thomas Keating, seventeen, both of Norristown, are alleged to have attempted suicide by jumping into deep water at McGinn's quarries, near Bridgeport. A passerby rescued the two young men, but when he pulled Keating out of the water he was unconscious. Keating was rushed to the hospital and a pulmonologist saved his life.

The fifty-fifth annual convention of the Grand Chamber of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Order Knights of Friendship, closed at Reading. Reading was selected as the next place of meeting, and nominations to be voted on next year were made. H. H. Hoffmeyer, of South Bethlehem, was nominated for grand scribe knight marshal.

Announcement was made of the wedding, August 16, at Terryville, Center of Miss Gladys H. Davis, only daughter of W. H. Davis, of Bethlehem, and Henry K. Mettler, Jr., a baseball pitcher at Bethlehem Preparatory School. The ceremony was performed by the bridegroom's father, Rev. H. K. Mettler, of the German Lutheran Church.

Samuel Hinkle, a Wrightsville farmer, fifty years old, was killed in death by a runaway horse. Hinkle was driving the animal in a dog cart, when it began kicking and dashed away. After running several miles, the driver was shaken from the cart and died in a few minutes from a fractured skull.

As the result of being hit on the head with a pitched ball while at bat in a baseball game at Reading, twenty-year-old Herman Babb died suddenly. The boy had apparently felt no ill effects from the blow and attended a band concert and festival at a neighboring town.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church at Steelton must go without a pastor because of the war. Rectors serving this congregation are sent by the synod of Bulgaria and word has come that under conditions improve the place will have to remain vacant.

In three Pen Argyll slate quarries there was a fatality and two serious accidents. Barnett Sobers, fifty-nine years old, was struck on the head by a stone and killed. Wilbert Dood, accidentally cut off his right forefinger and E. Bonney nearly severed his hand in machinery.

Falling on the pavement, Mrs. Jesse Sharpe, of Coatesville, has entered suit to recover \$10,000 damages for the injuries sustained. It is alleged that the pavement needed repairing and that the borough was negligent for its condition.

Mike Ross, a prisoner in the Indiana county jail, dismembered Luther Blose, a fellow-prisoner, with an spoon he had sharpened on the concrete floor of the jail. Blose is in a critical condition in the Indiana Hospital.

In York street paving operations have been suspended because of a strike of thirty laborers. The laborers' claim they were promised \$2 a day when they left New York city, but only received \$1.60.

More than five thousand persons attended the Northernumberland, Monticome and Columbia counties' farmers' picnic at South Danville.

O. L. Reichert, eighteen years old, fell down a forty-foot elevator shaft at the Home Brewery Company plant at Shenandoah, and was fatally injured.

Thieves entered and robbed the houses at Macungie, taking valuable jewelry and some money.

Lightning burned the barn on the farms of Mrs. Jacob Hoffman, near Washingtonville, and Wilson Colburn, near Berwick, Wednesday night.

Falling from an electric crane at the Worth Brothers' mills, Coatesville, Fred Griest, twenty-eight years old, suffered serious injuries.

John M. Miller, a drayman, at the Bradford Hotel, was killed by the falling of a barrel in his mouth and discharged a bullet into his brain. He has been ill.