

The Hollow * Of Her Hand eorge Barr McCutcheon



SYNOPSIS.

Challis Wrandall is found murdered in a road house near New York. Mrs. Wran-dall is summened from the city and iden-tifies the body. A young woman who ac-companied Wrandall to the inn and subcompanied Wrandall to the inn and subsequently disappeared, is suspected. Wrandall, it sppears, had led a gay life and neglected his wife. Mrs. Wrandall starts back for New York in an auto during a blinding snow storm. Os the way she meets a young woman in the road who proves to be the woman who killed Wrandall. Feeling that the girl had done her a service in ridding her of the man, who though she loved him deeply, had caused her great sorrow. Mrs. Wrandall determines to shield her and takes her to her own home.

CHAPTER III .-- Continued.

Half an hour later he departed, to rejoin her at eleven o'clock; when the reporters were to be expected. He was to do all the talking for her. While he was there, Leslie Wrandall called her up on the telephone. Hearing but one side of the rather prolonged conversation, he was filled with wonder at the tactful way in which she met and parried the inevitable questions and suggestions coming from her horror-stricken brother-inlaw. Without the slightest trace of offensiveness in her manner, she gave Leslie to understand that the final obsequies must be conducted in the home of his parents, to whom once more her husband belonged, and that she would abide by all arrangements his family elected to make. Mr. Carroll surmised from the trend of conversation that young Wrandall was about to leave for the scene of the tragedy, and that the house was in a state of unspeakable distress. The lawyer smiled rather grimly to himself as he turned to look out of the window. He did not have to be told that Challis was the idol of the family, and that, so far as they were concerned, he could do no wrong!

After his departure, Mrs. Wrandall gently opened the bedroom door and was surprised to find the girl wideawake, resting on one elbow, her staring eyes fastened on the newspaper that topped the pile on the chair.

Catching sight of Mrs. Wrandall she pointed to the paper with a trembling hand and cried out, in a voice full of horror:

"Did you place them there for me to read? Who was with you in the other room just now? Was it some one about the some one looking for me! Speak! Please tell me. I heard a man's voice-"

The other crossed quickly to her

"Don't be alarmed. It was my lawyer. There is nothing to fear—at presyou to see. You can see what a sensation it has caused. Challis Wrandall was one of the most widely known zuen in New York. But I suppose you know that without my telling you."

The girl sank back with a groan. "My God, what have I done? What will come of it all?"

"I wish I could answer that question," said the other, taking the girl's hand in hers. Both were trembling

After an instant's hesitation, she laid her other hand in the dark, dishevelled hair of the wild-eyed creature, who still continued to stare at the headlines. "I am quite sure they will not look for you here, or in my home." "In your home?"

"You are to go with me. I have thought it all over. It is the only way Come, I must ask you to pull yourself together. Get up at once, and dress Here are the things you are to wear.' She indicated the orderly pile of garments with a wave of her hand. Slowly the girl crept out of bed, con-

fused, bewildered, stunned.

"Where are my own things? I-I cannot accept these. Pray give me my

Mrs. Wrandall checked her. "You must obey me, if you expect ane to help you. Don't you understand that I have had a-a bereavement? I cannot wear these things now. They are useless to me. But we will speak of all that later on. Come, be quick; I will help you to dress. First, go to The telephone and ask them to send a walter to-these rooms. We must have something to eat. Please do as I tell

Standing before her benefactress, her fingers fumbling impotently at the neck of the night-dress, the girl still continued to stare dumbly into the calm, dark eyes before her. "You are so good, I-I-"

"Let me help you," interrupted the other, deliberately setting about to remove the night-dress. The girl caught it up as it slipped from her shoulders; a warm flush suffusing her face, a shamed look springing into her eyes.

"Thank you, I can-get on very well. I only wanted to ask you a question. It has been on my mind. waking and sleeping. Can you tell me auything about-do you know his

The question was so abrupt, so startling that Mrs. Wrandall uttered a sharp little cry. For a moment she could not reply.

"I am so sorry, so desperately sorry for her," added the girl plaintively. "I know her," the other managed to

ony with an effort. "If I had only known that he had a wife-" began the girl bitterly, almost

arm. "You did not know that he had a wife?" she cried. The girl's eyes flashed with a sud-

den, flerce fire in their depths. "God in heaven, no! I did not know it until- Oh, I can't speak of it! Why should I tell you about it? Why should you be interested in hearing

Mrs. Wrandall drew back and regarded the girl's set, unhappy face. There was a curious light in her eyes that escaped the other's notice-a light that would have puzzled her not a little.

