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By MARK ENGLISH.

THE FIRST PART.

Doris Thobury, the sister of the children's ward, was telling the little ones stories, when the door opened and the matron and Dr Weston came in. Doris's cheeks took a deep tint, for she loved the kindly, grave-faced young doctor deeply.

As the doctor went his rounds, she held each little patient's hand, for the pain never seemed so bad when Sister Doris was near, and when all the patients had been examined her duty for the day was over.

As she was going out of the Cottage Hospital gate, Paul Weston overtook her.

"May I accompany you?" he asked, and she smiled and nodded. They spoke of many things, and at last when they had reached a more secluded spot the doctor seized her hand.

"Miss Thobury," he said, "I love you—I love you with all my heart and soul. Will you be my wife?" She looked at him steadfastly as she answered "Yes." It was some time later when they parted, and when they did so Doris was the happiest girl in the world.

The next morning she received a telegram: "Come home immediately," it ran. "You are wanted at once." And a little later she was speeding towards her home.

At the very moment she was answering Paul Weston on the previous night, an interview was going on which was to alter her whole life.

"Those are my terms; take them or leave them. Accept them and I pull you through; refuse and you are ruined!" The speaker, Roger Armer, was a strong, hard man; he was Walter Thobury's manager, and the man he faced as he uttered those words was Walter Thobury himself.

Doris's father was a failure; he was weak and lazy, and as he faced his manager he looked frightened. His uncle had died and left him the huge business of Thobury and Co. But he did not trouble himself about the business; he left it all in the hands of Roger Armer. And now he found that he was on the brink of ruin, and only Armer could pull him through, and that he would only do so on one condition, and that was that he should marry Doris. And in his weakness and fear of ruin the crushed man agreed—actually agreed to sacrifice his daughter to save himself.

When he told Doris she was horrified. "Father," she cried, "you are not in earnest. Marry Mr Armer? I couldn't. You can't mean it." At last she cast aside all her hopes for the future and promised. That evening she wrote a short note to Paul Weston telling him she had changed her mind and could never be his wife.

Her engagement to Armer was announced, and eventually Doris Thobury became Doris Armer.

She found her husband domineering, and determined to break her proud spirit. She discovered, too, that she had been won by a trick, for her father's business had never been anything but perfectly solvent.

Paul Weston, a young doctor and her former lover, with whom she had been forced to break her engagement. He obtains for her a post as a nurse at a private house, which she thankfully accepts.

A few days after, she reads in the paper that the "missing Mrs Armer" has been found drowned, but actually the unrecognisable body that was discovered belonged to an unknown girl to whom Doris had given her clothes.

Then one day a new housekeeper arrived at Mr Farr's house, and Doris was horrified to recognise in her one of her thief-husband's accomplices.

One day Mr Farr's house is burgled and Doris, recognising her husband's work in this, rushes off to her old home to warn him.

Meanwhile Doris, who knows that he is the thief, bicycles over to Westways Court to warn him that a celebrated detective is on his track. She arrives at the lodge gates to discover he has had a motor accident, and that Isobel Vane is nursing him.

As a result, he loses his memory, and is taken to a nursing home by Doris, who acknowledges herself his wife. Roger does not recognise her, but he recovers, and suddenly disappears. His twin brother, Richard Armer, who is the real thief takes him to a house where he tells him the whole truth. Roger's memory returns with a shock when Richard tells him Doris is alive.

"THE BEST THING HE COULD DO."

"Doris alive!" Roger Armer repeated. And then sternly. "You lie!"

The man who was so strangely like Roger shook his head.

"Not this time, Roger. Doris lives! She is well!"

And then he looked curiously into the now haggard face; and perhaps for the first time he realised the enormity of the wrong he had done his brother.

"Do you mean to tell me you remember nothing of what has happened the last few weeks?"

Richard was naturally anxious to know how much Roger remembered of his visit to the office; of his signing of the deeds that gave the gang powers to realise a large sum of money.

"It's all coming back to me," Roger said. And then, in a hoarse, choking, voice he asked: "How could you do it, Dick? You have parted me from Doris for ever! She will never believe that I am not the criminal she thinks I am. You see, she never knew I had a twin brother. I was ashamed to let her know that I had a criminal brother. I would not have married her—much as I loved her—had I not been certain you were dead. How did you manage that fraud?"

"Quite easily, Roger. Wanda—my wife, you know—is a brick. She stuck to me through thick and thin. One of her brothers died, and it was easy to alter the death certificate. Bill Garland lies in a far-off grave under the name of Richard Armer—as a nameless girl does in a Sussex village on the cliffs under the name of Doris Armer."

"Richard, I might find it in me to forgive your crimes against society, your frauds against me, but for this last fraud I can never forgive you. Tell me, why are you here? It would have been easy to leave me here—to die."

"That is the one thing I could not do," the man said. "I am going out of your life now; I shall never return. But Doris will. You will be happy with her. A new life lies before you and her."

He moved slowly towards the door. Roger, summoning up all his strength caught him by the arm.

"You shall not go!" he cried. "Brother or no brother, I will not allow you to go free! I will summon the police; I will hand you over to the law. You deserve punishment. Why should you go free?"

He felt his strength failing him, but never in all his life had memory been keener. Everything that had passed since his accident lay like a printed map before him. Like pictures on a screen, each event lay, and passed in order before his mental vision.

He saw the nursing home. He saw himself seated in the garden, Doris—as he had first seen her, in her dainty uniform, white aproned and capped—sitting beside him.

The next mental picture depicted him striding through the crowded streets, every nerve strained to reach his office. And the there appeared on the scene Richard and Barlow.

As of old he sat at his desk, pen in hand, whilst Barlow placed before him certain documents for signature. His hand moved—he signed his name.

To what?

The last picture was a little blurred. He was in his room, and it seemed full of people—the woman Wanda, Henry Barlow, a man they called Philip.

"Where are your accomplices?" Roger asked, as his hands fell from Richard's arms, and he staggered blindly backwards. He had miscalculated his strength.

How strange his own voice sounded. Was he fainting? Or was the awful sensation of sinking deeper and deeper—death?

For a few minutes Richard stood, silently gazing down at the recumbent form that had sunk quietly on to the carpet. He sighed deeply.

"I wish it could have been different," he muttered.

He hesitated, and then, almost reluctantly, he drew from an inner pocket a

small packet. This he transferred to Roger Armer's pocket.

"It's all the reparation possible, and I shall get into an awful row with the others when they know what I've done. But, after all, they can say nothing. He smiled grimly. "I took the risk—I take the blame. I have the right to act as I like. Maybe it's a bit of sentiment. Poor Roger! I wish Fate had given you a better brother!"

His sharp ears, trained by his long career of crime, caught the sound of a car turning the corner of the street. Quick as thought he slipped over to the curtained window and peered out.

Too well did he know who occupied the car that drew up before the house!

"Tracked here!" Richard cried hoarsely. "Trapped like a rat in a trap, for that Detective Smart has no doubt communicated with the local police."

Like an animal at bay he turned, seeking a way of escape, only to be confronted by Geoffrey Smart.

"Hands up!" shouted Richard Armer. Whipping a nickel-plated revolver from his pocket, he covered the detective.

"Not much!" retorted Geoffrey Smart—who, to do him justice, had plenty of pluck. "Two can play at that game. You don't imagine I'm such a fool as to come here unarmed."

They stood a moment glaring into each

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