

The Man Nobody Knew

By HOLWORTHY HALL

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CHAPTER XII—Continued.

—13—

"Oh, he's going to take a look at it on his way West," said Hilliard, diffidently, and added, with more generosity than Waring had anticipated. "Rufus and I both asked him to. Let Rufus and Jack handle it together. Between them, they'll make rather an exhaustive study, don't you think? And they might turn up something that all of us would want to know."

"That's right! It's a thought. Well—" Cullen looked at his watch. "I can't waste any more time on this tomfool business. I ought to have been in the office an hour ago. Anybody going downtown?"

"I am—but I'll walk," said Waring reluctantly.

"Can I stay?" asked Hilliard of Angela, in an undertone.

"I want you to," she said. Her eyes followed Waring to the doorway.

After they had been alone for a full minute, and neither of them had uttered a syllable, it came to Hilliard that the chief difficulty in being evil is to make an end of it, but that the chief difficulty in being virtuous is to begin. His brain was active and his emotions were placid; but to his mild perplexity he had no compelling desire to make a start. There was no restraining impediment working against him, as on the occasion of his interview with Carol; his impulses were merely lazy. Indeed, he was rather highly gratified at the course of things this morning; he argued that Waring's zeal and Armstrong's timeliness had relieved him from any necessity of an out-and-out avowal of his innocent fraud; it was much more satisfactory, since all the issues were so confused, to turn his affairs over to Cullen, and to await the inevitable verdict on an impersonal basis. In the meantime, he was deeply touched by Cullen's confidence in him; Cullen and Carol Durant alike had refused to believe the obvious truth; he wondered stolidly what it would have meant to him to have had such a reputation from his youth onward; the gratification now would have been superlative—provided only that he had been entitled to his pride.

"He's jealous of you," said Angela abruptly. "That's all—he's jealous. Simply wild with it. You know that—don't you?"

Hilliard started; for it wasn't an emboldening beginning. Not the least so; it implied exactly the sort of rivalry which he had feared, and which he had come to relinquish.

"Who is? Oh! Rufus Waring?"

"Terribly jealous. Perfectly crazy with it. That's what all this whole mess is about." She tossed her head willfully. "I don't care; do you?"

The unreserved bluntness of it nearly took him off his feet; renewing the devastating suspicion that Angela had grown to care too much for him—to too much for her own good.

"Why, Angela!" he said lamely. "Of course I do. It hurts me."

She hammered a gold-embroidered sofa-cushion with one tiny fist.

"Oh, he's jealous of everything and everybody. That doesn't count any more. Only it made me perfectly furious. I wanted to scratch him . . . the very idea of his daring to say anything like that about you! Even if you do like me a lot!" She sighed heavily. "And yet if you stop to think about it, it was sort of brave, too—standing up to all of us when it was three to one, and he was wrong—poor dear!"

Hilliard looked down at her with deep affection and troubled relief.

"As long as I've a defender like you I wouldn't worry," he said, "but I'm afraid it won't be for so very long. Angela, that you'll feel like defending me."

"Why not?" she asked.

"Just a notion of mine. It strikes me that you're fonder of Rufus than you let yourself think. And he needs a champion worse than I do; I'm more used to taking care of myself."

The corners of her mouth were peculiarly sensitive.

"Such a queer notion!" she said. "Where'd you ever get it?"

"Oh, it came of its own accord."

"It's been such a funny day," she said, musing. "Rufus was funny, and Dad was funny, and you're so funny, and Carol was funny this morning, and I'm funny now, and—"

"Carol!" he echoed involuntarily.

She laughed at him, enjoying his discomfiture with the sweet insolence of a naughty juvenile; and it was noteworthy that her arraignment of Waring stopped short at this point.

"I know something about you!" she taunted wickedly.

"What do you know, bright child?" he demanded, red to the temples.

"I know!" Her tone was singing. "So do you! Look at the man blush! Why, you guilty thing! Why, you red geranium!"

He sat down beside her, staring at her vivid, flower-like face.

"Angela, you little demon, stop laughing at me!"

It was fresh incentive; she only bubbled the more.

"I told you I'd laugh at you some

time," she reminded him triumphantly, "and this is the time!"

"Think so?"

"I know so!" All at once she became demurely sober. "I'm awfully glad, honestly . . . it isn't out yet, of course, but everybody knows about you and Carol, especially since Jack Armstrong lost out, and went West just the way they do in novels. I'm just as glad as I can be. Only you might have given me a wee little hint just to me, you know, mightn't you?"

"Angela!" He caught at her hand.

