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other's faces. Both weapons were raised, and Heaven only knows how the duel of wits would have ended, had not Doris rushed forward.

"It's Roger! Don't shoot, Mr Smart! It's Roger!"

Richard saw his chance, and took it. Taken for a second off guard, Smart lowered his weapon. Like a flash of lightning Richard slipped past him, almost knocking down Paul Weston, whom he met ascending the stairs.

"That isn't your husband, Mrs Armer!" Smart shouted angrily. "That is Richard Armer the thief, whom I hoped to capture. You have spoiled a splendid piece of work—unless I can get him yet!"

He was gone like a whirlwind; and following on his hurried exit there came the sound of a wild scuffle in the passage below.

Fate was on the detective's side. Paul Weston had taken the precaution of locking the front door. It resisted all Richard's efforts to open it, and so he was trapped!

Doris crouched on the landing above. In spite of Smart's declaration that the man who was grappling with him was not her husband, she could hardly realise that it was not Roger on whom her terrified eyes rested.

"Hold hard!" shouted Weston.

Too late! A shot rang out—a puff of smoke, and Richard Armer fell against the wall, and dropped slowly to the ground.

Paul Weston knelt, and laid his hand on the man's heart. He rose silently. No need for words.

"He was getting the worst of it," panted the detective, "and so turned the weapon on himself. Well"—he shrugged his shoulders—"after all, it was the best thing the fellow could do under the circumstances. I've got a warrant for his arrest. There are no fewer than six specific charges out against him. Mr Roger Armer's losses are small by comparison with those sustained by others. Miss Farr, for instance. And now I must go to the police-station at once. I'll leave a constable in charge while I go. Why, where's Mrs Armer?"

Paul Weston pointed to an open door.

"She went in there." Doris had immediately recognised the house as the one to which she had been brought. Instinct led her to the same room where she had lain for hours in her drugged sleep.

On the threshold she paused. A man lay on the floor, his face turned from her. But she knew it was Roger—her Roger!

Had they killed him, too? Had she come too late? Her wild cry reached Paul Weston.

Her white, anguished face worked piteously as she waited breathlessly for the young doctor's verdict.

"Is he dead, Paul?" "Bless you—no! A faint, that's all. I've a flask about me somewhere."

In a few minutes, Doris—standing by Paul's suggestion a little way off—had the satisfaction of seeing her husband sit up and gaze round.

"Where's Richard?" he asked. "He was here a minute ago! Why, Weston, how did you get here?"

There was no coldness in Roger's manner. He addressed Paul as he would any other acquaintance he met unexpectedly.

"It's a long story, Armer," Paul said evasively. "Too long to go into now. You mustn't forget you've had a long illness. That motor accident, you know, returning from London."

"Yes—yes. Doris nursed me. Or did I dream it?" He sighed. "Of course it must have been a dream," he said. "Doris left me—"

The girl made a sudden movement forward. By an authoritative gesture Paul Weston stopped her. He feared the consequences of too much emotion. Neither physically nor mentally was Roger Armer fit for further excitement.

"Lie still just a few minutes, Mr Armer," he said. "Don't exert yourself. I have a car outside. I will drive you home."

"Home! Do you mean Westways Court?"

"Yes, I do mean Westways Court; you will soon pick up there."

Paul beckoned Doris from the room.

"There is a train to Westways in half an hour. Can you catch that, while I drive Armer down?"

"Paul, let me go with him," she entreated.

"No." Paul was firm. "Let him find you waiting for him as if nothing had ever happened to separate you," he suggested. "He will accept the situation only too gladly."

Doris Armer clasped her hands. "Oh, if I only thought you were right!"

"Believe me, I am right. You will have time to arrange everything."

He smiled as she hurried down the stairs, casting a shuddering glance at the closed door behind which lay all that remained of Richard Armer.

Paul cleverly managed to get Roger safely out of the house without his patient knowing anything of the tragedy that had so recently happened. Smart helped him by keeping in the background.

"I shall have to interview him as soon as possible," he said. "I'll run down to Westways as soon as I get this job fixed up. I'm afraid I'll have to trouble you, Mrs Armer, too. There are a lot of documents on the man, but not the faintest clue as to the whereabouts of the remainder of the gang. What on earth induced Armer to come here, goodness knows? Perhaps Mr Roger Armer can throw some light on the subject. Ah! Here you are, inspector. Come inside."

He opened the closed door, and they passed inside, and locked it behind them.

Paul Weston took this opportunity of assisting Armer down and into the waiting car.

During the run down into Bucks, Roger hardly spoke. He was wondering what had become of his brother. By this time, doubtless, he was on his way to the nameless destination he had indicated.

Well, let him go. After all, Richard was his brother.

Only two questions which Paul found hard to answer did Armer put.

"Was I alone when you came?"

"When I found you there was no one in the room with you," was Paul's diplomatic reply.

"How did you find out where they had taken me?"

"The detective—Smart—traced you. don't worry, Mr Armer. All's well—now." Impulsively he put out his hand. "You have my best wishes."

Roger grasped it warmly.

"Thank you, Weston. I—I've been mad, I think, ever to have doubted Doris."

And they left it at that.

"THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME."

To say that Mrs Spry was overjoyed to see her mistress return so quickly is to put it mildly; and when Doris told her to help her to prepare to receive her master she was beside herself with delight.

"The young couple had made it up," she confided to Jenkins. "It was all that mischievous Miss Vane's doing. She always knew she was up to no good. Of course, there was a lot to clear up; but, after all, what did it matter—what did anything matter—so long as master and missus come together again." And so on.

But though Mrs Spry's tongue wagged fast, she and her staff worked with such good will that long before the car containing Roger and Paul Weston appeared in the avenue everything was in readiness to give the master of The Court a royal welcome home.

And Doris, in her own apartments, was doing her share, too. She had asked Jenkins to do her hair in exactly the same style as she had worn it on the day on which, as the unwilling, unloving bride of Roger Armer, she had entered her "prison" house.

How all this was changed. Her heart throbbed with love and deepest gratitude. But a new fear gripped her. Would Roger allow her to remain? After all that had passed had he not the right to refuse to share his home with her? And if he did not share it, then Doris knew it would be no home to her.

Jenkins held up the same black dress which Doris insisted on wearing on her wedding night. She shuddered as she recalled all that had happened since then. "No—no! There's a white dress. I—I'll wear that. It's a—a gala night, Jenkins. I want the master to feel it is so. He's been ill, you know," she stammered, flushing rosy red as she met Jenkins' curious gaze.

As soon as the maid had left the room, Doris turned eagerly to the long mirror set in the wall of the blue and silver room she had hated. Critically she scanned the face and figure reflected therein.

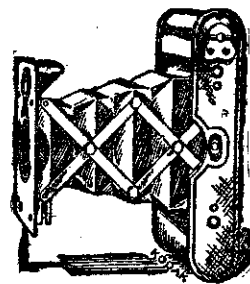
"How I have changed!" she sighed. "How much older I look; and yet, as years count, I am still but a girl. She laughed mirthlessly. "I feel a hundred! And how thin I've grown!"

She went downstairs. Nothing would do but that she should arrange the flowers herself.

She had ordered dinner to be set in the small dining-room; a pretty room, far cosier than the great room where she had eaten her first honeymoon meal—with Isobel Vane making an unwelcome third.

"She would be far more unwelcome," Doris thought, "if she came to-night. But she's not likely to do that. She doesn't know that Roger will be here."

(Continued on Page 4.)



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