"But you will tell me-everythinga little later," she said, strangely calm. Not now, but-before many hours have passed. First of all, you must tell me who you are, where you live everything except what happened in Burton's inn. I don't want to hear that at present-perhaps never. Yes. on second thoughts, I will say never! happened up there, or just what led up to it. Do you understand? Never!"

The girl stared at her in amasement. "But I-I must tell some one," she cried vehemently. "I have a right to defend myself-"

"I am not asking you to defend yourself," said Mrs. Wrandall shortly. Then, as if afraid to remain longer, she rushed from the room. In the doorway, she turned for an instant to say: "Do as I told you. Telephone. Dress as quickly as you can." She closed the door swiftly.

Standing in the center of the room, her hands clenched until the nails cut the flesh, she said over and over again to herself: "I don't want to know! I don't want to know!"

A few minutes later she was critically inspecting the young woman who came from the bedroom attired in a street dress that neither of them had ever donned before. The girl, looking fresher, prettier and even younger than when she had seen her last, was in no way abashed. She seemed to have accepted the garments and the situation in the same spirit of resignation and hope; as if she had decided to make the most of her slim chance to profit by these amazing circums

They sat opposite each other at the little breakfast table.

"Please pour the coffee," said Mrs. Wrandall. The waiter had left the room at her command. The girl's hand shook, but she complied without word.

"Now you may tell me who you are and-but wait! You are not to say cafe, far down town. We-" Yes, I left the papers there for anything about what happened at the "And you had no friends, no acinn. Guard your words carefully. am not asking for a confession. I do not care to know what happened there. It will make it easier for me to protect you. You may call it conscience. Keep your big secret to yourself. Not one word to me. Do you understand?"

"You mean that I am not to reveal. even to you, the causes which led up

"Nothing-absolutely nothing," said Mrs. Wrandall firmly.

"But I cannot permit you to judge me, to-well, you might say to acquit me-without hearing the story. It is so "I can judge you without hearing all

of the-the evidence, if that's what you mean. Simply answer the ques-



She Cried.

tions I shall ask, and nothing more, There are certain facts I must have from you if I am to shield you. You must tell me the truth. I take it you are an English girl. Where do you live? Who are your friends? Where is your family?"

The girl's face flushed for an instant and then grew pale again.

"I will tell you the truth," she said "My name is Hetty Castleton. My father is Col. Braid Castleton of - of the British army. My mother is dead. She was Kitty Glynn, at one time a popular music hall performer in London. She was Irish. She died two years ago. My father was a gentleman. I do not say he is a gentleman. for his treatment of my mother relieves him from that distinction. He is in the far east, China, I think, I have not seen him in more than five years. He deserted my mother. That's

appeared in two or three of the | me? You will not desert me now?" | solutely unseen, animated by the sly reasons. I was known as Hetty Glynn. Three weeks ago I started for New | ed the other. York, sailing from Liverpool. Previuation as governess to her two little | you." girls soon afterward. I was to go to her home in San Francisco. She provided the money necessary for the hand; hot tears fell upon it, voyage and for other expenses. She is still in Europe. I landed in New York a fortnight ago and, following her directions, presented myself at a certain bank-I have the name somewhere—where my railroad tickets were to be in readiness for me, with You are never to tell me just what further instructions. They were to give me twenty-five pounds on the presentation of my letter from Mrs. Holcombe. They gave me the money and then handed me a cablegram from Mrs. Holcombe, notifying me that my services would not be required. There was no explanation. Just that,

"On the steamer I met-him. His deck chair was next to mine. I noticed that his name was Wrandall-'C. Wrandall' the card on the chair informed me. I-"

"You crossed on the steamer with him?" interrupted Mrs. Wrandall quickly. "Yes."

"Had-had you seen him before? In London ?-

"Never. Well, we became acquainted, as people do. He-he was very handsome and agreeable." She paused for a moment to collect herself

"Very handsome and agreeable," said the other slowly.

"We got to be very good friends. There were not many people on board, and apparently he knew none of them. It was too cold to stay on deck much of the time, and it was very rough. He had one of the splendid suites on the-

"Pray omit unnecessary details. You landed and went-where?"

