



The Hollow of Her Hand

by George Barr McCutcheon



SYNOPSIS.

Charles Wendall is found murdered in a room near New York. Mrs. Wendall is arrested for the murder. Hetty is a young woman who is in love with Sara. The story follows their relationship and the mystery surrounding the murder.

"Listen, my dear," said Sara, a hard note growing in her voice: "this is my home. I do not love it, but I can see no reason for abandoning it. That is why we came back to New York."

In her dark hair, where it had been placed by the whimsical Hetty an hour earlier as they left the dinner table. "He is coming out on the eleventh-thirty," Sara, said the girl nervously, "unless you will send the motor in for him. The body of his car is being changed and it's in the shop. He must have been jostling when he said he would pay for the petrol—I should have said gasoline."

She came to the bridge by the mill, long since deserted and now a thing of ruin and decay. A man in knickerbockers stood leaning against the rail, idly gazing down at the trickling stream below. The brier pipe that he formed the circuit between hand and lips sent up soft blue coils to float away on the drizzle.

if I thought she'd— But nonsense! Let's talk about something else. Yourself, for instance." She leaned back with a smile on her lips, but not in her eyes; and drew a long, deep breath. He was hard hit. That was what she wanted to know.

ity. "I've seen her somewhere, but for the life of me I can't place her. Perhaps in a crowded street, or the theater, or a railway train—just a fleeting glimpse, you know. But in any event I got a lasting impression. Queer things like that happen, don't you think so?"

CHAPTER VI.—Continued. Sara and Hetty did not stay long in town. The newspapers announced the return of Charles Wendall's widow and reporters sought her out for interviews. The old interest was revived and columns were printed about the murder at Barton's Inn, with sharp editorial comments on the failure of the police to clear up the mystery.

"You gave me a week to decide," said Hetty in a hurried manner of speaking. "I took but twenty-four hours—less than that. Over night, you remember. I love you, Sara. I could not leave you. All that night I could feel you pulling at my heart strings, pulling me closer, and holding me. You were in your room, I in mine, and yet all the time you seemed to be bending over me in the darkness, urging me to stay with you and love you and be loved by you. It couldn't have been a dream."

"I wonder if he can be the man I saw yesterday at the bridge," mused Hetty. "Is he tall?" "I really can't say. He's rather vague. It was six or seven years ago."

She turned the bend in the road a hundred yards away. For many minutes she studied the stream below without really seeing it. Then he straightened up, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and set off slowly in her wake, although he had been walking in quite the opposite direction when he came to the bridge—and on a mission of some consequence, too.

"And you painted those wretched little boys instead of the beautiful things that nature provides for us out here, Mr. Booth?" Sara was saying to the artist beside her.

"That's a mental telepathy sketch," said the artist, complacently. "When did you do that?" "This instant, you might say. See! Here is the crayon point. I always carry one around with me for just such—"

CHAPTER VII. A Faithful Crayon-Point. Leslie Wendall came out on the eleventh-thirty. Hetty was at the station with the motor, a sullen resentment in her heart, but a welcoming smile on her lips. The sun shone brightly. The sound glared with the white of reflected skies.

"Good God, Sara!" cried the girl in Horror. water, her eyes big and as black as night itself. She seemed to be looking far beyond the misty lights that bobbed with nearby schooners, far beyond the yellow mass on the opposite shore where a town lay cradled in the shadows, far into the fast darkening sky that came up like a wall out of the east.

"I adore it," she replied, her own smile growing in response to his. It was impossible to resist the good nature of him. She could not dislike him, even though she dreaded him deep down in her heart. Her blood was hot and cold by turns when she was with him, as her mind opened and shut to thoughts pleasant and unpleasant with something of the regularity of a fish's gills in breathing.

"I suppose we will see you at the Wendall place this summer." "I'm coming out to paint Leslie's sister in June, I believe. And that reminds me, I came upon an uncommonly pretty girl not far from your place the other day—and yesterday, as well—some one I've met before, unless I'm vastly mistaken. I wonder if you know your neighbors well enough—by sight, at least—to venture a good guess as to who I mean?"

"Enchanting!" said he, almost too loudly. of nature, even at that," said he, with a smile. "Boys are pretty close to earth, you know. To be perfectly honest, I did it in order to get away from the eminently beautiful but unnatural things I'm required to paint at home."

"I think so. I'll show you one this evening. I have my trusty crayon about me always, as I said before." Later in the afternoon Booth came face to face with Hetty. He was descending the stairs and met her coming up. The sun streamed in through the tall windows at the turn in the stairs, shining full in her upturned face as she approached him from below.

"I shall ask Leslie down for the week-end," said Sara, the third day after their arrival in the country. The house was huge and lonely, and time hung rather heavily despite the glorious uplift of spring.

"I do love you," was the firm answer. Sara was staring across the water, her eyes big and as black as night itself. She seemed to be looking far beyond the misty lights that bobbed with nearby schooners, far beyond the yellow mass on the opposite shore where a town lay cradled in the shadows, far into the fast darkening sky that came up like a wall out of the east.

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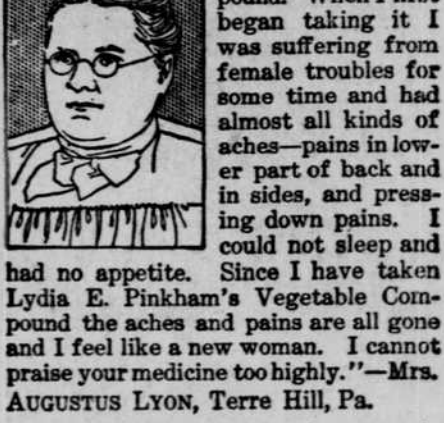
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