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and gliding up to her father she whispered brokenly in his ear—

"You tell him, dad. I can't!"

"Not now surely," he remonstrated in low tones and evident dismay. "If your decision is unalterable, at least, wait a little; there can be no immediate hurry."

"He must be told now—at once—and by you!" she persisted; then with head bent low she moved towards the door, her eyes so blinded with tears that she nearly came in collision with Ted Alston, who was at that moment re-entering.

Dick's gaze followed her retreating figure with a wistful surprise; it was the first time since he had known her that she had ever failed him; and it hurt him indescribably. There was a dull ache within him, a longing which could only be appeased by the pressure of her hand, by the soft touch of her lips. He felt much as would a wanderer in the desert who had solaced himself throughout the heat and dust of the march with the thought of the well of pure, fresh water he knows to be at the end of the day's wearisome journey; and who, arriving at his destination, finds that the well has run dry.

Why was Enid the only one who had no word of comfort or sympathy for him? he asked himself, and asked in vain.

He turned his eyes questioningly first upon Ted, in whose face he saw his own surprise reflected; and then upon the elder man, who was pacing the room with quick, short steps which betrayed agitation, his hands locked together behind his back.

"What is the matter, Colonel?" he asked dreadingly; "have I upset Enid so with my gruesome tale that she has no word for me?"

Colonel Anerley's steps came to a sudden halt.

"My boy," he said, "I am a blunt, straightforward man; and I cannot soften what it is my unpleasant mission to tell you, by wrapping it up in sugared phrases. Women are queer creatures! With the exception of my dear wife, who sees eye to eye with me, I have given up trying to understand them years ago. What is at the back of Enid's mind, therefore, I can't tell you—she refuses to explain; but she has decided that her engagement with you must come to an end."

At this unexpected announcement, coming as it did at the close of a scene which in his enfeebled condition had taxed his powers of endurance almost beyond their limits, two vivid patches of colour flamed out on Dick's face, as if he had been struck on each cheek by an open hand. He made an effort to rise to his feet, then, overcome by a sudden dizziness, fell back in his chair.

"She is right!" he said, half under his breath. "I offered her her freedom when last we met, but she refused then to take it; she has thought better of it now; she is right, quite right, to refuse to unite herself to a man whose name is sullied—who has only a heritage of shame to leave the children God may send him!"

"Heritage of shame! Pooh! Nonsense! Fiddlesticks!" cried the Colonel energetically. "If she argued in that fashion, she would be wrong, quite wrong. I, her own father, say so; but I am open to bet that the fact upon which you lay so much stress has nothing whatever to do with the case."

"What has then? What else can I think?" asked the young man, a profound discouragement and dejection stamped upon his face and expressed in every line of his body as he lay back wearily in his chair and half closed his eyes.

"Did I not tell you that I am as much in the dark as you are?" replied Colonel Anerley, almost impatiently. "Both her mother and I have pressed her hard for her reason; for the first time in her life we find her stubborn and intractable! 'It has to be!' is all the answer she will give us."

"It suffices," said Dick with a mirthless laugh, as, resting his two hands on the table for support, he managed to scramble to his feet; "I could, of course, insist upon my right to receive my sentence from her own lips; but, frankly, I have not the strength for such an interview. I feel used up—finished! Tell her that I bow to her decision. It only remains for me, Colonel, to thank you for your friendliness, and relieve you all of my tiresome presence."

The scarlet patches still stood out on



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