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THE SILENT WIFE.

(Continued from page 3.)

"Certainly," said Smart, "when I find him."

"Surely that should be an easy matter. A man in the condition Roger Armer is in cannot go far."

"Oh, I don't know. In these days of motors, one can go a long way in a very short time."

Mr Smart bowed himself out. He left his address with Isobel, who promised to let him know directly she had any information of Roger and Doris Armer's movements.

But days merged into weeks before any news came of the Armers. Paul Weston would give no information as to his patient's whereabouts, even though Mr Smart called upon him, and warned him that he might be placing himself in a very unpleasant position by withholding Roger Armer's address.

"Surely," Dr Weston said "you can't imagine that either Mr or Mrs Armer are concerned in these robberies, beyond the fact that Armer's house was burgled. It's ridiculous, Mr Smart! Mr Armer is a friend of mine. He is a hard, man, but he is honourable and straight as a die. His wife is an old friend of mine, and without their permission I cannot give you their address."

"I think," the detective urged, "that if you would inform Mr Armer that I want to see him, he would agree to see me. You see, in a manner, I am acting for him."

"Mr Armer," Weston said gravely, "is quite incapable of seeing anyone. I may tell you there is danger of permanent loss of memory. The operation has not been as successful as we could have wished. His health is gradually improving, but his brain—that is quite another matter. So you see that even if I consented to your request, you would gain nothing by seeing him."

Jeffrey Smart's face fell. His one hope of solving the mystery had been taken from him. Bad luck indeed!

For the present he could do nothing. He had come right up against a dead wall, and could only await the course of events.

Not that Smart left it quite at that. He began a search for the bogus housekeeper, the woman whom Doris had called Wanda.

"I HAVE GROWN TO LOVE YOU SO DEARLY!"

And whilst they were searching, Doris was going through a season of trial.

The house to which Roger had been taken lay in a quiet, unfashionable suburb a few miles out of town. This house was run more as a hobby of Dr Graham's than for profit. Miss Weston was practically responsible for the perfect arrangements of Dean House.

Only a limited number of cases were admitted. But everything connected with the house was perfect in its way, and Doris was charmed with everything.

She regarded Dean House as a haven of rest; a quiet spot away from the world, where she could have Roger to herself, and nurse him back to health and strength.

What would happen to them both when this was accomplished, she did not dare think. She lived in the present—her sole thought her husband's welfare.

Paul Weston had hesitated to tell the devoted young wife how very serious Roger's condition was.

Of course, Doris saw that her husband's brain was in no normal condition. Her hospital training had been sufficient for that; and she had hoped much from the operation, and was bitterly disappointed at the result.

"He doesn't recognise me, matron," she told Miss Weston, with tears in her eyes. "He takes me for a stranger; calls me 'nurse.'"

"You must be patient, my dear," Mary Weston consoled the girl, of whom she had grown very fond. "Paul thinks it possible that Mr Armer's memory may return to him suddenly. The cause removed, his brain may become normal any minute. Now, don't worry, my dear. Cheer up; all will yet be well!"

It was easy advice to give, but difficult to follow, as no one realised more than poor Doris in the long days and weary nights she spent waiting, watching for a sign of recognition in the man she now loved dearly.

One day, as they sat in the sheltered, old-world garden, basking in the spring sunshine, Doris working, Roger reading a paper, she looked up, and caught his eyes fixed upon her with a strange expression. Instantly she was all attention.

"Do you want anything?"

He shook his head.

"No, thanks. I was only trying to remember who it is you remind me so much of."

He pressed his hand to his brow, and Doris's heart leaped high with hope. Was memory about to return, as Dr Weston had predicted.

"Do I remind you of Doris?"

His hand fell instantly on his knee.

"Doris? I can't recall anyone called Doris, and, yet, the name does seem familiar. But it hurts my head to think."

He sighed. The light died out of his eyes, he looked tired and worn.

It was a bitter disappointment to Doris but she bore it as she had done all her trials, bravely.

"Don't try," she said. "When you are stronger you will remember everything."

"Shall I?" he said dreamily.

Day by day Roger Armer's health improved, till at last he looked quite his own self once more.

"He is quite able to leave Dean House," Paul Weston told Doris. "The question is, when is it best for him to go? Personally, I think he should return to his own home. Already there are unpleasant rumours going round."

"That Mr Armer is being kept out of the way on purpose?"

Paul hesitated to repeat all he had heard.

"By me?"

Paul nodded.

"You see, Miss Vane has been talking freely. She sent a notice to the papers contradicting your death. I purposely kept the paper from you. I didn't want you to be worried more than is necessary."

Doris uttered a little exclamation of annoyance.

"I might have known Isobel Vane would do a thing like that. Ah, well, if the papers have published my return to life, she smiled wanly, "perhaps it would be best to go back to Westways Court."

"I certainly think it is your wisest course. Armer's health is perfect. The return to his home may even prove beneficial."

And so it was arranged that Armer and Doris were to return home together, Paul Weston undertaking to inform Mrs Spry of their coming. By doing this the secret of their present hiding-place would be kept from inquisitive neighbours.

No sooner had Doris Armer consented to this arrangement than she began to regret it. That Roger would be watched by the detectives she felt pretty sure.

Mark Lewis had his reputation to consider, and now his suspicions, about Roger were aroused, he was not likely to let them off without very close questioning.

