

# The Hollow of Her Hand

by George Barr McCutcheon

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CHAPTER XX.—Continued.

"I thought perhaps he had written you about his plans."

"My father does not know that I have returned to New York."

"Oh, I see. Of course, um—um! By the way, I think the colonel is a coker."

"One of the most amiable thoroughbreds I've ever come across. Ripping."

"He's never said anything to me about your sympathy toward him, but I can see with half an eye that he is terribly depressed about it. Can't you get to gather about it?"

"Really, Mr. Wrändall, you are encouraging your imagination to a point where words ultimately must fall you."

"She said very positively. Booth could hardly repress a chuckle."

"It's not imagination on my part," said Leslie with conviction, falling utterly to recognize the obvious. "I suppose you know that he is coming over to visit me for six weeks or so. We became rattling good friends before we parted. My Jove, you should hear him on old Lord Murgatroyd's will! The quintessence of will! I couldn't take it as he does. Expectations and all that sort of thing, you know, going up like a hot air balloon and bursting in plain view. But he never squeaked. Laughed it off. A British attribute, I dare say. I suppose you know that he is obliged to sell his estate in Ireland."

"Betty started. She could not conceal the look of shame that leaped into her eyes.

"I did not know," she murmured.

"Must be quite a shock to you. Sit down, Brandy. You look very picture-esque standing, but chairs were made to sit upon—or, whichever is proper."

Booth shrugged his shoulders.

"I think I'll stand, if you don't mind."

"I merely suggested it, old chap, fearing you might have overlooked the possibilities. Yes, Miss Castleton, he left us in London to go to Belfast on this dismal business." There was something in the back of his mind that he was trying to get at in a tactful manner. "By the way, is this property entailed?"

"I know nothing at all about it, Mr. Wrändall," said she, with a pleading glance at her lover, as if to inquire what stand she should take in this disastrous situation.

"If it is entailed he can't sell it," said Booth quietly.

"That's true," said Leslie, somewhat dubiously. Then, with a magnanimity that covered a multitude of doubts he added: "Of course, I am only interested in seeing that you are properly protected, Miss Castleton. I've no doubt you hold an interest in the estates."

"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 dryly.

"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."

"Are you going to California this winter for the flying?" asked Hetty.

Sara entered at that juncture, and they all sat down to listen for half an hour to Leslie's harangue on the way the California meet was being mismanaged, at the end of which he departed.

He took Booth away with him, much to that young man's disgust.

"Do you know, Brandy, old fellow," said he as they walked down Fifth avenue in the gathering dusk of the early winter evening, "ever since I've begun to suspect that damned old humbug of a father of hers, I've been congratulating myself that there isn't the remotest chance of his ever becoming my father-in-law. And, by George, you'll never know how near I was to leaping blindly into the brambles. What a close call I had!"

Booth's sarcastic smile was hidden by the dusk. He made no pretense of openly resenting the meanness of spirit that moved Leslie to these cadish remarks. He merely announced in a dry, cutting voice:

"I think Miss Castleton is to be congratulated that her injury is no greater than nature made it in the beginning."

"What do you mean by 'nature'?"

"Nature gave her a father, didn't it?"

"Obviously."

"Well, why add insult to injury?"

"By Jove! Oh, I say, old man!"

They parted at the next corner. As Booth started to cross over to the Plaza, Leslie called out after him:

"I say, Brandy, just a second, please. Are you going to marry Miss Castleton?"

"I am."

"Then, I retract the scurvy things I said back there. I asked her to marry me three times and she refused me three times. What I said about the brambles was rotten. I'd ask her again if I thought she's have me. There you are, old fellow. I'm a rotten cad, but I apologize to you just the same."

NATURE'S WORK AT FAULT

Recent Quake That Startled the East

Due to Imperfect Formation

of Rocky Section.

To understand the shock which this part of the country received one must realize that "Logan's fault"—the line of weakness in the underlying rocks that extends from Canada well down toward the Gulf of Mexico—plays much the same role as do the carefully provided solutions of continuity which every observing person who crosses the Brooklyn bridge has noted. These points of overlapping permit the structure to expand on hot days and to contract on cold ones without breaking any of its parts.

Nature, being a clumsy engineer,

has made for this section of the cooling earth a much less nearly perfect provision for contraction in the crack which Sir William E. Logan of the Geological Survey of Canada made when he first discovered and described. The earth joint works just as does that in the bridge, but it works stiffly and only at long intervals, when the strain

"You're learning, Leslie," said Booth, taking the hand other held out to him.

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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 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 Wrändalls, 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. Wrändall, 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 Wrändalls were too deeply submerged in horror to speak. They merely stared at her as if stumped; 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

was formed to get rid of her.

"It is the mildest term I can command," said Sara. "I shall be as brief as possible in stating the case, Mr. Wrändall. Your wife's expression changed from one of bored indifference to sharp inquiry. Leslie paused in the act of lighting a cigarette.

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