"He advised me to go to an hotel-I can't recall the name. It was rather an unpleasant place. Then I went to the bank, as I have stated. After that I did not know what to do. I was stunned, bewildered. I called him up on the telephone and-he asked me to meet him for dinner at a queer little

one of the musical shows, saying he thought he could arrange it with a manager who was a friend. Anything to tide me over, he said. But I would not consider it, not for a instant. I had had enough of the stage. 1-I am really not fitted for it. Besides, I am qualified—well qualified—to be gov-erness—but that is neither here nor there. I had some money-perhaps forty pounds. I found lodgings with some people in Nineteenth street. He never came there to see me. I can see plainly now why he argued it would not be well, he used the word puzzled eyes for a moment before to her in the days when she loved her 'wise.' But we went occasionally to speaking. dine together. We went about in a motor-a little red one. He-he told me he loved me. That was one night about a week ago. I--"

"I don't care to hear about it." cried the other. "No need of that. Spare me the silly side of the story.'

"Silly, madam? In God's name, do you think it was silly to me? Whymore, I believe that he did love meeven now I believe it."

"I have no doubt of it," said Mrs. Wrandall calmly. "You are very pret-

ty-and charming." "I-I did not know that he had a

not go on. "Night before last."

The girl shuddered. Mrs. Wrandall turned her face away and waited.

"There is nothing more I can tell you, unless you permit me to tell all," the girl resumed after a moment of hesitation Mrs. Wrandall arose.

"I have heard enough. This afternoon I will send my butler with you to the lodging house in Nineteenth street. He will attend to the removal of your personal effects to my home, and you will return with him. It will be testing fate, Miss Castleton, this visit to your former abiding place, but I have decided to give the law its chance. If you are suspected, a watch will be set over the house in which is quite unknown, you will run no risk in going there openly, nor will I be taking so great a chance as may appear in offering you a home, for the had been obliged to pass between rows time being at least, as companion-or secretary or whatever we may elect to call it for the benefit of all inquirers. Are you willing to run the risk-this single risk?"

"Perfectly willing," announced the other without hesitation. Indeed, her there for me, I shall go with them expressing my gratitude to you for-"

musical pieces produced in London The girl's eyes grew wide with won-two seasons ago, in the chorus. I der. "Desert you? Why do you put never got beyond that, for very good it in that way? I don't understand." "You will come back to me?" sinsist-

"Yes. Why-why, it means everyously I had served in the capacity of thing to me. It means life-more than governess in the family of John Bud- that, most wonderful friend. Life long, a brewer. They had a son, a isn't very sweet to me. But the joy young man of twenty. Two months of giving it to you for ever is the dearago I was dismissed. A California est boon I crave. I do give it to you. lady, Mrs. Holcombe, offered me a sit- It belongs to you. I-I could die for

pressed her lips to Sara Wrandall's

Mrs. Wrandall laid her free hand on the dark, glossy hair and smiled; smiled warmly for the first time inherself if she had stopped to consider. "Get up, my dear," she said gently.



"I Am Challis Wrandall's Wife."

I shall not ask you to die for me-if you do come back. I may be sending you to your death, as it is, but it is the chance we must take. A few hours to himself that at last they really had will tell the tale. Now listen to what I am about to say—to propose. I offer you a home, I offer you friendship and to do something without being pushed I trust security from the peril that about by people who didn't belong but confronts you. I ask nothing in return, not even a word of gratitude. You may tell the people at your lodgings that I have engaged you as companion and that we are to sail for Europe in a week's time if possible. Now we must prepare to go to my own home. You will see to packing my-

that is, our trunks-" "I don't see why you do this for me. I do not deserve-"

Mrs. Wrandall, her manner so peculiar that the girl again assumed the stare of perplexity and wonder that had been paramount since their meeting; as if she were on the verge of grasp- foregoing, that Mrs. Wrandall, the ing a great truth.

"What can you mean?" Sara laid her hands on the girl's

"My girl," she said, ever so gently, "I shall not ask what your life has been; I do not care. I shall not ask world and you need a friend. I too am alone. If you will come to me I will do everything in my power to make you comfortable and-contented. Per- and master. The head of the house of haps it will be impossible to make you why, I believed him! And, what is happy. I promise faithfully to help up to, to be respected and admired by you, to shield you, to repay you for the thing you have done for me. You could not have fallen into gentler hands than mine will prove to be. That born. much I swear to you on my soul, which is sacred. I bear you no ill-will. I wife until-well, until-" She could have nothing to avenge."