"Oh! That wakes you up, doesn't it?" Her manner changed to the maternal; if Hilliard had been in a different frame of mind it would have convulsed him. "Now, just be calm and tell me all about it," she instructed him indulgently. "Tell me everything—I won't repeat it to a single soul! I'm awfully excited about it. Please tell me."

"Angela! Where did you—"

She pouted instantly.

"Not just plain 'Angela'—put some trimming on it."

"Well—Angela, dear . . . what's that about Jack Armstrong? Say that again—and tell me everything you know about it. Be serious for once. That's a good girl!"

Her eyes were mischievously tender; somehow she reminded Hilliard of that moment in the hallway of the Durants' house—the most precious of all his recent memories.

"Will you tell me if I tell you?"

"Yes, I guess so."

Her finger was appraised in warning.

"Say 'Yes, dear.'"

"Yes, dear," said Hilliard, writhing.

She settled herself with a little flounce of excitement.

"Well . . . Jack asked her, and she refused him. . . . Flat as a pancake. That's gospel truth! She told me she'd refused him, and he told me the pancake part. And everybody's glad of it—he's a nice boy; awfully nice—but nowhere near as nice as you are. And he's just naturally gone away to get over it. And you're the only one left. So—that's finished."

He stared at her unblinkingly. Had he really been at such cross-purposes with Armstrong at the station, then?

The conception was illuminating.

"Everybody?" he repeated, red and white by turns, and mightily hushed.

"What does that mean?"

"Just that. Everybody. That is—" Her accent was deliciously superior. "That is, all the people one knows."

"They think . . . they think I'm the . . . the one?"

"Silly!" She patted his head. "I don't believe you'd try to camouflage me. No—honestly—isn't it true?"

He studied her a moment. "What would you say if it were?" he asked soberly.

She returned his gaze with engaging frankness.

"Oh, I want it to be—I want it to be!" she said. "Carol's the sweetest thing in town, and as for you . . . well, sometimes I almost wish I could marry you myself!"

His heart leaped dangerously. One complication the less! Oh, the respite of it! Angela removed from the problem.



That Wakes You Up, Doesn't It?"

lém and—he sank back wearily—Carol coming into it again, and irrevocably. "Almost?" he queried mechanically.

She looked at the floor; when she raised her eyes he saw the well remembered depths in them. She was half-child, half-woman—and the woman was speaking with the child's tongue. Her hand covered his; the warm, timid pressure was very assuaging.

"Yes, 'almost' . . . I suppose I can really talk to you, can't I? I always thought I could . . . well, when you first came here I was perfectly crazy about you . . . I am yet, in a way, only sort of boiled down . . . you know. Not like a sister at all, but . . . not the other sort, either. I thought it was

going to be once—but . . . I like you better than anybody else in the world—all but two. . . . I liked to be kissed by people I like . . . and . . . you know it's sort of like sunlight; I need lots of it. People have always fussed over me. . . . Here she gave a poignant sigh for her lost youth. "Only . . . it's funny, too . . . but one of the two people I do like better than I do . . . in different ways . . . is . . . is Rufe Waring. He's jealous as a . . . a tom cat . . . but somehow I don't mind it from him; I always like it. . . . He was so frightfully jealous about you, and I . . . I teased him about that. It was just because he thought you weren't quite good enough for me, I guess. And you've got to give him credit for that, now, haven't you? . . . And . . . I hope you and Carol'll be awfully happy together."

He didn't believe that Harmon would ever carry out his promised betrayal; not that he had faith in Harmon's code of ethics, but because he trusted Harmon's horse sense. If Hilliard were alone to be accused, Harmon would gain nothing and might, if he offered any adverse testimony, even implicate himself. Indeed, if Harmon should say enough to establish the proof in the dangerous status of an accessory before the fact. No . . . this was the same procedure; to let

from the underwriting project, he thought, than from his character.

He had deposited with Cullen all he owned, except for his private belongings, his runabout, and a trivial sum for current expenses. The runabout he would offer for sale; it meant a few hundred dollars more to be divided among his contributors. Beyond that, there was nothing else he could restore to them.

