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to reprobation as a disseminator of idle gossip.

"You've no call to say that to me, Mr. Dick," he said, reverting in his indignation from the ceremonial to his usual, more familiar, form of address. "I thought it my duty to lay certain information before you, and I have done so."

"Quite so, quite so, Pollard; and we are much obliged to you," interposed Colonel Anerley, who had been listening silently to the discussion. "Mr. Emberson is much obliged to you, I am sure; but you must remember how painful all this is to him!"

"I do, sir, I do! and no one's more sorry than myself for the young gentleman—which I was a-saying at the station just now."

"Yes, yes, that's all right, Pollard!" said the Colonel, unceremoniously cutting short what threatened to be a long and rambling discourse; "but let us keep to business please. You must not be angry with me, dear boy," he continued, laying his hand kindly upon Dick's shoulder, "if I confess that I partly agree with our good friend there."

"Your views may be right—no doubt they are; but I have a constitutional objection to taking things I don't understand for granted."

Dick leant his elbows upon the table and rested his head upon his hand in such a way that his face was hidden from view. He remained in this position a few seconds as if struggling for composure—then answered slowly—his voice sounding strained and tremulous—

"Naturally, I should be the last person to wish to stifle inquiry; but I know how my father would have hated the idea of his name being bandied about from mouth to mouth, allied to all sorts of sensational reports and surmises; and, therefore, convinced as I am that there is nothing in this unhappy affair for which I cannot in my mind account, I strongly deprecate the idea of foul play being started; and I beg all those who have a friendly feeling towards me to assist in checking it at the outset."

Colonel Anerley, if not altogether convinced, felt that he had no option but to respect his young friend's wishes, and murmured words to that effect. Pollard also acquiesced, although with not too good a grace.

"I will bear what you say in mind, sir," he replied gruffly; "but I fancy at the inquest you will find many of my way of thinking. I wish you good evening, sir," touching his hat to the master of the house; "good evening, ladies."

He tramped stolidly off, and for a moment there was silence between those left behind—silence broken only by the sound of the heavy tread passing through the hall and crunching along the gravel paths; by the garden gate squeaking on its hinges as it opened and fell back again. No one spoke, for no one exactly knew what to say in the face of the abnormal sensitiveness Dick seemed to have developed on the subject uppermost in all their thoughts. Enid, who had risen to her feet on the constable's entrance, and remained standing during the subsequent interview, stole her arm softly across the young man's bowed shoulders—his hand crept up and met hers, pressing it almost convulsively; then with a brusque movement he rose saying—

"I think I will go to my room; I am just—played out!"

His face, his voice were those of a man mentally and physically broken with fatigue; but long after he had retired to the room placed at his disposal, which was just over the study, those below heard his step pacing to and fro; to and fro with scarcely a moment's cessation.

The sound got on Enid's already overstrained nerves; for some little time she had been struggling against an hysterical lump in her throat which threatened to choke her; for she felt that Dick had been anxious to escape even from her, and that wounded her deeply. She tortured her tender heart by picturing him above wrestling miserably with a grief she was powerless to alleviate, until she finally broke down herself and sobbed piteously.

"Poor little girlie," said her father, gathering her into his arms and tenderly stroking the golden head as it lay like a broken flower upon his broad breast—"it is rough on you that such a grim shadow should fall upon the opening of your young life's romance; but it will

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