Hetty drew back, completely mystified.

"Who are you?" she murmured, still staring. "I am Challis Wrandell's wife."

CHAPTER IV.

While the Mob Waited.

The next day but one, in the huge old-fashioned mansion of the Wrandalls in lower Fifth avenue, in the drawing-room directly beneath the chamber in which Challis was born, the impressive but grimly conventional funeral services were held. Contrasting sharply with the som-

ber, absolutely correct atmosphere of the gloomy interior was the exterior display of joyous curiosity that must have jarred severely on the high-bred sensibilities of the chief mourners, not to speak of the invited guests who of gaping bystanders in order to reach the portals of the house of grier, and who must have reckoned with extreme distaste the cost of subsequent departure. A dozen raucous-voiced pothe hundreds that thronged the sideface brightened. "If they are waiting | walk and blocked the street, Curiosity | become divided against itself without was rampant. Ever since the moment without a word. I have no means of that the body of Challis Wrandall was carried into the house of his father, a "There is time enough for that," motley, varying crowd of people shiftsaid Mrs. Wrandall quickly. "And if ed restlessly in front of the mansion, Mil. Wrandall grasped her by the all there is to that side of my story. I they are not there, you will return to filled with gruesome interest in the ab-

hope that something sensational might "God's will be done." Instead, she happen if they waited long enough,

Motor after motor, carriage after her. carriage, rolled up to the curb and were uttered in undertones, passing street knew that Mr. So-and-So, Mrs. | ing from his unhappy lips. This-or-That, the What-Do-You-Call-She dropped to her knees and clusive but most garishly advertised society leaders had entered the house of mourning. It was a great show for the plebeian spectators. Much better than Miss So-and-So's wedding, said into the face of her second son. one woman who had attended the well, in years she might have said to aforesaid ceremony as a unit in the well-dressed mob that almost wrecked aghast, the carriages in the desire to see the terrifled bride. Better than a circus, him. said a man who held his little daughter above the heads of the crowd so that she might see the fine lady in a wild-beast fur. Swellest funeral New York ever had, remarked another, ex- ably. cepting one 'way back when he was a kid.

At the corner below stood two parol wagons, also waiting.

Inside the house sat the carefully selected guests, hushed and stiff and tending a funeral, but because the occasion served to separate them from the chaff; they were the elect.) It would be going too far to intimate that they were proud of themselves, but it It was a beastly thing to say." is not stretching it very much to say that they counted noses with considerthey had not been left out. The real, high-water mark in New York society was established at this memorable function. As one after the other arrived and was ushered into the huge drawing-room, he or she was accorded a congratulatory look from those all to put up with." ready assembled, a tribute returned with equal amiability. Each one noted who else was there, and each one said something all to themselves. It was truly a pleasure, a relief, to be able thought they did. They sat backstiffly, of course—and in utter stillness confessed that there could be such a thing as the survival of the fittest. Yes, there wasn't a nose there that couldn't be counted with perfect serenity. It was a notable occasion.

Mrs. Wrandall, the elder, had made out the list. She did not consult her "Oh, it-it must be a dream!" cried daughter-in-law in the matter. It is "No. He suggested that I go into Hetty Castleton, her eyes swimming. true that Sara forestalled her in a way "I can't believe-" Suddenly she by sending word, through Leslie, that caught herself up, and tried to smile. she would be pleased if Mrs. Wrandall would issue invitations to as many of Challis' friends as she deemed advis-"You have done me a service," said able. As for herself, she had no wish in the matter; she would be satisfied with whatever arrangements the famtly cared to make.

It is not to be supposed, from the elder, was not stricken to the heart by the lamentable death of her idol. He was her idol. He was her firstshoulders and looked steadily into the born, he was her love-born. He came husband without much thought of respecting him. She was beginning to regard him as something more than a lover when Leslie came, so it was diffor references. You are alone in the ferent. When their daughter Vivian was born, she was plainly annoyed but wholly respectful. Mr. Wrandall was no longer the lover; he was her lord Wrandall was a person to be looked her, for he was a very great man, but he was dear to her only because he was the father of Challis, the first-

> In the order of her nature, Challis therefore was her most dearly beloved. Vivian the least desired and last in her affections as well as in sequence.