He might even go further. He might cause them to be arrested, and brought before a magistrate.

For the first time, Doris was glad that Roger had lost his memory. Anyway, he could not be questioned. The condition of his mind precluded this.

Paul Weston had mentioned a certain date for his patient's removal to his old home. True to his promise, he had seen the house-keeper, and bade her prepare to receive her master and mistress.

Much to Dr Weston's indignation, he found Isobel and her aunt still installed in their comfortable quarters. In plain language he told Miss Vane she must leave the Court.

Isobel defied him, hinting that it was to his interest to deprive Mr Armer of his friends, that he—Paul—was in league with Mrs Armer to keep Roger in the condition of mind she understood he was now in.

"If he is as bad as you say," she said vindictively, "he is more fit for an asylum than to come here."

"And yet," Paul spoke firmly, "Mr Armer is coming here, and Mrs Armer will accompany him. It is her wish that you should leave before her arrival."

In vain Isobel stormed and raved. Paul was firm, and at last, in a rage, she flung out of the house.

"A good riddance!" Mrs Spry declared, and all the servants agreed with her. They did not like Isobel; she was too arrogant and overbearing.

"It's my belief," the housekeeper confided to Jenkins, "that Miss Vane made a deal of mischief between master and mistress. I shouldn't be surprised if she was at the bottom of the mystery of missus's disappearance."

"Myself," said Jenkins, "I hate mysteries. I only hope there'll be no more here. We've had our fill. What with mistress's death—as wasn't a death at all—and them robbers, and her never speaking to master—"

It was Doris's task to prepare Roger for a change of residence. She found him basking in the sun, his eyes fixed on a bed of daffodils in full bloom.

"How beautiful the flowers must look at Westways Court now," So she opened the conversation.

"Westways Court? Where's that?" He looked at her wistfully.

"Don't you remember, dear?"

She sat down beside him, and took his hand in both her own. Tears filled her eyes. How changed he was from the stern man, full of life and vigour, she had

known, and sometimes feared, in the old days that seemed, now, so far away.

She wondered if she was doing right in taking him from this quiet spot, and bringing him up against the hard world that can be so cruel to the weak and defenceless.

And when she recalled that Paul Weston had said her husband might at any time recover his memory, and it was only right and fitting that when that longed for and yet dreaded moment should arrive it should find Roger Armer in his own home.

"Where you used to live, Roger—you and I."

"I don't want to go," he said, "unless you go with me, nurse. Can they spare you?"

"Yes, they can spare me. I am going with you, Roger. Don't worry about anything."

"How can I help worrying?" he said; and his hand went to his head with the pathetic gesture that wrung Doris's heart afresh each time it occurred. "I've forgotten everything, you see, except the fact that I met with an accident, and have been very ill, and that you've been an angel and nursed me back to health. You see, I don't even know if I'm married or not. And so—and so I can't tell you something I want to tell you."

He paused, and Doris's heart leapt with in her, for she guessed what it was he wanted to tell her.

"It wouldn't be fair to you," he said presently.

"Yes, yes, it would!" She pressed the hands she held more tightly.

"I've grown to love you. I'm never happy unless you are with me. Your voice is music in my ears. The touch of your hands on mine thrills me as no other woman's touch has ever done. Angela, I have grown to love you dearly. If ever I regain my memory, and I find there is no reason why I should not ask you to be my wife, will you marry me?"

Surely, thought Doris, when she had time to think at all, never was woman placed in so extraordinary a position. Her own husband was asking her to be his wife!

Just now she could think of nothing but the fact that Roger loved her, that the past of which now she was bitterly ashamed, was blotted out.

If only she could make him understand that she was already his—bound to him by bonds sacred and unbreakable! But Paul had warned her against forcing memory.

"Let it all come back naturally," he had said. "I am convinced that one day it will."

"Yes," she said forcing down her emotion. "Yes, Roger. When that day comes I will take my place beside you as your wife."

He looked at her strangely.

"Will you give me just one kiss, Angela? I will ask no more."

She leaned over him, and laid her lips on his. She had the right to kiss him.

"Thank you," he said simply. "I can wait now."

Doris, her whole being thrilled by that kiss of love, hurried away to finish packing. They were to start early next day in Dr. Graham's car. There was still a lot to do.

hour later Nurse Angela went back to the garden. She had told Roger to sit where he was until she came to fetch him for a walk. To her surprise she found the seat vacant.

At first Doris was not anxious, Roger, beguiled by the beauty of the spring day, had doubtless gone for a tour of inspection on his own account.

But though she searched the gardens and greenhouses, nowhere could she find Roger Armer.

Now thoroughly alarmed, she returned to the house, and sought Miss Weston. "Have you seen Roger?" she asked breathlessly.

No. The matron had not seen Mr Armer since Nurse Angela had taken him into the garden.

A search was organised at once. In vain! Roger Armer had disappeared, leaving not the faintest clue behind him.

(To be Continued.)

Already the margarine industry has been enormously stimulated by the price of butter (says the "Taranaki Herald"). According to "Weddel's Review" the supplies of margarine in Britain increased from 197,000 tons in 1914-15 to 360,000 tons in 1919-20.

Since jellyfish are largely composed of water, they evaporate when they lie exposed to the sun, and nothing remains but a small silvery mark. They are not to be envied, for even when they are in the water they seem at the mercy of the currents and quite incapable of directing their own course.

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