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Presently he sensed a subtle super-charging of the atmosphere whenever he met a male acquaintance; he couldn't deny that the greeting of his bankers was suddenly less informal, more impersonal; he perceived, with a sinking spasm of foreboding, that fewer people stopped to chat with him on the street and that those who still were willing to halt and pass the time of day were uncommonly restive about it. Syracuse hadn't yet arrayed itself officially against him, and a part of Syracuse was outwardly as pleasant as ever, but there wasn't the slightest question that the story had leaked out, and that it had got itself adherents. The end was plainly in sight; Armstrong's report was due. Only the Cullens and the Durants and one or two other of the James street families were quite as cordially attentive as formerly; and to Hilliard's vast chagrin, they rather overdid it . . . he seemed to feel in the steady warmth of their friendship a sort of blindly unseasonable resolution to support him, whether or no. This, infinitely more than the cooling manner of the majority, galled him incessantly. It was as though they rallied to his defense before the need of it . . . it was as though they conceded in advance the necessity of such a defense.

So Hilliard waited, waited . . . smiling upon the world his hollow smile, carrying through the city the body of a knave and the face of a martyr and in the watches of the night, he was perplexed to find that his eyes were sometimes wet, but never when he was thinking of himself—always when he was thinking of Angela, or Carol, or—unexplainably—of a common-enough representative of the French bourgeoisie named Pierre Duval.

On the eighth day, he chanced to meet Dr. Duran by accident in front of the Physicians' building at night noon.

"Hello, there! You're just in time," said the Doctor, cheerfully. "I'm going over to the University club for lunch. Won't you join me? I want your advice. I'm the worst business man in the world—you probably know that by this time. And I trust my friends for friendship; but when I want advice, I go to an expert. So you qualify on both counts. Come along over."

Hilliard was flattered, but not deceived.

"I'm not sure that my advice is worth anything half as expensive as a luncheon, Doctor."

The older man took him by the arm, and impelled him across the street.

"That depends on your appetite," he laughed. "Come along, and help me out on a decision I've got to make. About an investment."

Hilliard hung back for a moment, while suspicion dawned on him.

"What sort of investment, Doctor?" he queried.

"You come and sit down," urged the Doctor, seductively. "And we'll talk it over later. But first of all—" He patted his waistcoat. "Let's eat."

Hilliard was almost too grateful to speak; the Doctor's strategem was patent, but in all chivalry the invitation couldn't be declined. Once inside the doors of the club, however, he became panicky; for his first sweeping reconnaissance included half a dozen men whose late behavior had indicated that they knew.

The Doctor drew Hilliard under the mantle of his own unassailably position, and plowed ahead with the utmost serenity. He nodded here and there; he spoke to members right and left; he bowed across the room; always his personality, rather than his person, seemed to be escorting and guarding Hilliard; and Syracuse couldn't decline to acknowledge a man who was under the Doctor's adequate protection. Those who spoke to the Doctor also spoke to Hilliard; there was no way out of it and they spoke as casually as they could. They also nodded to him, and bowed, but when his back was turned, they became low-voiced and communicative, and he knew it.

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Divers in Ancient History.

The earliest mention of diving is made by Homer, about 850 B. C. in the "Iliad," when Patroclus compares the fall of Hector's charioteer to a diver diving for oysters; and Thucydides tells of divers being used to remove submarine barriers placed with the object of impeding or injuring the Grecian fleet at the siege of Syracuse. These divers had no apparatus save a stone to carry them quickly to the bottom and to cling to for the brief period, about two minutes, they could stay below. This is called natural diving and is still in use for collecting sponges and pearls at Ceylon and in the Mediterranean.

Short Answer.

Tenderfoot Scout (to second-class

scout who has just had his hair cut)—

How is it that your hair is so short—

did you have it cut?

Second-class Scout—No, I washed

my head last night and my hair

shrank.—Boys' Life.

Pay Debt to Community.

Don't think your only debts are

those measurable in dollars and cents.

Your community also has a claim on

you in the way of interest and a bit

of time now and then.

Home Town Helps

TO LEVY TAX ON BILLBOARDS

Commission Recommends That Massachusetts Legislature Get Revenue From Advertising Devices.

Taxation of billboards and all other kinds of outdoor advertising devices, as well as regulations of their size, location and manner of construction, is recommended in the report of the special billboard commission submitted to the legislature.

The only advertising signs exempt from the legislation recommended by the commission are those which have been erected in conformity with existing law and which call attention to the person occupying the premises on which the sign appears or to the business that is done on these premises, or advertising the property itself or any part thereof as for sale or to let. For all other signs, the commission recommended that an annual excise tax be levied, the amount to be determined by the division of highways of the public works department, having in mind in each case the location of such sign or device, the character of the neighborhood, the number and class of persons usually passing with in reasonable distance of the sign, and such other factors as in the judgment of the members of the division will give to a sign in that particular location a particular value for advertising purposes. Boston Transcript.

KEEP CAR IN A GARAGE