Strangely enough, the three of them perfected a curiously significant record of conjugal endowments. Challis had always been the wild, wayward, unrestrained one, and by far the most lovable; Leslie, almost as good looking but with scarcely a noticeable trace of charm that made his brother attractive; Vivian, handsome, selfish and as cheerless as the wind that blows across the icebergs in the north Challis had been born with a widely enveloping heart and an elastic congo: Vivian with a soul alone, which belonged to God, after all, and not to her. Of course she had a heart, but it nothing whatever to do with anything and daughter, closely drawn together. so unutterably extraneous as love, Well to the fore were Wrandall uncles charity or self-sacrifice.

was a very proper and dignified gentleman, and old for his years.

It may be seen, or rather surmised, that if the house of Wrandall had not licemen were employed to keep back been so admirably centered under its own vine and fig tree, it might have much of an effort.

> Mrs. Redmond Wrandall was the vine and fig tree.

And now they had brought her dearly beloved son home to her, murdered poison. I said ice cream first, but and-disgraced. If it had been either they made me guess again .-- Puck.

of the others, she could have said: cried out that God had turned against

Leslie had had the bad taste-or emptied its sober-faced, self-conscious perhaps it was misfortune-to blurt occupants in front of the door with out an agonized "I told you so" at a the great black bow; with each arrival time when the family was sitting the crowd surged forward, and names | numb and hushed under the blight of the first horrid blow. He did not mean from lip to lip until every one in the to be unfeeling. It was the truth burst-

"I knew Chal would come to this-Ems and others of the city's most ex- I knew it," he had said. His arm was about the quivering shoulders of his mother as he said it.

She looked up, a sob breaking in her throat. For a long time she looked

"How can you-how dare you say such a thing as that?" she cried,

He colored, and drew her closer to

"I-I didn't mean it," he faltered. "You have always taken sides against him," began his mother.

"Please, mother," he cried miser-"You say this to me now," she went

on. "You who are left to take his place in my affection-why, Leslie, I

Vivian interposed. "Les is upset, mamma darling. You know he loved gratified. (Not because they were at- Challis as deeply as any of us loved him." Afterwards the girl said to Leslie

when they were quite alone: will never forgive you for that, Les. He bit his lip, which trembled.

"She's never cared for me as she cared able satisfaction and were glad that for Chal. I'm sorry if I've made it worse."

"See here, Leslie, was Chal so-

80-"Yes. I meant what I said a while ago. It was sure to happen to him one time or another. Sara's had a lot

"Sara! If she had been the right sort of a wife, this never would have

happened." "After all is said and done, Vivie, Sara's in a position to rub it in on us if she's of a mind to do so. She won't do it, of course, but-I wonder if she

isn't gloating, just the same." "Haven't we treated her as one of us?" demanded she, dabbing her handkerchief in her eyes. "Since the wedding, I mean. Haven't we been kind

"Oh, I think she understands us perfectly," said her brother.

"I wonder what she will do now?" her sister-in-law out of her narrow little world as one would throw aside a burnt-out match.

"She will profit by experience," said he, with some pleasure in a superior

In Mrs. Wrandall's sitting room at the top of the broad stairway sat the family-that is to say, the immediate family-a solemn-faced footman in front of the door that stood fully ajar so that the occupants might hear the words of the minister as they ascended, sonorous and precise, from the hall below. A minister was he who knew the buttered side of his bread. His discourse was to be a beautiful one. He stood at the front of the stairs and



faced the assembled listeners in the science; Leslie with a brain and a hall, the drawing room and the entresoul and not much of a heart, as things | sol, but his infinitely touching words went up one flight and lodged.

Sara Wrandall sat a little to the left of and behind Mrs. Redmond Wranwas only for the purpose of pumping dall, about whom were grouped the blood to remote extremities, and had three remaining Wrandalls, father, son and cousins and aunts, and one or two As for Mr. Redmond Wrandall he carefully chosen blood relations to the mistress of the house, whose hand had long been set against kinsmen of less exalted promise.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Beyond the Styx.

Plato-Let me see: They condemned you to die, but permitted you to choose the manner of your death. Am I right? Socrates-That's right. I told them hemlock juice was my